

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

Tuesday 16 August 1988  
Wednesday 17 August 1988  
Thursday 18 August 1988

Tuesday 23 August 1988  
Wednesday 24 August 1988  
Thursday 25 August 1988

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



## NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

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

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

## MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Arafura	Stanley Gabriel Tipiloura
Araluen	Eric Houguet Poole
Arnhem	Wesley Wagner Lanhupuy
Barkly	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Braitling	Roger William Stanley Vale
Casuarina	Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Fannie Bay	Marshall Bruce Perron
Flynn	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
Jingili	Richard Alfred Setter
Karama	Michael James Palmer
Katherine	Michael Anthony Reed
Koolpinyah	Cecilia Noel Padgham-Purich
Leanyer	Frederick Arthur Finch
Ludmilla	Colin Charles Firmin
MacDonnell	Neil Randal Bell
Millner	Terence Edward Smith
Nhulunbuy	Daniel Murray Leo
Nightcliff	Stephen Paul Hatton
Palmerston	Barry Francis Coulter
Port Darwin	Tom Harris
Sadadeen	Denis Wilfred Collins
Sanderson	Daryl William Manzie
Stuart	Brian Richard Ede
Victoria River	Terence Robert McCarthy
Wanguri	Donald Francis Dale

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

\* Replaced Mr M.A. Reed on 23 August 1988

**House Committee**

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

**Standing Orders Committee**

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

**Publications Committee**

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

**Privileges Committee**

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

**Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee**

Mr N.M. Dondas  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr R.A. Setter  
Mr T.E. Smith  
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

**Public Accounts Committee**

Mr N.M. Dondas \* ✓  
Mr B.R. Ede  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr R.A. Setter

\* Replaced Mr M.A. Reed on 23 August 1988

*Overseas*  
*16/8*  
*Minutes 252*

**Sessional Committee - Environment**

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

**Sessional Committee - New Parliament House**

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

**Select Committee - Constitutional Development**

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

PART I

DEBATES





## DEBATES

Tuesday 16 August 1988

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

### RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR FLYNN

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, yesterday I received a letter from Mr R.A. Hanrahan resigning his seat as the member for Flynn and advised His Honour the Acting Administrator of Mr Hanrahan's resignation. I lay on the Table Mr Hanrahan's letter of resignation.

### ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to inform honourable members of changes to ministerial portfolio responsibilities and to the administrative arrangements.

On 14 July 1988, His Honour the Administrator made certain changes to the ministry following my election as leader of the parliamentary wing of the CLP. His Honour appointed me as Chief Minister and Treasurer, Barry Francis Coulter as Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister for Industries and Development, and Michael Anthony Reed as Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. The remaining ministerial offices and responsibilities have not been changed.

On the same day, His Honour the Administrator made an Administrative Arrangements Order to reflect these changes and, for the information of honourable members, I lay on the Table a copy of that Administrative Arrangements Order.

Mr Speaker, I advise the House that, following question time this morning, I intend to make a statement in regard to the directions of my government.

### PETITIONS

#### Daly River and Woolianna Roads

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 559 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to make every effort to cause the completion of the Daly River Road and the upgrading of the Woolianna Road. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, there were a further 39 signatories to this petition. Unfortunately, the signatures were on pages which did not bear the prayer of the petition and so they could not be counted as being signatories 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 of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens in the Northern Territory respectfully showeth their concern because of the ruinous condition of the Daly River and Woolianna Roads which serve the Daly River community as well as the Daly River Mission and 5 other settlements. Your petitioners humbly submit that residential, official, commercial and recreational traffic place an

increasing burden on those who are obliged to use the road regularly, both from an economic aspect in respect of vehicles, as well as impaired efficiency and physical fatigue. Your petitioners humbly pray that the Assembly make every effort to cause the completion of the Daly River Road and the upgrading of the Woolianna Road, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

#### Amendment to Liquor Act

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 118 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting an immediate amendment to the NT Liquor Act that would permit the return of the vehicle of Mrs Liyapidiny Marika OAM forthwith. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that Mrs Liyapidiny Marika OAM, who has not committed or been charged with any offence under Northern Territory legislation, has had her vehicle seized. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly will immediately amend the Northern Territory Liquor Act in such a manner as would allow the immediate return of Mrs Liyapidiny Marika's vehicle.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time this morning, the Minister for Health and Community Services accused me of a lack of interest in and ignorance about the plight of TB sufferers in the Katherine region. The attack that he mounted on me in question time was gratuitous in the extreme, but it is fairly typical of his debating tactics which owe their origin more to the muster room than to the court room. For his benefit, I advise that the opposition is well aware of many of these issues. I would appreciate it if, in future, the Minister for Health and Community Services would take silence for concurrence and not ignorance or lack of interest.

#### STATEMENT

##### Directions of the Northern Territory Government

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I advised earlier this morning that I would be making a statement in regard to changes and the directions of my government. It is appropriate that I now outline the broad directions of the government's priorities over the remainder of the life of this Legislative Assembly.

The Country Liberal Party has provided the people of the Territory with strong and effective government and that is why we have received the community's continued support. I therefore welcome the opportunity to state clearly that this tradition will continue. There will be no deviation from the broad goals and objectives set by CLP governments over the years. We will continue to advance the cause of the Territory in the interests of all Territorians, as we have done so successfully since self-government in 1978. We will continue our unshakeable commitment to the further fostering of a sound, growing and diversified economy and, most importantly, strong growth in

job opportunities for our citizens. We will continue to support the vital role that private enterprise must play in the growth and development of the Territory and we will continue our efforts to provide efficient and effective government for all Territorians and to seek to lay the foundations on which people can build a sound and secure future for themselves and their families.

It is no accident that successive CLP governments have been characterised as pro-development governments. Over the years, we have argued consistently that a growing and developing economy is an essential foundation for a prosperous Territory and a harmonious society. That is the belief on which we have based our policies and which has guided our priorities. It is a belief which I hold firmly and I welcome this opportunity to reaffirm it. I want to signal clearly to all Territorians that this commitment to development will continue. Tomorrow, it will be my privilege, as Treasurer, to introduce the 1988-89 budget for the Northern Territory. From time to time, members of the opposition and some of their colleagues from that side of the political fence in Canberra have tried to portray CLP governments as irresponsible. Mr Speaker, the facts repudiate such absurd allegations.

Mr Bell: We don't have to portray you that way. You do a good job all by yourselves.

Mr PERRON: Successive CLP governments have brought down balanced budgets every year since self-government. No other government in Australia can claim such a proud and responsible record. That record will be continued in the budget which I will introduce tomorrow. We have maintained this responsible approach, coupled with our commitment to growth and development, despite very significant cuts in recent years to the funds we have received from the Commonwealth. These cuts have been out of all proportion to the financial dealings between the Commonwealth and the states during the same period. We have tightened our belts. We have kept Territory taxes and charges to the minimum and we have set about doing more with less. All Territorians have been affected by the treatment we have received from the Commonwealth.

The Territory economy has not shown the same high levels of growth over the last couple of years that we saw in the early years of self-government. However, I have an unshakeable belief in the underlying strength and resilience of the Northern Territory and its almost unlimited potential. As Chief Minister, my major task will be to hasten the process of unlocking this potential and accelerating growth rates for the Territory to a level which we know can be sustained, given our resources and the efforts of our people.

A further and very significant step forward in promoting the economic development of the Territory will be the release of our own economic development strategy. On 25 February, my predecessor as Chief Minister outlined to this Assembly the government's proposals for the preparation of an economic development strategy. This work has continued and the strategy is now all but complete. It will be released publicly within the next 3 weeks.

The preparation of an economic development strategy is not simply a matter of preparing an attractive document, nor is the release of the document the end of the process. Quite to the contrary, it is the beginning. We have undertaken an extensive program of consultation with relevant industry and community groups and members of the Northern Territory Development Council have made a major contribution in guiding the direction of this work. This process of consultation and partnership has produced, I believe, a strategy which will be widely supported throughout the community and, very importantly, which will give a strong degree of confidence in the future economic growth

path of the Northern Territory. We have sought to identify development opportunities together with industry and community groups so that we have clear directions which we can pursue confidently together. This is a sound basis for action, and this is why the presentation of the strategy document is only the first step. Real development is in its implementation and with the employment that we can create.

I also want to reaffirm the government's continued commitment to essential infrastructure development. We have had to wait too long for a number of projects which are vital to the Territory. Early and adequate redevelopment of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports is essential. The state of these airport terminals is not only an embarrassment, it is a serious constraint on Territory development. The record clearly shows that the Territory government has tried over and over again to secure a start to the redevelopment of both airports, only to be rebuffed by indifference, inaction and sometimes even cynical hostility from Canberra. As Chief Minister, I give this commitment to honourable members and to all Territorians. These projects are essential. We will intensify our efforts. We will deal with the federal government in a reasonable and responsible way, but we will not draw back. We will not rest until the work has been completed and adequate new terminals are in operation.

I take essentially the same view of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. It is a project which is essential if the Territory's development potential is to be unlocked. To deny this would be to deny all the lessons of history. With our continuing quiet and patient efforts, and with the continuing interest of important private-sector parties, we are moving forward towards the realisation of the railway project. All members of this government firmly support the railway. We know that, in this, we share a common view with the overwhelming majority of Territorians. We will not let them down. The railway link is firmly on my agenda, and I will be making further statements on the railway as appropriate.

I should touch on one further very important infrastructure issue: the availability and cost of power in the Northern Territory. The Territory has made great strides over recent years. We have moved from our inherited oil-based energy system, with its outmoded and inefficient technology based on imported fuel with its uncertainty as to availability and price, to a gas system with its new and efficient technology based on the utilisation of our own natural resources. This has provided us with the key to future growth. Energy prices in the Territory continue to be high, too high for householders and too high for business. Current power costs are a serious disincentive for many businesses. Now our task is to utilise the key to contain and reduce power costs. To do this, we need to lift the level of usage. On a number of occasions, the Minister for Mines and Energy has outlined our plans to do this and I am confident that, not only are we on the right track but we are moving down that track at a very encouraging pace.

It would be appropriate for me to comment on the government's decision to proceed with the State Square project, a decision which I announced a few days ago. No one can seriously argue against the need for a new Supreme Court building and a parliament house. The efficient functioning of the Supreme Court is already being affected by the inability of the current premises to accommodate the court's requirements. As for this parliament building, sentiment aside, it has simply passed its economic life. Therefore, the government has entered into responsible arrangements for these important capital works projects which make sensible provisions for control of costs, timing and methods of construction. Detailed concepts and designs will be available shortly and the New Parliament House Committee of this Assembly is

already hard at work. The project will provide a very significant boost to the local economy and to local employment and, of course, will provide a major improvement for the city of Darwin, which all Territorians will enjoy.

Mr Speaker, I have focused on development and growth issues, and I make no apologies for that because that is where the government's priorities must lie. This is not to say that other issues are not important. Of course they are, and they will be given the attention that they require. Therefore, at this time, I would like to indicate the government's direction in just 1 or 2 important areas.

I believe that it is time for a further evaluation of the way in which Aboriginal land rights and other associated issues are working in the Northern Territory. In saying this, I am under no illusion as to the sensitivity of these issues or the impossibility of achieving arrangements which will satisfy the interests of everybody. Despite the image which others continually try to project, CLP governments have supported the concept and principle of land rights. Indeed, we have done more to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people than any state government in Australia, and that support will continue. But we do not agree with, nor support, everything that has happened. Nor do we support all aspects of the land rights legislation or practices. In some circumstances, we have not supported the wishes of those seeking to frustrate reasonable land rights processes. In other circumstances, we have not supported Aboriginal interests where they have gone beyond what we saw as acceptable.

The time has come when we must address those aspects of the land rights process with which we do not agree and which are currently creating tension in the community. We must act to support the interests of the whole community. Without pre-empting what needs to be done, I believe I can nominate 3 areas at least which need to be reviewed: excisions for living areas on pastoral properties, land claims over public purpose land such as stock routes and reserves, and the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites. The time has come to establish clear principles and to defend those principles. As Chief Minister, I have made this a high priority and it is my intention to bring to this Assembly, as early as the next sittings, legislative proposals for consideration and debate. I believe we owe that to the Territory community.

I would also like to touch on the issue of statehood. I share the view held by most members of this Assembly that statehood for the Territory is essential and that we must continue to work with statehood as our goal. I do not underestimate the difficulties nor do I underestimate the importance of the consultative process. The select committee of this Assembly will continue its work. I believe this is the most important process in the statehood program at present. There will be progressive consultation with the Commonwealth and, as necessary, with the states. It is not reasonable to set a timetable for statehood and I do not intend to do so. Achieving statehood on acceptable terms and conditions is far more important than working to any particular timetable. There is, of course, an important role for all members of the Legislative Assembly in the task of progressing the cause for statehood.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude with a couple of observations concerning the future. Our location as the gateway between South-east Asia and the rest of Australia is the key to setting the Territory on the path to a future which will unlock our true potential. In the past, our geographic location has been seen as a major impediment to development and growth. We now see it as a unique and exciting opportunity. Our political, economic,

cultural and human relations with the South-east Asian region must enhance this opportunity. Successive Territory governments have invested a great deal of time and effort to this end. It is beginning to show results and it will continue. Closer government-to-government relations establish a more fruitful environment for private-sector contacts. These are growing and will be encouraged and supported. At the same time, we recognise that the Territory will not grow if its population does not grow. A community of 160 000 people can never have the same range of opportunities as a community of 1 million. Our population will grow if there are jobs, and we will not get the jobs unless we are doers. As Chief Minister, I intend to lead a government of doers.

Tomorrow's budget will give specific evidence of our directions and priorities. The budget debate will enable each of my ministerial colleagues to develop in more detail these directions and priorities as they apply to their respective portfolios. I look forward to the opportunity which that debate will provide to present to the Assembly and to the wider Territory community a platform and a program for growth, development and jobs for Territorians. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for his courtesy yesterday in supplying me with a copy of his statement. That is a positive sign because, even when they are as sketchy as this one, statements which purport to set out the government's plans are important and should be debated fully.

I think that the key statement in the document is on page 2 where it is stated that the CLP has provided the people of the Territory with strong and effective government. The need for the statement has given the lie to that sentence. The statement has been delivered because we have a weak and divided government and we have a new Chief Minister. If the government had been strong and united, we would not have had a new Chief Minister and there would have been no need for the statement. Of course, if the CLP was strong and effective, we would not have had 4 Chief Ministers in 5 years, 2 of whom were not elected by the people of the Northern Territory. We have seen a period of unremitting activity within the Country Liberal Party, activity which at times has been little short of open warfare between different groups within the party.

I would remind you, Mr Speaker, of the campaign slogan used by the CLP during the last election: 'Strong, Stable and Independent'. That was what the then and now-departed Chief Minister promised. At least the present Chief Minister does not use the word 'stable' to describe the government. He prefers to use 'strong and effective'. I can understand perfectly why he would not use the word 'stable' to describe the activities of the Country Liberal Party government because, Mr Speaker, if you have ever seen a more unstable government with more trouble within its own ranks, I certainly have not.

I would like to refresh the memories of members opposite concerning what has happened since the last election. I will not go into the Tuxworth era and the machinations that resulted in his removal from the position of Chief Minister. I will simply look at what has happened since the last election. Immediately after that election, the member for Casuarina was sacked from the ministry by the Chief Minister, together with the member for Victoria River. The now departed and unlamented former member for Flynn did a job on the member for Berrimah and took over the deputy's job at that time. Within

6 or 7 weeks, the member for Port Darwin was sacked from the ministry after a foray into foreign affairs. He then went on the public record criticising the Chief Minister, basically saying that he did not know how to run the place. The member for Victoria River, who was not good enough to be in the original ministry, was reinstated 6 or 7 weeks after he was sacked. We now know, Mr Speaker, that the present Chief Minister and his deputy ...

Mr Coulter: You don't want me to get up and talk about the divisions on your side, do you?

Mr SMITH: It doesn't match the divisions among you fellows, I can tell you.

We now know that the present Chief Minister and his deputy started plotting in November last year. Ray Hanrahan paid the price in March. He went out in a blaze of glory saying - and I think we all agree - that the CLP is a spent force. It is a spent force in every respect except infighting, where there is certainly plenty of energy left. Grant Heaslip was disposed of as president and Graeme Lewis was sent to the equivalent of Outer Mongolia. Then it was the member for Nightcliff's turn. He was dumped unceremoniously as Chief Minister by the very same people who had put him there 20-odd months earlier. He was given a few hours notice by the ever-obliging member for Araluen and he was presented with a fait accompli in the form of a letter signed by all his parliamentary colleagues except the member for Leanyer who, conveniently, was out of touch.

One would have thought that the arrival of a new Chief Minister would have meant the end of it. But no, within days, his ever-ambitious deputy was tipping a bucket over his new boss. He went on the public record saying that the Department of Industries and Development needed a stiff broom through it to clear away the cobwebs. Industries and Development, of course, was the portfolio held by the new Chief Minister for a considerable period. The machinations go on. The member for Nightcliff plots to get back at those who did him over - and he has a fair range of people from whom to choose. The member for Karama wonders why his superior talents have not been recognised. The member for Casuarina has been done in the eye once again, after setting up the numbers for the new Chief Minister. No wonder the Country Liberal Party is in such a mess and no wonder the Chief Minister was at least honest enough to censor the word 'stable' from the list of adjectives used to describe the performance of the government.

Mr Dale: Don't you admire flexibility?

Mr SMITH: That is not flexibility. That is an indiarubber trick.

Mr Speaker, the important thing is that, while this infighting continues and while all these games are being played to share the spoils within the Country Liberal Party, the economy of the Northern Territory has been going down the chute. The population has fallen and, according to the latest figures, job numbers have declined by 9000 over 12 months. I will show you the graph again, Mr Speaker. It indicates the moving average of jobs over the last 12-month period compared with the CLP promise. It indicates a disastrous situation for the Country Liberal Party. The figures are disastrous for a party which has promised an increase of 1000 jobs per annum. The reality is that, as of August, we have lost 6500 jobs.

Mr Finch: Are any of them Commonwealth positions which have been removed?

Mr SMITH: A small percentage of them may well be Commonwealth jobs.

People have left the Territory. Instead of creating 1000 extra jobs a year, we have lost 6500 jobs. The sorry state of the economy is evident from all the indicators. Taxi takings are well down and hotel takings are down by 10% to 15%. The only people doing well at the moment are the removalists, whose loads are all directed out of the Territory. In that context, the Chief Minister has the effrontery to say that the government will continue its unshakeable commitment to the future fostering of a 'sound, growing and diversified economy and, most importantly, strong growth in job opportunities for our citizens'. What I asked in question time and what I ask now is: where are those job opportunities? Where are the government's plans to provide people in the Northern Territory with jobs, with security of employment and the belief that the Northern Territory is a good place in which to live?

Another aspect of providing strong, stable and independent government is, of course, to provide an effective public service. I am sure that members do not need to be reminded of the mess that the public service has been reduced to as a result of the operations of this government over the last 18 months. The government's lack of direction has left the public service rudderless. Its attack on their conditions has left public servants demoralised - and who could ever forget the Gilruth-style demonstrations of last year?

The Chief Minister spoke of following the same broad goals and objectives set by other CLP governments. I raised that very issue in my reply to last year's budget. The government does not have clearly identified goals or objectives. Its construction program is largely developed by whoever has spoken to it most recently and any sense of planning in respect of the development of the major centres is absent. A classic example of that is the Milatos hotel proposal which would never have occurred if Darwin had a town plan and everybody knew the rules. The Anderson proposal and the destruction of Marron's newsagency could have taken different directions with proper planning and direction. What has happened, however, is that we have lost another part of the heritage of Alice Springs with the destruction of Marron's newsagency and we have lost a Chief Minister because of the Anderson proposal in Darwin. If the CLP has goals, the community would appreciate knowing about them. Perhaps the greatest indictment of its lack of goals is in this paper.

The Chief Minister advised correctly that the previous Chief Minister told this House on 25 February that an economic development strategy would be prepared. Now, 6 months later, we are told that it will be available in 3 weeks time - just after these sittings are concluded and, conveniently for the government, just in time for the Flynn by-election. I am sure that the people of Flynn will appreciate being the centre of attention for the unveiling of the government's economic strategy, but it reflects poorly on the Chief Minister's respect for this House that, after 6 months of preparation, the strategy will miss out on being tabled in the Assembly by 1 week.

This all begs the question of what framework was used to prepare the budget. Was it the usual vacuum or is this paper being held back deliberately? I have to make the point again, Mr Speaker. The preparation of economic development strategies is a common practice, and it is pleasing that the Northern Territory government has decided at last that we need an economic development strategy. It has only taken it 10 years to come to that recognition, but I guess there is hope yet. However, normally, Mr Speaker, you put your economic development strategy in place and then frame your budget around it. You do not reverse the process and bring down your budget 3 weeks



earlier than the finalisation of the economic development strategy. That is patently nonsensical and ludicrous. No wonder the Territory is in such a mess if the government gets matters as basic as that the wrong way around. We will all watch with great interest the unveiling of the economic development strategy. It has taken 10 years for the government to come to the realisation that we need one so there is some chance that it might be halfway decent. For the sake of the Northern Territory, we can but hope so.

I come now to the very important issue of the baloney about balanced budgets and the statement in the Chief Minister's paper that 'successive CLP governments have brought down balanced budgets every year since self-government'. The truth is the reverse. In the Northern Territory, we have the highest level of debt and liabilities in Australia. It is over \$14 840 per head, and it is increasing annually.

Mr Palmer: Where did you get that figure from?

Mr SMITH: The Treasurer and Chief Minister relies for his absurd statement about balanced budgets on the fact that the Consolidated Fund ...

Mr Palmer: Where did you get your figures from?

Mr SMITH: ... balances each year.

Mr Palmer: Tell us the figures.

Mr SMITH: They are from the report of the PAC, of which you are chairman, my friend.

For a number of years, the opposition has pointed out consistently that the Consolidated Fund does not provide an accurate reflection of the Territory's finances.

Mr Manzie: We spend what we earn, that is all. No more than that.

Mr SMITH: You spend what you earn? That is an interesting comment which reveals the ignorance of the honourable minister opposite.

We now have independent verification of this from the New South Wales Commission of Audit.

Mr Perron: Oh, Neville Wran's performance!

Mr SMITH: The New South Wales Commission of Audit was set in place by the new Premier of New South Wales, Nick Greiner. It has reported recently to the parliament of New South Wales. As I said, it was an independent body of financial experts. Let me read the names of the people: the Chairman, Mr Charles Curran AO, Deputy Chairman of Kleinwort Benson Australia Ltd; members, Mr Jim Dominguez the Chairman of Dominguez, Barry Samuel Montagu Ltd, Mr James Yonge, Deputy Chairman and Managing Director, Wardley Australia Ltd, and Mr Don Nichols, Deputy Secretary of the New South Wales Treasury. Let us hear, Mr Speaker, what that learned group of people has to say about consolidated funds.

It says that a consolidated fund is a cash-flow base of measurement where the result for the year is simply the amount by which cash in this fund increased or decreased. It goes on to say that the budget result has no meaning, in a consolidated fund, from a modern accounting viewpoint and is

little more than the difference between cheques drawn from the bank during the year and cash deposited with the bank. It goes on to say that it has been called 'tennis club accounting', and that has been the form of accounting since the state Treasury was established in 1824. In other words, in the 20th century in the Northern Territory, we are relying on 'tennis club accounting' for the statement that we are running a balanced budget. I mean no disrespect to tennis clubs, but the fact is, if tennis clubs ran their business as the Northern Territory government runs its business, they would be broke because private organisations do not have the capacity to continue to finance their current commitments with loans from the bank. Any tennis club that followed that course of action would run rapidly into debt.

The New South Wales commission found that the Consolidated Fund in New South Wales had a surplus of \$767 000. If the Chief Minister were the Opposition Leader in New South Wales, he would have to say that they have balanced the budget because the Consolidated Fund has a surplus of \$767 000. However, what this report found was that, in fact, the annual operating deficit was \$1200m in New South Wales and the total level of debt in New South Wales was \$26 000m. But that is all irrelevant to simpleminded people like the Chief Minister opposite because he says that the Consolidated Fund balances and therefore we do not have a problem. We are running a balanced budget and every thing is hunky-dory. Of course, it is not, and what is happening in New South Wales is happening in the Northern Territory also.

Mr Perron: Is it happening in South Australia?

Mr SMITH: It is being tackled in South Australia and it is being tackled in other places. You are not even aware of the problem. That is the problem that we have: you are not even aware of the difficulties in which you are putting the Northern Territory government and future residents of the Territory.

The excess of expenditure over income figures for the Northern Territory are as follows. In 1985-86, we spent \$188m more than we earned and we financed that gap from loans. In 1986-87, we spent \$282m more than we earned and we financed the difference from loans. In 1987-88, we spent \$135m more than we earned and we financed the difference from loans. In 3 years, our debt in respect of those loans was \$605m. If you go to the public record, our total debt at this stage is \$1300m.

Mr Perron: You said it was \$2400m the other day in the press.

Mr SMITH: Of course, I knew the Treasurer would fall in at that point ...

Mr Coulter: You were setting a trap for us.

Mr SMITH: I did not even have to set the trap. Come in, spinner! Obviously, you get plenty of practice at Doctor's Gully. Come in. The \$2400m is the total of the loans and the liabilities of the government. I am talking here about our loan requirements. It is \$1300m which is almost \$10 000 per capita. That is by far the highest per capita loan debt in Australia. It is increasing, and that is the point. That is an independent calculation from the ABS publication called 'Government Financial Estimates'. Of course, the previous Treasurer probably would never have seen that document because we all know his view on government accounting methods.

We pay for that excess of expenditure over income through loans. Our total loans debt is now \$1300m and the interest on that is at least \$130m per

annum and it is increasing. It has already reached a stage where 12% of our total budget outlay is directed to repayment of government loans. That is the crisis situation that we have reached. We have reached a stage in fact where we have to take out additional loans to service existing loans. We cannot go on living like this.

Mr Perron: Do they do that in the states?

Mr SMITH: We cannot go on living like this.

Mr Perron: Does the Commonwealth do that?

Mr SMITH: That is the lesson that has been learnt.

Mr Perron: Does the world's greatest Treasurer do it?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: No, he does not, Mr Speaker. The world's greatest Treasurer has recognised the need to pull back from that level of debt. We have a leading example at the federal level of how that can be done.

Mr Speaker, John Cain, the Premier of Victoria, realises the extent of the problem and, in his last budget of 2 weeks ago, he retired some of that debt. Nick Greiner, the Premier of New South Wales, has retired some of its debt. He decided to pay out completely the debt on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Governments elsewhere realise what the problem is and are starting to tackle it. The economic illiterates opposite do not even realise that we have a problem. That is the first thing that they must get through their heads. We have a problem in the Northern Territory. We cannot go on extending the level of our debt. We must realise that we are going down a very slippery slope indeed and we must do something about it.

Let's get a bit of realism into the debate, stop talking nonsense about running balanced budgets and start talking about the level of deficit and the level of debt that we have. We must put the debate on a reasonable basis so that we can tackle our problems and get this economy back on an even keel. That is the plea that I make to people opposite: forget the balanced budget nonsense. I will lend members opposite my copy of this report and other documents issued by people who examine state accounting practices. They might learn something. It would be of benefit to everybody in the Northern Territory if members opposite managed to learn the basic essentials of running a government financial system.

Mr Coulter: How would you fix it?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that will be revealed in my budget response on Thursday.

I commented outside of the Assembly on the Anderson proposal and, because I am running out of time, I do not intend to spend much time on that. However, the basic point in respect of that particular proposal remains: when you have a limited amount of money to spend on capital works, it does not make sense to me and many people in the community to spend it on buildings that will not increase productive capacity after the construction is finished. Forget the other valid arguments for the moment. That, to me, is a ludicrous position for anybody to put himself in. Nobody doubts that the lives of judges would be improved if we had a new Supreme Court building and the lives

of parliamentarians would be improved if we had a new parliament house. However, when they are completed, those buildings will not create 1 extra job. There are capital works projects that can be undertaken and which would create extra jobs. I thought that that was what this government was about. That is the rhetoric in the Chief Minister's statement but, of course, when you examine it, the detail does not reflect the rhetoric.

Mr Speaker, of course we had the statements that every Chief Minister makes about the railway. Obviously, the Northern Territory would benefit from the railway and I wish the Chief Minister well. I hope that he has learnt from previous Chief Ministers that the less he says about the railway and putting together railway deals the better. Certainly, we do not want a repeat of the embarrassment caused to potential Japanese investors who were used as headline fodder last year.

For the record, once again I will state the opposition's bottom line on the railway. We see that there is room for a contribution to the capital cost from the Northern Territory government and from the Commonwealth government, but we do not see that there is any room for the Northern Territory government to commit itself to the continuing operating costs of a railway, and I would expect that that is the principle that government members would accept as well. I do not think there is any belief that a government the size of the Northern Territory's can commit itself to a situation where it would pick up the operating costs or part of the operating costs of such a railway line.

A set speech is always delivered on this sort of occasion. They have been made so often now by so many Chief Ministers recently. He mentioned the railway and the airports. I agree completely with what was said in relation to the airports and hope that there is some money in the federal budget for the airports in the Northern Territory. Then, of course, he moved to the other old hardy perennial of power costs. We have a situation where the government has promised a great deal in respect of power costs but has delivered little, both on the large scale and the small scale. It promised special off-peak rates at the last election, and we have found that hardly anyone qualifies to use the off-peak rates ...

Mr Coulter: Go and see the people who qualify.

Mr SMITH: ... because of the way that they have been set up.

You could probably count the number of people who qualify on the fingers of 2 hands. Most people have received no advantage whatsoever from the special off-peak rates that the Northern Territory government announced with such a flourish last year. Obviously, the reduction of power rates is a vital priority and I am pleased that the Chief Minister has established it as such.

The Chief Minister may also do well to gag his deputy who persists in making inappropriate public statements on the progress of negotiations with various companies. I have had company representatives come to me and say that they have been embarrassed by the premature announcements of the Deputy Chief Minister. It is time the Chief Minister did something about that because it is no longer a joke. It is all right to go headline hunting if you are an ambitious person who wants to become Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, but when headline hunting reaches the stage of putting people off and discouraging confidence in the Northern Territory government, it is time to call a halt to it. The Chief Minister must put a stop to the carryings on of his deputy. He must tell him to grow up and enter into serious negotiations with companies rather than make premature announcements.

Mr Coulter: Name one!

Mr SMITH: I will name one: the MIM Borroloola project. It has been announced at least 3 times by the Deputy Chief Minister - once before the last election, once in the last budget debate and once last week. It is still no further advanced; we know that.

Mr Coulter: How would you know?

Mr SMITH: We know there are grave technical problems with it. I know because I make it my business to find out.

Mr Coulter: Go on another world trip!

Mr SMITH: The outbursts of the Deputy Chief Minister put MIM in a very embarrassing position.

Mr Coulter: They went to you.

Mr SMITH: MIM's representatives know the difficulties in putting together that project. They are certainly not helped by the Deputy Chief Minister's efforts to score points for the sake of his own advancement within his party. To make the record clear so that you do not run a vendetta against them, they did not come to see me.

Members interjecting:

Mr SMITH: One has to make that clear to people like you because too many people have suffered from the personal vendettas that you have been running against them.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, there are other aspects of the Chief Minister's speech that I have not had time to address. Those will be followed up by my colleagues.

The key point about the address is that we have the same tired old rhetoric and we have the same tired old ideas except for the economic development strategy which, through some fluke of genius, is coming down after the budget has been put together. That is a really bright thing to do. The message that I want to leave with the government is that the most important thing that it has to do is to realise that there is a problem with the debt. It is time that at least it took a close look at our debt position and acquainted itself with the facts. I am quite happy to supply all the information that we have and it is all publicly available. It is a serious problem. If we do not come to grips with it, we will leave future Territorians with a huge mountain of debt to climb over. Other governments in Australia have recognised the problem. It is time that the Northern Territory government recognised that the best thing that it can do for Territorians over the next 12 months to 2 years is to come to grips with that problem.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I will commence by working backwards from the absurd statements that the Leader of the Opposition delivered this morning. He made great play of a statement which, as Minister for Mines and Energy, I issued without the knowledge of other people. He said that company representatives had visited his office complaining about these types of statements. The statement that I issued regarding the McArthur River project was made in conjunction with officers from Mt Isa Mines and with their full knowledge. Let me read that press release:

Executives from Mt Isa Mines Holdings today presented to the Northern Territory Cabinet the company's submission for further development studies on the massive McArthur River mineral deposits. The Minister for Mines and Energy, Mr Barry Coulter, said MIM Holdings had undertaken to complete a new feasibility study on the project by April next year. This would take into account the latest mining technology, the economics of the project and the options of the company and the Territory government for infrastructural development and would overtake a study of the project completed 10 years ago.

Mr Smith: That is nothing new. You announced that last year.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, there he goes again. This information was given to Cabinet at the last Cabinet meeting.

Mr Smith: Have a look at your budget speech.

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

'On this basis', Mr Coulter said, 'the government has renewed MIM's development lease of the McArthur River deposit, the world's largest known reserves of silver, lead, zinc, until 30 June 1989'. The minister said the project would involve the production of 227 million tonnes of ore valued in billions of dollars. The MIM executives, Joint Operation General Manager, Carl Hoffman, and General Manager Development, Merv Norman, also briefed Cabinet on other company projects in the Territory, including Tom's Gully goldmine to be opened on 4 November.

Mr Speaker, one of the other projects on which they briefed Cabinet was the TTS Transport Darwin Freight Lines which the Chief Minister opened at Winnellie on Friday. This particular company does not share the doom and gloom of the Leader of the Opposition and is continuing to increase its presence in the Northern Territory. TTS will be taking the copper concentrates from the Warrego Mine across to Mt Isa in a venture in which Peko and MIM are involved. Not only Tom's Gully mine will be opened on 4 November but also a number of other mines in which Mt Isa is involved.

The statement was nothing extraordinary as the Leader of the Opposition has sought to claim. There was no embarrassment resulting from the press release. It was factual. As a result of my trip to Birmingham University last November, I brought an academic from that university to the mining conference this year. In fact, he visited the McArthur River project and spoke in Brisbane with representatives of Mt Isa Mines. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would like to do a 180° turnaround in relation to silver, lead and zinc as he has done in respect of the mining of uranium in such a short space of time. Perhaps he should undertake another trip to investigate that and put some effort into getting one of these massive projects up and running. The member for Barkly can tell him that it takes about 7 years to get one of

these projects up and running. The Leader of the Opposition does himself no credit and does nothing for business confidence by making the sort of inane statements that he makes in relation to projects of this kind.

Nothing has changed, Mr Speaker. On 8 July 1986, he said in a press release that this government 'would not know the first thing about economic responsibility and restraint'. He is still saying the same thing 2 years later. He has not changed at all.

What is his solution to these problems? Mr Speaker, wait for it. In a press release on 19 July, he said: 'Territory residents are voting with their feet on policies which have decimated job opportunities and led to an ever-increasing cost of living. The Territory is rapidly losing its appeal. CLP maladministration has included a failure to arrest costs. High costs have meant little investment. Declining investments mean less jobs available. What is the solution? The situation is so serious, says the Leader of the Opposition, that the new Chief Minister should call a summit of business and trade unions to determine ways to arrest the problems. When he spoke on talkback radio recently, the interviewer asked him what he would do. The Leader of the Opposition said that he would call a summit'.

That is all the people of the Northern Territory can expect from the alternative government and the Leader of the Opposition. He talks about stability! His own position is so perilous that it depends on the vote of just 1 member, the member for Arnhem. How many leadership challenges has he faced in the last 2 years? Quite a few. The member for MacDonnell is now an expert at challenging. He has worked out the tactics. The problem is complicated for the opposition because of the numbers. People who cannot count to 3 are in trouble. Members opposite are in really big trouble.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government should put in for the development of the railway, although not for recurrent and ongoing operational expenses. I wonder how much he believes the Northern Territory government should put in. Can he give us some indication? On a project of, say, \$600m, would he put in 30%, 10% or 5%? How much would the opposition put in for the development of the railway? He said that he would do it, now let him stand up and tell us how much he would put in.

We now know the opposition's policy. The Leader of the Opposition said that the less said about railways the better, and that the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth should invest. That is on the public record. He said that in this House this morning and that the government should not be involved in any recurrent or operating costs. Now, we want to know how much the Leader of the Opposition would commit from the Northern Territory budget to this particular proposal, and I cannot wait to hear his answer on that. All there has been so far is a deathly silence. Surely he could call out, in percentage terms, 10%, 5% or whatever.

The Leader of the Opposition's great speech on economic matters today reminds me of the story of 2 balloonists. The balloonists had a failure and landed on the college campus. As the balloonists were getting out through the wicker basket, taking the balloon off their heads, they yelled out to 2 passing students: 'Where are we?'. One student said: 'You are in a balloon'. One balloonist turned to the other and said: 'Just our luck to get economic students'. The second balloonist said: 'How did you know they were economic students?' The other replied: 'Because his information was precise, but totally useless'. And that is the type of information that was delivered to this House this morning.

Where did his figure of \$2400m come from? In fact, it came from last year's budget speech by the member for Nhulunbuy. Talk about last year's budget speech! He is the only one who has even tried to get close to this particular issue, and he can't get it right. The member for Nhulunbuy lent him his speech from last year, and what happened? He fluffed that too. Where does the figure of \$2400m he spoke about the other day come from? Where do the figures of \$1300m debt or \$14 000 per capita that he is now talking about come from? Let him table some of the figures that have been written down for him so that we can have a good look at them and debate them. Let him make the figures available and let us have a talk about it.

Mr Smith: I am happy to.

Mr COULTER: Tell us where you got the figure of \$2400m.

Mr Smith: I am happy to.

Mr COULTER: Where did the figure come from? I would love to know.

Mr Smith: Is that the only response you have?

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition talks about decline, how things are going badly in the Territory and how there are no jobs.

Mr Smith: What about the deficit?

Mr COULTER: You will get your chance.

Mr Smith: You have yours now. I have had my chance.

Mr COULTER: That is for sure. You have fluffed it every time.

Mr Speaker, on 2 August 1988, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'We have a debt which is a direct threat to our lifestyle. Labor's strategy is to work with what we have got to foster our strength in mining, primary industry and tourism'. It is certainly news to honourable members that this is what the Leader of the Opposition intends to do. He continued: 'From there, we can build to a broader manufacturing base'. He also said - and this is interesting because he acknowledges it very clearly - that 'government debt will not be a political lifebelt; it will be an economic tool'. For the Leader of the Opposition, government debt is 'an economic tool to expand and to keep on expanding growth'. The member for Nhulunbuy's argument was that our debt was so great that we could not go anywhere. He had better get his act together with the Leader of the Opposition who now advocates that debt is an economic tool.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at development in the mining industry. I have spoken about this subject in this House before. I have spoken about the numbers and the percentage increases but the message just does not seem to be getting through. Let me refer to the number of mining establishments. In 1984-85, there were 21 and, in 1986-87, there were 33. Wages and salaries paid in those establishments totalled \$49.5m in 1984-85 whilst today they total \$70.2m. Mr Speaker, in terms of the number employed, it has grown from ...

Mr Leo: What has 1984-85 to do with post self-government?

Mr COULTER: I am trying to give a comparison over several years.



Mr Leo: When was self-government? What does 1984-85 have to do with it?

Mr COULTER: I am trying to give you the facts on the comparative analysis of our economy which, according to your leader, is sliding downhill. I also used 1984-85 as a basis for comparison with 1986-87. Mr Speaker, it is very difficult for me to give figures to members of the opposition because they just will not listen. If they do listen, they do not understand. As I said before ...

Mr Leo: You are hopeless. What is the point of the 1984-85 figures?

Mr COULTER: It would appear that the maximum number members opposite can understand is 3. They get it wrong every time.

In 1984-85, 17 000 people were employed in the mining industry. In 1986-87, the figure was 21 000. Furthermore, the value-added has gone from \$466m to \$711m in the same period. Is that decline, Mr Speaker? I guess the opposition thinks so.

Horticulture is another example of growth. This year, I believe, 1000 t of grapes will be grown at Ti Tree. Perhaps the member for Sadadeen can confirm that figure. It represents \$300 000-worth of grapes. The horticultural industry is the Territory's most outstanding success story. The value of annual horticultural production 5 years ago was \$400 000 and today it is \$7.8m. Horticulture is highly labour intensive and employment figures for the industry are very encouraging. We have been able to develop new horticultural industries in remote parts of the Territory where they never existed before and other services are developing to support those industries.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the hotel industry was down. He did not say where it was down or what it was down to.

Mr Smith: I said takings were down.

Mr COULTER: Takings in what? Alcohol sales, room nights? What takings are down?

Mr Smith: Alcohol ...

Mr COULTER: Alcohol sales. He is talking about the consumption of alcohol. He did not say that, Mr Speaker. It had to be prised out of him. He is trying to be an alarmist and say that everything is bad in the pub business. However, that was not his real meaning. We know now that he was simply talking about alcohol sales. That is the type of alarmist statement that we hear from him from time to time, when he is trying to make sensational headlines but he cannot do it because the truth is that the people can see through him.

He spoke about the 10 years of self-government and said there cannot be government without an economic strategy or development plan. The 10 years of development that the Northern Territory has gone through since self-government would be a model for any developing community anywhere in Australia. If the Leader of the Opposition does not believe that, then that is one of the reasons why he is having trouble projecting some electoral appeal. That is the meaningful thing that everybody in the Territory can relate to.

We have lost population because of that outstanding success and because we have completed some of those major projects - the gas pipeline, the

Channel Island Power Station, the Tindal RAAF base and a large number of other infrastructure developments - that have been built over those 10 years. The hospital, the police headquarters, the police station, the prison, the fire station, the magistrates courts and schools have been built during that period and provide a foundation on which to base our future economy. We have that truly meaningful base which we did not have before. That is the reason why there has been a decline. The closure of 3 such projects would not have made one iota of difference to the economies of the southern states. However, to close projects such as the \$270m Channel Island Power Station, the \$250m gas pipeline and the Tindal base, which ran at \$1m a day, can have a large impact on the Northern Territory with its small population base. That is one reason why there has been a decline.

The other cause of the decline is quite simple. One of the greatest multipliers, the housing construction industry, has declined from 800 houses 3 years ago to 600 houses 2 years ago to 200 houses last year. Thus, there has been a massive downturn in the housing industry which has the greatest multiplier effect in any economy. It involves plumbers, brickies, painters, sparkies, tilers and plasterers. That is where the downturn in the economy is. The effect multiplies because people are not moving into new houses and that affects sales of white goods and cars. It affects insurance salesmen and plant nurseries. All that makes a big impact.

The truth is that our housing effort, over that period, had been substantial. There was a time when, at Palmerston, we used to turn off 3 houses a day. That turnoff is not occurring any more, and that is easy to understand. Now we require a base that will endure and it exists with the mining industry, primary industry and the horticultural industry. To some extent, the manufacturing industry forms part of that base and that includes the Trade Development Zone. We have heard the opposition's opinions on the Trade Development Zone: that it hasn't a chance of succeeding, that it will not stack up and that it will not provide jobs. However, it has a good chance of succeeding in terms of creating meaningful, full-time employment next year. Some of the businesses that are coming into the zone will create massive employment. I say 'massive' because there are not too many projects around this town that will employ 140 people, and that is the type of development that we are now talking about in the zone that the opposition party has knocked continuously since it opened its doors.

The comments from the Leader of the Opposition - and no doubt the same will apply to those from his supporters on that side of the House, although I understand he does not have very many - offer no insight at all into what he would do. He told us it will be contained in his response to the budget. I urge honourable members to listen carefully to the Leader of the Opposition when he delivers his response to the budget speech next Thursday at 11 o'clock so that we can all learn what he would do and how he would turn the economy around. All we heard from him today was a lot of economic gobbledegook that somebody wrote for him. We are looking forward to analysing those figures as soon as he makes them available to us. We are looking forward also to hearing what percentage of the cost of the railway he considers should come from the Northern Territory government.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, before I respond to that rather ridiculous outburst, I would like to go back to the statement that was delivered to us this morning. You do not have to get past page 2, Mr Speaker, before you run into the type of rhetoric which had us rolling in the aisles. The Leader of the Opposition has talked about the fact that the government has dropped the word 'stable' from its self-description, and that is fair enough and quite a

realistic assessment of its situation. Government members still talk about 'strong and effective government'. I ask you, Mr Speaker, how can any government be strong and effective when the blood is rising so high over on that side of the House that is above their ankles and is rapidly mounting towards their armpits? Let's have a look at their history. Let's have a look at what they have been up to.

It started with the member for Casuarina over there who knifed the member for Barkly. That was the kick-off. Of course, as soon as that was done, Mr Hanrahan, the ex-member for Flynn, could not help himself. He had to knife the then Deputy Chief Minister, the member for Berrimah, who is now back as Deputy Chief Minister again. That was knifing No 2. We then saw the then Chief Minister, now merely the member for Nightcliff, turn around and knife the member for Victoria River. He said that he could not be in the Cabinet because he was not good enough. Following that, the member for Port Darwin made the mistake of saying what he thought about something in an adjournment debate and therefore the member for Nightcliff, the then Chief Minister, had to knife the member for Port Darwin and to resurrect the member for Victoria River who, brushed down and made shiny clean, became an acceptable member of the Cabinet again.

What was the situation after that, Mr Speaker? Immediately, it was decided that it was time to knife the member for Flynn and everybody came in on the act. He was demoted, then he resigned and we waited to see who would come in next because, at that stage, there was a problem with dissension in the ranks on the backbenchers. We saw then the return of the member for Port Darwin who had been spending his time on the backbench busily knifing the then Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff. He was rewarded, or bought off or whatever, by having the education portfolio restored to him. Of course, there was also a problem because Cabinet did not have a member from Alice Springs and therefore we had to find out who else was sharpening his knife. We all know that the members for Karama and Araluen were busily counting the numbers and doing their lovely, little knifing jobs among the backbenchers. The Chief Minister then elevated the member for Araluen to the frontbench. It was a 2-for-1 job, Mr Speaker. They sacked 1 minister and brought in 2 to take his place.

The then Chief Minister had a problem because, on his own frontbench, sitting there beside him, he had 2 ministers who had been spending their entire time trying to knife him in the back. By that stage, he was desperate. He thought that he had bought the member for Araluen but the member for Karama was still busy with his knifing job, and there was no way that he could buy him or the member for Casuarina who was also trying to knife him. He just did not have enough positions to share round. Also there was the member for Ludmilla who again could not be bought because there were already more ministers than we had ever had before in the whole life of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. There is a limit to the number of people that you can put on your frontbench.

He thought that he was safe from the member for Doctor's Gully, the member for Fannie Bay. What happened one dark night, Mr Speaker, when he thought that he had bought off enough people? He thought he had done a good deal for the member for Palmerston who had been knifed earlier by someone else. He had resurrected him as Deputy Chief Minister. However, there are no friends on that side of the House. The member for Fannie Bay and the member for Palmerston got together and did a deal. They slipped the knife in well and truly. Did they ever, Mr Speaker! They got the numbers to give themselves a majority over on that side and when it turned out ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I understand that standing orders prevent members from making improper inferences against members of this Assembly. I believe standing order 62 refers to offensive and unbecoming words.

Mr SPEAKER: In fact, I was about to pull the honourable member up under 2 standing orders. He must relate his remarks more closely to the question before the House and also he must not impugn any other honourable member.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will definitely continue to point out that the strong and effective government, which has been claimed by the Chief Minister, is not what is occurring in this House and has not been a factor for a number of years. The point that I am making is that the reason why we have not had strong and effective government is that members opposite have been too busy knifing each other. They have been too busy making deals, breaking deals and knifing each other.

It goes on. Now that he has got himself into that seat after all these years, the Chief Minister has found that, while he thought that he had bought off the member for Palmerston, he was unable to buy off all the other people on his backbench who supported him. The member for Casuarina is sitting back there unhappy and so is the member for Ludmilla, who thought he might get something, and the member for Karama who has made no secret of the fact that he thinks he should be on the frontbench and has not got a hope of getting there. Of course, he now has the honourable ex-Chief Minister sitting back there and let us note that he is sitting in the exit seat. That has already been demonstrated by the previous occupant of that seat. That is the seat that they retire to before the eject button is pushed and they are out. It is interesting to look at the vacant seat over there. I am quite surprised actually that it is on that side of the House because I thought the member for Flynn had already left the government before he resigned from parliament.

Be that as it may, the problem is that the Chief Minister has so many people on his own backbench who are creating problems for him already that we fear that the blood will continue to flow. We already know that the days of the member for Araluen are marked. We know that he is only sitting there biding his time so that they have a face from Alice Springs on the frontbench until after the Flynn by-election. We know from his comments that he has made allegations about the Minister for Transport and Works who apparently does not work hard enough.

The problem basically is that this economy and the employment of people in the Northern Territory are being washed away by the blood that has been flowing from the benches opposite as they busily knife each other. I have a quote here from them: 'This is the belief on which we have based our policies and which has guided our priorities'. Mr Speaker, what a lot of holy hogwash! What has guided them is personal aggrandisement and political opportunism. That is why this Territory is in the strife that it is in today.

There was some discussion from the honourable member opposite regarding the deficit. A perusal of the Hansard will show that he has finally agreed that this Territory government has been running a deficit every year since at least 1981-82. Every year, he has stood up and told the people of the Northern Territory that, once again, they have balanced the budget. That would be one of the more grotesque misleadings of this Assembly and of the people of the Northern Territory that I have heard, and more will be said about it. They have tried various recoveries. They have tried the 'give some gifts to your CLP mates' recovery. They have tried the 'bail out the bankrupt

mates' recovery. They have tried the 'buy another investment today' recovery. The railway-led recovery has been in the wings for years. We have the fantasy of the uranium-led recovery from the Minister for Mines and Energy over there.

Year after year, Mr Speaker, debt, debt and more debt has been piling up on the shoulders of Territorians, a debt which is becoming crushing. Let us have a look at the facts for the last financial year. It is obvious that government members are finding difficulty in understanding this point. This government spent \$1191.2m. It raised \$168m from taxes and it received \$43.9m from statutory authorities and \$907.3m from Commonwealth grants, a total of \$1119.2m. Mr Speaker, you cannot have that without a deficit of \$72m. As I said, we have been grossly misled over the years. It has gone on long enough. It is about time that the honourable regurgitated Treasurer over there admitted that those are the facts.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is well aware that he must refer to other members by their correct titles.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, statistics that I have here confirm those deficits. In case it is too difficult for members opposite to understand, I would refer them to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth Government Financial Estimates Australia, 1987-88. It is catalogue No 5501.0. I cannot be clearer than that. Table 36 explains very clearly the basis for working out the deficit of the government. The deficit basically works on the financial transactions less the increases in provisions. The financial transactions are quite simple. They are current outlays plus capital outlays less revenue. Do you understand those 3 terms?

Mr Coulter: Yes.

Mr EDE: Current outlays plus capital outlays less revenue: that gives the financial transactions requirement. If that amount is then adjusted for any increase in provisions or decrease in provisions - if that ever occurred - the resulting amount is the deficit. This government's deficit in 1981-82, when it said it had no deficit, was \$105m. In 1982-83, when it said it had no deficit, it was \$62m. In 1983-84, when it said it had no deficit, it was \$78m. In 1984-85, when it said it had no deficit, it was \$66m. Now we are coming to the period referred to by the ...

Mr Palmer: Was there a federal deficit in 1987-88?

Mr EDE: ... member for Palmerston. In 1985-86, there was a \$188m deficit. The member for Palmerston stated time and time again that we have never had a deficit and that we do not have a deficit.

Mr Palmer: Your colleagues say that the 1987-88 federal budget is balanced.

Mr EDE: There was a \$188m deficit in 1985-86. In 1986-87 it rose to \$282m.

Mr Palmer: Tell us about the 1987-88 Commonwealth budget.

Mr EDE: In 1987-88, the provisional figure is \$135m.

Mr Palmer: Tell us about Keating's surplus budget.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in reply to that interjection, the federal government is one of the only governments in Australia which is actually honest because when it says it has a deficit, that deficit ...

Members interjecting.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing order 62 says that no member shall reflect on a member of this Assembly or a member of any other parliament in Australia. The member for Stuart has called into question the honesty of governments in other parts of Australia.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. However, I ask that the member for Stuart address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I would seek your ...

Mr Coulter: Tell us about the drilling rig at Emily Creek.

Mr Palmer: The federal budget in 1987-88.

Mr EDE: I would like to clarify for the member for Karama, Mr Speaker, that when the federal government talks about a deficit, it is referring to its borrowing requirement. The figures that I have provided here constitute a borrowing requirement. That is the borrowing requirement. That is the deficit calculated on the same basis as is used by the federal government which would refer to that figure as its deficit. This government says that it is not a deficit, Mr Speaker. In doing so, it is getting further and further from the guidelines of public authorities which are trying to get the states to stick to an established system similar to the federal system, which will identify what is and what is not a deficit.

I would like now to turn to some of the other issues. I would have liked to have spent more time on employment but I think that has probably been covered adequately by the Leader of the Opposition. I would like, however, to make a couple of points. Members opposite have talked about their efforts to increase job numbers. They use a figure of 1000 per year and they come up with proposals which they say will make it a reality. Those proposals, however, are all fuzzy around the edges. Nobody knows exactly what they are. Once again, I would point out to members opposite that the figures show a loss of 6200 jobs between June last year and June this year. The July-to-July figures show a loss of 9400 jobs. This is clearly a spiralling dive that is becoming self-perpetuating, a complete crisis of confidence among the people of the Northern Territory in this government. All that the government has been able to come up with are more and more grandiose projects like new parliament houses. Once again, it is looking for a quick fix for the problems of the economy. It is like a person who has been gambling away his money on what he thought were sure bets only to see it go down the drain. Every time that happens, he backs another outsider. The government continues ...

Mr Coulter: What would you do? How would you create jobs?

Mr EDE: The government has gambled away the house. Now it has put the keys to the car and the shirt off its back on a rank outsider: a new parliament house which it hopes will somehow enable it to walk away from the mess and the big hole that it has dug for itself.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister said that this was a 'government of doers'. A government of doers, Mr Speaker? We talk about ...

Mr Coulter: What would you do? Tell us what you would do?

Mr EDE: We talk about the Hawke government and various other governments. This government cannot be identified by the name of its Chief Minister because they change so rapidly. There is one thing, however, that is common to the whole lot of them. They are 'gunna' governments. They are always 'gunna' do something.

Mr Coulter: Well, what are you 'gunna' do?

Mr EDE: They are not doers; they are a mob of 'gunnas'.

Mr Coulter: What are you going to do?

Mr EDE: What you are 'gunna' do is continue to make promises. That is all you have been doing for the whole time that you have been there. You are 'gunna' make some more promises. You are 'gunna' promise some more gas projects. You are 'gunna' promise us some more mines somewhere else. You are 'gunna' do this, and this is 'gunna' happen.

Mr Speaker, it does not happen. But, I am going to give members opposite some free advice in the couple of minutes remaining to me. I am going to give them a couple of basic rules and, if they hold to these, we may be able to turn the corner. I am going to tell them that they must not continue to make promises that they cannot keep. They must get rid of the 'gunna' philosophy and not tell lies about projects that they know either will not work or will not get off the ground. They must not tell lies about the state of the economy. They must be fair, realistic and open with people. If they are running a deficit of that size, they must tell the people about it and not give them a load of hogwash. That is it basically: no more lies, no more broken promises and no more knives at each other's backs. Let us get on with the job of giving Territorians what they deserve - an economy which works on the advantages that it has, that maximises those advantages, that provides jobs for Territorians and that provides real growth rather than airy-fairy things. Real growth should be based on advantages that we have such as the cattle industry. The cattle industry is a real case in point. In 1987, 367 814 head of cattle were turned off. How many of them were slaughtered locally? 76 2341.

Mr Palmer: Ask the AMIEU!

Mr EDE: Ask the AMIEU, Mr Speaker? The AMIEU has bent over backwards and what has happened is that ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: ... the amount of employment, Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: ... has decreased every year.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I name the honourable member for Stuart. You had 3 warnings and you ignored every one of them - wilfully disregarding the request of the Chair.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, could you explain?

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I am left with no choice but to move that the member for Stuart be suspended from the service of the House.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 7
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mr Leo
Mr Firmin	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Harris	Mr Smith
Mr Hatton	Mr Tipiloura
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mr Palmer	
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Disturbance in Public Gallery.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Serjeant-at-Arms, remove that man from the Public Gallery. A police officer will assist.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Reference to Privileges Committee

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the matter of your naming the member for Stuart be referred to the Privileges Committee.

In moving the motion, Mr Speaker, I would say that, in my 8 years in this House, I have not seen the business of this House conducted in the manner that has been demonstrated most recently. Mr Speaker, I appreciate that you are obliged to contend with many difficulties in your position. I understand that, from time to time, members strain your patience and that we have a set of standing orders to which we are all obliged to adhere. The member for Stuart, as I understand it, is still unaware of what he has been named for. I appreciate that you had given him some warnings in the past about something or other, but for you to abruptly name him with no opportunity of redress is a most extraordinary occurrence.

It would have been very simple for you, Mr Speaker, to have called the member for Stuart to order. You could have simply said: 'The member for Stuart, order!' That is all you had to say. If he abused that, you would have been quite within your rights to have named him. But, Mr Speaker, for



you to have simply named the member for Stuart and have given him absolutely no opportunity for redress leaves me no choice but to demand that this House question your naming of that member and refer the matter to the Privileges Committee. Mr Speaker, I believe you have breached a privilege of this House.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The motion is out of order on the grounds that the Privileges Committee has nothing to do with this. It is not a matter of privilege that should go before the Privileges Committee.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, I cannot think of a more appropriate committee of this House for this matter to be referred to. If, Mr Speaker, you or indeed the Leader of Government Business can suggest a more appropriate committee, I am prepared to amend my motion. However, if you cannot suggest a more appropriate committee to which to refer this matter, the members of the Legislative Assembly have absolutely no redress in this or any similar matter.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I would like to speak to the point of order. I appreciate that the Leader of Government Business is deeply embarrassed by the circumstances he finds himself in but I would like to direct his attention to the role of the Privileges Committee. In speaking to the point of order, let me just point out to him exactly what inheres in the expression 'privileges of this House'. What inheres in that idea is that the member for Stuart, like every other member of this House, is free to express particular points of view. If decisions are made that seriously impinge on such privileges or on the freedom of a particular member to express opposition points of view, I believe that a clear understanding, within the context of the Privileges Committee, needs to be expressed.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, there is a clear procedure for dissenting from a ruling from the Chair.

Mr Leo: I tried to.

Mr Coulter: All you had to say was that you dissent from the ruling.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PERRON: The member for Nhulunbuy, in proposing that such a matter be referred to the Privileges Committee, is in fact referring it to a body subordinate to this Assembly. Clearly, matters involved in a substantive motion such as dissent from the ruling of the Chair should be debated in the Chamber, not referred to a committee. Clearly, this is not a matter for the Privileges Committee at all.

Mr SPEAKER: For the information of honourable members, there is a point of order, and I will uphold that point of order. I would advise the member for Nhulunbuy that he should probably withdraw that motion and, if he wishes to proceed, then he is entitled to move a substantive motion against the Chair.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to withdraw the motion.

Leave granted.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion in relationship to your position in the Chair.

Leave granted.

MOTION  
Want of Confidence in the Speaker

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that this House has no confidence in the Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I thank you and the Assembly for your indulgence, but it is something that has to be thrashed out and I would prefer that it be the subject of free and open debate whilst we still have fresh in our minds what has actually occurred this afternoon. In moving my previous motion, I outlined the events and indicated that the naming of the member for Stuart was short, sharp and, indeed, vicious. As I said, I have been in this Assembly for 8 years and I have never never seen a dismissal from this House which was less deserved and which was precipitated over so few moments. Mr Speaker, as I said to you earlier, if you had difficulty with the manner of address of the member for Stuart and if the House had difficulty with the manner in which he was expressing himself, he could have been pulled into order very easily. That would have required no effort at all upon your part. Mr Speaker, I accept that, on a number of occasions, you called him to order but your naming of him came some minutes after warning him and you gave him absolutely no chance to seek redress from the Chair or the House.

If the business of this House is to be conducted in such an arbitrary manner, then I see little point in continuing to conduct any business here. Mr Speaker and all members are aware, the numbers on the opposition side of the House are few. You can put that down to electoral choice or whatever you choose, it really does not matter. The fact is that we are very few in this House and, for a member of the opposition to be summarily dismissed from this House demands some explanation. It demands some redress because, if this continues, this House will end up as nothing more than a government forum, and it would be absolutely pointless to attempt to pursue meaningful debate or legislative process in the Northern Territory.

I move this motion in the full knowledge of what it means. I have no doubt about what it will mean if the House agrees to this motion of a want of confidence in the Speaker. For the member for Stuart's sake, there must be some way other than this for the debate to take place. But, in the interests of this debate, I demand that the confidence of this House in its Speaker be called into question and, for the sake of this parliament, that his peers - the members of this Assembly - vote that he is incompetent. I move this motion for the sake of all members of this House; politics have nothing to do with it. Honourable members can forget government and opposition; I do it for the sake of all of members in this House. In particular, as a result of his most recent decision, the naming of the member for Stuart, the Speaker must be declared incompetent in his position.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the only point on which I agree with the member for Nhulunbuy is included in his last few remarks. Indeed the question before the Chair, the authority and impartiality of the Speaker, is of paramount importance to the very functioning of democracy as we know it, and the very functioning of our parliamentary system. Without the authority of the Chair and respect for the Chair in a parliamentary system, we do not have a parliamentary system working as we know it.

Obviously, the member for Nhulunbuy was not paying attention to the debate and to the Chair during the discussion by the member for Stuart because he

made a most amazing statement. The member for Nhulunbuy said that, if the Speaker had any trouble at all in calling for the attention of the member for Stuart, if the Speaker had any difficulty with the way in which the member for Stuart was conducting his speech in this Chamber, all he had to do was call him to order. According to the member for Nhulunbuy, it would have required no effort at all on the part of the Speaker to have brought to heel, as it were, the member who at the time was on his feet.

As I interpret the events in this Chamber this afternoon, that was exactly the problem that the Speaker had. He could not exert his authority over the member at the time. On many occasions during the course of his speech, the honourable member was asked to come to order and he ignored those requests. A couple of times, he pulled up. Honourable members, the transcript will show exactly what occurred this afternoon and therefore there need be no mistake. There is no possibility of misinterpretation because it is a recording and there is an opportunity for all honourable members to hear that recording or, at least, to see a complete transcript of it. Maybe we should take that opportunity because therein lie the facts.

We are dealing with a very fundamental matter: the ability of the Chair to control debate. It was absolutely clear to me that the member for Stuart was out of control. He was totally ignoring the Speaker. He had totally and completely ignored the Speaker's specific request - made at one stage when he was able to silence the member for Stuart for a second - to address his remarks through the Chair. No more than a couple of minutes later, he was into a loud tirade with no regard whatsoever to that warning from the Chair, a warning that every member should have taken very seriously. Most of all, the person who should take such a warning seriously is the person who is on his feet.

Clearly, the Speaker sometimes warns the House about interjections, as he should. That sort of warning to the House about interjections, however, is very different from calling a member to order, as the Speaker did, and asking him to address his comments through the Chair before permitting that member to continue his remarks. That is a most grave matter of which a member should take due consideration. I therefore agree with the member for Nhulunbuy that what we are talking about is the very authority of parliament. That is why we must uphold the Speaker who today was fulfilling his function as a Speaker in conducting this Chamber in an orderly fashion. It was getting out of his control and that was obvious. I believe that the member for Stuart was clearly in breach of standing order 239(e) which refers to a member who has 'persistently and wilfully disregarded the authority of the Chair'. There can be no mistake about the fact that that is what happened in this Chamber today. The tape-recording of the proceedings will show that. We cannot possibly support the motion of the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister has identified the issue that is before us. It is the authority of the Chair and the respect that both sides of the House should have for the Chair. As a result of what has happened today, this side of the House does not have any respect for the Speaker of this Assembly. Clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, he overstepped the mark by the decision that he took. He has acted with bias, and without the impartiality that is required and is expected of Speakers.

Let me make a few salient points. In the 7 years I have been a member of this parliament, this is the first time that a member has been named without the Chair first giving a warning that that would occur the next time the member ignored the Chair or went against the Chair's ruling. I challenge any

member opposite to tell me that the member for Stuart was given a warning that he would be named.

Mr Coulter: Where were you during question time?

Mr SMITH: He was not, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I have said, that is the first time in my life in this parliament that a member has been named without such a warning being given. There is such a thing as custom and practice in parliament and it is the custom and it is the practice in this Assembly that members be warned if it is the Speaker's opinion that they are overstepping the mark. That warning was not given. That is an indication that the Speaker, in this particular case, was acting with bias and was not acting with the impartiality required of someone in his position.

A second salient point, already made by the member for Koolpinyah, is that the member for Stuart was subject to intense cross-Chamber chatter and interjection. At the time he was named, he was responding to comments made by the member for Karama and other members. I would have thought that, if the member for Stuart was to be named and evicted from this parliament, the member for Karama, who started the whole thing by interrupting and not recognising his place in this Assembly, should have been similarly named and thrown out. That is a second indication that Mr Speaker has acted with bias rather than impartiality in this Assembly. As a result, he has lost the confidence of members on this side of the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the position of Speaker dates back to the 15th century. We have talked about this in the Assembly previously. The position of Speaker was created because of the desire of the parliament to reduce the influence of the king over its deliberations. In the 5 or 6 centuries that have passed since then, a large number of conventions have been developed in relation to the role of Speaker. The key convention is, of course, that the Speaker be seen to be impartial and that he judge the House's proceedings without fear, favour or bias. The transcript will show that that has not applied in this particular case.

It is true that it was a rowdy debate. A single speaker cannot create a rowdy debate; a rowdy debate is caused by interjections from the other side. Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart was called to order by the Speaker on a couple of occasions. We are not denying that, but no one from the government side was called to order for interjecting. They continued to interject. They continued to provoke the member for Stuart. They were not warned by the Speaker about their behaviour. I reiterate that the convention in this Assembly is that, when the Speaker has reached the end of his patience and tolerance, he warns the member that he will be named. I will donate \$100 to a charity of the Chief Minister's choice if he can find in the transcript any reference to the Speaker warning the member for Stuart that he would be named if he persisted. It did not happen, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Coulter: Are you saying that a warning must be given? Do you want that in standing orders?

Mr Bell: Don't be stupid Barry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: I am saying that a warning must be given. It has been set in concrete by the practice of this House ever since I have been a member - and, I am sure, before I became a member - that members are given a warning before

being named. It may not be stated in the standing orders but it is a practice that Speakers have followed in this House and that people in this House expect Speakers to follow.

For the reasons I have outlined, the opposition has no confidence in the Speaker. He has shown bias. He has not acted with impartiality. The member for Nhulunbuy's motion should be passed.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, let me refer to the record of this morning's question time which has been delivered to us, to see whether any warnings were given to the member for Stuart. The third paragraph of that document shows that the member for Stuart interjected. The Speaker said: 'Order! In the past, I have advised honourable members about interjections during question time, particularly since question time is being broadcast'.

Mr Smith: He was not interjecting when he was named. He was speaking!

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to illustrate the conduct of the member for Stuart throughout today's sittings. There were 5 incidents involving him and, if the Leader of the Opposition will allow me the courtesy of pointing them out to him, I am sure I can respond to his remarks about warnings. In the first few minutes of question time this morning, Mr Speaker said that he had advised members about '... interjections during question time, particularly as question time is being broadcast'. He then said: 'I ask the member for Stuart to listen in silence'.

A little later on, Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart was also cautioned about his interjections during an answer to a question on flood mitigation in Alice Springs. A little later, the same thing happened in relation to heritage legislation. Mr Speaker said to him: 'Order! Whilst I may have used those words outside the Chamber, I will not allow them inside. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark'. Less than 30 words later, the Speaker said to the member for Stuart: 'Order! The honourable member will ask his question'. Less than 30 words after being cautioned and pulled into line by the Speaker, the member for Stuart had to be reminded again of his conduct in this Assembly. How many warnings does one person need during any 1 sitting day before the Speaker has to act? In this case, there is no question - and the transcript will tell it all tomorrow - that the member persistently and wilfully disregarded the authority of the Chair.

If my recollection is correct, the Speaker called for order 3 times and the member for Stuart was asked to address his remarks through the Chair. The member for Stuart ignored the Speaker. Five times during question time today, he ignored the Speaker's ruling and, when he had the floor in debate, he ignored the Speaker's call to order 3 times. Three times, the Speaker requested him to address his remarks through the Chair in order to avoid cross-Chamber chatter and to have the debate conducted in a normal manner. The Speaker was left with no choice. Having made his decision to name the member for Stuart, we on this side of the House had no choice.

Mr Smith: Yes, that is right.

Mr COULTER: For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I will read from standing order 240 which relates to the suspension of a member.

Mr Smith: If you had a choice, you would not have done it, would you?

Mr COULTER: The standing order reads: 'If the offence has been committed in the Assembly, the Speaker shall forthwith put the question, on a motion being made, no amendment, adjournment or debate allowed ...'. It is pretty simple. The member for Nhulunbuy simply had to say: 'Mr Speaker, I dissent from your ruling'.

Mr Leo: It has to be in writing.

Mr COULTER: Then, he should have written it.

The member for Stuart had been named and the motion had been put. The motion we are now debating is a reflection on the Assembly itself because this Assembly has taken a vote and made a decision. It is pretty simple, Mr Deputy Speaker. A motion of want of confidence in the Speaker is very serious indeed. On what grounds has it been moved, Mr Deputy Speaker? Very shaky grounds indeed!

The member was given 5 warnings during question time for a start.

Mr Leo: 5 calls to order.

Mr COULTER: He was given 3 warnings at the time of the offence. Read Hansard tomorrow, Mr Deputy Speaker. The decision had to be made and it was made. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that there should have been a warning, when 5 warnings are recorded ...

Mr Smith: There were not 5 warnings at all.

Mr COULTER: I stand corrected. How many were there, Mr Deputy Speaker? How many were there?

Mr Smith: How can asking a member to withdraw a remark be a warning? In what way is that a warning?

Mr COULTER: He was called to order.

Mr Smith: Right, but that is not a warning. What is wrong with you? Get your words right.

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition claims that, when the Chair calls a member to order, that member is to be congratulated, I suppose. Mr Deputy Speaker, the use of the word 'Order' is to indicate that the member's conduct is unbecoming. That is what it means. He is breaching the standing orders. The Speaker calls, 'Order!' If that is not a warning for a member to pull himself into line, I don't know what is.

The Leader of the Opposition said that there were not 5 calls to order. I count it as 5. If the Leader of the Opposition is aware of a few more, he might care to divulge that information to the Assembly, but I count 5. We know his economic background and his ability to count, but I make it 5.

This is a grave day for this Assembly because, during the counting of the votes, the reflection on the Chair by both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for MacDonnell was nothing short of disgraceful. They know that there was no recording taken during the voting on that particular issue, but it was nothing short of disgraceful. Members of this Assembly, people in the gallery and people in the press gallery who heard those remarks would be in no doubt about the standing that those 2 members of this Assembly have allowed to the Chair this afternoon. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a disgrace.

The Leader of the Opposition said that no impartiality was displayed by the Chair yet the record of the proceedings shows the conduct of the member for Stuart. It is there in black and white for everybody to read about the problems that the Speaker had with this particular member's performance throughout today. Mr Speaker was left with no choice but to carry out the action that he did.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the opportunity to explain my position as I saw the unfortunate events of this afternoon. Earlier on in the debate, when the member for Stuart was making his speech, I very nearly jumped to my feet to call a point of order and request that the member for Karama be asked to curb his provocative interjections so that I might hear what the member for Stuart was saying. I nearly did that. At the time when the Speaker called the member for Stuart to order and requested that he address his remarks through the Chair, that was right and proper. But, as I recall events, the member for Karama, aided by 1 or 2 of his government colleagues, kept up a provocative stream of interjections and, at the instant when the member for Stuart again forgot his advice from the Speaker and started to address his remarks directly to the member for Karama, a shouting match was in progress.

You will recall that, at that time, the honourable Speaker stood before his Chair and called for order at the top of his voice. I heard it, but I do not believe that the member for Stuart actually heard what the Speaker was saying. By pointing my finger towards the Speaker, I tried to indicate to the honourable member that he should stop speaking. I think the first thing he really heard was the Speaker actually naming him. I do not believe that the member for Stuart heard the actual warning. Therefore, whilst technically the Speaker may well be correct, in my view, from seeing the face of the member for Stuart, I do not believe that he heard the warning. My vote was based on my view that he had not heard and that he should have been given the benefit of the doubt.

To my mind, the position of Speaker is of paramount importance to the conduct of business in this House. I think that a little bit of give and take is required in this matter. I can well understand members of the opposition becoming very annoyed but, with a little give and take by both sides, this incident might not have happened. The Speaker made his judgment, and he is the umpire. Quite clearly, the Leader of Government Business had no alternative but to move a motion to suspend the member for Stuart, but the whole event should not have happened. I suggest it would not have happened if that continual provocation had been curbed so that the member for Stuart could have said what he had to say and other members could have spoken at the appropriate time. I think we would all be much better off if that were the situation.

That is my position. I supported the member for Stuart simply because I do not believe that, given the shouting that was occurring and judging from his facial expression, he was aware that he was being given those 2 warnings by the honourable Speaker.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I heartedly endorse the views put forward by the member for Sadadeen. I think that this has been one of the most unfortunate episodes that has occurred in the time I have been in this Assembly, and I say that as somebody who has had some experience of being named. I will point out for the benefit of the government - and it is something that a Speaker, whoever he may be, needs to bear in mind - that, having had 7 year's experience in opposition, I can say that the opposition of

its very nature is forced to push its opportunities to the limit. The problem is that the CLP has been in government in the Northern Territory for too long. This will not be a mature polity until we have a few changes of government. It is so easy for somebody like Speaker Vale, who has only been in government in this Assembly, whose party has always been in government, to construe any comment from the opposition as a lack of order.

The debating style of the member for Stuart is a forceful one. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to contrast it with the debating style of the member for Braitling. I think you will understand the difference. In spite of the fact that the member for Braitling is able to obtain headlines such as the one in our local paper, his debating style in this Assembly has never been characterised by the sort of forcefulness that has to be a part of opposition, because he has always been on the government benches. Unfortunately, having moved straight from the backbench into the Speaker's Chair, I believe that he has had even less opportunity to understand the cut and thrust of debate in this House.

I believe that the motion before us at the moment should be supported for exactly the reasons that have been referred to by the member for Sadadeen and by my colleagues, the member for Nhulunbuy and the Leader of the Opposition. In spite of the forceful style of my colleague and the persistent interjections, his naming cannot be regarded by anybody as reasonable.

The motion we are debating is important because, if it is not supported by this House, it will cast under a cloud the very future of this parliament and the very capacity of this parliament to have an aggressive opposition. Each time an opposition member says something that is contentious, and which is answered by interjection from the government benches, that member may be named inadvertently in exactly the same way that the member for Stuart was named. I declare a degree of self-interest because, as you will be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, frequently the points that I raise in debate in this Assembly occasion loud-mouthed interjections from people such as the Leader of Government Business who is probably a principal offender. Another principal offender is the Minister for Health and Community Services. The Attorney-General manages to do it sotto voce because he is never quite sure what he is interjecting about.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I should mention also the Minister for Transport and Works. Feeling a bit neglected over there were you, Fred? The Minister for Transport and Works is fairly vociferous in his interjections. The fact is, Mr Deputy Speaker, those of us on the left of this Assembly have to be vociferous in our debating styles and we will always run the risk of people interjecting against us. Speaker Vale does not understand that, and that is why I believe this motion has to be supported.

The Chief Minister, who in his first day in that chair has not exactly covered himself in glory, gave us some mealy-mouthed nonsense about authority having to be recognised. Mr Deputy Speaker, authority in this Assembly is earned. It is not achieved automatically just because you have the numbers in the CLP party room, and it is about time those self-servers on the government benches understood that. The decision that was taken to remove the Deputy Leader of the Opposition from this Assembly for 24 hours is the sort of outrageous abuse of power that we on this side of the fence and an increasing number of people in the community are getting sick and tired of. That is the reason why this motion needs to be supported.



This Assembly cannot work through crucial budget sittings with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition out of this House for 24 hours. He bears important responsibilities for the opposition and for the government of the Northern Territory. For the good government of the Northern Territory, it is important that we have a shadow minister for education. It is important that we have somebody who is able in that respect to listen to what is going on as we move into the budget session of these sittings. I believe that today's activities have been absolutely outrageous. I have no hesitation in supporting this motion and I believe that anybody opposite who believes that this parliament can work satisfactorily on the basis of decisions of this sort has rocks in his head.

Let me reinforce one point. The Leader of the Opposition has offered to donate \$100 to a charity of the Chief Minister's naming if he is able to find a place in the Hansard record where the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was given a warning. I heartily endorse those sentiments and I am prepared to back that up by going halves or whatever. In response to that, the Leader of Government Business said that it is somehow obligatory for the Speaker to warn a member before he names him. Obviously, it is not. It would be inappropriate to have in standing orders some requirement that a person be warned. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, and you have been here long enough on the backbench and the frontbench of the government to know it, in order for this place to work, there has to be a certain amount of give and take. The fact is that the member for Stuart was named without adequately understanding that he was about to be named. It is outrageous.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, the attitude of the member for MacDonnell typifies the attitude of the opposition in this House in its complete disregard for the parliamentary processes. The standing orders are quite clear. Standing order 239 lists a number of transgressions for which a member can be named and standing order 240 states quite clearly the circumstances in which a Speaker can name a member. The Chair is a position selected and agreed to by all members of the House regardless of their political persuasion. A person is selected by members of the House to carry out the role of umpire.

According to Pettifer, at page 474, the naming of a member is, in effect, an appeal to the House to support the Chair in maintaining order. It is not a matter of who was right or who was wrong or whether I agree with what one person said or whether I disagree. It is the Speaker of the parliament asking the House, which has given him authority to chair the proceedings, to support the institution of the Chair.

Mr Smith: Impartially.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, these accusations of partiality are false. It disappoints me that the Leader of the Opposition has taken this tack because it is not a matter of which side of politics you are on. Quite clearly, the Leader of the Opposition will probably regret the words he has uttered today when he reads the Hansard tomorrow completely and notes the behaviour patterns of the member for Stuart. As the Leader of Government Business pointed out quite clearly, the Speaker was forced to pull the member for Stuart into order on 8 occasions. Eventually, he was forced to name the member because of his continual disregard for the authority of the Chair.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I admit that, at times, I have been guilty of interjecting and I think all members of this House have. The process of parliamentary debate includes interjection yet the member for MacDonnell

chastised some of us for having the audacity to interject. I am sure that the member for MacDonnell would agree that, at times, he becomes a victim of his emotions and is forced to interject, possibly against his better instincts. He does so and he is allowed to do so within the confines of what the Speaker considers is an orderly way for the parliament to behave.

The role of the Speaker is to adjudicate on the behaviour of members and on the conduct of debate. When he considers that standing orders are being transgressed, it is his role and his duty to bring that to the attention of members. We have seen today the Speaker bring to the attention of the member for Stuart numerous breaches of standing orders. He did so on 8 occasions. The Speaker was eventually forced to name the honourable member. In effect, he was appealing to the House to uphold the institution of the Speaker's role and, Mr Deputy Speaker, we must do so. It is ridiculous to try to portray this as some sort of political move or some move by the government. The role of the Speaker has nothing to do with government and any suggestion by members opposite to say that it does is untruthful, is misleading and is detrimental to the processes of our parliament. We have no option but to uphold Speaker Vale's ruling.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing the debate, I would like to reiterate a few of the remarks that have been made by my colleagues and, indeed, by the Attorney-General and some members opposite. This motion is certainly about whether or not Speaker Vale remains in the Chair. Let nobody be in any doubt about that. It expresses a lack of confidence in the Chair. Mr Deputy Speaker, it was with some reluctance that I moved the motion, but I certainly believe that it is for the good of the House for this motion to succeed. It would require a parliament of some courage to achieve it and it would also give notice that this House expects the very highest of its Speakers.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out to the House quite clearly that at no stage was the member for Stuart warned. Calling to order is not issuing a warning. Calling to order is a simple matter, Mr Deputy Speaker. Any member of the House can rise to call a point of order. Certainly, on a number of occasions, the Speaker called the member for Stuart to order for words and utterances and, indeed, perhaps for expressions that he used. That occurred this morning and later today. Nobody in this House would argue about that, but on no occasion was he warned.

The second point is that, while he was on his feet speaking, he received absolutely no protection from the Chair. While he was on his feet speaking, a number of interjectors persisted and not once did the Chair intervene on the member for Stuart's behalf. Not once did the Speaker call to order the interjectors and say, 'Order! The member will be heard in silence'. Not once was that done. He received no protection from the Chair and, without warning, he was named summarily. At the very least, it is extraordinary that a member cannot receive the protection of the Chair and yet can be named summarily for protecting himself across the Chamber and responding to interjections. I do not believe that there is a single parliament in Australia, even with the extraordinary examples that we have had in our recent and distant past, that would accept that that is a reasonable ruling by a Speaker. My interpretation is that it is a quite unreasonable ruling by the Speaker.

To pursue the point that the Attorney-General made, it is true that, if this motion succeeds, it will sack Speaker Vale from the Chair. It will express this House's lack of faith in his ability to do the job. That is precisely what this motion means and I contend that what we have had

demonstrated to us all too clearly this afternoon is that he is incapable of doing the job. First, he provided absolutely no protection to the the member who was on his feet speaking; secondly, he named him summarily; and thirdly, he did not warn him or give him any opportunity for redress. I do not know of any clearer demonstration of why a person should not hold the position of Speaker of this House.

The Leader of Government Business can bring to the House's notice the many instances that the member for Stuart was called to order. None of those constituted a warning. In the 8 years that I have been here, the 2 previous Speakers have provided members with a warning at least prior to their being named. That was not provided on this occasion. The Speaker provided the member for Stuart with no protection from the Chair, despite the constant, vociferous interjections from the other side of the House. He provided him with no protection at all, he named him and, as a consequence, he was dismissed summarily from this House with absolutely no opportunity for redress in the matter at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this motion requires a degree of courage from the government benches. I accept that. I suspect, unfortunately, that they will not display that courage, but you can be certain that the events of this afternoon will linger long in the minds of opposition members certainly and, I would suspect, long in the minds of any persons who take any interest in the proceedings of this House.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 4	Noes 14
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Leo	Mr Dale
Mr Smith	Mr Dondas
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Finch
	Mr Firmin
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the rescission of the motion to suspend the member for Stuart.

The reasons why I move a suspension of standing orders in this way are precisely the reasons that have been canvassed fulsomely in debate today. If, in rejecting the previous motion, the government genuinely has determined to persist with the business of this House, in view of the outrageous suspension of my colleague, I believe that the opposition has no alternative but to insist on the suspension of standing orders in this way to ensure that the

motion to suspend him is reversed and that a decision of this Assembly is taken to ensure that my colleague is restored to participate adequately in debate in this Assembly. I believe the cynicism demonstrated by the government in rejecting the sensible, well-argued motion of the opposition in respect of the suspension of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is entirely unwarranted.

The failure of the government to come to terms with the realities of government and the realities of opposition demand the support of a rescission motion of this sort. I appreciate that a rescission motion of this sort is unusual but, in this circumstance, I believe that the government has no alternative but to accept it. The refusal of the government to understand the realities of opposition augurs less than well for the future of this Chamber. Our neophyte Chief Minister has decided that authority is to be respected and the opposition has no hesitation in ensuring that authority is respected when respect is earned. That is precisely what is at issue here. The capacity of the Chair to earn authority has not been recognised by the government and, consequently, this suspension of standing orders has to be supported.

The reality of opposition as a crucial part of government is something that quite clearly this tired CLP government has failed to understand. It is clear to me that the vigorous debating styles pursued by people like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are an essential part of the democratic process in the Northern Territory. There is not a member ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to confine his remarks to the motion for rescission of suspension.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will endeavour to do so. I believe that the suspension of standing orders can be fully understood only in the context of the overall working of the Assembly, the relationship between government and opposition and the relationship of both to the Speakership. The point that I am making is that, because we have no members of the government who have ever been in opposition, they fail to understand, firstly, the essential difficulties faced by the opposition and, secondly, the importance of the role of the opposition. Never has that been thrown into relief in quite such a stark fashion as it has been by this particular decision of the Chair and the callous, mindless, ignorant reaction that members of the government have demonstrated in relation to the difficulties faced by opposition spokesmen. Opposition spokesmen in various portfolios are not paid ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for MacDonnell has had 5 minutes in which to demonstrate to this House his reasoning for seeking the suspension of standing orders. He has contributed not one word to explain why this House should suspend standing orders in this matter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I find it most interesting that the Minister for Transport and Works, not having contributed to the previous debate ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will not reflect on a decision of the Chair.

Mr BELL: Far be it from me, Mr Deputy Speaker, to reflect on a decision of the Chair. I do reserve the right, however, to reflect on the decisions of the Minister for Transport and Works. That, of course ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is not permitted under standing orders to reflect on honourable members of this House and I take great exception to his so doing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for MacDonnell to confine his remarks to the suspension of standing orders and not to reflect on any other member in the House.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw any reflection on the decision of the Chair.

To return to the general issue involved, let me say that I certainly hope that the Minister for Transport and Works will contribute something to this debate because I believe that the question of the rescission of this particular decision of the Chair goes to the very heart of the role of opposition and the viability of opposition in this Chamber. The sort of decision that has been taken in respect of the member for Stuart strikes at the very heart of the process of democracy as it operates in this Assembly. I point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Chief Minister and the CLP members of this Assembly, including Speaker Vale, have been in government so long that they believe that what is fair for the CLP is fair for the Legislative Assembly. The fact is that none of them has had to do the hard grafting involved in being shadow minister for education, as I have. It is an unpaid position and, as members of the press gallery will know, is extremely important in ensuring that there is constructive, sensible public debate.

In the context of this debate in relation to the suspension of my colleague, the Leader of Government Business reflected on events in question time this morning. Let me draw to his attention another little incident which occurred in question time this morning, an incident which required me to make a personal explanation. Let me remind the Leader of Government Business that his colleague, the Minister for Health and Community Services, fails to understand the role of opposition members and fails to understand the role that shadow ministers play in our policy in the Northern Territory. That is clear from the outrageous criticism he made of the way that I do that job. I point out to the Minister for Health and Community Services, the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Minister, that the effort that we put into those particular jobs, unlike that of office-holders in this Assembly, is entirely unpaid. It is done entirely for the purpose of ensuring that there is adequate public debate and that both sides of any question receive an airing. As far as I am concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, the capacity for the opposition to do that in the next 24 hours has been unreasonably constrained by the Speaker's decision.

I do not believe this House has any option but to suspend standing orders so as to allow my colleague to return to the Chamber. I believe that the motion should be supported by the government. The extraordinary arrogance that has been displayed by the Country Liberal Party, which believes that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory is nothing more nor less than a CLP club, needs to be challenged. That is precisely why I moved this motion, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is what is at the heart of this debate.

The Chief Minister tried to tell us that the authority of this Assembly is at stake. That is not what is at stake in this particular debate, Mr Deputy Speaker. The opposition has never had any problem with recognising authority. Certainly, we have never had a problem with recognising authority when it is appropriately exercised. However, respect for authority has to be earned and that is what the CLP club in this Assembly has forgotten. It is

important that this motion be agreed to. It is important that standing orders be suspended. It is important that the decision to suspend my colleague be reversed. It is important, Mr Deputy Speaker, that rescission is supported, not just by the opposition, not just by the independent members of this Assembly, but by the CLP members of this Assembly as well, because the fact is that the government, the CLP club, does not understand the role of ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will refer to members of the House as honourable members of the CLP, not members of the CLP club. I have let you get away with it 3 times, but 4 times is too many.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have certainly ...

Mr Finch: You are lost for words, aren't you!

Mr BELL: No. Unlike the Minister for Transport and Works, who is unable to contribute to this debate, I am never at a loss for words. I know precisely what I am saying and what I am saying is ...

Mr Finch: You are the only one who does.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to tell the Minister for Transport and Works, as I am trying to convince other members of the government, that we need the member for Stuart back in this Chamber for the budget sitting tomorrow. As I understand it, there are 5 bills scheduled for debate today, including 1 for which my colleague is responsible. I think that the decision to suspend him from the House has been extremely unwise. Shadow ministers, in their unpaid roles, have a responsibility for debating legislation in many areas, a responsibility which this government does not understand as it ought to understand it.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has responsibility for the Electoral Amendment Bill that stands in the name of the former Chief Minister. Quite obviously, the effort that my colleague has put into researching that bill will play crucial part in the deliberations of this Assembly. Honourable members will be aware that an amendment schedule has been circulated and I am quite sure that the Leader of Government Business will be quite satisfied that the business of the House cannot proceed properly without the presence of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

With those few thoughts, Mr Deputy Speaker, I urge the government to support my motion, together with the opposition.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, the motion to suspend standing orders cannot be agreed to for the same reason as the previous motion could not be agreed to. Government support for this motion would have the same effect as a vote of no confidence in the Speaker. It is that simple.

Mr Perron: He would have to resign.

Mr COULTER: He would have to resign. Mr Deputy Speaker, we talked about the umpire and the rules of debate. We have been through the process set down in standing orders. Can I suggest, if it is so important to have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Chamber, that perhaps he might approach the Speaker and apologise, and see subsequently whether the Speaker may be of a mind to allow him to re-enter. There was a case where such an incident occurred in the House of Representatives. The member was allowed to re-enter

the Chamber almost immediately after apologising to the Speaker. It can be done. That is an avenue that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition may like to take. We cannot guarantee the success of such a mission, but perhaps he should do it anyway. Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no alternative but to move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14	Noes 4
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Smith
Mr Finch	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Firmin	
Mr Harris	
Mr Hatton	
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mr Palmer	
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 14
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Collins	Mr Dale
Mr Leo	Mr Dondas
Mr Smith	Mr Finch
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Firmin
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it does seem a long time since we were last debating the Chief Minister's directions for his government for the remaining term of this parliament. I am quite sure that the people of the Northern Territory who are well aware of the difficult times that we are facing, are looking for a very clear direction. They want some solid guidance and some leadership. We are aware of the hard times but, if we raise our sights, there are things which can be done which will advantage not only the Northern Territory but also the rest of Australia.

A theme that ought to be taken up is turning the back door of Australia into the front door. We have a magnificent opportunity to do what should have been done 70 or 80 years ago and I refer to shipping facilities and the railway line. One revolution in shipping in latter years has been the container ship. The container ships people know that costs can be kept down if they can go to one place, unload their cargo completely and completely load again and go to another port. When they come to Australia, invariably they have to go to one port, move some containers around and maybe pick up a few more and then do the same at the next port. A great deal of time is lost.

Singapore is a fantastic port in which a ship is turned around every 20 minutes. A tremendous amount of the world's shipping goes through that port. Those ships could come to Darwin instead of taking 4 days to sail to Perth and even longer to Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. At lunchtime today, I was told by someone who had been speaking to Japanese shipping people - and no doubt this is partly the result of other ports on the way - that ships could come to Darwin 3 times for the cost of going straight to Sydney.

It has been argued that that railway should be built simply for defence purposes or to bring goods north. We have been looking at it the wrong way round. We should be thinking in terms of goods going south. The infrastructure would create many jobs for Territorians but it would also cut the cost of transporting goods for the people of Australia. What is needed is for that railway line to be built and for the Port of Darwin to be up and running in an efficient manner to handle that cargo. The containers would be transported on the railway and Port Augusta would become a hub where the containers could be sorted for dispatch to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney on the existing railway lines. We have a golden opportunity.

Mr Hawke reneged on his clear electoral promise to build the railway line by commissioning the Hill Report on which one can but pour scorn. With hindsight, however, I regret that the government of the day in the Territory did not take up the federal government's offer to pay for 40%. We should have taken that 40% and, as we did with the gas pipeline, found large investors such as Mr Warren Anderson to invest 60%. It would still have been a private company.

I remind honourable members of what happened in Britain in Mrs Thatcher's first year. Privatisation was stumbled on virtually by accident. The government decided not to take up new shares to which it had rights in a company. That put the share ownership just a whisker over 50%, but it put it into private hands. Lo and behold, in private hands, it started to make a profit. The government thought that, if it could happen once, it could happen again. If we have to go down on our hands and knees to Mr Hawke and ask him for his 40%, I believe we should do it. I believe it is the Territory government's role to set this up, not to put taxpayers' money in. It should provide an opportunity for Territorians and indeed all Australians to buy shares in a north Australia railway company. We should privatise the port and give the people who are running it a share in the profits. In this way, we would have a work force that would be very keen to make the port operate efficiently. It would do Australia a great deal of good.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me tell you of something which would please me greatly. If we could stymie the tricks of those people on the Australian waterfront, particularly at interstate ports, who hold up containers on wharves for weeks and even months because someone has not greased somebody's rotten little palm, it would give me a great deal of pleasure. Those people are holding up Australian industry. They are holding up productivity and the creation of wealth.



We are in a difficult time, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I put this scenario to you. A person who owns a modest house and a business and who has no spare cash does not, when times are tough, borrow money to turn his modest house into a lavish house. All common sense would counsel against that. In tough times, a wise person who wished to borrow money would put that money where it would create wealth - into his business. Having expanded the business and created the wealth, he would later have the opportunity to enjoy the resulting benefits by expanding his home. When things are tough, that is the wrong time to beautify one's home.

I will use another example with which I am personally familiar. As you well know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to establish a grape property at Ti Tree. Initially, I lived in an old caravan but now I have moved to an old ATCO unit. It would be lovely to have a brand new house built at Ti Tree but I know that is the way I would go broke. I would end up with absolutely nothing because I have no special source of money to tap into. I have to put my money into those things which can create wealth - namely, the grape vines.

The people I have been talking to in Alice Springs and in Darwin understand these examples and how they apply to the government's efforts to build a new parliament house and a new Supreme Court building. People do not want these buildings. They will certainly offer no benefit to the people of Alice Springs. If we had created wealth and were in a great position, I am sure the people of Alice Springs would support a new parliament house, even though they would see it very infrequently. However, now is not the time to embark on such projects.

Let the money go into wealth creation. That is our only way out of our current situation, and the only way we will stem the tide of Territorians leaving. People are leaving, many with deep regret because the Territory has been good to a vast number of people. I regret that they are going but I do not believe that going into debt to build a new parliament house and a new Supreme Court will be of any help, apart from the jobs that would be created during the construction phase. In fact, it will be detrimental. It will be an albatross around the Territory's neck and, if I could give some gratuitous advice to the new Chief Minister, I would suggest that he carefully consider talking to people in Alice Springs. A by-election is to be fought there shortly and I am aware that the people of Alice Springs can see no advantage in building properties which will only lessen the amount of money available for projects in Alice Springs and, no doubt, the rest of the Territory.

We need vision in developing projects which will create wealth. There are people here who have vision. The Deputy Chief Minister has often spoken about the potential of our uranium industry and any problems we have in that area are purely political. However, I think the day may well come, because of the change of attitude which appears to be occurring within the ALP federally, when that industry may be able to grow further. My own suggestion is that the Territory should push for something which the rest of the world is not keen on: the storage of radioactive wastes. We should take them, develop the plant to process them and use synroc to store them.

Mr Coulter: You would not lend us a bit of your farm to put it on, would you?

Mr COLLINS: It is not really appropriate because of the water underneath the land. Otherwise, I would not mind.

We could use heat exchange to run our generating plants, and I will expand on that at a later stage. We can take the rubbish and we can store it safely. I would not dare to suggest that if I had any doubts about the capacity of technology and the Northern Territory to get this material into synroc and stored deep down. It would, as far as I am concerned, be electoral suicide. It may still be electoral suicide because some people may never be aware of the facts. However, I have acquainted myself with the facts. Just 3 or 4 years ago, China was receiving \$100 000m a year for storing radioactive waste on its soil using what I suspect was a fairly unsatisfactory method. There are big dollars there which could make a great contribution to the Territory and to the rest of Australia.

Once we were in a position to dispose of such wastes, we could move into enrichment, offering favoured status to the treatment of waste from nations which took our rods made to their specifications. In other words, we could have a controlling interest. I believe that could make a considerable contribution to world peace. There are exciting possibilities. Let us hope that the people in Canberra who say we are mendicants, whilst standing on our jugular vein to hold us back, can be brought to see reason.

As a private project with as many Australians involved as possible, the railway is something which can really make a contribution to Australia. It could turn around the Territory's economy with the many spin-offs that it would create. As someone said to me this morning, if that happened, there would be a railway line built from Queensland to the Territory, through Mt Isa, in no time at all. That would be a very logical and sensible development. Australia would benefit and the Territory would benefit. We need guidance. We just need to pull the right people together. That happened with the gas pipeline and I believe it can be done again. It does not need a commitment of Territory taxpayers' funds because we do not have enough to spare. What we need is vision. If we can lift ourselves and lift our sights, then we can lift the rest of Australia to everybody's advantage.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, my initial response to the Chief Minister's statement, although I do agree with some of the things he said, is that we have heard it all before - been there, done that. As other members have said before me, we have heard it all before. Some of the Chief Minister's remarks lack depth. They are the sort of things that one likes to hear if one is a supporter of the Chief Minister, because they sound good. I think that the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We have heard these sorts of statements before, from other Chief Ministers. They have all said the same thing. In 6 months time, I would like to see what this statement has brought forth. Is it just a lot of hot air or will it result in something tangible, something which will show that the Chief Minister has put his money where his mouth is?

I believe that this Chief Minister will be a reasonably careful manager of the affairs of the Northern Territory. He is not, in my view, a scintillating leader, but I think he will be a good manager, provided that the people are prepared for such a Chief Minister. In his time previously as Treasurer, he was fairly tight-fisted, which is what we need. I know that we live in straitened times and that some people believe that the government has to invest money to make money. I do not believe that is true. I believe the government has to encourage private investors and create the right climate for them to invest in the Northern Territory. I hope that, in saying that I believe the Chief Minister was a good Treasurer previously, comparisons will not be made between him and a federal coalition Treasurer who did not prove to be a very successful Prime Minister. I refer to Billy McMahon. I hope that

the Chief Minister, in being a good Treasurer, also proves to be a reasonably good Chief Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to go through the Chief Minister's statement and comment on particular aspects. He spoke about his wish to have strong, effective government and his belief that the CLP has provided that. In doing so, he was really stretching the listener's credibility quite a bit. I could not see much of those qualities last year. I do not know whether he means that he will give strong, effective government in the future. I hope he will, but I certainly did not see that during the past year.

I believe the Chief Minister was referring to decentralised and regional development when he spoke about a growing and diversified economy that he would like to see. This fits in with my views exactly. I will touch on it briefly now because I will be speaking on it later in these sittings, given the opportunity. I hope to present a petition speaking against the proposed demolition of the current Legislative Assembly and Supreme Court buildings and the construction of new ones in the Territory's present straitened financial situation. If there is money available, I would prefer to see it being used to encourage development in centres outside Darwin. I believe that such development could occur in our rural area and in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy - in fact, anywhere there is already a primary industry. As honourable members will know, my interests are always with primary industry development.

It would not take much thought to encourage the investment of development money in middle-range developments in those areas, which would not only provide jobs in the initial building phase but would also provide jobs when these developments got off the ground. I am talking about packing sheds and processing of primary industry products and things like that. It would provide jobs in the actual work involved in the development but, more importantly, it would provide jobs for our youth in the future in these areas so that these children, as they grow to maturity, would not have to leave these towns in the Northern Territory, but would find jobs there.

The Chief Minister said that the CLP government has argued for a harmonious society. I do not know whether he is touching briefly there on what is hitting the headlines at the moment - a multi-racial society. That is a subject in itself. I have my own views on that matter. I believe we are a multi-racial society in Darwin and we seem to get on with each other much better than do people in other parts of Australia. However, we have to face the fact that, in order for the development of Australia as a whole to proceed in a harmonious way, one could say in a resource-economical way, we can only have 1 language. If we encourage all migrants to continue actively speaking their native tongue and do not insist on their speaking English in Australia, we will be making a rod to beat our own backs. I do not say that people who come to Australia should give up everything that they have from their previous country. I believe that they should speak their own language and continue with their customs, but not to the detriment of our all living together and speaking 1 language in this country.

Again, I would like to see the Chief Minister encouraging small business, but I do not see any actual words to that effect. He said merely that his government seeks 'to lay the foundations on which people can build for themselves and their families a sound and secure future'. Those are pretty grandiose words. Perhaps if the price of power went down, people might be able to conduct a small business more economically. The price of power for domestic usage is 11.03¢ a unit. As soon as a person sets up a little

business - and I am not talking about the Coles and Woolworths style of business; I am talking about little businesses that people set up in the rural area which they can start on their residential blocks or in their homes - the price for electricity increases to 14.58¢ per unit. To my mind, that is grossly unfair. When somebody is prepared to get off his behind and actually work in the community, the government does not seem to give him much actual help. People do not want words; they want help.

If the Chief Minister had not left his run so late to be the Chief Minister, he might have started on his growth-and-development program a bit earlier. Reading speeches in which blame is always attached to the federal government, despite the fact that it may be true, becomes a wee bit boring after a while. We have heard enough about the bad deals the federal government has done with the Northern Territory. It is time we stopped complaining and got on with the job.

The Chief Minister spoke several times about unlocking the potential of the Northern Territory, re-establishing growth rates etc but, again, no mention was made of encouragement of small business, and I believe that is a pity. I know that the government has asked for expressions of interest in the establishment of a high-risk government lending institution. I have made inquiries about this and, on the surface, it seems a you-beaut idea. I have been given an extensive briefing on it, which I appreciated, but it looks like a case of, 'here we go again'. Originally, we had the Northern Territory Development Corporation and, for reasons that were stated at the time, that was disbanded. That was a lender of last resort. Is this new government lending institution to be the same as the NTDC? These matters seem to occur in cycles. One Chief Minister decides that we will have an NTDC, the next decides we will not, the next one decides we will and so it goes. One Chief Minister decides to have mega government departments and the next one decides to revert to smaller government departments. I suppose it prevents the public servants from becoming bored.

The one thing I hope we do not see is any more building and encouragement of office blocks. By now, the vacancy rate must be more than 20% to 25%. Even so, an office block is being built down the road. The Chief Minister said that the government's proposals for the preparation of an economic development strategy will be released publicly within the next 3 weeks. All I can say to that is that he is adopting the old ALP policy - when in doubt form a committee.

I agree that the building of new airports at Darwin and Alice Springs is certainly necessary. I cannot help thinking that, somewhere along the line, somebody from private industry with lateral thinking capabilities should be able to settle that question and build our airports.

The sooner we get the railway built the better. Originally, it was planned to carry freight only and, if that policy is pursued, it will be a great pity. Not only do we need a freight railway, which would be very important and a great boon to the development of the Northern Territory, but with the encouragement that the tourist industry has received and so many tourists coming to the Northern Territory, it would give a further boost to our economy if the railway had the capability to carry passengers.

Mr Perron: No one will stop it putting on passenger carriages if that is viable once the line is there.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am pleased to hear that.

The Chief Minister said that, on a number of occasions, the Minister for Mines and Energy had outlined plans to reduce power costs. It is all very well to say power costs will be reduced but everybody has his fingers on the switch waiting for it to happen. As I believe I use the amount of power necessary to have an off-peak system installed at my place, today I have put an exercise in motion to determine if I actually can have it installed and how much it will cost me. I believe the government installs special meters and wiring at no cost to the customer, except in some circumstance. I want to see if I will have to pay anything and how much it will benefit me. I have been told that to use off-peak power costs 10% less than the domestic rate, which is 11.03¢, and therefore my power bill would not be very much less because it applies to power used between 10 pm to 6 am. If the government wants to encourage more use of power, this 10% reduction has to be increased so that people can obtain greater benefit from using off-peak power.

I was very pleased that the Chief Minister said his comments were focused on development and growth issues. He did not mention anything about social welfare issues and I was very pleased about that. However, that was not surprising, knowing the Chief Minister, because he is not strong on the social welfare angle, and neither am I.

Mr Dale: Come on.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The honourable minister for social welfare can keep quiet. If he wants to talk, he can get up and speak after me.

Mr Bell: The Ghengis Khan of social welfare.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The Minister for Health and Community Services does sit there in splendid isolation and has appeared to be doling out government moneys with gay abandon to all his social welfare projects. He may not be aware of it, living and working as he does in his ivory tower, but the ordinary working man and woman is becoming a little sick and tired of trying to earn a livelihood for his or her family and seeing other people in similar circumstances not working yet still having their hands filled with dollars. They become a little fed up with it.

Mr Bell: What a wonderful, simple world you live in, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I live in a small world, but I work for what I get and so do the people out our way.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister went on to say that the government will continue to evaluate further the way in which Aboriginal land rights and other associated issues are working in the Northern Territory. I agree, and I agree with him also that we have done more to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people than any state government in Australia. I think that record stands alone because no other government in Australia has had the same restrictions put on it with regard to the legislation that it can consider as the Northern Territory has.

I get a bit fed up, as do many others in the community, with what occurs as soon as one disagrees with the views put forward by representatives of Aboriginals. I am not talking about Aboriginals themselves. They are nice people who are very easy to get on with as I found when I represented the electorate of Tiwi. They can see reason, but some of the representatives ...

Mr Bell: I bet they like being patronised.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You see? As soon as somebody disagrees with what I say, it results in insults being delivered. I get a little tired of the fact that, as soon as I disagree with certain people in respect of black/white relations, I am called a racist, and 'racist' seems to be the fashionable epithet of disapprobation these days. It is used by those people who cannot sustain their arguments. If you disagree with them, they try to talk you down.

Mr Speaker, as one would expect, the rest of the Chief Minister's speech was a little bit ho hum-ish. I was a bit surprised that, when he talked about ...

Mr BELL: Think about this one.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You do not have to listen. You can clear off like one of your mates.

In his growth-and-development statement, the Chief Minister did not mention anything about uranium mining or national parks. I thought that those would have stood high on his list of priorities for examination. I know that, year after year, we talk about uranium mining and national parks, but we are still talking about the railway and airports. In omitting the important subjects of uranium mining, the 3-mines issue and the national parks from this debate, the Chief Minister missed an opportunity.

In conclusion, whilst I agree with much of what the Chief Minister said, I would like to see whether, in 6 months or even a year's time, what he said in his speech today is realised in terms of actual development in the Northern Territory and the cessation of the drift away from the Northern Territory of people whom we can ill afford to lose.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the statement from our new Chief Minister because, if this statement is to set the tone for his term of office, it does not bode well for the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister is desperately trying to create the impression that there has been a smooth baton change and that the member for Nightcliff did not attempt to hang on to the baton and run the race in his own way. The fact is that the baton has been dropped and fumbled all over the place for the last several years and the glib attempt of the Chief Minister to gloss over that fact will not wash with the Northern Territory public.

What I propose to demonstrate is that the comments of the Chief Minister indicate in themselves the desperate trouble that this government is in. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out, this government is in desperate straits and the CLP club looks as though it is destined for defeat. The Territory has had 3 Chief Ministers in the last 4 years and is not in particularly good shape. I do not think that the member for Fannie Bay will be able to pull them out of the fire.

This statement from the Chief Minister is not only studded with unsustainable assertions but is also a very lacklustre performance. I was certainly expecting something with a little more vision and a little more determination to lead. The new Chief Minister - and I do give him this credit - has shown himself to be a capable administrator as a frontbencher. However, this statement shows him naked as being unable to lead the Territory in the directions that are important. I will certainly demonstrate that in the context of my comments.

It is not that the Chief Minister has not learned anything over the time he has been a member of the Legislative Assembly. He has learned a great deal. I remember that, when I came into the Assembly, one could not get a word out of the member for Stuart Park, as he then was. You would greet him as you passed and you would be lucky to get an acknowledgement. However, it is now possible to have a very fulsome and often fruitful conversation with him. However fruitful those conversations are, this statement that he presented today is far less than fruitful.

He is unable to gloss over the extraordinary changes, and the extraordinary behaviour of the former member for Flynn. I think that it is an absolute outrage that the CLP has allowed the people of Flynn to remain unrepresented throughout these budget sittings. It is absolutely extraordinary that a section of the Northern Territory population is to be unrepresented throughout what are arguably the most important sittings of the year. Honourable members are asking what they could have done about it. I point out to them that the former member for Flynn, who yesterday announced his resignation from this Assembly, recently resigned from the CLP and was ostensibly an independent. However, he has announced that he will help the CLP during the election. I believe his independent status was entirely a furphy and was an arrangement cooked up between himself and the government.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member opposite is making some incredible allegations against members on this side and I believe he should be asked to withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order and I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker. However, I am quite sure that the career of the former member for Flynn will receive a suitable airing in circumstances where his motivations will be well and truly scrutinised.

Mr Dale: That is a matter for your own integrity, Neil.

Mr BELL: I will ignore the ravings from the Minister for Health and Community Services and turn to the honourable minister's statement.

I thank the Chief Minister for the opportunity to scan this statement. I probably scandalised the clientele at Harrison's Coffee Studio at about 9.30 this morning as I sipped a cup of short black whilst poring over the comments it contains. The first of those is the reference to 'strong and effective government' provided by the CLP. The member for Stuart read out the litany of backstabbing, chaos, weakness and ineffectuality that has characterised the recent years of CLP government. As opposition speakers have pointed out, the CLP is certainly far from providing strong and effective government. It has provided weak and ineffectual government. I need do no more than point to the array of Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers to prove that.

I have some of the advertisements from the CLP's election campaign last year. One states that the 'CLP stands for strong, stable, independent government'. The way these phrases are used is quite interesting. The new Chief Minister uses the word 'strong'. I suppose we should be thankful that he does not have the gall to use the word 'stable'. At least he has sufficient respect for the English language not to attempt to con us to that extent. Here is another blast from the past, a beauty: 'If you want it to happen, stay with Hatton'. It appears that the Northern Territory electorate gave that a fairly good go. The only problem was the parliamentary members of

the CLP did not seem to want it to happen because they certainly did not stay with Hatton. We were asked to accept that this government had the strength to shape the future. The fact is that the Chief Minister's statement today indicates that the government has no greater capacity to do that now than it had more than 12 months ago.

The government's election advertising referred to projects such as the Milatos building and the TIO building. There was a very interesting little series of advertisements. Then there were the plans to help families, and another great series of advertisements. That was barely 18 months ago. What has happened? We have a Chief Minister desperately trying to convince us, with a statement containing very little substance, that he is able to provide strong and effective government.

Mr Speaker, let me turn to page 2 where the conspiracy theory once again took hold of the Chief Minister, as it so often takes hold of the government members. He said, referring to opposition members, that 'some of their colleagues from that side of the political fence in Canberra have tried to portray CLP governments as irresponsible'. Mr Speaker, I think you will be aware that the CLP does a good enough job of representing itself as entirely irresponsible without any help from the federal government or the opposition in this House.

The Chief Minister's statement is really quite extraordinary. On page 5, there is an interesting sentence about the government's 'continued commitment to essential infrastructure development'. The fact is that this government's understanding of infrastructure development has been characterised by a degree of vacillation that will end up removing it from office. The key word is 'essential'. One of the projects I want to concentrate on is the new Supreme Court building. The Chief Minister said that no one can seriously argue that a new Supreme Court building is not needed. He expressed exactly the same sentiments in his column in the Sunday Territorian recently where he said that the court building 'must go'. There were some very interesting comments in that article. One of these was: 'The existing Supreme Court was built 25 years ago when the Northern Territory's population was about 45 000'. Does that mean that every public building that is 25 years old has to be bulldozed? I hope the Chief Minister will be able to answer that for us. I suggest that an arbitrary 25-year figure is a little silly.

In his column, the Chief Minister went on to say that 'the Supreme Court is inefficient and prohibitively expensive to maintain'. He presented no facts and no figures. He has said nothing to substantiate that in this Assembly. In a real doozey, he went on to say: 'There are 6 Supreme Court judges, 1 Master and 1 Deputy Master. All require a courtroom'. Because there are only 4 courtrooms, and effectively 3 because 1 is unsuitable owing to security problems, the Chief Minister tells us that the situation is unworkable. I am absolutely staggered to hear that sort of comment from the Chief Minister who has been an Attorney-General and should have a better understanding of the exigencies of the administration of justice. He clearly does not understand what is going on.

The fact is that there is less pressure on the Supreme Court now - and I hope the current Attorney-General is listening to this so that he can take my comments on board - than there has been at any time in the recent past. That is because of the movement of the Family Court and the new Federal Court out of the Supreme Court building. I challenge the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General to table figures on courtroom use. I would like the Chief Minister or the Attorney-General to tell me just when all courtrooms were



simultaneously in use. My information is that that happens very rarely and that it is very rare for the Supreme Court to have difficulties in its arrangements because of a lack of space. I am not saying that there may not be a need for additional facilities in some areas, but I find it very difficult to sustain a belief that a new Supreme Court building is in fact required.

Mr Speaker, I will offer a word of approbation for the Chief Minister's comments. On page 6, he referred to the need for redevelopment of the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports. I wholeheartedly agree with that. I would also like to put it on the record that I am a supporter of the railway.

The Chief Minister also commented on the availability and cost of power in the Territory. I was concerned about his approach, as anybody concerned about fossil fuel resources around the globe would be. His proposal was that we should actively seek to lift the level of consumption just so that we can cover costs. I find that a matter of serious concern. We cannot afford to look at the use of such resources in a narrow Territory context. We have to look at them in a national and international context. That, incidentally, is parallel to our argument about uranium usage which I do not propose to canvas in this debate. I find it alarming that we have a Chief Minister who is advocating profligacy in the use of scarce fossil fuels in order to solve a short-term problem.

The Chief Minister made the absurd statement that his government and previous CLP governments have done more to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people than any state government. Mr Speaker, that might be true if you compare them with Queensland. I have never analysed the figures in this respect but, if the Chief Minister intends to tell my constituents at Ayers Rock or Imanpa that that is the case, he had better think again. I propose to address the problems of schooling for my constituents at Imanpa later in these sittings. There is insufficient time in the context of this debate to do that but, by golly, let me put the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education on notice in that regard. The ramblings we have heard from the Minister for Education in respect of that particular school give the absolute lie to the statement that the government has done more to accommodate the needs of Aboriginal people than has any state government.

I have said before and will say again that the CLP government - and the Chief Minister is the worst offender of all - can accept Aboriginal people only on the terms of white Australia. They can accept Aboriginal people only when they are seeking to aspire to majority society values. There are a couple of exceptions among government members and the former Chief Minister was certainly a shining light. I have congratulated him previously in this Assembly on his views in that regard. However, I shiver at the prospect raised by the comments of the Chief Minister. I point out here that the new Chief Minister is the only member of this Legislative Assembly to have escaped prosecution for offences against the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act because that act specifically prevents prosecution of ministers of the Crown. As I said, Mr Speaker, I shiver in that regard.

In my concluding moments, I will hand a bouquet to the Chief Minister for his reference to our location as the gateway between South-east Asia and the rest of Australia. It was particularly welcome. I heartily endorse his comment that our political, economic, cultural and human relations with the South-east Asian region must enhance the unique and exciting opportunity that is presented to us. I would say, though, that I doubt whether his federal colleagues, particularly the federal Leader of the Opposition, endorse his views.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's statement was insubstantial. It is a matter of serious concern to the opposition and to the people of the Territory that the Perron government has set off in this direction.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion of the Chief Minister. In doing so, I am in a position unique among members of the House, in that I am speaking to a statement of direction for the government of my immediate successor. I do so proudly as a member of the CLP government team, in full support of the directions that have been proposed by the Chief Minister and his government.

The opposition made great play of the fact that there had been changes in the frontbench of the Northern Territory government in the last couple of years. Members opposite know very well that the Westminster system of government means that the leader of the parliamentary team with a majority in the House will take the position of Chief Minister. Nobody has guaranteed continuity in that job. Incumbents continue while they hold the confidence of their colleagues. When they no longer hold the confidence of their colleagues or when their colleagues believe that it is appropriate that some other person should take on that role, the democratic process leads to the election of a new leader. Every member of the party team then has a responsibility to stand behind the new elected leader and support him. I do so unreservedly.

Let us hear no further discussion about knife-wielding and so forth. The election of leaders is a normal part of a democratic parliamentary process and if any of us does not like it, he should get out of politics. I understand the rules of the game and I stand by them. I stand by the elected leader of my party and I intend to continue to serve in this House and in my electorate as long as my electorate will have me and to promote the philosophies of the Country Liberal Party and the advancement and development of the Northern Territory. I have no intention of spitting my dummy. I have no intention of turning into a vindictive, bitter old man as others have done. I intend to continue to do my job as an elected member in this Assembly.

It was only 4½ years ago that I was elected into parliament and I can still remember how proud I felt to be the elected representative for the seat of Nightcliff and to sit in this Assembly. I feel just as proud of that now. I am not interested in the opposition's jibes and carry-on. I am simply not interested. I intend to get on with the job, and I will work with this government team to promote the interests and the development of the Northern Territory.

I particularly support this statement because it signals a continuation of the direction that has been so hard fought for and set over the last 2 years not by any individual but by a team of people in a CLP government during the most traumatic period in the Northern Territory's history when all Territorians have had their endurance and their faith tested. Sadly, some have failed that test and left the Northern Territory, but the vast majority have stayed, have expressed their faith in the Territory and are living through the hard time because they know that, by going through that and maintaining our drive, we can reach the real potential of the Northern Territory. No matter what Canberra throws at us, we can achieve the future that we all so desperately want for ourselves and our children, and we must work for that.

In responding to this statement this morning, the Leader of the Opposition and other opposition members have spoken about what we have not done in government. I was working on a program to provide a report to this Assembly

of what we have achieved towards meeting the comprehensive range of election undertakings and plans in the period up until these sittings. Unfortunately, the process of developing that was rudely interrupted and I have somewhat less resources at my disposal than I had but I do intend to complete that because it is a proud record of development and achievement by a range of ministers right across the spectrum of government under very difficult circumstances.

The Leader of the Opposition made big play of the fact that we promised 1000 new jobs every year and it is true that we did promise that. It is interesting to study the figures. We were well ahead of that target after the first 6 months following the election but there was another factor that we had every reason to expect would not happen. There was a federal act called the States Grant General Revenues Act, No 156 of 1985. That legislation was enacted because all the states and the Northern Territory did not trust the word of the federal government. If the federal government was to make an undertaking in respect of funding for the states, the states insisted that it be put into a law of the parliament. The federal government did that. That law said that in the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, there would be a guaranteed 2% real growth in funding to the states and the Northern Territory. That is indexation for the CPI plus increases for population growth, plus 2% and, with that figure, the Northern Territory would have more than exceeded its targets on job growth and population growth. What happened was that, at the 1987 Premiers Conference - and members of the opposition can seek to deny it as much as they like but it is a fact - the federal government simply told the states to forget it. Not only would they not receive the 2% real growth, there would be a cut in their funding. That represented a 10.5% cut in real terms for the funding available to the Northern Territory government.

Members of the opposition can rant and rave about what has not been achieved and the difficulties of the Territory as much as they like. They can make as many snide remarks as they wish about our trying to blame other people. Those are facts that have had a traumatic effect on all of the people of the Northern Territory. It is no good simply putting the blame on the Northern Territory government. What about the broken promises from the federal government? We can forget the Memorandum of Understanding. The federal government broke its promise to every state but, most of all, it broke its promise to the Territory. The people of the Northern Territory have been hurt badly in the last 12 months as a consequence of that. I do not resile one step from any of the decisions that were taken to save money in the last 12 months. They had to be made to rebuild our foundations so that the Northern Territory could grow.

Each minister in the government worked at that task and I must say that the people working in the Northern Territory Public Service deserve great accolades. They suffered great difficulties through having their conditions of employment reduced and their real wages cut. They suffered the problems of reorganisation of government, excess lists and redundancies. They did go through all of that and, whilst facing all of those very personal and traumatic problems, in my view, they exhibited the best features of a committed public service - a servant of the public. The achievements shown in the annual financial statements to 30 June 1988 are a testimony as much to their dedication to the task that has had to be done by the government, because we achieved what had to be achieved. We rebuilt those foundations. Not only that, in the middle of that process, there was a range of initiatives and service improvements to be instituted in many small ways right throughout the community.

In addition, as the Chief Minister mentioned, in conjunction with the community, we have virtually completed the economic development strategy to deal with the circumstances facing the Northern Territory today. It is pleasing to see that that work is being completed and implemented. As the Leader of the Opposition may not comprehend this, let me explain it. I refer him to the statement that I made in the February sittings of this parliament, when I indicated that the development strategy and the budget would be put together together to enable its implementation. I have no doubt that, tomorrow, we will see financial resources allocated for a good, development budget to regenerate the growth that the Territory warrants. Territory people have suffered to attain this position; there is no question about that. But, what they have now is the chance for growth, the chance to realise the benefits of that pain during the last 12 months. We must be committed to that.

But, in doing so, I must say that it is essential that the broader community comes to accept that the people who work in the public sector have a valuable and vitally important role to play in the Northern Territory scheme of affairs, even as the public sector must recognise that the people outside the public service perform a vital and effective role. We are all Territorians, our children are here and we are all working for the same goal. It is time to stop the war between the public and the private sectors. My accolades go to all of those people who have worked in the public sector in the last 12 months and to those in the private sector who worked so diligently to overcome the frightening problems that have faced the Northern Territory during that time.

In addition, I must say to those in government service who felt some sense of bitterness and demoralisation and perhaps used their positions to let the government know how unhappy they were, that I hope that, now there has been a change at the top, they can put that behind them. Perhaps they can feel their spleen has been vented and they can recognise that they are working for the Territory too and that, in doing so, they will start to apply the sort of flexibility that was the hallmark of the public service in the past. To the private sector, I would say that it would do well to stop the continuous and carping blanket criticism of many dedicated people in the public service so we can all work towards the objectives that we share.

It is a fact that electricity costs are far too high, but it is also a fact that there has not been any increase in electricity charges since September 1986, as promised. In addition, there have been some off-peak cost reductions. I think the Treasurer will be able to advise that the revenue cost to the Power and Water Authority is in the order of some \$2m - hardly a saving to be sneezed at. In addition, Mr Speaker, look at how Territory taxes and charges have been held down to take the pressure off the community. I am not talking about the indexed Commonwealth charges and excise duties that continue to bite into our pockets month in and month out.

Let us give the lie to what was stated by the member for Stuart. He was talking about deficit budgeting and I was sitting here enthralled by the discussion until I realised what he was talking about. He developed a formula that concluded that every cent you borrow is an automatic deficit. The Northern Territory is not a member of the Loans Council. We have access to global borrowing only with the specific approval of the federal Treasurer. By accusing the Northern Territory of borrowing too much, the opposition is saying that the federal Treasurer is being irresponsible and profligate in the Northern Territory because he approves every cent of borrowings in the Northern Territory in advance. We cannot borrow a cent without the approval

of the federal Treasurer. He is our representative on the Loans Council and that is one of the prices of being a territory. Every time, members opposite criticise our borrowings, they are criticising Treasurer Keating who approves them.

Mr Smith: Haven't you heard of self-government?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am referring to the fact that we are not members of the Loans Council and that our borrowings are under the specific approval of the federal Treasurer. The Leader of the Opposition has been shadow treasurer for many years and it is no wonder he is sitting on that side of the House.

The fact is you borrow to build assets that will last 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 years. Of course, you could refrain from borrowing and use today's dollars. All that means is that today's taxpayers will be paying for the benefits of the next 2 or 3 generations. That is a possibility. Mind you, Mr Speaker, you might have to reduce your capital works by about 50% or 60%. If that is what the opposition thinks is a fair thing, let it do it.

The other course is to adopt a principle to be regarded as the user pays. As you are using the facility, you pay for it. Every government does that and nearly every citizen, and certainly every home owner, does it. Mr Speaker, did you wait until you had saved \$60 000 or \$70 000 before you bought your home? Of course you didn't. You worked out whether you could afford the repayments out of your income. If you could afford the repayments, you borrowed and you paid for it as you were using it. That is how governments operate right around the world.

The Treasurer will deal with the figures but we have had to build up basic infrastructural assets to provide the basis for economic growth in the Territory because they were not in place after 70 years of federal government control. In the last 10 years of high interest rates and inflation induced by federal government spending, both Liberal and Labor, we have had to borrow at substantially higher rates than the states have had to and we had to build infrastructure that the states have had in place for decades. That is a fact of life and we should not, and we do not, apologise for that because that is the basis of building the future for the Territory.

I fully support the statement and the directions of the Chief Minister. I am pleased to see the focus and directions that, as a group, we fought so hard to get together in the last year or 2 and that we will continue to build the Territory.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will not dwell too long on the matters raised in this debate. I have a couple of salient points to make to the Treasurer and perhaps a couple of points to the former Chief Minister. Despite the latter's declaration of devotion and loyalty to his assassin, I point out that his constituents expect him to represent them and not the Chief Minister. In fact, all of our constituents expect us to represent not our leaders, not our party but the electorate. That is the point of parliamentary democracy. Indeed, I attended a conference recently at which this very matter was debated at some length. There is grave concern among commentators and academics about the future of parliamentary democracy because of a growing trend of executive rule. In fact, our responsibilities are not to our leaders and not to our parties but to our constituents. If the member for Nightcliff

intends to continue with his crusade to recapture the leadership, he should perhaps remember that in the first instance.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate that, from time to time, Treasurers are very influential in talking up and talking down economies. Indeed, there have been some notable utterances by the current federal Treasurer in talking up and talking down the economy. Everybody will recall how he influenced Australia's international credit rating by saying Australia might very well become a banana republic and so forced the value of the Australian dollar down. I appreciate that Treasurers do have a very real role in influencing confidence within a community. The big problem that the Northern Territory faces is that, after 10 years of self-government, after 10 years of talking up the economy, the only growth that we can show is a growth in borrowings. That is a fact. Government members can point to Taj Mahals. They can point to infrastructure support systems, and I accept that everybody in this House will appreciate that I do not give a tinker's damn about Darwin. I want to see an ounce of infrastructural support in my electorate. I don't see an ounce of infrastructural support in my electorate. I do not see any infrastructural support south of the Berrimah line, and those are the facts of life.

The government can continue to talk up an economy and that is all very laudable. The problem is that, when it does not produce the goods, there is a real credibility gap. That is a real problem for any government to face. The Premier of New South Wales is behaving in a certain manner. It is a very studied performance that he is involved in. He is talking down the economy. He is not raising people's expectations exorbitantly. He is doing that quite deliberately. It is not by mere chance that he has suddenly discovered that New South Wales has a huge deficit. There is nothing accidental about that. He is doing it quite deliberately.

Mr Perron: I am sure he is. See him in 3 years time.

Mr LEO: Of course! In 3 years time, coming up to the next election, of course he will start talking it up.

The problem is that the Northern Territory has committed itself to this perpetual illusion that cannot be sustained. As a result, there is a real crisis of confidence in the community. There is a real conflict of credibility. The government has 3 years to run before the next election. There would be no difficulty in telling the Northern Territory that we have heaps of problems. We are up to our eyeballs in excreta. There would be no problem for any government to do that. Instead, this government keeps talking up this mirage, this fallacy, and it simply cannot be maintained.

I am not saying this for the sake of maintaining this government. I have no real interest in the maintenance of this government. What I am trying to do is tell the Treasurer that he has a real responsibility, at least in the intervening years between elections, to try to introduce within the Northern Territory a sense of credibility. Okay, you play it up large when you are running up to an election: you tell them that you are going to build another 5000 hotels and put in a marina. That is okay. Every government does that and it is expected by the electorate. But, in the intervening years, introduce at least a note of credibility. I accept that there has been the development of infrastructure for tourism and certainly there have been some successes. There have been some failures too, but the problem is that the real growth area in the Northern Territory has been in debt. That cannot be sustained ad infinitum.

As the member for Nightcliff said, of course governments work on the principle that the persons who enjoy the assets which are created today should perhaps pay for them over a period time. I accept that as a principle. The problem is that, because of this myth that has been created, we are placing a monstrous burden on the people of the Territory. It is not just a reasonable return. We are placing a monstrous burden on the future of the Northern Territory.

I know that the Treasurer cannot question the level of borrowings that the Northern Territory has and its comparison with those of the states and the Commonwealth. Those states and the Commonwealth are trying to come to grips with that. The federal government is now being criticised because it is an extraordinarily high-taxing government. The purpose of that is to try to pay back global deficits which have been created over decades. Of course that is true. There is no escaping that. It is basic economics. But, to persist in saying that we should continue to create bigger and bigger deficits and hope that somebody in the future will pay for them is ludicrous. It is insanity at its worst. Per head of population, we are without a doubt the most debt-ridden population in Australia. Now that must be of concern.

Mr Perron: You are wrong.

Mr LEO: The Treasurer says that I am wrong. When he rises to reply, I will be pleased to hear which state is and by what margin. I will be very pleased to hear that because, personally, I am very concerned about the level of debt that we are leaving to the future. If we leave that debt, whatever we create and develop now will mean nothing because our descendants will be lumbered with that debt. If the repayments of that growing debt are not able to be supported, everything we will have done will be absolutely useless.

I think the Territory has very much to hope for, but when we keep reading on the front page of the NT News, and seeing in press releases that come from the Chief Minister's office, the Treasurer's office and the offices of all the other ministers, items telling of another boom or another goldmine - and the stories range from 44-gallon drums full of gold through to the creation of another school and another so on - that is creating myth. It is creating myth and it is destroying credibility.

All I ask is that the government exercise some degree of control over its public statements because, in the Northern Territory, we are facing a monstrous and developing debt because the government is creating expectations in the electorate that it has to satisfy to stay in government. I understand that. That is okay. But it is creating these expectations and we are finding it increasingly difficult to bear the burden of that debt. Also, within the Australian community, we are consuming credibility at an extraordinary rate.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will touch on a couple of specific points that honourable members have raised during the debate.

Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition raised the subject of balanced budgets and said that the inquirers into the New South Wales financial situation came to the conclusion that balancing consolidated funds means nothing. Those were the words of the Leader of the Opposition. It was just 'tennis club accounting'. I guess that is one view of it, but all the states and the Commonwealth act in exactly the same way. Only recently, the federal Treasurer made great play of the fact that, for the first time in perhaps decades, the federal consolidated accounts actually had a surplus. It was called a 'budget surplus' and great play was made of it. Never mind the fact

that there are vast debts that Australians are wearing, the federal government regarded it as a great accounting step forward that it had a budget surplus. If it had balanced the budget and there had not been a surplus, it would have been saying simply that there was a balanced budget and cracked the champagne. I think that the honourable member is making too much of the fact, and I will come to the government debt shortly. That was his major point: how can you have a balanced budget when you have a growing level of borrowings which means, of course, a growing level of debt?

I think it was the member for Stuart who called it 'grotesque and misleading'. Of course, he was implying not just that the Northern Territory government was grotesque and misleading but that all governments around Australia were. I would suggest even local governments around Australia, who probably all aim for balanced budgets, do not include their loan programs when they say they have a balanced budget. It is not as though the Northern Territory is singled out in some way as the only government in the country conducting its accounts and its affairs in this way.

I was told that the words in my statement were simply the old rhetoric and the old ideas and that there was nothing new. If the old rhetoric and the old ideas have served the Territory as well as they have since self-government, I do not see a great deal wrong with them. The record of Northern Territory growth in many areas since self-government is one that any state in Australia would be proud of. I acknowledged this morning that there had been a tapering-off of growth. After 10 years of growth at 4 to 5 times the Australian average, sooner or later we were bound to have a period in which population growth took a nosedive. That is of concern to us and we will work as hard as we can to arrest it and turn it around, and I am sure we will succeed. We have seen growth in the Territory in mining activity, tourism, agriculture and fishing. Even manufacturing is getting on its feet in the Northern Territory in a small way. Some of this growth has been hard won. We have spent years trying to get things like tanneries under way but they are popping out of the woodwork now as a result of those efforts. In fact, we have done pretty well.

We would have done much better, of course, had we not had the constraints of being a territory and not a state. If we had not been as restricted as we are in respect of matters such as the control of uranium mining royalties, we would have earned much greater income. The Territory deserves much more money out of uranium than it has ever received. If any honourable members would like to apply the profit-based system of the Northern Territory Mining Act to the published figures on uranium profits, they will see just what sort of money and benefits the Northern Territory government believes the Northern Territory people are rightfully entitled to from development of Northern Territory resources. The Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act denies that they are our resources. Uranium belongs to the Commonwealth. That is what I mean when I refer to the constraints that we have had to operate under for 10 years because we are a territory. There are other examples where such constraints have prevented us from doing as well as we could have done had we been on our own. My point, however, is that we have done well despite that.

I can imagine what it would have been like if Labor had been in office for those 10 years because the ALP is certainly a very different political party to the CLP. It suffers from different sorts of pressures from the electorate and its supporters. If it had been in power, it would have had enormous difficulty in achieving anything like the development and growth we have achieved since self-government. I doubt that an ALP government could ever have done the deal - and I call it a deal - that we put together to obtain



about \$150m of international finance for the Yulara project. It took a very handsome contribution from the Territory government and, as we are often reminded, we are paying back millions every year. We believe that was a great investment. One of the things I am proud of in my record in the government is the decision we made to go ahead with Yulara. It was not made lightly. It was discussed many times in Cabinet, and we agonised over whether the growth forecast in the feasibility studies would occur. We took the plunge and it has been a great success. I think the Labor Party would have had a great deal of trouble coming to grips with that and dealing with the international capitalists in the way that we did.

If the ALP had been in power, there would probably have been no uranium mining in the Territory for years, if ever. Members will recall the official Labor policy at the time we achieved self-government. The Fraser government was in office and Labor was in opposition federally with a policy to shut down the mines that were operating. We would not even have had the Fraser government's sequential mining policy which we thought was a mistake anyway. We wanted all mines to go ahead. In hindsight, I think the sequential policy has been a big mistake. However, if Labor had been in power, the mines would have been shut down completely. That was its federal policy and it was the NT policy also. We all remember how, in those days, Mr Bob Collins told this Assembly of the evils of uranium. He was certainly out to shut them down.

The opposition tried to hang the Sheraton hotels around our neck as some sort of liability. We see them as assets. If we did not have the Sheraton at Yulara we would not have had the tourism growth that we have had to date. One of the problems we had in pushing tourism in the early days was that we simply could not accommodate visitors. Obviously, they are not all accommodated in Sheratons. A range of other accommodation is required. However, until we had the capacity in places like Darwin and Yulara to accommodate hundreds of people satisfactorily, we could not land a single jumbo-load of passengers. There would have been nowhere for them to stay. That was the situation we were in when we decided to encourage the development of accommodation, which enabled us to push national and international tourism with the tremendous results everybody knows about.

An ALP government would have bogged mining down and probably stopped it. There would have been environmental impact statements and goodness knows what around the necks of miners. That is because the greenies and the ALP are pretty thick. One can imagine how tough it would have been. It is bad enough now. One has only to ask the miners what they think of our systems. We think they are reasonably efficient and, if you ask a miner what it is like to go into Victoria, with all its environmental constraints, you will see how bad the situation can get.

With the ALP in power, the pastoral industry would have been in dire straits. Members will recall that, when the big fuss developed over the downstream processing of our pastoral industry's meat products, the Labor Party said that the whole Mudginberri dispute was a provocative action by the employers. Provocative! All they were doing was abiding by the law and abiding by a particular award which said that an employer could set up an arrangement with his employees to kill and process beef. The employees in question were happy with it and it was lawful, as all the court cases showed, much to the detriment of the AMIEU. The Labor opposition in this House tried at the time to tell the government that it should not interfere and should not support Pendarvis in his endeavour to hang on while the AMIEU tried to strangle his operation. It could well have succeeded without our support. At that time, the union had the support of the federal minister responsible for

the ANPWS who would not prosecute picketers camping in the Kakadu National Park. Meanwhile, any tourist who pulled up beside the road for a night, had a ranger on his back in 2 seconds flat. The AMIEU camped there for months, on a site resembling a pigsty, with the total concurrence of the federal government. Mudginberri would have lasted for about 5 seconds under a Territory Labor government. It would have gone under, and the AMIEU would have had its system operating throughout the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I will move on to the matter of public debt, which has been the subject of much media attention of late. The opposition has been saying that, according to its calculations - and I am glad it makes that qualification - the Territory's debt amounts to \$15 000 for every man, woman and child in the Territory. That calculation is based on a gross public debt of \$2300m. The fact is that the opposition figure is about \$1000m out. The sum of of the government's debt, as we read it, is about \$1300m. The opposition has consistently demonstrated a lack of comprehension of financial administration and we are still trying to discover how it arrived at a figure of \$2300m. We have gone through the reports of the Public Accounts Committee, the annual financial statements of the Northern Territory government and all the other information which has been released.

Mr Smith: Try having a look at the liabilities.

Mr PERRON: Liabilities are not necessarily debts, Mr Speaker.

For the benefit of members opposite, however, let me place on record the situation in regard to Territory debt. At self-government, we assumed a debt of \$193m as part of the Memorandum of Understanding. It related to the Stokes Hill Powerhouse, hundreds of public service houses purchased for about \$19 000 each, and so on. Since that time, the debt has grown to \$1307m. During that time - and this is a very important point that the Leader of the Opposition should note - we have spent \$2430m on assets. That figure is calculated from the actual expenditure amounts. For example, an expenditure of \$20m on a school would be included in that amount without adjusting the amount in terms of the school's inflated value in today's figures or the replacement cost.

In today's dollars, our assets are worth \$3962m. In other words, we have \$4000m-worth of assets and \$1300m-worth of debt or approximately \$3 in assets for every \$1 debt. The Northern Territory has a per capita debt of \$7595. That is the figure as of June 1988. Tasmania, the only state that exceeds that figure, has a per capita debt of \$7811, \$216 more. Of course, Tasmania has its own problems of remoteness, expense and so on. The average per capita debt in the states, according to ABS figures, is \$4975.

The Northern Territory has a comparatively high debt factor per head of population for a number of reasons. One is the higher cost of construction in the Northern Territory. Does the Leader of the Opposition suggest that, because building costs in the Northern Territory are 20% higher than interstate, according to official figures recognised by the Grants Commission, we should build schools for 20% below interstate standards or 20% smaller than we really require them? Of course not! That factor results in the Northern Territory having to carry a higher level of debt than is necessary interstate. Another factor is the wide dispersal of the Territory population. We have to provide facilities for widely-spread groups and that makes our costs considerably higher. Our assets are not concentrated in 1 or 2 places.

Most assets in the Northern Territory are new. We do not have facilities like the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which was built in 1932 or thereabouts, when

interest rates were 1% or 2%, and paid off over 56 years, with Mr Greiner making the final payments only a few weeks ago. After 56 years of use, why should it not be paid for now? If the New South Wales population had had to pay for the bridge in 1932, it would never have been built. It would have been insane for a government to suggest that it had to be paid off within 5, 10 or 20 years. Why would a government do that when the people using it for the following 30 years of its life - and it will probably be there for another 100 years - would have to pay nothing except the cost of maintenance? Of course, that is what loans are all about.

Most of the Northern Territory's assets are new, having been built since self-government in the context of high population growth rates. One has only to move around the Territory to see the courthouses, police stations, schools, hospitals, jails, museums and so forth which have been built within the last 10 years. The very fact that they are new means that their cost was in today's dollars, as it were, rather than the value of the currency 20 or 30 years ago and the interest rates that applied were those of today which are much higher than the prevailing rate when the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built. Therefore, there is a legitimate reason why the Northern Territory has a higher debt factor than do the states.

The lack of infrastructure meant a rapid build up in our level of debt. It is true that the Territory's level of debt has increased faster than the levels in the states over the last 10 years. All our infrastructure has been installed in the last few years. As I have said in this Assembly before, nowhere in Australia would have replaced 50% of its electricity generating capacity, as the Territory has done by the establishing of the Channel Island Power Station. Given that, and the upgrading of generation sets between Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, probably 80% of the Territory's power system has been built in the last 10 years. Of course there has been a rapid growth in our level of debt.

The same applies to infrastructure such as schools, police stations etc. Take the example of the Berrimah Police Centre. No state in Australia would have had that level of debt suddenly come on its books in respect of its assets relating to police. In addition, the Northern Territory has had a high rate of population growth. Since self-government, it has averaged 5% per annum. The states' average in the same period was 1% per annum. That high population growth demanded the construction of schools and other necessary infrastructure. We have had to provide sewerage systems and other facilities because we had a high level of population. At the moment, we have a low level of population growth and that is why we are not building 600 Housing Commission houses a year and why we do not need the infrastructure. The reason why we are in our present position is because of the 5 factors that I have outlined.

Mr Speaker, I am running out of time. It is a shame because I would like to say a bit more in relation to debt. I will touch on the subject of future generations paying for debt. This is very important in respect of this debt factor. The Leader of the Opposition gives the impression that almost any debt is bad and that, if you build an asset, you really should pay for it and future generations should not be lumbered with a debt for it. To my mind, that is a completely wrong principle.

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

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable Chief Minister be granted an extension of time to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, there is a range of facilities which really make it very easy to comprehend why funding debt for a government is a sensible practice, and no doubt that is the reason why it has been the practice all this time. The cost of powerhouses probably is not a good example because powerhouses really should pay for themselves through electricity tariffs. There is a bit of an anomaly in the Territory because of the horrendous cost of the whole system. However, with assets like schools, police stations, courthouses, fire stations, even roads, there is no reason why funding should not be provided through loan funds. Indeed, in the Northern Territory, the system in relation to our roads funding is to utilise partly road grants and partly loan funds. When we build a bridge over the Katherine River or the South Alligator River or wherever, and it is also decided to upgrade the Victoria Highway or any other road in the Northern Territory, and that is likely to have a life of 20, 30 or 40 years, why should today's taxpayers be told that we will only build as much road each year as they can afford, because we do not want to get into debt and we do not want to saddle future generations with making a contribution towards the cost of the road, the bridge and the fire station that they will be using? There is no reason why they should have a free ride. We fund an enormous amount of government assets through debt, and rightly so.

The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have been reported in the press as saying something different. For example, there was a statement in the newspaper on Wednesday 2 August. The Leader of the Opposition referred to Mr Greiner's affairs in New South Wales. In his view, we have a debt which is a direct threat to our lifestyle. To my mind, that really is a disservice to Territorians. It uses dramatic words that create the idea that maybe the government has really let the debt situation get out of hand.

Mr Coulter: It is his way of building up confidence.

Mr PERRON: It certainly does not help confidence. He needs to adopt an attitude that there is a responsible level of government debt. I suppose a government could exceed that level but I do not know what that level would be. As the member for Nightcliff mentioned, to some extent our watchdog is the federal Treasurer who makes our bids for us in the Loans Council. If he thought we were getting into trouble, you can be sure he would be trimming a bit off the top. I would like all honourable members to bear those principles in mind so that they can be advocates in their relationships with the general public and try to put this question of debt in perspective.

I would like to say that the member for Nightcliff, whose name has been mentioned a number of times during this debate, in his role as Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, made a very significant contribution to the growth and development of the Territory during a period that was most difficult for politicians and for Treasurers in the Northern Territory. He will continue to make a valuable contribution to the development of the Northern Territory as a member of my government in the future. He will make a far greater contribution than members opposite ever will because they are not in government and it is unlikely they will ever get into government. They are not on the right team and the member for Nightcliff is.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a copy of a 1988 message to members from the Chairman of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Executive Committee, Hon Lavu Mulima MP. The message marks the 77th birthday of the association on 18 July 1988 and copies of the message have been circulated to all honourable members.

DISCHARGE OF ITEMS FROM NOTICE PAPER

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the following Orders of the Day Government Business be discharged from the Notice Paper: No 17 relating to the noting of a ministerial statement on education; No 21 relating to the noting of a ministerial statement on statehood; No 22 relating to the noting of a ministerial statement on work health; No 25 relating to the noting of a ministerial statement on Equal Opportunity Program; and No 28 relating to the noting of a ministerial statement on noxious weeds.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

Discharge of Member for Katherine from Parliamentary Committees

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the member for Katherine, Mr Reed, seeking his discharge from further attendance on the following committees: the House Committee, the Publications Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and the Sessional Committee on the Environment.

I advise honourable members that, consequent upon Mr Hanrahan's resignation, vacancies exist in the membership of the Standing Orders Committee and the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

MOTION

Membership of Parliamentary Committees

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Katherine, Mr Reed, be discharged from further attendance on: the House Committee, the Publications Committee, the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and the Sessional Committee on the Environment, and that members be appointed to those committees as follows: the House Committee, Mr Palmer; the Publications Committee, Mr Hatton; the Standing Orders Committee, Mr Firmin; the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee, Mr Dondas and Mr Palmer; and the Sessional Committee on the Environment, Mr Hatton.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the member for Arnhem who has been unavoidably detained in his electorate.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of Privileges Committee on Statement  
by Member for Barkly

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the report of the Privileges Committee on the statement made by the member for Barkly, Mr Tuxworth, on the ABC 7.30 Report on 25 February 1988. I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Report of Privileges Committee on Statement  
by Member for Barkly

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

In the adjournment tonight, I wish to pay tribute to a man who made an enormous contribution to the Northern Territory and its development. I refer to Mr George Manolas. George was born in Perth in 1907. He was the son of one of Perth's Greek settlers, Kyriakos Manolas, a fish merchant who had migrated here from the Greek island of Kastellorizon in 1896. George Manolas was to follow in the family tradition and soon proved himself a pioneer in his own right.

After he had worked in Perth as a cabinet-maker for a number of years, he moved to Darwin in 1939 accompanied by his wife Nellie and their sons Kerry and Theo. Together with Nellie's brothers, Nick and Mick Paspalis, the Manolas family opened their first Darwin business, Kerry's milkbar in Cavenagh Street. World War II brought business to a halt and the family was evacuated to Perth. Undaunted, they returned here in 1953 together with a new addition to the Manolas family, a daughter, Pawleen. They opened another milkbar, the Continental - which I recall well from when I was a young fellow - which soon became a Smith Street establishment renowned for its gelati and capuccino.

A firm believer in Darwin's potential, George began to expand his real estate interests in the city area. Over the years, he acquired property in Mitchell Street, opening up the Manolas pharmacy and Rocky's place which he subsequently redeveloped as Mitchell Chambers. George also purchased a 20 acre site at Casuarina. This was later developed in conjunction with Lend Lease and, in 1973, it became the Casuarina Shopping Centre. For many years, one of George's dreams was to see a major hotel established on the family property in Mitchell Street. When the Sheraton opened its doors in 1986, that dream came true. Today, this luxury hotel stands in memory of a man who was a doer as well as a dreamer, a man who arrived in town with a willingness to work hard, who had great confidence in the future of Darwin and who ploughed his profits back into the city that had given him his start.

George is remembered not only for his sound business sense but also for his lifelong service to the Greek community and the Greek Orthodox Church.

George Manolas died at the age of 81 on 10 July 1988. He was truly one of Darwin's founding fathers. Indeed, his greatest legacy is the family he left behind him, a family which has inherited his enterprise and his determination. On behalf of this Assembly, I extend heartfelt condolences to his children, his grandchildren and to all his relatives and friends.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we have come a long way today in relation to discussion on the deficit facing the Northern Territory. At the start of the day, we heard the view expressed that we were running a balanced budget and, at the end of the day, we ended up arguing about the size of the debt. I was asked if I would provide this House with the information on which we have based our calculations that the debt and liabilities of the Northern Territory are \$2400m. I do so, but I ask that, when the honourable members opposite are analysing this document, they read also the statement I am about to read now because the 2 go together. I may have to read it reasonably quickly because it is quite long.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am advised that the honourable member is raising a topic which has been debated earlier today and should do so by leave.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, with respect, I was asked by the members opposite to table the document. I am now proceeding to speak in explanation of the document. I am not entering into a debate at all; I am speaking in explanation of the document.

Mr SPEAKER: I can appreciate your point but my advice from the Clerk is that it is an issue which has been debated previously.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, for goodness sake, I was asked by the members opposite to table the document. If I cannot table it in a manner that I see fit and that does not refer to a previous debate, I will not table it.

Mr SPEAKER: If the honourable member would contain himself for a few moments, on advice from the Clerk I will advise how he can table that document and discuss it. I am not attempting at all to censure the honourable member.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, why don't you let me proceed and pull me up if I refer to a previous debate?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will seek leave to table the document in the first instance and we will take it from there.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document and to make a statement in relation to the document.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: The document outlines the value of the government's debt and contingent liabilities as estimated by the opposition. A debt is money, goods or services that are owing. A liability is also a debt which one is bound to pay - that is, an obligation for which one is answerable. A contingent liability is one which is uncertain in either or both the amount payable and or the time it is due for payment and is dependent on some future event occurring.

For the benefit of all members, I have tabled a statement of debt and liabilities that has been prepared as a result of 2 parliamentary papers with which I am sure the honourable Treasurer is quite familiar. The first is the

Annual report of the Auditor-General on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements. It was Parliamentary Paper No 49 of 1987. At page 87 was included statement No 5 signed by the Minister for Mines and Energy who was then the Treasurer. Item 1 of statement 5 includes a list of semi-government borrowings taken out in 1986-87 at rates of interest varying between 13% and 15.5%. The face value of that debt was \$142 860 500. Item 2 was borrowings for conversion of semi-government loans which had been redeemed during the year and refinanced - a sum of \$39 313 200. Item 3 was the semi-government borrowings amounting to some \$321 278 000 collected from the market by this government in its own right, and liabilities to the Commonwealth of some \$587 349 033 being for Australian Savings Bonds, Commonwealth Government Securities and Treasury Bonds raised by the Commonwealth to finance the spendings of the government. In addition, further amounts were outstanding from semi-government borrowings on-lent to statutory authorities - as at 30 June 1987, a sum of \$250 802 000. There are also amounts of some \$167 732 917 outstanding to the Commonwealth for assets transferred. Advances for housing assistance outstanding amounted to \$122 934 334.

These items add up to a total of \$1450m. I think the Chief Minister's figure was \$1300m. That is very close to the Chief Minister's figure of \$1300m. The difference between the \$1300m and the \$1450m in our estimate is the amount of \$150m in statutory authority loans not included in the government's figure. That covers the loans area, in which we are in broad agreement. However, a genuine calculation of government debt also requires the inclusion of the value of lease liabilities. The present value of those lease liabilities takes the calculation of government debt to a figure in excess of \$1200m. I assume, since the Minister for Mines and Energy signed the statement to which I refer, that he is familiar with what that public debt is.

I will now explain what a lease commitment is. A lease is an agreement whereby one party gains the rights and benefits of ownership of an asset in exchange for a series of payments. Under the terms of the relevant accounting standard, a lease agreement is treated in much the same way as would be the purchase of the asset. In other words, a debt is recognised for the amount borrowed and the value of the benefits of ownership are treated as an asset. Thus, to treat government debt in the same way as anyone else's debt, that lease commitment must be included. I apologise for the technical language which needs to be used here.

Mr Hatton: It is not that technical.

Mr SMITH: All right, smartypants.

That adds something like \$160m to the calculation of total debt. \$160m represents the present value of commitments entered into by the government under the terms of lease agreements in effect as of 30 June 1987. That ends the calculation of the total government debt held by this government at the end of June 1987.

We then turn to the question of other liabilities which include long service leave. The source for the information of those other liabilities is a document with which I am sure the Treasurer is equally familiar because it was prepared by the Public Accounts Committee which he fought so hard to oppose. It is Report No 2 of November 1987 entitled 'Report on the Actual and Contingent Liabilities of the Northern Territory Government'.



Let me turn firstly to superannuation. Superannuation has been an item of some controversy both inside and outside this House as a result of the government's refusal to fund the liability and the genuine fear of contributors that the liability may blow out to such an extent that future taxpayers could not be reasonably expected to pick up the tab. The value of that liability, as of June 1992, has been actuarially calculated at \$391m. It increases each year by some \$51m. If that liability were to be paid out now, it would cost in the order of \$287m on the basis of the amounts presently committed to superannuation benefit and not funded by any of the statutory authorities or this government or, in other words, the amount over and above that which is financed by employees and the employer. While this emerging superannuation liability has been subjected to an actuarial calculation of the actual liability, the calculations in the case of the other liabilities may be less precise. A contingent liability is one which arises out of an event which is not certain and therefore the extent of the liability may be uncertain.

What the Public Accounts Committee did was to determine the likely value of the contingent liability under each of the arrangements which had been entered into by the CLP government. We will turn firstly to Yulara. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory government underwrote the Yulara project in such a manner that the results were guaranteed under an agreed profile. That contribution agreement has led the Public Accounts Committee to conclude the cumulative government cash contribution up to September 1996 will total some \$164m. It is a contingent liability but we will be expected to pay \$164m, based on the PAC-supplied figure. Calculations by my staff indicate that a rational businessman who wanted to pay out that liability now would be liable for a sum of around \$97m. In other words, we have discounted the \$164m that would be paid by 1996 to \$97m if it were paid now.

The Sheraton Hotel in Darwin was subjected to a similar sort of arrangement. The calculations of the PAC indicate that the Darwin Sheraton Hotel will be subject to a net loss to the Northern Territory government of \$23.5m by October 1996. Our calculations indicate that the value of that loss on 30 June 1987 would be around \$11m. The Sheraton in Alice Springs was, of course, quite a different case because title has now been effectively vested in the government. However, the government liability in the project as of June 1987 was calculated by the PAC at \$49.3m.

The Minister for Mines and Energy and former Treasurer would realise that the Power and Water Authority is obliged to make 39 half-yearly payments of approximately \$16m under the terms of the 'take or pay' gas commitment arrangement for Amadeus Basin gas. A liability calculated by the PAC as \$60m in present-day terms is obliged to be paid for a period of 20 years by the Power and Water Authority to NT Gas, under the terms of the construction arrangement agreement. The PAC's calculation of the 'take or pay' obligation in net present value terms was \$200m. A further \$11.5m was to be charged to the Power and Water Authority by Gasco Pty Ltd. The total of those liabilities is, quite clearly, \$271.5m.

The other liabilities, which I am sure will be quite clearly understood by the Minister for Mines and Energy and the new Treasurer, relate to recreation leave, air fares and furlough. These were calculated at June 1987 as, respectively, \$46m, \$68m and \$6m.

Mr Speaker, that gives a grand total of \$2427m in government debts and other liabilities, as determined by the Public Accounts Committee. I have already tabled the figures and I will run off copies of my speech for the Chief Minister.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on Expo and the Territory's involvement in it. I had the privilege of spending a few days at Expo towards the end of June and I heartily congratulate the people in Queensland who had the courage to take on this mammoth project. It certainly has put Brisbane on the map and it is very well done indeed.

One of the first things that struck me about Expo was how clean it was. People move around continually emptying the rubbish bins whilst others sweep up every small item that may be dropped, even collecting cigarette butts with long-handled implements. It is the old story. When something is clean, the public respond pretty well. The cleanliness adds to the atmosphere of the place and it was a real pleasure to be there in such a clean environment with so many thousands of people attending every day. I congratulated a few of the cleaning staff on their efforts and they were very pleased to receive a pat on the back. Picking up cigarette butts, even with a long pair of tongs, is not particularly enjoyable and the workers were pleased to hear that their efforts were appreciated by a member of the public.

The second thing that struck me was the sheer friendliness of the place. Whether standing in a line waiting, at a restaurant or virtually anywhere, it was easy to chat to people. The atmosphere was beaut. The exhibits were great and I cannot remember any which I did not enjoy. Some were better than others but they all had some value. Whilst my memory of the exhibits may dim as time goes by, certain things will always stick in my mind, particularly the cleanliness and friendliness of Expo.

I believe that the Territory involvement in Expo has been very positive. I know we came in rather late because of the costs involved. It was very easy to strike up conversations with people and they would ask you about yourself and about the Territory. Almost invariably, I heard good reports about the Territory pavilion. People had enjoyed what they had seen when they had gone there. Surprisingly, few of the people to whom I spoke had ever been to the Territory. A vast number of people in Australia have not been to the Territory and therefore there is the potential to attract them, and I hope I did my bit to help to whet their appetites.

There were many favourable comments about the cheerful, helpful nature of the staff of the Territory pavilion and about their uniforms. I certainly concur with such comments. I spoke to a few of the staff quietly. Some were people I have known in the Territory and others I had not met before. It is not easy to maintain enthusiasm constantly but the message that came across clearly to me was that the public was thoroughly pleased with the attitude, appearance and friendliness of the staff there. Those people have done a great job as ambassadors for the Territory.

The head of the pavilion there is a former minister, Speaker and member of this Assembly, Mr Roger Steele. Before I went there, I had heard a few stories about 'jobs for the boys'. I think it would be well known amongst my former colleagues that Mr Steele and I did not always agree on every point in this place but I can only dip my lid to the job that he is doing down there along with his staff. He put himself out, not only for me but for a host of other people. Nothing was too much trouble for him. When I returned to Alice Springs and conferred with other people about their visit to Expo, I was pleased to learn that they had the same opinion about our former Speaker. Everyone said that he was doing an excellent job for the Territory. He knows the Territory well and he was helping to promote it. I have no doubt that, in the future, many of the people to whom I spoke will visit Alice Springs when they come to the Territory. I hope they will drop in and remind me that we

chatted at Expo at Brisbane. I think the spin-offs from the Territory's participation in Expo will be considerable. I am glad that we were involved.

As far as I am concerned, it was a magic experience to have visited Expo. Queensland has every justification for being very proud of it. As one of the ministers of the present Queensland government said to me: 'It is totally Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen who should have the credit for it because most of us were opposed to the whole thing. We figured that we would be \$100m in debt and we would have only a tinsel show'. They will clear the debt on it. It has put Queensland on the map and, in its way, it has put Australia on the map too. It is an exhibition of which all Australians can feel proud.

If I could contrast it to the Bicentennial Exhibition that went around Australia, I am afraid that there is simply no comparison. My feelings on that Bicentennial Exhibition are that I could hang my head in shame over the money that was spent on it, if that is the best that Australia can produce after 200 years. But Brisbane and Queensland have done Australia proud and put the nation on the map. I believe that our involvement will have its spin-offs over the years and bring more and more people to the Territory. Expo might be causing us to lose tourists at the moment but, in the long run, we can only benefit from it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the adjournment debate this afternoon, I would like to strike a rather sombre note. The subject I am about to speak on and the cases I am about to elaborate on are not very happy ones. While I will not give personal details on the 3 cases that I intend to talk about, I will provide the minister with those details later provided the people involved have no objection.

I would like to elaborate on 3 cases of detriment that I believe related to welfare officers under the control of the Minister for Health and Community Services. I hope I have the right terminology. I do not know what they are officially called but I am calling them welfare officers. I believe that the actions of these welfare officers show that they are not fit to hold their positions. I will not give the exact details in order to hide the identity of the people concerned but, as I said before to the minister, if these people give me permission, I will give him details later.

The Minister for Health and Community Services is long on rhetoric but his department is pretty short on the action or provides action of the wrong sort. In 2 cases, there is a belief that there has been an actual casting of blame on innocent parties by welfare officers. It appears there is no communication between the minister and his officers. He talks about his interest in child welfare, child abuse and the general welfare of children, and this sounds pretty good. On the surface, no sensible person would disagree with it but, in all his rhetoric, the honourable minister has made no mention of fairness in any situation in which his department deals.

We all know about the inequity in that celebrated case in England and a further 100 cases where incest was alleged to have occurred. Sadly for the family victims, the 2 doctors whose diagnoses were relied on proved faulty and more in the realms of fantasy than fact. The innocent fathers who were accused of this heinous crime were victims of gross inexactitude which their families will have to live with from now on. There was an official overkill which, unfortunately, has hidden and, if it continues, will hide actual crimes of this sort, and it will also penalise innocent people.

Coming nearer to home, I will give some details of 2 cases that have been brought to my attention. It will be evident that in 1 case, the innocent father was supported by the rest of his family. He is having great difficulty in his work, in his family relations and his general living because of a concerted attempt on the part of welfare officers to make him appear guilty even though his family says he is not, and they should know.

This family consists of a mother and father, 2 natural children and 2 adopted children. One of the adopted children, a teenage girl, was having certain difficulties with her parents, and she left home. The welfare officer consulted her and also consulted the family. Her innocence was assumed. The father was assumed to be guilty. In this particular case, his guilt perhaps has not been established but the welfare officers are trying very hard - and there is an overkill in that situation too - to somehow make him appear guilty and to say he is guilty of making incestuous advances to his adopted daughter. His wife supports him, his 2 natural children support him and his other adopted child supports him. Nevertheless, he cannot seem to get anywhere. His whole life is a mess.

I have also been told briefly, but I do not know the details, of a similar situation again with a teenage girl who wants to leave home. Her mother and father want to keep her at home under their family control and with the family. She thinks otherwise and I have been told that she has actually blackmailed her father: 'If you keep me at home, if you don't let me leave, I will say you did this and this and this'. In other words, she was saying that she would say that he had made incestuous advances towards her. What has our society come to when this sort of action is condoned and encouraged by welfare officers and all fairness is thrown out the window?

Another case was brought to my attention even more recently. It does not give me any joy to be relating the sordid details of these cases and I do not think other honourable members like to hear them but they must be spoken about because, if they are not, the unfairness of the situation will not become apparent. In this case, a neighbour interfered with a young girl. He was given a 3-month sentence which was changed to a 1-year good behaviour bond. Counselling was offered to the parents of the little girl. This was offered in such a way as to make them appear as though they were guilty. They resented this offer of counselling. I do not know whether it was offered to the bloke who committed the offence but it was offered to the parents of the little girl. They felt that it was an attempt by the welfare officers to make them feel guilty so that they would not pursue their rights any further.

Mr Speaker, to make the situation even worse, the mother of this little girl is a public servant and the man who interfered with her little girl comes to her place of work from time to time. She has had occasion to speak to this man. On 1 particular occasion, if I can put it very mildly, she gave this man a mouthful of language. I would do the same, Mr Speaker, only I might not be as polite as this particular mother was. We come now to the unfairness of the situation. That woman was threatened with the sack if she continued to express her feelings vocally.

Perhaps the bloke had right on his side. You could say that he had served his sentence and therefore should have been accepted back into the community. I think this situation needs to be examined because I believe the mother only did what any mother who was looking after her children's interests would do. I know that I would have done exactly the same. This couple was told that they could not go to court and have their say. I am not a lawyer and I therefore cannot offer any information as to whether they could or could not

have had legal representation. They were not given any information in relation to an application for a restraining order to stop the chap from going to the mother's place of work quite so often. They have been offered no help at all. All they have been offered is counselling which they have rejected because of the way it was offered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, from these 3 cases, it seems to me that the welfare officers seem to spend all their time on the interests of the person committing the crime and forget about the real victims. Instead of always sounding off about his interest in all of these welfare cases, it is about time the minister got down to the nitty gritty and found out exactly what his welfare officers are doing.

The last case that I would like to elaborate on relates to an adoption. The people concerned have written to the minister and they have no objection to my telling the minister their name. They were in the unfortunate situation of having to wait 5 years for the papers to be finalised for the child that they have adopted. This was the result of a rather less than speedy termination of their case by a local solicitor. It cost them \$20 000 to finalise the adoption and, in the process, they had to sell their house and live elsewhere. It has taken 5 years to finalise the adoption which was started in Queensland and they were victims of a rather slack lawyer there. I do not say that the lawyer here was particularly slack; he simply took a long time to finalise their case. Because of that and because the parents are reaching an age at which adoption is not encouraged, they may not be able to adopt another child as a companion for the little child whom they have already adopted. I have been told by the parents that the ideal is that, if one adopts a child, one adopts another child about 2 years later.

I come now to the complaint against the minister's department. Because their adoption took so long to finalise, they have been interviewed time and time again. They are beginning to feel that the welfare officers would be able to write a book about all their personal details without consulting them again. I might add that these people are what you would call the salt of the earth. They are very decent people and any of their neighbours and anybody who has any contact with them would bear me out on that. Despite the fact that they are willing to adopt another child, and in my view they are the ideal people to adopt another child, they cannot do so. I do not know whether it is due to slackness on the part of the welfare officers or because there are insufficient welfare officers in the minister's department. We have another case of the minister being long on rhetoric but, although these people may be saving a child from possible abuse by adopting it, they cannot obtain any help from the government.

I believe that the Minister for Health and Community Services and his department need to darn well pull their socks up. If the minister and his department expect the subjects of their interviews and their inspections to have faith in them, they must ensure that the work they do with these people in the community is right down the middle and does not favour one side or the other.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few brief comments regarding my attendance last weekend at the Australian Study of Parliament Conference in Perth. I attended that conference as a delegate of the government side of this House and I was accompanied by the member for Nhulunbuy and by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I thought I would make some comments because I was very impressed by what I learned at the conference. It was attended by a whole range of eminent speakers and I

thought I might run through a list of some of those speakers and the subjects which they addressed.

The conference was opened by His Excellency Professor Gordon Reid, the Governor of Western Australia, who has made quite a study of constitutional development. His opening address was extremely interesting and the conference was very fortunate that, on that evening, Professor Reid gave the after dinner address. Once again, he spoke at length about the development of Western Australia which I personally found extremely interesting. The 1-day conference was broken up into 4 major sessions. I will briefly run through them and talk about the content and the speakers.

The first session related to parliament and the executive. The chairman was Bruce Okley, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. The lead speaker was Professor Geoffrey Bolton from Murdoch University in Western Australia. I had the pleasure of having dinner with Professor Bolton later that evening. The panelists were Hon Mal Bryce, the former Deputy Premier of Western Australia, and Senator Peter Durack who would be well known to many folk here. That particular subject was very interesting indeed because it concerned the relationship between the executive and the parliament. There was discussion of how much influence the elected government and its executive had on the good working of parliament. Various points of view were put forward with regard to that matter and there was an interesting debate.

The second session related to parliament and the judiciary. The chairman of that session was Mr Peter Lewis MHA, from South Australia. The lead speaker was Professor Jim Mallory, Chairman of the Canadian Study of Parliament Group. He, of course, had come over from Canada especially for this conference. The panelists were Mr Phillip Joseph, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and Mr Harry Evans, Clerk of the Senate in Canberra.

I found this session fascinating because it dealt with the role of the judiciary in relation to the executive in a Westminster style parliamentary democracy. There were some suggestions that the judiciary should have the power not to veto but to vet the major decisions of any parliament. Some people were suggesting that the relationship between the judiciary and the parliament ought to be changed. At the moment, the judiciary certainly does have a role to play, particularly in relation to decisions by the parliament concerning legislation. Citizens have the right to take appeals to the courts in relation to the implementation of legislation. Some people argued that, because of the evolution of parliamentary democracy and changes since federation, we are now seeing a much increased influence of the judiciary in terms of its interaction with the parliament.

The third session related to parliament and its organisation. The chairman was Mr Alan Cumming Thom, a former Clerk of the Senate. The lead speaker was Mr Dermot Englefield, who is the Deputy Librarian for the House of Commons in London and Chairman of the British Study of Parliament Group, which is the British group similar to the one being established in Australia. I understand the British group has been in existence for 70-odd years. The panellists were Mr John Evans, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council for New South Wales, and Mr Robert Herrington MLC, from Western Australia.

Delegates spoke about the organisation of parliament and how parliament physically operates. That was of great interest to me because I have the good fortune to be a member of the New Parliament House Committee. In that context, it was very interesting to hear the thoughts of the various delegates

in relation to how parliament should be organised and what that entailed in terms of the layout of the parliamentary structure around the Chamber.

I thought that the most interesting session was the final one which was entitled 'Parliament and the People'. The chairman was Professor Peter Boyce who is the Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University in Western Australia. The lead speaker was Mr Graham Neate, Principal Legal Officer of the Australian Constitutional Development Commission. He played a major role in the production of the various reports of the Constitutional Development Commission. I believe its final report is currently being printed and will be available a little later this year. One of the panellists was Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowan, former Governor-General and currently the Provost of Oriel College, Oxford. After dinner, I had quite an interesting talk to Sir Zelman. He came across and sat at our table and we chatted for quite some time. He is quite a fascinating fellow. The other panellist was Dr Campbell Sharman of the University of Western Australia.

All in all, it was certainly a very interesting experience. It was also fascinating to note that 1988 is the tercentenary of what has been affectionately called the Glorious Revolution. That occurred in 1688 when King James in England fled the British throne and was replaced by William of Orange and his wife Mary. Subsequent to that event, there was a convention of members of both Houses of Parliament established and from that was developed the Declaration of Rights which, I understand, still applies in the British parliament. It is that Declaration of Rights on which the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy was developed which has served us so well down these several centuries. I am very thankful that I have had the opportunity to attend that conference. I have various papers available and, if any members of this House would like to have copies, I would be very pleased to provide them.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, Message No 7 has been received from His Honour the Acting Administrator:

I, Keith John Austin Asche, the Acting 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 appropriate certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year ending 30 June 1989.

Dated 12 August 1988  
Austin Asche  
Acting Administrator.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that I have received an invitation to attend the first sitting of the Commonwealth parliament in the new Parliament House, Canberra, on Monday 22 August 1988. Because of the sittings of this Assembly, I have asked the Deputy Speaker, Mr Dondas, to attend in my stead. He will be accompanied by the Deputy Clerk, Mr Ian McNeill. With the concurrence of honourable members, I intend to send a message of congratulation to the President of the Senate, Hon Kerry Sibraa, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Joan Child, on this historic occasion.

Members: Hear, hear!

PETITION

Animal Shelter in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 573 citizens of the Northern Territory which does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, we, the undersigned citizens of Alice Springs, urge the Northern Territory government to establish an animal shelter in Alice Springs to aid in the control of the population of domestic dogs and cats and, by doing so, to contribute to the protection of the environment and to the appointment of an inspector. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1988-89  
(Serial 127)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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



I am pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly and to the people of the Northern Territory the Territory's eleventh budget. It marks the passing of the first decade of self-government and is a platform for a second decade of sustained growth. It is a budget which will prove to be a significant milestone in the Territory's development, demonstrating the government's total commitment to strong and sound economic growth driven by the private sector, to the maintenance of the Territory's high standard of social and cultural services, and to keeping increases in Territory taxes and charges, on both citizens and businesses, to a minimum.

The government has met the challenge posed by 3 years of fiscal restraint without serious reductions in the provision of services to Territorians. In March this year, the Commonwealth Grants Commission presented its report on the recommended relativities to be applied to the financial assistance grants provided to the states and the Territory. For the first time, the Territory was assessed on the same basis as were the states, even though this presented the commission with a number of severe difficulties. The commission recommended a reduction in the Territory's per capita relativity which, on the basis of most recent population estimates, would have resulted in a reduction of some \$59m in the Territory's tax-sharing grant. The commission itself cautioned against the implementation of the new relativities, but the Territory was included in the states' pool and will receive financial assistance grants on the same basis as will the states.

After a concerted Territory campaign, the Commonwealth agreed at the Premiers Conference to provide \$57.5m of special revenue assistance in 1988-89. While this special revenue assistance has been provided in 1988-89, there is no guarantee that it will continue in future years. Accordingly, there is a deal of uncertainty regarding the level of funding which will be available to the Territory in 1989-90 and beyond and, for that reason, particular attention has been paid in the budget strategy to avoiding, as far as possible, permanent increases in the current expenditure base. Having weathered the storm of the last 3 years, the government is now able to bring down a budget which will have analysts searching long and hard for bad news. At this time, I will briefly cover a few of the major initiatives contained in this budget.

The government has frozen Housing Commission rents over the current financial year. There will be no increase until the second half of 1989 at the earliest. This is a move which will have a direct impact on the hip pockets of over 6000 Territorians and their families. Marginal adjustments will be necessary to rent rebates as required by the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement, but the Territory's concessional rent scheme remains the most generous in Australia.

The payroll tax exemption level has been increased from \$300 000 to \$400 000, backdated to 1 July 1988. This will provide immediate exemption from payroll tax liability for some 50 Territory employers and reduce the tax liability for another 300.

Compulsory motor vehicle insurance premiums payable under the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme administered by the Territory Insurance Office will fall by 5%. After a review of the operation of the tourism marketing duty, it has been decided to exempt caravan parks from liability. Many caravan parks are operated by small businessmen and the administrative burden on them is disproportionate to the revenue derived from this source. No other changes to that tax are contemplated.

There are no new taxes or charges introduced in this budget, nor will any be introduced during the current financial year. But, despite a reduction in the financial impact of the government on all Territorians, despite cuts and a freeze on Housing Commission rents and despite no new taxes or charges, this budget will maintain and, in many cases, enhance the level of services provided by the government to the people of the Northern Territory.

A start on the long-awaited redevelopment of the Darwin International Airport is anticipated this year. While the amount of work committed is dependent on next week's federal budget, the Northern Territory government has been given borrowing authority for its share of the project. \$49m is committed to the Department of Lands and Housing for its capital works program, an 18% increase on last year's figure. Of this amount, \$39m is for new and redeveloped housing, including Aboriginal housing. The Department of Industries and Development will receive an additional \$4.6m for a range of important industry assistance packages to establish new industries in the Territory.

\$6.2m has been committed for a new fishing industry wharf and ancillary facilities at East Arm, designed to complement the mooring basin and to encourage the establishment of additional onshore support for the fast growing Territory offshore fishery. \$2.5m has been provided to the Trade Development Zone to construct 2 new factories and to extend services for another 14 factory sites. A \$6.3m construction program has been approved for extensions to Darwin and Alice Springs museums. This will include the establishment of an aviation museum in Darwin, extensions to the Alice Springs Aviation Museum and additional space to house the maritime collection in Darwin. The Conservation Commission has an additional \$6.3m in 1988-89, \$5.8m of which is provided for capital works in Territory parks.

The University College of the Northern Territory will employ an additional 18 staff needed for third-year courses, and almost \$1m has been allocated for new works necessary to accommodate third-year physics and law students.

Even though the government is implementing a range of major new initiatives without new taxes or charges, again this is a balanced budget and confirms the government's credentials as a sound economic and financial manager. It has lowered the costs of government and released resources for Territory development. It is a platform for another decade of strong economic growth.

All Territorians are aware of the impact of national economic circumstances on the economy of the Northern Territory. This was no better illustrated than by the impact of severely-reduced federal funding in the 1987-88 Territory budget. However, the past financial year provided the first good economic news Australians have had for some time. Economic growth in Australia is now just over 4% with only 5 OECD member countries recording higher growth rates. National exports increased by 10% in the past year and they continue to make a positive contribution to that growth. Still of concern is the current account deficit which, in 1987-88, was close to \$11 000m. While inflation has fallen to 7%, it remains significantly higher than that of our major trading partners. Despite a fall in interest rates, those rates remain relatively high in terms of the global economy and are a clear disincentive to investment.

On the wages front, it is pleasing to note that growth in real wages has been constrained. However, it is of concern that the Commonwealth has suggested that the tight rein on wages growth can be loosened. Restraint

shown over recent years by workers and unions alike has been commendable but, while it may have been fair to reward that restraint through last week's national wage case, it would be unfortunate if all that had been achieved over those years is jeopardised through the inflationary impact of further wage rises unsustainable by the Australian economy.

While the Northern Territory's economy operates within and responds to significant changes in the Australian economy, it is also affected to an extent greater than the states by the level of internal activity and aggregate government spending. Our macro-economic indicators continue to show strong growth. Since self-government, the Territory's gross domestic product has grown at a rate significantly higher than that for Australia as a whole. The Territory's inflation rate of 6.5% remains lower than that for Australia and for all but 1 state. Wage growth has been lower than the national average due in part to the Territory government's actions during 1987-88.

Territory exports in 1987-88 were again far greater than imports in that year by a ratio of 2.5:1 which was in marked contrast to the national current account deficit. Minerals again dominated our export figures accounting for 72% of the total in 1987-88 and oil and gas are also becoming important export products. Imports have risen slightly but this rise is attributable in the main to imports of capital equipment for further development in the Timor Sea oilfields.

Rural industries continue to return strong performances. The value of horticultural production last year, at \$13m, well exceeded expectations and future prospects for the pastoral industry are widely regarded as the best they have been for many years. In the area of fisheries and related industries, the Territory has seen the opening of 2 fish-processing plants over the past year with more likely to follow as the huge potential of the Territory's offshore fishery is further identified and exploited. Licences have been issued to allow 4 companies to establish pearl-farming operations in the Territory and a further announcement in this regard will be made shortly by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. Over coming years, pearl culture is expected to develop as a significant export earner.

Tourism continues to play an increasingly important role in the Territory's economy and the prospects for this industry in future years are virtually limitless. There are also exciting prospects for a new company which will tan exotic leather and add further value through an integrated manufacturing operation. Crocodile skins, which were exported raw previously to Japan, will soon be tanned and processed into leather goods in the Territory. Fish skins, which were discarded previously, will return value to fishermen and the company alike. This new industry illustrates what this government's development strategy is about. It is about identifying and exploiting the Territory's natural advantages and resources and about adding value to those resources through processing and manufacturing. The government's strategy is working. The Territory is making the transition from an economy underpinned by the public sector to one in which the private sector will take its rightful place as the cornerstone of future economic growth.

Despite these positive signs, it has been of concern to the government that 2 related indicators of economic activity - population growth and numbers employed - are estimated to have declined during the last financial year. However, these estimates must be kept in perspective. Since self-government, we have seen a rapid growth in both population and employment, growth which has far outstripped that of any state. Between the census collections of 1981 and 1986, the Territory's population grew at the rate of 5% a year, with

slightly over 1% for Australia. Employment growth was equally dramatic. After 10 years of unprecedented growth, there was a slowdown last year - a slowdown which would be expected to occur in any economy after a period of such strong growth.

The Northern Territory's population growth is governed by 3 key components - natural increase, overseas migration and interstate migration. Natural increase is higher in the Territory than elsewhere. Our young population profile and the high birth rate of Aboriginal people in the Territory will ensure that this will continue. Overseas migration to the Territory averaged over 100 a month in the latest period for which estimates are available and this government has made a commitment that overseas migration should increase. Interstate migration, however, appears to have fallen during the last wet season, but such a trend was expected given the seasonal downturn, the completion of major projects such as the Channel Island Power Station, the gas pipeline and the Tindal RAAF Base during 1987, and the huge cuts to Territory funding over the previous 3 financial years. These influences resulted in a major decline in the amount of funds flowing into the Territory and contributed to the downturn in the Territory economy.

The budget strategy this year is about jobs in the private sector, both in the short and long term and, with those jobs, a return to vigorous growth. It is about allocating resources efficiently both to support and to encourage the private sector while maintaining and enhancing the level of services provided by the government to all Territorians. In this regard, the government has established 3 key parameters.

First, honourable members will be pleased to note that \$23m in recurrent funds has been earmarked in this budget for expanded initiatives and a further \$172m has been committed for new capital works. This welcome injection of cash into the Territory economy follows 3 years of enforced restraint. A balance was struck between the amount to be provided for services and the development activities needed to promote strong, sound economic growth. Secondly, additional funds have been found through efficiency measures across the public sector rather than cuts in services. Even though a range of new programs will be implemented, there will be no significant increase in public service staffing numbers. Thirdly, there are no new taxes or charges and, as indicated earlier, there are significant reductions in payroll tax for resident Territory employers, and a freeze on Housing Commission rents.

An overview of the budget shows that total expenditure by the government and its authorities will be \$1561m in 1988-89, an increase of \$55m or 3.5% over 1987-88. As has been the pattern in recent years, the Commonwealth portion of funds provided for these expenditures is decreasing. Commonwealth funding in 1988-89 is \$975m or 62% of total Northern Territory public-sector receipts in comparison with 64% in 1987-88. This is a lower percentage than has been reported traditionally in the budget because the comparison is in terms of total public-sector receipts rather than simply receipts into the Consolidated Fund.

Receipts from Territory sources total \$519m, an increase of \$52m over 1987-88. Part of this increase is due to the carry-over of cash in authorities for commitments entered into in 1987-88 but not paid for until 1988-89. Use of semi-government borrowings in this budget is projected to decline by 10% to \$68m in 1988-89. However, provision has been reserved within the approved global borrowing limit for the redevelopment of Darwin Airport and for the State Square project.

In terms of economic development expenditure, in 1988 - as it was in 1978 and no doubt will be in 1998 - the focus of the Territory government's economic strategy is on continuing Territory development. It is the government's primary task to facilitate the growth of industry. This is the key to a buoyant economy, more business and employment opportunities, improving standards of government services and a better lifestyle for all Territorians. This budget places special emphasis on the government's role as a catalyst for expansion of existing business and the establishment of new industries. Particular attention will be paid to value-added manufacturing and processing to ensure the Territory extracts maximum value from the development of its rich, natural resources.

Minerals, oil and gas are of major importance to the Northern Territory. These contribute 15.7% to the Territory's gross domestic product. The value of production in 1987 was over \$1200m. Mining royalties are expected to increase to \$13m in 1988-89. The gross value of mineral production was \$984m in 1987, a 25% increase over the previous year. There has been outstanding growth in gold production. Almost 9000 kg of gold was produced in the Territory in 1987, 8% of the total Australian production and an increase of 69% over the previous year.

The oil and gas industry continues its spectacular growth. It presents the most exciting prospects for the Territory, and value of production has increased dramatically from \$24m in 1985 to \$350m in 1988. Exploration activity in the Timor Sea is the most intensive of any offshore operation in Australia. In March this year, there were 32 active permits, 17 onshore and 15 offshore, and the successful bidders for 7 new areas will be announced shortly. Production from Jabiru will expand with the completion of the third stage and tenders for construction of facilities for Challis have been let. Production will start in 1989. Mr Speaker, 5 rigs are now active in the Timor Sea, and the stage is set for vigorous growth in both exploration and production in 1989.

To provide further incentive to the mining and petroleum industries in the Territory, \$1m will be provided to launch an intensive geological program to chart our mineral and energy assets. This major initiative will provide valuable data to industry within a short time frame. The geological program will concentrate on target areas: the Tanami, East Arnhem Land, the Kakadu Conservation Zone, Tennant Creek Inlier and the McArthur Basin for minerals, the Eromanga and Amadeus Basins for onshore petroleum, and the Arafura and Bonaparte Basins for offshore oil and gas. The work will involve airborne geophysics, field studies, upgrading of databases and preparation of data packages and exploration maps. The Territory's knowledge of its resources will be increased substantially and industry will be shown the quick and efficient path to mineral and petroleum production to the benefit of all Australians.

Construction will start before the end of the dry season on a \$2m ring road which will link current and prospective mining operations in the Pine Creek area. This will mean that previously marginal deposits can be mined and ore carried to processing facilities at other larger operations. Another element of the strategy to develop the important Pine Creek mining region is the delivery of gas-powered electricity to these mining operations. A privately-owned 10.8 MW substation will be built at Pine Creek. This will provide power to the Moline and Pine Creek goldmines and allow opportunities for many other mining operations in the area to join the electricity grid. That is a small component of the government's drive to connect increasing numbers of industrial and commercial users to gas-powered electricity.

We are all acutely aware of the high costs of electricity generation in the Territory. The Territory has enormous potential advantages in electricity generation in that we have substantial natural gas reserves, and outstanding assets in the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline and the gas-fired Channel Island Power Station. The task before us is to attract large users of gas and gas-powered electricity, thereby bringing about the economies of scale needed to stabilise electricity production costs. In simple terms, the more gas we use, the cheaper it becomes to produce electricity. When large-scale consumers take up gas-powered electricity on a major scale, domestic electricity will be a far cheaper commodity for the government to offer its citizens. Just as importantly, it will give the government flexibility to offer electricity tariff packages to attract industry investors and allow business expansion. The Minister for Mines and Energy is addressing this vital issue and I expect that decisions on large-scale gas-related projects will be made in the near future.

This budget does not increase power costs for Territory consumers and I remind honourable members that electricity tariffs have not risen since October 1986. However, in the short term, the substantial cost to government of producing electricity remains of great concern.

Mr Speaker, tourism continues to be a major growth industry with almost unlimited potential. It contributes more to the Territory's economy than it does to that of any of the states. The allocation for tourism has been increased by \$1.3m this year, in addition to the \$2m allocated late in 1987-88 for increased marketing efforts. This brings the total provided to the Tourist Commission to \$16.1m. The commission will almost double its international marketing budget to over \$1.6m and will spend more than \$2.6m on the marketing of the Territory within Australia. In addition, the commission will open offices in New York and Vancouver to further tap the lucrative North American market, while the London office will be expanded to service strong growth in the European market. The activities of Territory tourist bureaus in Australia will be enhanced by locating to prominent new premises in Sydney and Perth, and by refurbishing the offices in Adelaide, Parramatta, Canberra and Brisbane.

More than 9000 Territorians are now directly employed in this industry which, last financial year, brought in more than \$300m. Tourist numbers in 1987-88 rose to 830 000 from 709 000 in the previous year - an increase of 17%. This is an exceptional performance in a year when Australian tourism generally was being dominated by Expo. Visitor numbers are expected to increase to 1.1 million by 1991 and to more than 2 million by the year 2000.

Mr Speaker, this budget reaffirms the government's commitment to conserving the Territory's essential natural resources while promoting and enhancing the tourist industry. In 1988-89, it is proposed to spend \$1.2m on the development of visitor facilities at Tolmer, Florence, Sandy Creek and Wangi Falls in Litchfield Park. A total of \$4.4m will have been spent by the end of this financial year on major access roads in the park. 1988-89 is the final year of a 3-year development program, costing \$6.7m, to create the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. It will open late this year and will display the Territory's unique wildlife in world-class surroundings. The park has attracted international interest as one of the most advanced zoo concepts in the world.

To further develop the Territory's infrastructure and tourism, it is planned to spend \$700 000 in the next 2 years to develop 23 km of access road along the Upper Roper River, together with associated visitor facilities.

\$600 000 has been provided in the budget for visitor facilities and parking infrastructure in the West MacDonnell Ranges.

Mr Speaker, this budget places great emphasis on the growth and development of industry and the marketing and promotion of Territory products and services. Total expenditure on these functions will increase in 1988-89 to a total of \$38m. Of this, \$4.6m will be provided to the Department of Industries and Development for the establishment of major new industries in the Territory.

The government has continued its commitment to the Trade Development Zone, established to improve the manufacturing base of the Northern Territory for export-oriented industries and for the promotion of Darwin as a distribution centre for both imported and exported goods. The marketing component for 1988-89 will include targeting of specific industries and \$60 000 has been approved to commission 3 industry feasibility studies. Funding of \$2.5m has been provided to the zone for the extension of the current subdivision and for the construction of 2 factories totalling over 3000 m<sup>2</sup>. The factories will house 2 significant manufacturers, and will generate 150 new jobs.

Development in the primary industry sector of the Territory economy is being assisted by an enhanced effort in the joint Commonwealth Northern Territory Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, with an expenditure of \$21.9m compared with \$15.5m last year. It is anticipated that 'declared free' status for brucellosis will be achieved by December 1988 and 'impending free' for tuberculosis by 1992. The campaign's major aim in 1988-89 is to complete the majority of bush destocking. New arrangements have been adopted following an agreement in February between the Commonwealth, states and the industry. These arrangements include such incentives as a mustering subsidy of up to \$10 a head, extension of loan assistance to include debt reconstruction and payment of an interest subsidy where loans are funded by private finance, elimination of the 200 km limit for the restocking freight rebate, and revised compensation schemes to reflect the value of animals destroyed or destocked.

The budget also includes \$1.9m for support loans to buffalo industry producers for the purchase of breeding stock and other improvements. Turn-off in the buffalo industry increased by 13% in 1987, with high-quality meat finding a ready market in Europe and South-east Asia. These new incentives will assist the industry in developing the size and quality of herds to take further advantage of these lucrative markets. The program will be implemented by the Department of Industries and Development in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Other major items include the provision of over \$1m for support to the grain and milling industries and \$1.4m in drought relief subsidies to meet anticipated restocking following the break in drought conditions in the southern region.

The budget reaffirms the government's commitment to develop the full potential of the Territory's fishing industry. Work to convert facilities at the decommissioned Stokes Hill Power Station into a barramundi hatchery is nearing completion. The project is designed to facilitate the development of barramundi aquaculture, and preliminary discussions are presently under way with several companies on joint hatchery proposals.

The design and construction of new berthing facilities for fishing vessels at East Arm, estimated to cost a total of \$6.2m, will start in 1988-89. The project is the initial phase of a development to attract onshore processing of fish products. In this regard, the government is also negotiating with a

major foreign fishing fleet to invest in infrastructure and to base a substantial part of its fleet in Darwin. The Territory's offshore fishery shows great promise and the government has insisted that benefits to the Territory must be demonstrated by any foreign fishing fleets which fish our waters. The Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries anticipates being able to make further announcements about this matter later in the year.

Important research and development projects include an aquaculture pilot project in Alice Springs designed to produce information for prospective investors in the production of beta-carotene, an algae used in food processing. The government will introduce a quality trademark system for Territory fish products entering interstate markets. The need for the trademark was identified through industry associations. Its use will be voluntary and users will be required to meet quality guidelines.

The outstanding growth in horticultural production continues. Value of production was \$13m in 1987, a 58% increase over the previous year. The Territory remains a major exporter of increasing quantities of rock melons to South-east Asia where the exceptional quality of Territory melons attracts premium prices. The Manbulloo Mango Farm is expected to produce a \$2.5m crop this year, a yield which will increase as trees mature over coming seasons, and Territory Grape Farms at Ti Tree is expected to produce a \$1m crop this year. Research will continue to determine the viability of establishing a cashew industry in the Northern Territory. A recent visit to the Wildman River cashew trial by senior London executives of Nabisco was particularly successful, and prospects for a major cashew industry are promising. An additional \$548 000 has been provided for the continuing development of a proposal to attract commercial investment in a pulp and paper industry based on locally-grown kenaf.

Honourable members will be aware that, following the completion in 1987-88 of the major projects associated with the oil-to-gas conversion of the Territory's power generating systems, a considerable reduction in allocations to the Power and Water Authority has been possible. However, the authority will be undertaking projects which will upgrade the Territory's facilities and infrastructure in 1988-89. Additional 4 MW to 6 MW generating sets will be provided at the Tennant Creek Power Station, and the Darwin River Dam to McMinns water pipeline duplication project will be completed. A pilot project will be implemented to prove and facilitate further private development of new diesel-battery-powered generation technology for rural and remote areas. The technology offers significant energy conservation and capital and operating cost savings for small, private and commercial plant up to 25 kW as well as savings to the authority at its small, remote power sites.

A new bore field to augment domestic and mining industry water consumption at Pine Creek will be developed. The Darwin sewer rehabilitation program will continue in the Rapid Creek, Nightcliff, Fannie Bay and Larrakeyah areas. This program will reduce ground infiltration from the old system and, as a consequence, will reduce pumping costs. The Rapid Creek sewage pumping station is to be modified to reduce odour and the possibility of future wet season outflows into Rapid Creek.

Funds have been provided to the Department of Lands and Housing for the completion of design work to open the way for land release at Gunn Point. This should result in serviced residential and commercial land being made available in the vicinity of Shoal Bay, and the release of unserviced weekend sites. The government has provided funding for specific design studies of the East Arm peninsula aimed at extending waterfront development.



This work in 1988-89 should pave the way for capital works in following years, resulting in land turnoff for waterside enterprises and commercial development.

In relation to services expenditure, the accent of government policy in this budget is on necessary Territory development. This is not just for the sake of development, but as the only practical means of generating a healthy economy which can deliver quality standards of government services to the community and bring about improvement in the living standards of all Territorians. Ultimately, that is what government is all about. It seeks to offer its citizens a safe and secure environment in which they can thrive and prosper. In 1988-89, those high standards will be maintained.

In health and welfare, funding has increased by \$18m to a total of \$256m. A new hospital wing will be built in Katherine at a cost of \$3.8m. The project includes 2 operating theatres, a delivery suite, a central sterilising department and a 20-bed obstetrics and gynaecology ward. At the Royal Darwin Hospital, almost \$2m will be spent to upgrade radiology equipment. Clinics and staff accommodation will be provided at Lake Nash, Mt Liebig and Harts Range at a total cost of \$451 000.

In the area of mental health, the Tamarind Centre will be upgraded at a cost of \$280 000, and \$225 000 will be spent on the development of a regional mental health service. In community welfare, priority has been given to child care and protection. This budget provides \$446 000 to establish a Child Protection Unit to safeguard the welfare of children. Other initiatives include \$700 000 for child-care centres in Karama, Tennant Creek and the Darwin rural area.

Emphasis has been placed on initiatives in Aboriginal education. Post Year 7 education in Aboriginal communities will be upgraded substantially with the establishment of community education centres at Yuendumu, Barunga, Angurugu, Galiwinku, Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Maningrida and Borroloola. This will cost \$1.3m and employ 22 additional staff.

In Katherine, the former high school will be converted to a TAFE college which will include a library to be jointly administered with the Katherine Town Council. The college will greatly advance the provision of adult education services to Katherine and surrounding regions. Funding of \$560 000 has been provided. Other initiatives of note include \$250 000 for the Indonesian Vocational and Technical Aid Program which will enable exchange visits of senior TAFE officers between the Territory and the eastern provinces of Indonesia, and \$186 000 to continue the Video Loan Scheme of the School of the Air.

The merger of the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology will be completed in 1989, achieving a greater level of efficiency in the delivery of tertiary education. The merger was prompted by recent changes in Commonwealth policy and is being implemented in the Territory on the understanding that, as in the states, university education will now become fully funded by the Commonwealth. Courses in business, economics, law and education will be expanded in 1989 and access to tertiary education will be enhanced when child-minding facilities at the university campus start operating next year.

In line with established needs, the government is continuing with a reduced program for construction of Housing Commission houses. 176 new dwellings will be commenced in 1988-89. In addition, the program of housing

construction on Aboriginal communities will be maintained. This program, which is partly funded by the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement, will provide grants to Aboriginal organisations to construct 230 dwellings. Each community or organisation will have the opportunity to build the dwellings or to arrange contracts and seek assistance from the Department of Lands and Housing for contract administration. The Housing Commission will be accelerating the program launched last year to upgrade its older dwelling stock. This year, \$6m will be directed to unit complexes and older houses in Darwin, \$3.5m in Alice Springs and \$1.3m in Katherine.

Police funding has been increased by \$4.6m to a total of \$55m. Funds have been provided for an additional 26 constables, and 12 police cadets will be recruited in February. Initiatives to counter domestic violence have been introduced to ensure offenders are prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Other community safety projects include the Safety House, Stranger Danger and pilot Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. The administration of justice will be enhanced by a computerised judicial information system. This will provide vital information to police, the courts and correctional services and replace a system no longer adequate to cope with community demands.

The budget provides for a major upgrading of fire service equipment. \$385 000 will be spent equipping Darwin's Iliffe Street Fire Station, now nearing completion, and \$243 000 is provided for a replacement tanker, fire units and basic accommodation for Volunteer Rural Fire Brigades. Twenty-two volunteer brigades provide services in rural areas and Aboriginal communities, and 9 auxiliary firefighters will be employed at the Jabiru station. A new fire station will form part of the tri-service complex in Katherine. The Bushfires Council will spend about \$60 000 on a new fire control region encompassing the rapidly-expanding rural population around Katherine, and \$100 000 has been allocated for fire control on Crown land in the Darwin rural area.

The spread of the noxious weed *Mimosa pigra* poses a major threat to the Top End wetlands environment which, in turn, has a detrimental effect on tourist, hunting, boating and fishing activities. The government has committed almost \$1m to an integrated mimosa control program. The program will be administered by the Conservation Commission, the Department of Lands and Housing and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and is expected to continue over the next 5 years while biological control methods are developed and tested.

The government is acutely aware of the employment needs of the community and the requirement that young Territorians be able to enter meaningful employment. To this end, a wide range of programs will be funded to provide young people with skills appropriate for current and future labour markets. Assistance will be given to school leavers to obtain employment by way of an \$880 000 program.

The Aboriginal Development Branch of the Department of Labour and Administrative Services has devised a private sector group intake scheme to complement the existing and successful public sector program. The \$350 000 scheme includes the conduct of courses in the development of computer, creative writing and public relation skills. Other new programs which will assist in providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in rural areas include the jackaroo training scheme, a community-based tour guide program, enterprise development workshops and a program developing the manufacture of furniture. Funding of more than \$300 000 has been provided in these areas.

In relation to capital works expenditure, I have referred to a number of important capital works projects which will start this year. However, in view of the significance of capital outlays, particularly in the construction sector, it is appropriate that I offer further comment. Total expenditure on all capital outlays detailed in the budget, including acquisitions, capital items and construction activities, will decline slightly in 1988-89. In the construction sector, new works in the capital works program are \$45m higher than last year. However, because of the completion of a number of projects in 1987-88, most notably in electricity generation, the revote into 1988-89 is less than last year, and this has offset the increase in new works. Nevertheless, the value of the capital works program in 1988-89 totals \$270m, including 3 large government-related projects. These are the development of State Square, the redevelopment of Darwin Airport and the construction of the Darwin to Katherine electricity transmission line.

There are a number of new revenue initiatives in 1988-89 which are designed specifically to assist small Territory business and, in those areas where it is reasonable to do so, adopt state-like rates and practices. Increases in rates of taxes and charges have been kept to a minimum. In payroll tax, significant reductions have been introduced and caravan parks have been exempted from the tourism marketing duty. Water charges will rise on 1 October by 2c per 1000 L. Revenue targets will be achieved largely through improving the efficiency of collection methods and by reducing avenues for avoidance. As a consequence, the taxation burden on business will be spread more equitably. There has been only one change - in stamp duty rates - and this does not increase imposts beyond those which are experienced in the states.

The transfer of effective title to rural property by certain land holding companies or unit trusts will no longer be possible at the marketable securities rate of duty. As in the states, transfers of this nature will now be subject to duty at conveyancing rates. Other measures will ensure that, where there is an existing requirement for a dutiable instrument to be prepared, the duty is not avoided by carrying out these transactions on an oral basis. It is estimated that an additional \$1.5m will be raised in a full year through these measures.

The other area of avoidance is stamp duty on insurance policies, where the Grants Commission has assessed that the Territory has a capacity to raise an extra \$2m a year. While part of the additional taxable capacity is due to the lower rates of tax that apply in the Territory, the main reason is avoidance, often unwitting, of the duty payable. It is proposed, therefore, to mount a concerted campaign to ensure that the duty payable within the Northern Territory is in fact paid. This may mean a policy will have to be written in the Northern Territory if double duty is to be avoided. As part of a strategy for preventing future avoidance, an amnesty will be provided to all those with a current liability provided that, in future, the duty is paid in the Northern Territory. This amnesty will extend until 31 December 1988, after which time the full force of the tax laws will be brought to bear. It is considered reasonable to offer this amnesty on the grounds of equity as, in most cases, stamp duty will have been paid interstate. It is expected that the amnesty will prompt those with insurable risks to review their insurance status and pay the Territory duty, thereby reducing the extent to which investigations have to be carried out.

Loan security duty is to be increased from 30c per \$100 to 40c per \$100. This increase is necessary to bring the Territory duty to the same level as that imposed by most states. At the same time, the definition of 'mortgage'

will be amended to overcome any uncertainty arising as a consequence of past interpretation by the courts. These measures will raise an additional \$600 000 in a full year.

A recent interpretation of section 92 of the Constitution by the High Court has necessitated a review of the Business Franchise Act. The act will be amended to ensure that revenue from this source will not be jeopardised. Any avenue for avoidance which may have been opened as a consequence of the High Court decision will be closed by requiring retailers of petroleum and tobacco products to be licensed. While this changes the current licensing system which focuses on wholesalers, increases in the prices of these commodities are not anticipated. The amendments will have effect from the date of the High Court decision to ensure that there is no hiatus in licensing. The penalties for tax evasion in this instance will be increased from \$1000 to \$20 000. Legislation necessary to implement these revenue measures will be introduced during the current sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I draw the attention of honourable members to the fact that the budget papers this year are presented in a form significantly different to that of previous years. Budget Paper No 2 now includes comprehensive information on the Appropriation Bill, special appropriations and revenue sources.

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

Mr COULTER: (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Treasurer be granted an extension of time to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON: Budget Paper No 3 is a new document which assembles the significant features of the budget and presents, for the first time, consolidated information on the budget in a range of formats. This paper provides commentary on major financial issues. It includes a form of presentation advocated by the federal Treasurer as part of his objective to have consistent reporting formats for all public-sector expenditure and receipts. The essential purpose is macro-economic policy, and the Territory is pleased to cooperate. Budget Paper No 4 contains the detailed estimates behind the budget and covers the whole of the Northern Territory's public sector.

Honourable members will note the change in the structure of expenditure to a program-budgeting format. Details have been provided of the programs of all departments and authorities. Appropriation continues, however, to be provided in its traditional form by division and subdivision.

Budget Paper No 5, Capital Works, has been supplemented with information on expected committal target dates and expenditure for major projects. This is designed to be of assistance to the construction and related industries. Budget Paper No 6 continues the precedent which was well received last year, and provides valuable information on the Territory's economy and its future prospects.

Mr Speaker, before concluding, I would like to place on record the government's appreciation of the work of the former Treasurer, the Deputy Chief Minister, who maintained the government's record of balanced budgets during the most difficult financial period since self-government. This budget

will pick up the pace of Territory growth. It will be growth sustained increasingly by the private sector.

For a decade, the government has been setting the scene for this transition. We have put in place the infrastructure vital for a resource-rich economy to capitalise on those resources, to add value to them, and to enter world markets. We have put in place the social infrastructure necessary to give the people of the Territory an outstanding environment and lifestyle. This budget will see the Northern Territory throw off its cinderella tag forever. It will be remembered as a turning point for the Territory after 3 difficult years. It is a budget designed to take the Territory into the next decade with an ever-stronger economy. Introducing significant new initiatives, while reducing the burden of government on the private sector, it is a budget for growth. Maintaining and enhancing the services provided to the public while introducing no new taxes or charges, it is a budget for all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT  
Suspension of Member for Stuart

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, during the luncheon recess, I discussed with the member for Stuart his naming and subsequent suspension during yesterday's sitting. Mr Ede has advised me that he did not hear that he was being called to order prior to the naming and that, had he done so, he would have resumed his seat. Mr Ede has apologised to me.

In accordance with the House of Representatives' practice and with the concurrence of honourable members, I propose to permit Mr Ede to take his seat in the Chamber and to apologise to the Chair. Again with the concurrence of honourable members, I propose that, following his apology, Mr Ede's suspension be revoked.

Serjeant-at-Arms, please ask the honourable member for Stuart to attend in his place.

STATEMENT  
Apology by Member for Stuart

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, honourable members, prior to my being named yesterday, I understand, from reading Hansard, that the Speaker called for order on 3 occasions. Unfortunately, I did not hear him. Mr Speaker has advised me that he named me because he was of the opinion that I was persistently and wilfully ignoring the Chair. If I did ignore the Chair, Mr Speaker, you may be assured that I did so inadvertently and would never do so intentionally. Mr Speaker, I apologise to the Chair for any offence which I may have caused.

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 126)

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 ensure that legislation relating to public places, however described, applies on Aboriginal land in the same way as it applies on non-Aboriginal land. Section 74 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act envisages that the law of the Northern Territory, to the extent that it is capable of operating concurrently with the act, applies to Aboriginal land. Many provisions of the Northern Territory laws are expressed to be related to public places, public streets and other references to the quality of publicity. Some examples include the Traffic Act, the Motor Vehicles Act, the Places of Public Entertainment Act, the Place Names Act and the Motor Accidents Compensation Act.

In 1963, Justice Bridge had before him in the Supreme Court a matter involving certain behaviour on a public street which was alleged to constitute an offence. However, the place at which the incident occurred was an Aboriginal reserve under the then Social Welfare Ordinance. That ordinance prohibited access to the land to all but Aboriginals and certain other persons. In view of the statutory exclusion, Justice Bridge held that the street was not a public street which, by definition, must be open to or used by the public. In other words, the restricted class did not constitute the 'public' at law. The Social Welfare Ordinance was amended subsequently and a definition made it clear that the 'public' in the definition of 'public street' included, in relation to Aboriginal reserves, the section of the public not excluded under the ordinance. The efficiency of the amendment was tested subsequently and, in 1975, Justice Muirhead ruled that the amendment was sufficient to overcome the defect and ensure that public streets or public places on land reserved under the Social Welfare Ordinance remained public for the purposes of the law.

The advent of the Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 made the Social Welfare Ordinance redundant, at least in so far as it related to reserves. The act itself contained prohibitions of a similar legal effect to those of the Social Welfare Ordinance and the formula used to overcome that ordinance became irrelevant in relation to Aboriginal land.

The need for a corrective definition in Northern Territory legislation was overlooked at the time the Land Rights Act came into force and has only recently come to light. It is necessary to ensure that the provisions of laws of the Territory that expressly or impliedly provide that a right, obligation or liability arises or is imposed by reference to actions on or the existence of a public street, road or place, however described, are not prevented from applying on Aboriginal land by reason only that most persons other than Aboriginals are precluded from entering or remaining on that Aboriginal land.

An example of the potential problem is found in the Motor Accidents Compensation Act. The operation of section 7 of that act, which refers to benefits in respect of injuries, hinges on the definition of 'accident' in section 4. The term 'accident' means firstly an occurrence on a public street caused by a motor vehicle. In those circumstances, a Territory resident has an entitlement to benefits. Where the accident occurs on any place other than a public street, the resident's entitlement depends on additional criteria such as whether the accident was caused by a Territory motor vehicle in respect of which a compensation contribution was paid. There may be occasions where a Northern Territory resident on Aboriginal land does not meet these additional criteria and therefore may be left outside the ambit of section 7 because of the problem with the word 'public'. Clearly, this was not the intention of the legislature.

Similar arguments exist in relation to offences under the Traffic Act dealing with public place etc. The Traffic Act's purpose is the protection of pedestrians and those who use roads and motor vehicles as a means of conveyance. It would be unforgivable of this legislature that such protection did not extend to pedestrians and users of motor vehicles on Aboriginal land. A search of current legislation reveals a plethora of such offending provisions. In view of the breadth of the problem, because of the number of acts in which a reference to the public or the publicity of a location occurs, it would not be satisfactory to incorporate in each act an amendment in terms similar to that inserted in the Social Welfare Ordinance. An omnibus declaration provision in an amendment to the Interpretation Act is considered to be more appropriate.

The bill inserts a new section 59A into the Interpretation Act. Subsection (1) of proposed new section 59A provides that:

Where by or under the law of the Territory a right, privilege, obligation or liability is expressed or implied to be acquired, accrued or incurred by reference to a public place, public street, public road, place of public resort or other place, however described, open to or used by the public or to which the public has access, whether as of right or on the payment of a fee or other charge, that reference includes, and shall be deemed always to have included, any place which but for the fact that it was on Aboriginal land within the meaning of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 of the Commonwealth would have been included in such a reference, and even though it is open to or used only by those persons who are not precluded by that act of the Commonwealth or the Aboriginal Land Act from entering or remaining on that Aboriginal land.

Subsection (2) of proposed new section 59A provides that:

For the purposes of a law of the Territory referred to in subsection (1), the persons who are not precluded by the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 of the Commonwealth or the Aboriginal Land Act from entering or remaining on Aboriginal land shall be deemed to constitute, and always to have constituted, a section of the public in relation to that land.

Clause 2(2) of the bill states the object of the amendment is to ensure that a place, street or other place referred to in the amendment situated on Aboriginal land which would be, but for being so situated, a public place, public street, public road, however described, shall have that status, notwithstanding that certain persons are precluded from entering or remaining on that Aboriginal land. The clause goes on to say that a construction of a law that would promote that object is to be preferred to a construction that would not promote that object. Clause 2(3) provides that nothing in the amendment shall be taken to permit a person entering or remaining on Aboriginal land who would not otherwise be entitled to do so.

Mr Speaker, I was rather disturbed by a news story that I heard on the ABC at lunchtime. I would like to make it very clear that this piece of legislation does not change the circumstances that exist at the moment. Private property on Aboriginal land remains private property. A public place on Aboriginal land, a public street or whatever, remains a public place or public street. This legislation is to ensure that the law is correct in relation to the practice and procedures that operate presently and have

operated for many years. Aboriginal people must have the same protection at law as all other Australians and all other Territorians. The proposed legislation merely clarifies and removes beyond doubt what has always been understood to be the case. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

NATURAL DEATH BILL  
(Serial 113)

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 Natural Death Bill is in similar terms to the Natural Death Act 1983 of South Australia and permits a person of 18 years or over to make a 'direction' that that person not be given extraordinary, life-prolonging measures if that person is suffering from a terminal illness. The bill provides for and gives legal effect to directions against the artificial prolongation of the natural dying process. This therefore ensures that a terminally-ill patient will be able, if that person chooses, to issue a direction that extraordinary measures are not to be taken when death is inevitable and imminent. A point often arises in the treatment of the terminally ill where the emotional cost and suffering associated with extraordinary medical measures designed to sustain life are worse than allowing the patient to die peacefully and naturally.

The proposition is straightforward. Terminally-ill adults have, with some minor exceptions, the absolute right to refuse medical treatment, and no doctor is permitted to treat a patient against that patient's known wishes. While a patient is conscious and aware of his or her rights and able to signify his or her consent or otherwise to treatment, no problem should arise. If a patient is unconscious or heavily sedated and, therefore, unable to exercise his or her right to refuse or consent to treatment, then the treatment at that stage of a terminal illness is entirely at the discretion of the doctor. The patient may not have wanted the treatment given by the doctor but, because of the condition the patient was in, he or she was unable to exercise his or her right to have that treatment withheld.

If passed, this bill will provide a framework that will ensure that any person who so desires will have his or her wishes and rights respected in the circumstances I have outlined. Although this would be the most important function of the bill, it would also have the effect of relieving the doctor and relatives of terminally-ill patients of the responsibility of deciding what extraordinary measures or treatment should or should not be applied.

This is a sensitive issue, and I think it is important to spell out clearly what the bill does not do. The bill restricts itself specifically to adults so that problems relating to terminally-ill children do not come within its scope. A person who has never been of sound mind does not come within the scope of the bill. The definitions in clause 3 of the bill state clearly that death has to be 'imminent' with no reasonable prospect of permanent or even temporary recovery, even if extraordinary measures of treatment were undertaken. Thus, a person who could be reasonably expected to go into the remission stage of an illness would not come within the ambit of the bill. Neither does the bill authorise any act that causes or accelerates death, as



distinct from an act that permits the dying process to take its natural course. Not only does it not authorise such acts but, in clause 7(2), it states specifically that it does not authorise such acts. While it may be somewhat unusual for a bill to state what it does not permit, this clause has been inserted consciously to avoid any misunderstanding by lay people reading the bill.

The bill answers some important medical legal questions. It does not disturb the present doctor-patient relationship unless the patient wants it disturbed. If it is disturbed, it is disturbed in favour of the patient by allowing the patient to assert his or her right to make his or her own decisions regarding what would be ineffective medical treatment in the case of terminal illness. This bill does not disadvantage anyone because no one's rights are adversely affected. Because of safeguards incorporated within the bill, it cannot be misused. In fact, it strengthens the patient's rights. The bill allows people who are about to die to have a say in their dying process. They cannot say whether or when they will die, but at least they can say how. I believe that is a right we should acknowledge.

In introducing the bill, I am inviting comment not only from both sides of this House, but also from the general public. Before I close, Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the assistance you gave to the government in the preparation of the bill and in bringing the concept to the notice of government members. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 112)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the substance of the bill itself is not controversial. It ensures that the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth have joint rolls. At present, these rolls are on the computer together. It is quite unlikely that any problems will arise in that situation except in the unlikely event of the federal government deciding to hold an election on the same date, or a date very close to, an election in the Northern Territory. There could be controversy in such a case in terms of priorities for the printing of rolls or work required to make last-minute amendments to the rolls.

I foreshadow that we will be introducing an amendment during the committee stage to attempt once again to establish a period between the issuing of the writs and the closure of the rolls. We introduced such an amendment on a previous occasion but, at that stage, honourable members opposite were unable to accept it. However, I note a report in the *Centralian Advocate* that the issuing of the writ, which will trigger the closure of the roll for the Flynn by-election, will not occur until next week. The Chief Minister indicates that that is true and I would like to congratulate him on that move. It will allow people in Flynn to have every opportunity to get on the roll. No one will be able to complain that he was unable to satisfy the necessary prerequisites to getting on the roll.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to some items that relate generally to rolls. I will be quoting fairly extensively from the report of the Australian Electoral Commission. I can table the document if members so wish. I intend to quote references to the rolls, but there are some other issues which members may wish to examine.

The point is made that, while the ratio of population to enrolment nationally is 8:5, in the Northern Territory it is 8:4 or 2:1. In fact, we have a significantly lower proportion of the people on the roll here than occurs nationally. The report states that many government employees on term employment in the Territory, military personnel on posting, construction and seasonal workers and others, such as long-term tourists, do tend to preserve their enrolment at the address in their home state to which they have a fixed intention of returning. Honourable members would know of instances where some people in the Territory, for one reason or another, evade enrolment.

Funds were provided during 1986-87 for an electoral roll review. Unfortunately, 55% of the review funds sought were originally allocated and the balance was made available in early 1987. By that stage, we had already called for the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election and, as a result, some 30% of those total review funds were handed back and the total review did not take place at that stage.

Another point is that about 1 Territory elector in 5 resides in a traditional Aboriginal community. Whilst it is easy to enrol those citizens, it is rather more difficult to maintain their enrolment accurately due to the mobility of the rural Aboriginal population and to some misunderstandings, on their part, as to their continuing enrolment obligations. Typically, Aboriginal people in rural areas become enrolled through the agency of party workers or field officers of the Aboriginal Electoral Information Service. I believe it is a duty of members of this House and of anybody who has an interest in the maintenance of our system of democracy to take whatever action he or she can to assist people to get on the rolls.

It is rather difficult to gain information on interstate mobility but, having regard to such factors as Aboriginal mobility, building approvals and development projects such as the Tindal base at Katherine, the probability is that interstate movements are very high. In June 1986, it was determined that there was a net population gain of some 1331 people. Unfortunately, as we discussed yesterday, that situation has reversed and we are now talking about figures for people leaving the Territory. However, mobility is very high and this is borne out by the very high number of enrolment cards which are processed in the Territory as transfers between districts.

Another related problem is the development, over recent years, of the outstation movement. Although some outstations are 20 km and up to more than 100 km away from the principal communities, electors who move from the central communities to the outstations do not notify their changes of address. Generally, that is because, for all other purposes, their postal address remains the central community. However, the Electoral Office would prefer to have the outstation address on the roll so that it can decide where mobile polling booths should go.

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will not take on board that interjection from the Attorney-General except to say that it is his government which is in charge of the maintenance of the rolls. If he is saying that, after all this time, the government has been so incompetent as to be unable to get the rolls into some sort of order, I am sorry to hear him acknowledge it.

Mr Speaker, the difficulties arising from mobility problems are exacerbated by the small size of the Northern Territory divisions. The mean enrolment for the 1987 Legislative Assembly elections was 2985. That is not

really a problem federally, but it does mean that the Northern Territory Electoral Office has to take particular pains to ensure that the rolls are up to date in time for redistributions.

According to the records that the Australian Electoral Office has been able to maintain, it appears that, in recent years, the electoral rolls review activity has been carried out mainly in urban areas. Reliance seems to have been placed on the activities of the Aboriginal Electoral Education Program as the principal source of information concerning the state of the rolls in rural areas. We have spoken before about the unreliability of mail deliveries to residents in Aboriginal communities. Because of the movement to outstations, very often information that a person is about to be removed from the roll because he did not vote is not received by that person in time for him to make a protest against his removal. Thus, roll cleansing does not occur in a manner that actually reflects the situation on the ground.

It is to be hoped that, now that elections to both parliaments are out of the way, the Electoral Office will be able to give its full attention to ensuring that the rolls are up to date and accurate. As members would know, there will be a further process of electoral redistribution and it is most important that we are operating on up-to-date rolls. The move to ensure that we have common rolls with the federal government will assist in this process. It will ensure that we do not have any problems if there are elections called after the Flynn by-election.

I commend the bill to honourable members and I will discuss our proposal in the committee stage. At the moment, I simply flag it to honourable members. An amendment schedule was distributed yesterday. Basically, we are calling for a period of 14 days to elapse between the issuing of the writs and the closure of the rolls. I would like honourable members to give that some thought during the course of this second-reading debate so that they will be able to contribute in an informed way when that comes up in the committee stage.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the proposal put forward by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to allow 14 days for people to get on the rolls. I have raised this matter in the House before, and I will raise it again because ...

Mr Smith: You should have done it when you were Chief Minister instead of arguing against it then.

Mr TUXWORTH: I have never argued against it, Mr Speaker. If the Leader of the Opposition will listen for a minute, I will tell him why it is important that we consider it.

The reality is that many people in the remote areas of the Territory do not have the physical capacity to get on the rolls. People hearing an announcement today on the radio that there is to be an election on a certain day have 1 plane a week to bring their mail out. If they hustle around and obtain their application forms in time to return them to the Electoral Office on time, they manage to get on the rolls. However, for many people, it is physically quite impossible for them to correspond with the Electoral Office within 14 days to get themselves on the rolls. It can be argued that people should be given 3 weeks or a month. The reality is that today most of the more remote places have 1 mail a week in some form. For the many people in the remote areas of the Territory who cannot communicate with the Electoral Office in 2 weeks because of their mail services, I do not think it is unreasonable that they should be given additional time to enrol.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised the matter of outstations. I would say that there are a couple of outstations in my electorate, and there is 1 on the Queensland border in the Nicholson River area, where people could be given a month and would not be able to get on the rolls because it takes so long to communicate with that area. That is a special circumstance and I do not see that we need to extend the period to a month to accommodate a special circumstance like that. That is a stable community and the Electoral Office could make special provision, during the course of its mid-term preparations, to see that places such as the Dry Creek area are catered for. I think it is perfectly reasonable ...

Mr Manzie: It is against the law not to be.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Attorney-General says that it is against the law not to be enrolled, and nobody is disputing that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dale: I have heard you say so often, Ian.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am not disputing it, Mr Speaker. I am saying that many people in the Territory, even if because they have just moved from 1 electorate to another during the course of the run-up period to an election, need adequate time to get on the roll. If we do not accept that, all right. Let's put it aside. What we would be saying is that we do not care whether they get on the roll or not. If that is the way the parliament feels about it, we cannot really be upset if people do not take the trouble to vote.

I believe that most people are interested in being on the rolls and, given the physical opportunity to get on the rolls by having a regular mail service, they will avail themselves of the opportunity. I am saying that I do not think that the proposition is unreasonable at all.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I was going to give the member for Sadadeen the opportunity to speak on this because I am in the unusual situation of having introduced the bill, the responsibility for which has now been transferred to somebody else. However, I understand that, under standing orders, I am entitled to speak.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! May I have silence, please!

Mr Smith: Good try, Steve!

Mr HATTON: I am allowed to. I checked it.

Mr Smith: Very cheeky! You are having a second bite. You are not closing debate.

Mr SPEAKER: I am advised that, if the honourable member for Nightcliff speaks now, in fact he does close the debate. Whilst the Leader of Government Business will have passage of the bill through the committee stage, I would suggest at this stage that, with the concurrence of honourable members, the member for Sadadeen now take the call.

Mr HATTON: I am certainly happy to concur, Mr Speaker.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Thank you, honourable member for Nightcliff.

I would like to pull up the member for Stuart on 1 point. He said that the government is in charge of the rolls. I trust it is not in charge of the rolls. I trust that it is the Electoral Office which is in charge, and it is controlled by an act of this parliament. I would be very much alarmed if the government were in charge of the rolls. I would be as much alarmed as the opposition would be. I think that point is made.

It does make sense that there should be common rolls between the Commonwealth and ourselves. After all, the electors are the same people. I believe there would be very few situations where a person was not entitled to be on both of those rolls. It is a cost saving, and that makes sense to the tax-paying public.

In the compilation of the rolls and the cooperation with the Commonwealth, I hope that the government takes on board my suggestion in respect of resurrection voters which I will explain. Mr Speaker, you will recall that, about a year ago, there was a federal election in which the coalition parties won more than 50% of the votes, and yet still lost government. There was quite a swing in actual numbers of seats against them. The marginal seats did not swing in the same manner as many other seats did. On the one hand, one could say that was the result of good campaign strategy and, on the other, that it was resurrection day for quite a number of dead voters who got up and voted Labor to a man on the occasion. Whether or not there is any truth in those accusations, I would suggest that one way to overcome the problem would be to require that, when a death certificate is issued, a form is sent to the Electoral Office requiring it to remove the name of that person from the relevant electoral roll.

That is an idea which the government might like to take on board to prevent the possibility of this occurring. Whether it did or did not occur, whether it was a minor thing or a major thing, I am in no position to judge. Certainly, I have spoken to people in New South Wales who reckon their rolls were an absolute mess during both the federal election and the state election last year. For the sake of democracy, I hope that the NSW rolls will be reviewed. If the government were to act to ensure that, on the issue of a death certificate, a form would be sent to the Electoral Office instructing it to remove the name of the deceased person from the rolls, that would eliminate an opportunity for cheating the system.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as the member for Stuart has indicated, the opposition supports the broad thrust of the legislation which creates common electoral rolls for Commonwealth and Territory elections, with the exclusions that the former Chief Minister referred to in his second-reading speech. At the outset, I want again to endorse strongly the sensible and practical amendment that the member for Stuart has put forward. I was heartened to hear it endorsed by the member for Barkly. I am heartened to hear it endorsed, I think, by the member for Sadadeen although I must confess that some of his riveting prose went over my head. The drift of his comments, however, seemed to be that he was happy to support the opposition's amendment. I certainly hope that it will enjoy the government's support as well.

On numerous occasions, I have heard snide references to attempts, particularly by opposition politicians or candidates in bush seats, to manipulate the rolls. Let me lay that little furphy to rest. In my electorate the fact is that, if I did not keep an eye on who is on or off the roll, it would be in even worse shape than it is because the Electoral Office does absolutely nothing to ensure that the rolls are in anything like decent shape. Frequently, people have their names removed from the rolls because

they do not vote at a particular election. The enrolment process then has to start all over again, and it is a sore trial indeed.

Earlier on, the Attorney-General made a classic sotto voce interjection about people being enrolled 2 or 3 times. For his benefit, although I am sure that he is sufficiently taxed in the wilds of Sanderson, I point out that it is not unusual to have 2 or 3 people with the same name in communities in my electorate. I will tell the Attorney-General a little story about a recent election and an event that occurred at a community in my electorate, where 3 people with the same name turned up to vote at the mobile polling booth. Alas and alack, some zealous official had removed 1 of the individuals having that name - let us say that it was Daisy Smith - from the roll. The first 2 Daisy Smiths had their vote but the third Daisy Smith, who was a particularly important old lady ritually, sat outside the booth and proceeded to 'sing' the electoral officials, much to the concern of all involved.

I do not believe the keeping of electoral rolls up to date in those communities is capable of being sorted. It is like being on a treadmill simply trying to keep them 80% or 90% accurate. The government should accept the fact that our only interest in this is that we want to do as good a job as possible in an area as extensive as the Northern Territory. Many of the people in those communities have only been voting for 20 years. They do not have the same traditions associated with voting as we do. I believe that their votes are conscientiously cast and I do not say that because a majority of them go my way. I have watched the processes, and I become a little sick and tired of the snide accusations that people in Aboriginal communities do not cast sensible votes and that opposition politicians try to sort the rolls and so on. I am not interested in it.

I want to pick up a comment from the member for Barkly. He referred to difficulties with postal votes in isolated places. The same arguments apply with respect to pastoral properties in my electorate. The member for Barkly referred to scarce mail services, and I can think of 2 instances where long-term pastoral families have dipped out on voting because of the exigencies of the postal voting arrangements in respect of both federal and Territory elections.

Those pastoral properties have a high turnover of ringers and other employees and many of them would not necessarily be Labor voters. However, I believe they should be given a decent chance to get on the roll too. It does not all cut our way. What we propose is in the interests of the whole Territory and of the electoral process in the Territory. We have had some outrageous examples of low turnouts, and there are various reasons for that. If we do not accept this amendment, which will give people the best chance to get on the rolls and give the electoral rolls themselves the best chance of being accurate, we will not be serving the democratic process particularly well.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I am in the unusual position of closing the debate yet not having carriage of the bill. However, since I did introduce this bill, obviously I have considerable knowledge of its background and it is probably appropriate that I close the debate. It is pleasing to note that all members who have spoken have supported the intention to provide complementary provisions in the Northern Territory Electoral Act to enable the formation of a joint-rolls agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory.

The member for Stuart criticised our government for poor maintenance of the rolls. I must advise him that, whilst there is a statutory responsibility on the Northern Territory Electoral Office to maintain rolls for electoral purposes, since the formation of the Northern Territory Electoral Office in about 1980, the de facto maintenance of the rolls has been by the Commonwealth Electoral Commission by way of an information cost-sharing agreement. All of the rolls maintenance has been carried out by the Commonwealth Electoral Commission. This bill will enable us to formalise that arrangement and to formalise the cost-sharing arrangements in respect of roll maintenance, including provision for the notation of those people who may only be registered in the Northern Territory or may only be registered for the Commonwealth, as outlined in the second-reading speech.

The member for Stuart ignored the intention of the bill and proceeded to deal with a proposed amendment concerning a matter that is totally unrelated to the purpose of this bill. I accept that, by the use of a device in the standing orders - and it is nothing more than a device - the member for Stuart has succeeded in sliding in what is effectively a totally different and new matter to that which is before the House. If the long title of the bill had more accurately reflected the fact that it was intended to amend certain sections of the Electoral Act, this particular amendment would have been thrown out as being inadmissible under standing orders and parliamentary practice as outlined in Pettifer. Because the long title, as has been the practice of this House, stated that it is a bill to amend the Electoral Act, the member for Stuart has decided to use that device ...

Mr Ede: Wouldn't you?

Mr Smith: What is wrong with that?

Mr HATTON: It is not appropriate to slide in something that has been debated in this House at least half a dozen times and which the member for Stuart and all members opposite know was debated extensively on 2 occasions last year, including after the Barkly by-election. As Chief Minister at that time, I advised that there would be a total review of the Electoral Act. I can advise honourable members opposite ...

Mr Ede: You are not Chief Minister any more.

Mr HATTON: I can advise on behalf of the Chief Minister, because I have confirmed it with him, that that review has continued. I believe that the Chief Minister will very shortly be introducing a principles document dealing with the whole ambit of the Electoral Act, undertaken in the process of the full review and capable of being fully dealt with before any future Northern Territory election. Members opposite know that position was put to this parliament by myself. Unlike some members opposite, when I say things in this House, I mean them. I do not change my story after a month or when I change parties. When the government puts something forward, it intends to go ahead with it. It is going ahead.

As has been said before, Mr Speaker, all of these matters should not be looked at in isolation but in the context of a total review of the Electoral Act. It will certainly be my recommendation to the government that it does not accept this amendment, recognising that the matters it relates to is being dealt with in the context of a total review. That is how the matter should be properly dealt with, not in an ad hoc way.

I would also strongly urge the government, in the light of the devices which the opposition has used to deflect it from its business, to tighten up in respect of the long titles of bills, as was done in the House of Representatives when federal oppositions adopted similar tactics. That would enable the government to deal with matters as they are brought before the House rather than having to debate red herrings because of the opposition's attempts to play politics in this House.

Mr Smith: Where else can you play politics?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to play politics, let him do so in relation to issues that are brought before the House. If he wants to raise other matters, in the context of a General Business Day, let him do so. Perhaps, one day, the opposition will raise something of substance on a General Business Day so that there can be some fruitful debate rather than the nonsense they usually trot out. I urge the House not to debate the pros and cons of the amendment, in the knowledge that there is a major review of the Electoral Act taking place and that, in the near future, the Chief Minister will introduce a statement of principles to enable informed debate and discussion to take place. We should not entertain piecemeal change now. I can advise the House that there were serious concerns about dealing with even this bill in isolation. However, because of the necessity to reach an agreement with the Commonwealth and formalise arrangements, it was decided that it should proceed although it should not in any way interfere with the broad direction of reviewing the Electoral Act. I urge all honourable members to reject the amendment put forward by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, there are a couple of other points which simply cannot go unanswered. The member for Barkly recognised quite accurately that some people within his electorate do have difficulties as a result of the mail service in their areas operating once a week only. I am as familiar as he with the difficulties in communicating, particularly during short election campaigns, with people within the Barkly electorate, particularly by mail. Complications can arise over issues such as postal voting and other communications. However, I would remind honourable members that each and every one of us has an electorate in the order of 2500 to 3000 people. There are 3 to 4 years between elections and the people living in remote areas comprise a very small percentage - certainly in the Barkly electorate - of the people eligible to be enrolled.

Honourable members in large country electorates receive a significant travelling provision in their electorate allowances to enable them to move around and service their electorates. Part of servicing an electorate is to enrol people who are not on the roll, to assist them to get on the roll. Given the fact that that may not have been done for 3 or 4 years, it is wrong ...

Mr Tuxworth: Listen to what I said. What about the guy who just moved in? What a racket!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker it is wrong simply to turn around and blame the government, the Electoral Office or the mail planes because people have not been regularly enrolled. As one of the biggest red herrings that he has drawn across the trail in this House in years, the member for Barkly now says: 'What about the people who moved in the last week or two?' And there might be half a dozen; that is quite possible, Mr Speaker. I would say that, if they moved into the electorate a week or 2 before an election, the member for



Barkly would not know they were there to send them a form to apply to go on the roll.

Mr Tuxworth: Don't knock the ringers from Queensland.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that is an absolute red herring, and the member for Barkly knows it. He knows, as we know, that he is doing nothing to enrol people in his electorate.

Mr Smith: Hang on, he is always doing it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell says again, and the member for Stuart has raised this on a number of occasions, that there are difficulties in roll maintenance. There are great difficulties in roll maintenance, particularly in the electorates of MacDonnell and Stuart. One of the principal reasons for that, to the great frustration of the people in the Commonwealth Electoral Commission and the Northern Territory Electoral Office, is that, in the week or month leading up to an election, the mates of members opposite walk up to everybody in the electorate, shove a form under his nose and say, 'Sign this'. They do not check the person's age or whether he is on the roll. They check nothing. That is how we end up with the same names on the rolls 2 or 3 times, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bell: What rubbish!

Mr Ede: Listen to him making allegations, Mr Speaker.

Mr HATTON: That is a fact, Mr Speaker. Their zeal to enrol ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. There is far too much interjection. The member's speech is almost inaudible. I would ask members to restrain themselves while he continues his speech.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I make that point because I know that it has been a source of constant frustration. It was referred to me, as the minister responsible, by the people in the Electoral Office in the face of the flood of forms that came in when we were trying to get the rolls together. Of course, when people's names appear on the roll 2, 3 or 4 times, when a comparison of the total number on the roll and those that voted is made, as occurs in the few days immediately following an election, it appears that there was a very low percentage turnout.

I urge honourable members, when the rolls have been properly cleansed after the elections, to check the percentage votes in those electorates. This is important. I might say that there is no evidence of people having voted twice. There has been considerable evidence of names being on the roll more than once. I support the member for MacDonnell in his statement that neither ALP members nor any other people are having people enrolled more than once to enable them to vote more than once. I do not believe that allegation, and there is no evidence to support it. However, there is evidence that undue zeal in enrolling people in the lead up to elections leads to massive confusion with the rolls when the election is held, and then low turnout figures are quoted when the reality is that the turnout was fairly comparable with that in the rest of the Northern Territory. The problem is that so many names appeared on the roll more than once in some electorates. There is plenty of evidence of that, Mr Speaker. We debated that last year in this Chamber.

I do not intend to deal with questions of voter identification now. I think it is a matter that can be dealt with, but I will raise one issue. I raise this only because members opposite generally open this bag of worms. I would like to make a general comment. It is a fact that there are significant difficulties, with Aboriginal people in particular, who move from community to community around their electorates. It is true that they will use different names at different times or at different locations, and that is understood and is recognised. It is a significant problem for us to deal with as a community.

Mr Ede: There are a many white people too, but they do it for a different reason.

Mr HATTON: There are many white people, Mr Speaker, who did it for entirely different reasons.

However, I am referring to traditional and appropriate reasons why people use different names in different locations, and it needs to be dealt with for the purpose of proper voter identification and to ensure the rolls are properly maintained. I ask honourable members to note that, with respect to Aboriginal people who are seeking, for example, to claim medical benefits, it is my understanding from information I have received when travelling around the Territory that there is no difficulty in identification through Medicare cards, which are usually registered at a particular location in a particular name. There has been no difficulty in using that card for identification for the purpose of claiming medical and social security benefits and perhaps the government, in the course of the review, should consider some process of association with such a card to overcome the very serious difficulty that exists in respect of voter identification and the problem of people using different names at different times. I am not talking about a substitute for the Australia Card or ID card. The parliament could adopt a bipartisan approach in addressing the issue of the proper recognition of the cultural practices of Aboriginal people whilst ensuring the proper maintenance of electoral rolls and overcoming some of the significant administrative difficulties facing the Electoral Office.

Mr Speaker, I commend this bill to honourable members. I urge honourable members not to allow the manipulative device of the member for Stuart to be used and I urge the defeat of his proposed amendment. I reiterate that a major review of the Electoral Act is in process. A paper is to be released soon detailing the principles to be adopted for the amendment of the Electoral Act. The process presently under way is the proper vehicle for debate. We should not accept a back-door method to amend a bill which aims to do something that everybody accepts can and should be done.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

New clause 1A:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.1.

Mr Chairman, I note that the member for Nightcliff acknowledged in his conclusion the significant administrative difficulties faced by the Electoral Office under the current system. He stated that a report has been

commissioned and some work is occurring in some areas. He has not stated whether this is one of those areas or whether it covers other matters that we have raised in the past.

The opposition could easily have used this occasion to move amendments relating to all the matters we have raised in the past. However, in order to bring home the necessity for change to the Electoral Act, we decided to focus on a single major point. At one stage, we considered putting forward an amendment seeking to reduce the variation in electorates from 20% to 10%. However, we realised that that issue would be resolved by the referendum on 3 September.

Therefore, we decided to concentrate on the fact that, in the Northern Territory, the rolls close at 6 pm on the evening of the date of the issue of the writs. This was sorted out at a national level after the election of the Hawke Labor government in 1983. The report on the 1984 election indicated that some 200 000 people across Australia availed themselves of the opportunity to enrol after the federal government amended its act to allow a 7-day period between the time of the calling of the election and the closure of the rolls. Mr Chairman, 200 000 people, who otherwise would have been disenfranchised, were able to exercise their democratic right to vote. It really must give us cause to pause and reflect when we realise that that election was far more democratic than it would have been had the amendment not been passed. It is not a matter of which party benefits from these arrangements. It is immaterial whether it is the CLP, the Territory Nationals, independents or the Labor Party - democracy benefits. It is our job in this Assembly to protect and to foster democracy.

We consider that a 14-day provision is specifically appropriate for the Territory. Nationally, 7 days may be seen to be adequate. It is, however, very difficult to make such a period work here in the Northern Territory. As the member for Barkly and others have said, there are a large number of communities in rural electorates which only receive 1 mail service each week. Whilst, at an earlier stage, we talked about 7 days, we have very deliberately moved to 14 days to take account of that large number of communities. Such a period would allow the forms to be flown out on the mail plane during the first week and provide time for people to return the forms in the second week in time for the closure of the rolls.

Our amendment is appropriate to the needs of the Territory and fits in with our particular circumstances. That is what an electoral system must do. It must grow from the people. It must be for the people and of the people and it must fit in with what they require. This is what the Northern Territory people require, and I would hope that, after reflection, we will not hear any more talk about deferring it until some mythical report is brought down. We first heard about that report after the Barkly by-election, and we are still hearing about reports and reviews that supposedly are being undertaken.

In a matter of weeks, we will have another by-election, this time for the seat of Flynn. That election will be conducted without the benefit of that report and without the benefit of the amendments. Mr Chairman, if we wait, we will find that the honourable member who is now in the reject chair, the member for Nightcliff, will be gone and we will still not be any closer to having the amendments passed. I ask members to support this amendment and, if consequential amendments are required as a result of this mythical report, we will be able to make them at that stage.

If we wait for this report for anything like the time we waited for the d'Abbs report on dry areas legislation, we certainly will be the worse for it, and democracy in the Northern Territory will be the worse for it. I urge all members to support the amendment and hope that they will recognise that, through their doing so, the electoral system in the Northern Territory will be fairer for it.

Amendment negatived.

See Minutes for amendments to clause 2 agreed to without debate.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

New clause 2A:

Mr EDE: I move amendment 30.2

Mr Chairman, I move this amendment even though it is obvious that it will be defeated. It really is a sorry day when electoral legislation is not debated in this House. We introduce reasoned amendments which some members opposite agree with in their hearts, yet they cannot see their way clear to discuss the issues or to vote according to their consciences. It is a sad day. All we have had are a few words from the member for Nightcliff saying that something may occur in the future. All other members on the government side sat on their hands and refused to debate the issues.

Mr Chairman, I can understand that many of our amendments are philosophically objectionable to members opposite. They are the government and it is their right to impose their philosophy on the people of the Northern Territory to the extent that they can. In the course of doing that, it is their right to reject the principles that are put forward by this side of the House. That is what being in government is all about. However, one would have thought that electoral legislation would be one area where we could seek to hold common cause and where members opposite would not use their numbers simply to crunch proposed amendments but be prepared to discuss them on their merits. They are continually saying that members on this side are totally negative and yet, when we propose a reasoned, sound and sensible amendment, which attempts to further the cause of democracy, all we have is the absolute silence of rejection from the other side. If our proposal provokes one of them to stand up and at least give something approaching a reasoned reply as to why they will not accept it, my words will not have been uttered in vain.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the amendment provides essentially for a 14-day period before the closure of the rolls after the issue of the writs. Members of the opposition proposed a 7-day period in June 1987. Now they have doubled the proposal to 14 days. We had better be quick before it increases to 21.

Talk about silence, Mr Chairman! The member for Nightcliff, as Chief Minister, asked all honourable members in the Legislative Assembly for submissions when he spoke about a complete review of the Electoral Act. To date, no submissions at all have been received.

Mr Ede: It is all in the Hansard.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, no formal submissions were received from any honourable member.

The amendment proposed by the government is of a technical nature to allow the joint-rolls agreement to come into effect at the relevant time. It does not address substantive or philosophical issues relating to the Electoral Act. The opposition's amendment is substantive and should not be admitted on those grounds. It is interesting to note some of the comparative analyses with other parts of Australia and no doubt they will be taken into account in the review of the Electoral Act. The government is ready to address those substantive issues and the principles paper is already in preparation at this stage. That is the reason why the government is not supporting this particular amendment at this stage. We are simply making a technical change to allow the joint rolls to proceed at the relevant time. That is what we will do.

I remind honourable members once again that a principles paper is being prepared at the moment. Any submissions that anybody has to make should be made available so that they can be considered at that time. It is interesting that, as I said, in June 1987 the opposition proposal was for 7 days and now we have heard the Deputy Leader of the Opposition argue for a 100% increase in that, to 14 days. There was no reference at all to the period of 14 days last June. Today, it appears that there is. However, this is not the time to talk about it. This amendment is simply of a technical nature to allow for the joint rolls. That is the reason why the government is not supporting this amendment at this time.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the matter of 7 days or 14 days is ...

Mr Coulter: It is irrelevant!

Mr EDE: It is quite relevant, Mr Chairman. This is the result of an analysis that we have made of the mail system around the Northern Territory. Obviously, as the member for Barkly stated, there are still some places where, as a result of their remoteness, even 14 days would not be adequate.

Mr Coulter: And therefore you want 21 days?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, what we attempted to do with this provision was to bring in as many people as we possibly could and to provide people with a reasonable opportunity to be able to get on the rolls during that period.

Mr Coulter: Why didn't you consider that last June when you talked about 7 days?

Mr EDE: If you keep cutting back on the mail service and cutting back on the money to remote communities so that they are unable to get planes, of course the numbers of mail services will drop and, of course, that will make it harder and harder, Mr Chairman.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: The Commonwealth does not pay for charter planes to remote communities. That is how much you know.

Mr Chairman, in my second discussion on this, I would like to comment on something said by the Deputy Chief Minister. He made a statement which I found rather outrageous, but extremely worrying. He said that the government had not received any submissions from ourselves indicating what we would like to see in the amended act. I recall that we have debated this matter on at least 3 occasions: as the subject of an MPI, through debate on statements,

and in the context of proposed amendments to the Electoral Act. On those occasions, we have indicated the various points that we would like to see covered.

I would like to receive now an assurance from the Deputy Chief Minister, or possibly from the member for Nightcliff if he has anything left to do with this, that our relevant statements as they appear in the edited Hansard covering those debates will be taken into account - indeed, that they have been taken into account, have been read through and taken on board because he said this was in the final stage of preparation. I would be most disappointed if the government did not take that opportunity because that is how we saw ourselves fulfilling our obligation to ensure that the views of this side of the House were conveyed to that committee.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to pick up the point that was raised by the Leader of Government Business, who is in control of the bill, about the lack of response from people in relation to amendment of the Electoral Act. As the member for Stuart said, this matter has been raised on several occasions and, on 2 occasions at least, the member for Nightcliff has said that the Electoral Office was preparing a paper on the proposed amendments that would be brought to the House for people to respond to and for debate to take place on. Maybe I am under some misunderstanding, but I am waiting for the paper prepared by the Electoral Office to be tabled by the Chief Minister so that we can start a rational discussion on amendments to the Electoral Act. If I am incorrect, Mr Chairman, I would be happy for the Leader of Government Business to correct me on that. However, I think that is what Hansard will show.

My other point is that the Leader of Government Business said that the proposal to allow 14 days should be disallowed because we are not really dealing with any philosophical or policy matters in relation to this bill; we are dealing with mechanical matters. I do not know that we hold different philosophical views about giving people the opportunity to vote, and that is all I am talking about. The reality is that we should ask ourselves whether we want people to have a vote and, if we do, we should consider what provisions we need in the act to enable them to have that vote. Quite clearly, in some parts of the Territory, if we want people to have a vote, we must allow them a couple of weeks to get on the roll. If the government does not want to do that, then that is fine, but I was always of the view that we were preparing the groundwork for people to be able to get on the roll if they so wished. As it stands at the moment, that is not possible.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, to clarify this, I understand that the previous Chief Minister asked for submissions. I was just trying to find his words in the Hansard. I can tell honourable members that neither the Electoral Office nor the Department of the Chief Minister has received any formal submission. If it was not clear before, then I invite honourable members formally now to submit to the Electoral Office ...

Mr Tuxworth: What about the paper?

Mr COULTER: You can wait till after the accident or you can be part of it.

Mr Tuxworth: Do you have a paper or don't you? If you don't have a paper, just say so and we will all write to you.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the paper is being prepared. Honourable members can have input into that paper or they can wait until it is tabled in this Assembly. Obviously, honourable members have chosen to wait till the paper arrives because the opportunity was given to them to make formal submissions and they have not done so.

Mr Tuxworth: No, that is not the case.

Mr COULTER: That is pretty simple.

Mr Tuxworth: That is not the case.

Mr COULTER: We will get the words. Mr Chairman, let us not forget that eligible ...

Mr Tuxworth: That is not the case.

Mr COULTER: Let's make it the case now. You are formally invited. I will write to you.

Mr Tuxworth: You don't even answer the ones you get now. What are you going to send me another one for?

Mr COULTER: Hansard will record that the honourable member for Barkly is not prepared to make a formal submission to the Electoral Office on behalf of his constituents, in particular the outstations in his electorate in respect of which he has the gravest concerns. Let the record show that that is so, but let it show also that eligible citizens have an ongoing responsibility to ensure that they are correctly enrolled. We do not have elections every 14 days. It is their responsibility to become enrolled. It is true that there are a number of people who have moved into an area shortly before any particular election and some people are disadvantaged by the tyranny of distance. We have learned today from the opposition that, within a 12-month period, the time necessary to overcome that disadvantage can range from 7 days to 14 days.

Let it be known very clearly that we invite submissions from anybody who would like to have input into the revision of the Electoral Act and that those submissions can be forwarded either to the Electoral Office or to the Department of the Chief Minister. But let us not forget that eligible citizens have that ongoing responsibility to ensure that they are correctly enrolled.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the Deputy Chief Minister persists in treating the Electoral Act and its consequences as a club matter. We are part of the club and I accept that. But I am amazed and staggered that he would assume that a call by the previous Chief Minister in June in this Assembly would constitute a formal call by the government for submissions on the question of reform of the electoral system. Certainly, we did not take it as that.

We have responded in this Chamber on a number of occasions to matters of concern to us in relation to the Electoral Act. If that was the basis on which the previous Chief Minister made his call, I am surprised that the government cannot see that we had already responded on that matter. If the honourable minister opposite is now telling us that the government will call formally for submissions by writing to us, we will be happy to respond in writing. But I would hope, Mr Chairman, that the honourable minister will also make the government's call for formal submissions widely known. It is

not only members of this House who are affected by electoral legislation even though we are affected very directly. People in the wider community are affected. I hope the government will ensure that people in the more remote areas of the Territory, who have been the subject of most of the debate today, also receive formal notification of the government's intention to hold an inquiry so that they have a chance to contribute.

Mr Coulter: He didn't do it once. He did it twice.

Mr SMITH: In response to that interjection, I point out that, on more occasions than I have fingers, we have referred in this House to the inadequacies we perceive in the existing Electoral Act. I would have thought that that would have been brought to the attention of the Electoral Office if it were conducting a review. Let us stop this nonsense. It is too important a subject for nonsense. Let us get it out into the open. Let the government send letters out, not only to us but to the broad community so that we can have a thorough inquiry into the provisions of the Electoral Act.

Mr Coulter: We will write them for you if you like.

Mr SMITH: You will write the inquiry?

Mr Coulter: We will write your submissions. You just tell us what you want and we will sit down beside you and write it down for you.

Mr SMITH: I will be very happy to take up that offer.

Mr Coulter: We will take you by the hand to the Electoral Office and show you around.

Mr SMITH: I will be very happy to take up the offer of secretarial and other assistance from the Deputy Chief Minister because we are short of secretarial assistance on our side of the House. I will certainly be pursuing that matter with him.

Mr Coulter: We will also have the final say.

Mr SMITH: Of course you will. Fortunately, the people of Australia will shortly limit your ability to have the final say in the very important area of tolerance. A 10% tolerance will be introduced, against the wishes of the Territory government, in the very near future. That will see a very important improvement in democracy in the Northern Territory.

Mr Chairman, the government has again put forward the familiar, circular argument that we hear every time the closure of rolls is discussed. Certainly, people have an obligation to go on the roll. It is not, however, one of their high priorities. That, I suppose, is a reflection on how important they think what happens in here is and, probably, a reflection on the way we perform. The fact is that people do not enrol until they need to. We should recognise that as a fact of life and we should give people every opportunity to enrol when they recognise the need to do so. We accept that we have a compulsory voting system in Australia. It is not an optional system. We accept that as an important part of the democratic process in Australia. Once that principle is accepted, it is clearly important to give people every opportunity to enrol. Human nature and the special circumstances of the Northern Territory being what they are, it is appropriate to have a 14-day period for enrolment after the issue of the writs.



Mr Coulter: It was only 7 days last year. Now it is 2 weeks.

Mr SMITH: As my colleague has said, we have since had the benefit of experience, particularly in the Barkly by-election. It is clear that 7 days is simply not enough.

The electorate of Flynn is an example of the need in the Northern Territory for such a provision. In our view, the electoral roll for Flynn is 30% out of date. That is not the fault of the Electoral Office. It is the result of the population turnover in the electorate since the last election, 18 months ago. We have a highly mobile population. People do not, unfortunately for us, consider it a high priority to enrol to vote. We should be doing everything we can to encourage them. That is why we have moved this amendment. By so pig-headedly refusing to accept the amendment, members opposite are denying democracy.

Amendment negatived.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

DAIRIES SUPERVISION REPEAL BILL  
(Serial 99)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill proposes to repeal the Dairies Supervision Act of 1939 and I am happy to say that the opposition supports it. It repeals the Dairy Supervision Act on the basis that it is no longer necessary in this modern day and age. Whilst that act provided some regulation of the dairy industry, that can be provided equally well under other acts of parliament. It is desirable to reduce the amount of legislation and regulation wherever possible, and this is a case where that can be done.

The repeal of this act is also a good argument for introducing sunset legislation. I suspect that there really has not been a need for the Dairy Supervision Act for the last 15 to 20 years or perhaps even longer. Sunset legislation can be reviewed well before it becomes redundant or inappropriate and does not sit uselessly on the statute books for years and years. That, however, is by the by.

Mr Speaker, it is worth taking a little time to discuss the dairy industry. It offers a dramatic example of the ability of private enterprise to come into the Territory and, with very little or no government assistance, to carve out and secure a niche in the Territory economy. The pioneers of the dairy industry in the Northern Territory have been the Fitzgeralds ...

Mr Collins: And the Kennys in Alice Springs.

Mr SMITH: ... in recent times and they have been joined by the Rowlands in Katherine. The Rowlands in particular have brought 20th-century technology and management practices to the dairy industry in the Northern Territory. I am advised that the Rowlands Dairy could hold its head up anywhere in Australia in terms of the technology it uses and that is obviously good for the Northern Territory.

It is clear that there is a market niche in the Northern Territory for local milk supplies and that is rapidly being met by the Rowlands. The minister informs me that they are also exporting to Brunei. It is pleasing to see local milk supplies penetrating the Darwin market. One can now go into most milk outlets in Darwin and the Darwin rural area and find local milk for sale. I believe that is a sign of the growing maturity of the downstream processing industry within the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, that maturity is not developing as quickly as some of us would like. However, the success of the milk industry in the Northern Territory demonstrates one of the basic truths which apply in downstream processing. It is that, as the population of the Northern Territory increases - and hopefully it will start to increase again fairly soon - those marketing opportunities will grow. We should not try to force people to manufacture products when our population is not large enough to offer adequate markets but, as the population increases, we will find that there are more and more opportunities for such industries to develop.

Mr Speaker, I conclude my remarks by congratulating the Fitzgeralds and the Rowlands on the steps that they have taken in the Northern Territory to provide themselves with a fruitful occupation and also to generate employment opportunities in the Northern Territory. Their efforts have added to the profile of Northern Territory industry and have helped to ensure that the Northern Territory will become a better place for people to live in.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the repeal of the Dairies Supervision Act, I must state that, while I can see the reasoning behind the repeal of the act, I have reservations about the operation of the dairy industry under the Food Act. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the Dairies Supervision Act was completely outmoded and useless to such an extent that it was completely impossible to operate under it. I tried it at one time.

In speaking to the repeal of this act, a wider view of the necessity for this action is necessary. If any honourable member has taken any interest in the erstwhile Department of Primary Production or the previous Northern Territory Department of Industries and Development or the current Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, he will know there has been great unrest. There have been many resignations. No one knew whether he would have a job next month or the level of salary he would be on or where his office or laboratory would be, let alone whether he would have access to facilities such as vehicles, adequate office furniture or an office telephone. All of this is true, Mr Speaker.

There were 2 occurrences brought to my attention which should not occur in any public service structure anywhere. One involved a senior officer in what is now the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. This officer, who is not professionally-qualified, went to an establishment and spoke to qualified people. He denigrated the necessity for them to have professional qualifications. His throwaway remark was something along the lines of: 'What do you need degrees for? You are only dealing with horses and cows, and they are not very choosy'. Unfortunately, these professional officers could not rebut these remarks because of their inferior positions, nor could they make a suggestion for the senior public servant's future enjoyment of life although, with their surgical skills, they would have been in an appropriate position to provide the necessary expertise.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find this really interesting. It would make a marvellous adjournment debate speech but, quite frankly,

discussions on a range of staff conditions in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries seems to have absolutely no relevance to a bill dealing with the repeal of the Dairies Supervision Act.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, because of portfolios he held previously, the honourable member may think he has some expertise on the matter but I think my expertise may be rather more extensive than his. My reason for taking an overview is to indicate the reasons for my belief that this Dairies Supervision Act should be repealed.

Mr SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable member to relate her remarks more closely to the legislation before the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, when we have grave unrest among, and resignations from, veterinary officers, stock inspectors and other professional people, the expertise is no longer available in the department and the people are not there to supervise the legislation. Thus, it is in the department's interest to try to get rid of any legislation for which it cannot provide sufficient staff for supervisory purposes.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has not received much help from this government. It has had 180 acres of its farm taken away from it. Some staff do not know whether they will have a job when they return from holidays. The previous Chief Minister's idea of a mega-department went down like a lead balloon with the department. I must say that the present Chief Minister at least has a few better ideas. He has divided the department up again, and now we have a Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. During the term of the previous Chief Minister, this would have been the only government in Australia that did not have a department of agriculture. I am very pleased to see that we have a department of agriculture again.

About 3 years ago, I requested a rationalisation of this very same act. At the time, it was under the auspices of the Department of Health and Community Services. Nowhere else in Australia did a department of health administer anything to do with dairies. After considerable deep thought, the supervision of the industry was passed over to the Department of Primary Industry. The wheel has now come full circle and we will see its administration left to the tender mercies of the Minister for Health.

I have my reservations regarding the administration of the dairy industry by the Department of Health and Community Services. I have had a little experience with the work of health surveyors and, whilst individuals may be doing the right thing as far as they know how, I believe they are not nearly as qualified as stock inspectors and veterinary officers to administer this act. I have had a great deal to do with stock inspectors and veterinary officers from the Department of Primary Industry over the years. I have only complimentary remarks to make about these people. They give advice willingly, they spend time advising people on all sorts of matters and they help people in primary industry in every way they can. Following the repeal of this act, the administration of the dairy industry will come under the control of the health surveyors operating under the Food Act. That will be the end of it. I sincerely hope that that will not leave us up that well-known waterway of unusual constituency without the means of forward propulsion.

Mr Speaker, I can see all sorts of scenarios developing when the production of milk is considered as production of a food under the Food Act. I recall decisions of health surveyors regarding the establishment of a tourist attraction in the rural area. I believe that, because their knowledge

is less than that of veterinary surgeons and stock inspectors in particular cases, situations may arise which will be to the detriment of the dairy industry. All the people who sell milk now, both bovine and caprine milk, to my knowledge do so from clean and hygienic surroundings in the appropriate way. However, what is now to stop a health surveyor saying that producing milk is the same as producing any other food and insisting on the same conditions, which will turn out to be unnatural, as apply in the production of other foods? What is to stop such a surveyor saying that ceramic tiles and stainless steel are the order of the day and have to be put into every dairy and milking shed? What is to stop him saying that, if workers have to be clean in the production of other foods, it is not appropriate for dairymen or dairywomen to have a little dung on their gumboots? I can foresee all sorts of scenarios like that, which would be to the detriment of the sale of milk on the local market.

My argument that the Food Act is not appropriate for the dairy industry is backed by scientific and practical information known not only to me but to any dairyman, dairywoman or veterinary surgeon. I will give an example to illustrate my point. The Food Act says that milk cannot be sold unless a withholding period of 15 days has elapsed from the date of parturition. Anybody who has milked bovines or caprines knows that a withholding period of 5 days is all that necessary.

Mr Bell: What is a caprine?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: A caprine is a goat. Surely you should know that!

Mr Bell: Oh, a caprine. That is with a 'c' not a 'p'.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, when honourable members have finished their English lesson, I request them to address their remarks through the Chair.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I have a scientifically-backed argument against the application of the Food Act to dairies because, if a dairy has to withhold its milk for an extra 10 days after parturition, it will lose 10 days of high production. I can see health surveyors insisting, under the terms of the Food Act, on that withholding period of 15 days, which is completely unnecessary. Once 5 days have elapsed after parturition, the milk does not contain any post-parturition fluids such as colostrum. Its taste is the same as normal milk and, in fact, it is completely normal after 5 days. It is completely unnecessary and very expensive to compel dairies to dispose of milk produced more than 5 days after parturition, as the strict application of the Food Act's 15-day withholding period would require.

I am rather concerned that my remarks may be considered flippant, but I want to ask how cows and goats will be considered under the Food Act. Will they be considered as food-vending machines, with all the rules that apply to them? Whilst I can see the reason for rescinding the Dairy Supervision Act, I have some grave reservations about the operation of the dairy industry under the auspices of the Department of Health and Community Services. Whilst personally I have and never have had any objection to my property being subject to spot inspection by officers of the Department of Primary Production, I would have my doubts about health surveyors inspecting because I believe their standards would be artificially high when applied to industries such as the dairy industry.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I confess that I had not taken a great deal of interest in this act until the member for Koolpinyah made it clear

that the control of milk production would revert to the Department of Health and Community Services. Being a long-term Alice Springs resident, Mr Speaker, you may be aware of even more dairies than the 3 I know of which were forced to close down in Alice Springs in times when efforts were being made to establish a fledgling dairy industry. This very matter was actually raised at a dinner meeting which the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries held in Alice Springs recently. One of those dairies was run by Mr Jim Brown and his family at White Gums. Others were run by the Barbers and the Kramers. Those people were given a pretty hard time. I am told that the Bullens ran another dairy. They were a bit before my time. Those people were given a very hard time by the then Department of Health which demanded bacteria counts far lower than was acceptable in the states. As a consequence, there are no dairies in Alice Springs.

I believe there should be every opportunity to develop a dairy industry in central Australia. I hope that anybody who wishes to move into the industry in Alice Springs will be treated as fairly as the Rowlands and the Fitzgeralds have been. Alice Springs is not asking for special treatment, but it does appear to have suffered in this respect in the past. I knew the people concerned, particularly Mr Barber, very well. Life was made extremely difficult for him and the development of his dairy was hampered by hassles and demands which eventually forced him out of the industry. I trust, therefore, that common sense will prevail and that a balance will be struck between fair treatment of the consumers of the product and what is reasonable and sensible for the continuation of the industry.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr speaker, I rise to support this bill.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You wouldn't know which end of a cow moos!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah says that I hardly know which end of a cow moos. It is true that I do not have a veterinary degree, but I have risen to speak principally because I was fascinated by her contribution to the debate. For some time, the member for Koolpinyah has railed against the government for not doing something about deregulating the dairy industry.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You are not deregulating it. You have given it to the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the Dairies Supervision Act bore the brunt of the assault by the member for Koolpinyah. It was outdated, it should be thrown out and the government should deregulate the dairy industry. When the repeal bill was introduced, I remember hearing the member for Koolpinyah raise her voice to say: 'Hooray, it is going at last!' Today, however, she complains because responsibility is shifting from the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries back to the department responsible for health. The member for Koolpinyah says that I have some difficulty in understanding which end of a cow moos. I can assure her that I do understand the difference as I have taken great pains to spend a considerable amount of time in getting to know the dairy industry, both as Minister for Primary Industries and, later, as Chief Minister. I assure her that I do know the difference even though I do not have a degree in agricultural science.

Where I perhaps surpass the member for Koolpinyah is in my ability to read. If one reads the legislation, one finds that all authorisations, inspections etc are carried out by a person whose title is Chief Medical Officer. Under section 4 of the act, which covers definitions, the Chief

Medical Officer means 'the Chief Medical Officer appointed under the Public Health Act'. In fact, the people responsible under this act for carrying out the very functions that the member for Koolpinyah was talking about work for the Department of Health and Community Services, unless they have delegated those functions to an appropriate person in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Statutorily, however, it is a responsibility of officers of the Department of Health and Community Services even though the act rested with the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, as he is now. Doing away with this piece of legislation does not in any way take away from the protection of public health, which is a principal reason for having any control over the dairy industry.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That was changed. That is all you know about it.

Mr HATTON: If the honourable member for Koolpinyah will open her ears instead of her mouth, it so happens that, when milk is produced, fundamentally it is consumed by human beings and, unless proper health protection measures are undertaken - because it is a food, Mr Speaker, and I would like somebody to deny that - it is possible that there could be a transmission of disease.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The veterinarians and the stock inspectors are better people.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the member for Koolpinyah had a fair run and was heard in relative silence during her speech. I ask that she extend the same courtesy to the member for Nightcliff.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I applaud the member for Koolpinyah's desire to minimise the plethora of regulations that plagues our rural industries. There is a plethora of regulations that drives the industry to distraction. At the same time, we must balance that against the absolute obligation of the government to protect the health of the general community. The most appropriate legislation to do that is legislation that deals with public health and protection against the spread of disease through foods. That is exactly what this legislation is designed to do. It is not intended to create some mythical, new army of health bureaucrats that have never been on a farm before in their lives to go wandering around with an explicit desire to undermine and destroy the dairy industry. The objective is exactly the opposite.

I remind honourable members, as I have before in this debate, that, under the legislation we are now seeking to repeal, the administrative responsibility, the approvals and the inspectorial responsibilities, rested with people appointed under the Health Act, under the Chief Medical Officer. Mr Speaker, quite obviously this is not so much taking that administrative responsibility away as removing a duplication of laws, the sort of duplication that the honourable member has been criticising for years. This government is now moving to change that. The honourable member does not even have the decency to stand up and congratulate the government for picking up her suggestion. In the beginning, I had intended to thank her and give her credit for the fact that she had raised this issue on many occasions in this House and that we had listened to her. She cannot seem even to bring herself to do that, Mr Speaker, and I find that somewhat of a shame.

I commend the actions of the government on this matter. I look forward to an alleviation of some of the regulatory impositions and duplications in regulations and statutes that have been imposed on the dairy industry, and a modern and more streamlined approach to what we all hope will be a growing and productive industry.

Mr REED (Primary Production and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members for their comments and to pick up a few of them. I will commence with the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the growing dairy industry in the Northern Territory, particularly his comments about Rowlands Dairy in Katherine. Within the next year or 2, Rowlands Dairy in Katherine will grow to be one of the biggest, if not the biggest, dairies in Australia. Already, it is supplying markets throughout the Northern Territory. Indeed, I believe it is supplying outlets in Kununurra and is looking at Mt Isa as well. It is a magnificent enterprise. I would suggest to honourable members that, if they are in Katherine and they have not already been to see Rowlands Dairy, they might well make arrangements to do so because I am sure they would be surprised at the extent of the development there.

The member for Koolpinyah made a range of comments, most of which I found totally unrelated to the bill. I would like to touch on a few of those in passing, particularly those expressing her reservations about and her reasons for the repeal of this act. As I have already indicated, I found that many of her comments, particularly about tourism and staffing of the department, were unrelated to the bill, but the member for Nightcliff has indicated quite clearly and correctly that many of the controls that lie with the Dairy Supervision Act are applied by the Department of Health and Community Services and, in fact, in some respects very little will change.

The member for Koolpinyah indicated that officers of the Department of Health and Community Services were not appropriate people to undertake some of the supervision required in the dairy industry. She said that it would be more appropriate to leave the matter to the veterinarians and stock inspectors. In the case of milk and milk products, we are dealing with public health and the expectations of the public in relation to the hygiene standards of those products. I believe that it is only right and correct that we should take every opportunity to ensure that maximum hygiene standards are adhered to. In fact, with the repeal of this act, what will happen in relation to the dairy industry and supervision on the ground, or at the dairy so to speak, is that the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries will be responsible, under the Stock Diseases Act, for the control of the industry on the farm and to the milk floor. Once milk is produced and in the stainless steel vats, between the stainless steel vats and out on the market it becomes a public health matter. It will be administered by the Department of Health and Community Services, under the Food Act, and I think that is the appropriate way to go.

The repeal of the Dairies Supervision Act is proposed in light of the existence of other acts that I have already referred to, principally the Food Act and the Stock Diseases Act, which provide adequate powers to supervise dairying operations should that be necessary. The Territory's 2 commercial dairy cattle herds are confirmed free of brucellosis and tuberculosis and, should government control of bacterial infections on those holdings be required, this can be implemented under the Stock Diseases Act. Similarly, as I have already indicated, public health aspects relating to milk and milk products can be adequately controlled under the Food Act.

The Northern Territory dairy industry has illustrated an ability to achieve maximum self-regulation and, of course, the proposed repeal of this act complies with the government's intention to remove unnecessary legislation from the statutes. Consultation in relation to the repeal of this act has occurred across the industry, including both the commercial dairies. All indications have been that the act should be repealed.

In relation to some of the concerns raised by the member for Koolpinyah, the standard under the Food Act does make provision for the exemption from requirements for pasteurisation for those small producers who wish to seek such exemption. Of course, I speak mainly in reference to producers of goat milk.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SOCCER FOOTBALL POOLS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 97)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this legislation which will allow for uniform levies to be made to the states and Territory for such moneys as may be derived from the soccer pools. In his second-reading speech, the minister indicated the percentage increases. Perhaps, in his reply, he could indicate what benefit the Territory is likely to receive from this change in percentage. He may or may not have the figures. I would like to know for my own sake. The other matter on which he may be able to inform the House is how many other states have completed the legislative program to come into line with the Victorian proposition. With those few words, I repeat that the opposition supports this legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I would like to advise the House that the Australian Soccer Pools organisation has been the licensee for operating pools throughout Australia, and I think that is quite a fascinating revelation. It has been responsible for the operation of soccer pools in the Northern Territory since about 1978. This bill provides for increased rates of duty to apply and, interestingly enough, these rates have applied since 20 April 1986. This really confirms and authorises the payment of the duty at the increased rate. I wonder why it is necessary to enshrine in legislation the actual level of the duty? One would assume that regulations would be a more appropriate means of adjusting the level of duty rather than amending the legislation each time. Nevertheless, that is the current situation, and perhaps the minister might have a look at that at some future time. As I indicated, we have been operating with the Australian Soccer Pools at the newly-adjusted rates since 20 April 1986. It appears that the Victorian government adjusted its level. Because it is common practice for all of the states and territories to have a uniform level of duty, all the other states and the territories are adjusting their levels to fall in line with that currently applying in Victoria.

I would like to comment on some of the increased rates. The minister alluded to these in his second-reading speech. It appears that, where the total national subscriptions to the pool do not exceed \$1m, the rate will increase from 32.5% to 34%. That, of course, is the duty payable on Territory subscriptions. When the level moves up to in excess of \$1m, the rate increases to 35%. It also provides for the duty payable on Territory subscriptions to be 35% of all subscriptions in that particular year or any ensuing year when the gross national subscriptions reach \$104m.



Clause 5 addresses the issue of allowing payment of duty to be excluded in certain circumstances by agreement between a state or a territory involved and the Australian Soccer Pools. With those few words, I support the bill and believe it is certainly in the best interests of the Northern Territory that this matter be dealt with today.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. Regrettably, I do not have the information that the member for Nhulunbuy requested but I will certainly obtain it for him.

The major aim of this bill is to bring the act into line with the arrangements that have been operating by agreement with other states and the licensees since 20 April 1986. The bill also provides for the duty payable under the act to increase as total subscriptions increase over the amount of \$1m. Obviously, it will have financial advantages for the Northern Territory. The bill sets out the prescribed formula for the calculation of the duty and provides for the exclusion of subscriptions from duty where the minister has entered into an agreement with a minister responsible for an appropriate authority of a participating state to that effect.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 98)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this bill guarantees the independence of the Master and the Deputy Master of the Supreme Court who are, at times, required to act in a quasi-judicial fashion, as the Attorney-General pointed out in his second-reading speech. The opposition 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.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are 2 matters I want to raise in today's adjournment debate. One of them relates to an issue in my electorate, particularly the question of schooling at Imanpa. The second issue relates to the tabling in the Assembly today of the Annual Report of the Publications and Films Review Board.

I have been absolutely horrified to see that, for several months now, the government has been unable to provide a teacher at the school at Imanpa. I am not completely clear about the reasons for this. I know that there have been

difficulties in recruiting staff for bush schools. I suggest that perhaps some of the employment practices followed by the government are to some extent responsible for the difficulties. I do not know. I accept that those officers of the Department of Education who are responsible for this have been making efforts but, quite clearly, if one were to compare the situation at Imanpa with that in any other school in a Territory centre, it would be regarded as entirely outrageous.

I hear an interjection from the Minister for Education and I am not making any personal criticism or suggesting that somehow he is uninterested. What I am suggesting to him is that he reflect on the reaction there would be if there were 30 or 40 kids who went along to Moil Primary School or Nightcliff Primary School and were told, week after week: 'Sorry, there is no teacher for you. You will have to stay at home'. I ask the minister to reflect on the reaction that he would receive. I remind him of the reaction that he got when he sought to shift the students from Darwin Primary School, his alma mater, to other premises. It would not be on in Darwin or Alice Springs and it should not be on at Imanpa either. That is one point.

The other point is, and this really got up my nose, that the Minister for Education, having winked at this sort of intolerable lack of application of resources, was then prepared to browbeat the community because they had not been looking after the school, because there had been some vandalism in the school buildings that the minister had not been able to staff.

I ask the minister, once again, to reflect on the comparison with Moil Primary School or Nightcliff Primary School or any other school in Darwin or Alice Springs. I challenge the Minister for Education to tell us whether he would front up to the Darwin City Council or the Alice Springs Town Council if there had been vandalism at one of those schools, as there has been, and tell the council to fix it up. I know that he would not have the guts to do that because he knows that he would be laughed out of court. He knows that the Darwin City Council would say that it is not its responsibility. Nevertheless, he expects the local government council or its equivalent at Imanpa to take on municipal responsibilities that he would not dare foist on the Darwin City council or the Alice Springs Town Council. As far as I am concerned, that is just not acceptable.

Having said that, let me give an indication of the support for the school that that community has provided. I do not know whether the Minister for Education realises this but, 2 or 3 years ago, and I cannot give him the exact date ...

Mr Harris: The eisteddfod. I know all about it.

Mr BELL: Yes, the eisteddfod. I was not going to refer to that but, since the Minister for Education has interjected, I will point out to him that Imanpa school has at times worked very well and the work of teachers there has been excellent.

What I was going to point out to the Minister for Education was that, within the last 2 years, that community has itself found \$10 000 to repair that school. I do not think the Minister for Education is aware of that. If the minister wants me to find the exact date, I will certainly do that for him. I suggest that the Imanpa community has gone more than the extra mile for this government and it is about time that it got something a little better than the sort of absurd criticism that I have heard stemming from the minister in recent weeks. I suppose it was some sort of effort to cover his

embarrassment that, in moving into the new school semester, they were still unable to staff the school.

The activities of this government in that respect do not bear too close scrutiny. I am deeply disappointed that that school still remains closed. I heard the comments on the news yesterday that there had been a meeting between Department of Education staff, the local community and staff of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I hope that some satisfactory resolution can be found. Obviously, the question of staffing in Aboriginal schools is something dear to my heart, having spent a few years of my own life at it. I certainly want to ensure that that situation is ameliorated forthwith.

It is with some concern that I draw the attention of honourable members to the Annual Report of the Publications and Films Review Board. If they turn to item 13 on page 4, there is a reference to an investigation. The chairman of the board said that an investigation occurred in Darwin as to the extent to which video dealers were complying with the understanding that X- and R-rated videos be kept isolated from other videos. The results indicated that the X- and R-rated videos were not, as a generality, being kept sufficiently isolated from other videos. That is a matter of serious concern to me.

I draw to the attention of the Attorney-General and other honourable members the need to restrict displays of R- and X-rated videos so that little kids do not see them alongside Mary Poppins. I draw the attention of honourable members to the debate on a Classification of Publications Bill in this Assembly that was held in March 1985. The then Attorney-General, now the Chief Minister, in referring to one of the amendments to that bill stated: 'The same strict requirements relating to X-rated videos apply also to R-rated videos; that is, they must be exhibited for sale or hire in a restricted publications area, the conditions relating to which are prescribed'. Those prescriptions were laid down in regulations No 29 of 1985. Section 6 of those regulations give details of the restricted publications area.

It is a matter of serious concern to me that we have a report for the year ended 31 December 1987 indicating that the situation is not as this Assembly has determined it should be. I do not want to get into the debate about R-rated videos and X-rated videos and non-violent erotica and so on. What is a matter of concern to me is that a sensible, bipartisan decision of this Assembly - much debated, I might say - that was taken in 1985 was not in effect more than 2 years later. I suggest that that should be of serious concern to all members of this Assembly.

I hasten to add that I have a rough idea of what the Attorney-General or the Chief Minister will say. They will say that the Commonwealth government has had a joint select committee working on the question of the classification of videos. I am sure many honourable members will have seen the publicity that surrounded the release of that report this year. The deliberations about classification and the desirability of keeping videos in separate areas are entirely different issues.

I believe that this government has let down the people of the Territory and it has let down parents who are trying to do the right thing by their kids. It has let down the kids of the Territory by permitting, for more than 2 years, the collocation of video nasties with G-rated material. I think the government is to be utterly condemned. I appreciate the difficulties that are presented to us as legislators in that regard. At the time of the release of the joint select committee's report, there was a debate between 2 Labor

members on opposite sides of the fence on that subject. There was Mr Dick Klugman and Ms Mary Crawford, both of whom I have met, the latter being well known to me, indeed a friend of mine. I respect the position of each. As I say, I am not raising the question of video censorship here. What I am raising is the refusal of this government to put into effect, in a sensitive and important area, the decisions of this Assembly. The government and the Attorney-General of the time, the now Chief Minister, and his successor as Attorney-General stand condemned for their refusal in that regard.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I noted the member for MacDonnell's comments at the beginning of the adjournment debate in relation to the school at Imanpa which previously was known as Mt Ebenezer by many people. He commented on the difficulty of positioning teachers in that particular school. There is no question that there are very real problems in relation to our putting teachers in that particular school. And I wonder why, Mr Speaker? The member for MacDonnell said perhaps employment factors related to those problems, but he did not know. He threw out the barb, the aspersion, but he is not interested in finding out what the facts are. The school is in his electorate. I wonder if, in fact, he has spoken to the community in relation to this particular issue because clearly he does not know what the situation is at all.

The Department of Education was contacted in relation to problems that were being experienced in that particular area and officers of the department visited the Imanpa school on 2 August. Although I will not mention the names of people concerned, I will read some of the comments made about the school when they arrived.

We were disgusted at the sight that greeted us as the school had been badly vandalised: all windows and lights had been smashed; screens slashed; desks, chairs and cupboards upturned; books and materials strewn all over the place, both inside and outside the caravans; faeces on the floor and in cupboards; telephone, microwave oven, fridges and lawn mowers wrecked etc.

Not long after our arrival, the janitor arrived and told us that the petrol sniffers had caused all the damage. We were then joined shortly afterwards by another person from the community, who is also employed as a janitor. We expressed our sadness and disgust at the state of the school and questioned whether the people really wanted a teacher for their children. We then advised these 2 people that we would meet them in the morning to start to clean up the place and that people could come and speak to us tomorrow about the future of their school.

We then went to the teachers' residence and started to sweep out the caravans and check the generator. The assistant teacher then arrived and expressed her disappointment at the state of the school.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the history of that particular school. There has been social unrest in the community, mainly because of alcohol consumption and some petrol sniffing problems, which reached another high earlier this year. Mr Speaker, I would like to give you some idea of what the problems have been over the last 2 or 3 years. In 1986, a break-in to the teachers' residence was reported as having occurred during the preceding week, with some minor damage sustained. On 20 August 1986, there was minor vandalism at the school. On 22 August 1986, there was a break-in at the

school with minor vandalism. In December 1986, there was extensive vandalising of the school, repairs were subsequently effected at the expense of the community at \$3500 for the premises and \$7000 for repair and replacement of equipment. In August 1987, there was a break-in with superficial damage being done to the school.

I am very pleased to see that the member for Stuart has returned to the Chamber.

In March 1988, we had community problems with alcohol consumption and violence and consequent poor attendance reported by the head teacher. On 22 and 23 March 1988, the Assistant Secretary Superintendent Aboriginal Education, Senior Projects Officer and the Ministerial Officer Education visited Mt Ebenezer in response to representations from the teachers because many of them felt concern for their well-being. The physical well-being of the teachers was at risk and this led to their seeking and gaining transfer. I might say that the teachers who have been transferred, who are now at Harts Range, have fitted in very well with that community and are doing an excellent job.

Action to recruit suitable staff commenced as soon as they left in April. Again, in August 1988, extensive vandalising of the school was reported. The teachers at Imanpa were dedicated. They were properly prepared to take their place in that community and they were able to perform the task that they were supposed to be able to perform. The 2 teachers at the school requested transfer as they felt threatened and intimidated by the unrest in the community. In addition, they were frustrated by the fact that, despite their best efforts, attendance was extremely poor. In the afternoon of some days, attendance was down to 3 or 4 children out of a potential enrolment of some 50.

Efforts have been made to recruit teachers to that particular school, but we have not met with success so far. There have been 12 offers made and all have been rejected. And I wonder why. I have made it clear that I will not have a situation where teachers feel threatened or are concerned about their safety in those communities.

Mr Speaker, when you arrive in a community and a person tells you that you are not wanted there, that is great stuff to start the ball rolling. The member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell should be out there and talking to people in those communities and trying to tell them about the need to have their children educated and the need for the communities to have a commitment to their children's education. They should talk to the advisers in their community and say that it is important that those people be accepted in the community to perform a very important task.

I noted also that the member for MacDonnell started to speak about the process of preparing teachers to go into those communities and, some time ago, he was on the radio saying that we just 'throw' teachers into those communities. We do not worry whether they are trained or not to perform the task. What a load of nonsense, Mr Speaker, and the member for Stuart knows it! There is a very good program in place in the Northern Territory. When hiring teachers for remote schools, our policy is that the Department of Education endeavours to place suitably-qualified, experienced and appropriate staff in all schools. Selection procedures reflect awareness of the problems associated with small, remote schools. The department's recruitment policies and procedures are aimed at ensuring that, as far as possible, suitable teachers are employed. These result in priority being given to teachers who

possess qualifications in Aboriginal education or Aboriginal studies and who have already gained some experience of working with Aboriginals.

We also have induction courses, and the member for Stuart would be well aware of that. All recruits to Northern Territory schools are inducted into the NT Teaching Service through courses planned and presented by departmental officers. These courses aim to prepare new recruits for their responsibilities in schools throughout the Northern Territory. Consequently, the problems in recruitment for small Aboriginal communities are dealt with, teachers are given an idea of what to expect and are provided with advice about possible action that could be taken. Extensive documentation is provided to assist the recruits and discussion sessions are held with experienced officers.

The member for Stuart knows that this material is available and that videos are available also. All of this is part of the process of letting teachers know about where they are to teach and the problems that they may encounter in those communities. As far as experienced teachers are concerned, one of the problems is that many of them are too qualified to go into those communities. That problem has to be addressed. It is the same in most states also, where first-year teachers tend to serve in the more isolated areas. Fortunately, some of them stay there for many years, dedicate their lives to the area and do extremely well there.

In addition, regional induction courses are held which aim to provide more specific assistance. Where possible, familiarisation visits are made at the regional level. Induction lasts for 1 week. Following their travel to their postings, during which recruits are accompanied by experienced officers, the new teachers are recalled at the end of the first term so that they can meet their fellow recruits, share experiences and pursue issues of concern which have arisen from their first-term experiences. This process is extensively documented. All indications are that teachers find both the induction and the induction recall courses invaluable as preparation for their work.

Mr Speaker, let me turn to the induction program 'Rural Recall Summary' book to see what the teachers have said. This book was issued to teachers attending the induction recall course in Alice Springs which was attended by the teachers who were previously assigned to Imanpa and questionnaires recorded the responses of teachers on a number of issues. As far as the aims of the course were concerned, 100% of participants said that they were achieved and 100% said the course was of practical use. One participant said that the course was too long. All of the other participants said the course was about right. No one said that the course was too short. There was ample time for participants to air their concerns and to discuss them. 100% of participants said that other officers would benefit from such a course. As far as the course as a whole was concerned, 9 participants said it was very successful and 12 said it was worth while. Most participants definitely believed that the course was beneficial.

As far as general comments were concerned, there were many. I will quote just a few: 'I was very pleased with this course'; 'I found that the whole course was of great benefit and very practical'; 'a very stimulating course'; 'I felt the 3 days here have helped me tremendously in knowing more about different approaches to bilingual education'; 'a very well run course'; 'the days were well-planned and offered a good overview of the core subjects'; and 'practical activities were very good, atmosphere is very good'.

The member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell know full well that there are problems in relation to recruiting teachers in some areas. We are able to position teachers in most schools and it just so happens that, in the case of this particular school, although 12 offers have been made, no one has wanted to take up the position. The member for MacDonnell correctly stated in his opening remarks that the community had met recently. It is very pleasing to note that this is the case. A meeting was held in Imanpa, on Monday 15 August, between the Imanpa community and officers of the Northern Territory Department of Education. The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs was also represented. Unfortunately, FEPI was unable to provide a representative to attend. I might say that a representative of FEPI has visited Imanpa and talked to the community. I would suggest that the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell should also start talking to the community instead of trying to knock the government and the Department of Education. Why don't they get into the community and talk to people, ask them to look at the issues and welcome people into the community? Those members should talk to some of the people there, particularly the community advisers, because they are the ones who are causing a great many of the problems.

The community indicated that it wanted the school to resume operation. As the member for MacDonnell said, previously it was a very good school. It undertook to clean the premises in preparation for the appointment of teachers to work there. The community agreed to that at the meeting attended by various other groups. The Department of Education undertook to continue its efforts to recruit a teacher who was experienced and suitable for the position. The community agreed that, if a permanent appointment could not be made quickly, a temporary arrangement would be acceptable. Further constructive discussions are planned between the Imanpa community, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Northern Territory Department of Education. I hope that FEPI will also be involved in those.

We do not resile from the need to provide teachers in that community. We want to provide teachers and we have a responsibility to provide teachers. However, the community also has a responsibility to make a commitment in relation to its children's education. That needs to be acknowledged by both the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell. We will do our job. Let them get out there and do their job by talking to the community and encouraging it to accept the teachers and do what is right so that its children can be educated in the correct manner.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to raise an issue that one of my constituents has raised with me. He and his wife are retired public servants, having lived and worked here for many years. They are extremely highly regarded for their work in historical circles. I think the best approach for me to take is to read out a letter. The contents of the letter apply particularly to the Minister for Conservation. The letter relates to the lack of government care and supervision of heritage cemeteries in the Northern Territory. In the last 18 months, this gentleman has sought support for the preservation of some 20-odd old cemeteries in mining areas, but without much success. He says that, unfortunately, there is a lack of any policy formulated by the government. I am not sure whether the Heritage Unit of the Conservation Commission has yet agreed to or formulated a policy on who is to deal with these areas, let alone protect them from adverse status.

One area in the Shire of Litchfield - the Southport Cemetery - is known to contain 40 or 50 persons from the 1855 to 1870 period. Recent letters from South Australia have drawn attention to this area. He has attached these. They were written to the NT News by visitors from South Australia.

Genealogical requests to the local society have raised queries about those who were buried in these cemeteries but there has been little response from the government because of a lack of policy on where the responsibility lies.

There are 2 questions that I would like to ask today which were raised in the letter. In view of the interest in heritage legislation in the Territory shown at last year's seminar and more recent articles in the press about the need to preserve some heritage items in the Territory, what positive steps are being taken by the government to introduce heritage legislation? In respect of a series of early cemeteries near Darwin and the mining areas, what policies are being adopted by the government with regard to preserving the Northern Territory heritage value of these areas, and what positive steps are being taken to examine the Southport area and preserve its status, having regard to recent queries in the Darwin press?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have raised those questions today because, previously, ministers have said they will answer questions asked in question time or in the adjournment debate or any other debate. I sincerely hope that the Minister for Conservation has taken note of my questions and will give me a reply at some future time. If the honourable minister requires any further information, I will be only too happy to provide it as also would the gentleman to whom I referred.

I asked the Chief Minister a question this morning in relation to DNA fingerprinting. This is a revolutionary means of identification. Strictly speaking, the DNA identification system, although it is called DNA fingerprinting, is not related to conventional fingerprinting where a person's finger pad patterns of arches and wells etc are recorded on paper. DNA is short for deoxyribonucleic acid. It is a substance in the cells in a person's body which has a make-up peculiar to that person and that person only.

DNA is a complex string-like chain of chemical. When it is recorded photographically, it has a sort of bar code approximately similar to the recently-introduced bar coding identification of articles in supermarkets. The life of DNA is about 4 years, and it is present in body substances such as blood, semen, hair, saliva etc. This form of personal identification was discovered accidentally in 1983 by Dr Alec Jeffreys in Leicester in England. In 1987, for the first time, a rapist was convicted in Britain through the use of DNA identification. I believe also that the Victorian and the South Australian Police Forces are studying the viability of the introduction of the DNA system of identification. In view of the fact that our police force is way out in front in adopting modern methods in the administration of justice, I feel certain that, if it has not already taken this on board for consideration, it will in the future. That aside, I will be very interested to hear what the Chief Minister says in reply to my question.

Previously, I have spoken quite extensively about the proposed Milatos development in a public area under the control of the Darwin City Council. I do not intend to canvass any of those ideas or repeat what I have said on previous occasions. However, an item in the NT Government Gazette drew my attention to another area in Darwin, and I wondered whether a major hotel development would be considered in that area. It also is in a gully in which some of the land is unoccupied and some of the land is occupied. I speak of an area known as Doctor's Gully. On the map, Doctor's Gully is a very unusual gully. It has a very good outlook over the sea and would be ideal for the development of a tourist hotel complex.



Doctor's Gully consists mainly of vacant Crown land but there are other blocks there. There is a block which has been owned by the Chief Minister for some time - block 5320. There are 2 small blocks, 5246 and 5245, which are occupied by the Navy storage tanks and both, I have been assured, are owned by the Darwin City Council. There is a parking area, block 5551, which is also owned by the Darwin City Council. In view of the thrust of the Northern Territory government's development policy to bring industry into the Northern Territory, could I suggest - and not really with tongue in cheek, but with some common sense - that the government consider perhaps using all this vacant Crown land in Doctor's Gully for another big hotel tourist development.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have received a petition from 27 citizens of the Northern Territory which does not bear the Clerk's certificate as, unfortunately, it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. If I may, I will read the petition:

We, the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory, respectfully petition the Speaker and honourable members of the Legislative Assembly as follows. We request that: (1) noting the deep concern of parents, teachers, employers and members of the community at large that government schools in the Northern Territory, unlike those of the 3 neighbouring Australian states of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, offer no systematic curriculum of religious education to students at primary or secondary level other than a 6-week optional segment during Year 10; (2) having regard to published research indicating that 73% of Australians think that religion should be taught once weekly in government schools as contrasted with only 8% being definitely opposed; (3) recognising that the most important reason for parents choosing to enrol their children at independent schools is the perceived basis of religious conviction and consequent ethical values of those schools; and (4) accepting that section 6 of the Northern Territory Education Act empowers the minister, as his primary responsibility, to take all measures which he believes necessary or desirable to assist parents of children in the Territory in fulfilling their responsibility to educate their children according to the individual needs and abilities of those children, members support jointly and severally the revision of the curriculum for all Northern Territory government schools by the incorporation of a systematic program of religious education to cover all levels from transition year to Year 12, as in duty bound, we ever pray.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table that petition.

Leave granted.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet, I would like to comment on something that the Minister for Health and Community Services said yesterday in relation to Aboriginal health workers. I am very pleased to support his comments. In fact, in my view, some of the work being carried out by Aboriginal health workers is quite magnificent. I was very pleased to hear his comments about Harry Singh and the efforts of Harry Singh in helping to save the arm of a female tourist. Of course, the Singh family is quite well known in the Belyuen area. I could relate a number of similar stories. In fact, only in the last couple of years, I told the House about Matthias Namarluk, who carried out some quite magnificent surgery on a woman's cheek when she had a fishhook caught in it. Matthias, by the way, also worked with Dr John Hargreaves who, as the minister pointed out yesterday, is

well-known for his skill as a microsurgeon. Currently, Matthias works at Port Keats where he is very highly regarded.

I would like to say a few words about a magnificent book called 'Top End Native Plants' which is written by John Brock who works for the Conservation Commission. I think he is a field officer. He is a very keen bushwalker and photographer and has become very familiar with Top End native plants. He put together this book with the sponsorship of a number of people and organisations including, I am pleased to say, the Office of Local Government. I believe that that initiative began with the Minister for Health and Community Services in his former role as Minister for Community Development. I was happy to take up the commitment because the book, as I said, is quite magnificent.

It contains about 700 photographs of plants and lists 450 common shrubs, trees, herbs, vines and aquatic flora. It has been well received around the Territory. As part of its sponsorship, the Office of Local Government purchased a large number of these books and distributed them around the Territory to all Top End councils, to libraries, the DIT and so on. I have had a very positive response from those places, indicating pleasure at receiving the book and that it would be put to very good use.

In my recent travels around the Territory, I was very pleased to see some of the work that is being done by Aboriginal groups in the cultivation of trees for the greening of communities, particularly at Jurnkurakurra at Tennant Creek and, of course, Tangentyere at Alice Springs. I am sure that they would be very pleased with the contents of John Brock's book. It covers a whole range of matters. It sets out the family each plant belongs to, its habits, leaves, flowers, flowering period, fruiting period, habitat, cultivation and Aboriginal uses. Those uses are quite interesting. Many of these plants are significant because of their use by Aboriginal people for medicinal purposes. I think it will prove to be a very valuable book to all people who are interested in growing plants in the Top End. I commend John Brock and all of the groups who helped to sponsor the book. It is the fine result of their efforts.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to answer the inane accusation by the member for MacDonnell that the government took 2 years to implement certain legislation. He was referring to legislative provisions which were passed by this House after quite detailed debate and a conscience vote. The legislation related to the separation of R- and X-rated videos from other videos for the purpose of excluding people under the age of 18 from the area where those videos are displayed and sold.

As a result of that legislation, and before the government could implement it, a committee of the Commonwealth parliament investigating the classification of videos gave a commitment that it would be reporting within a period of 6 months. As a result of representations from video proprietors throughout the Territory who pointed out that, if the committee actually precluded the X-rated classification from sale, there would be no need for the exclusion to operate, an exemption was gazetted. I emphasise that it was gazetted for all and sundry to see. The proprietors also gave an undertaking that they would operate under the spirit of the legislation.

We know the fate of the committee, Mr Speaker. Every 6 months it would report that it had not finished and would come back in a further 6 months. This went on and on. Eventually, in February this year, I decided that, even though we had been promised that the committee would be reporting in another

6 months, further delays in implementing the legislation were not appropriate. I removed the exemption and ordered that the provisions of the legislation commence on 1 July. I can say with great confidence that that is what occurred. Apparently, the member for MacDonnell is not aware that those provisions are operating.

The commencement of those provisions was accompanied by a great deal of publicity. There were press releases as well as some comments by some video proprietors along the lines that the requirements were unfair because the Commonwealth committee was about to report. When the committee did report, there was no change in the situation in the Territory. I think it is important to point that out. The exemption was gazetted. That was done in relation to a commitment from a Commonwealth parliamentary committee.

The member for MacDonnell's claim that this government failed to comply with the will of the parliament is ridiculous in the extreme. However, since he is taking the high moral ground, I pose one question to him and I certainly hope that he will rise in the next adjournment debate to answer it. I would like to know where he stands regarding the denial of the will of the parliament in relation to an act that was passed by the federal parliament which precluded the claiming of land on stock routes and reserves under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. That act was passed in the federal parliament and is still awaiting approval. If the honourable member has such great moral concern for what he sees as a denial of the will of the parliament, I would like to hear what his attitude is to that blatant denial of the views of the federal parliament.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly tonight in response to what I believe is one of the most outrageous adjournment speeches delivered to this House in quite some time. I refer to the speech delivered by the member for Koolpinyah last night in relation to 3 cases she cited in which welfare officers from my department were involved. In fact, she made the comment that she believed that the actions of these welfare officers showed that they were not fit to hold their positions. The member for Koolpinyah has shown to this House her complete lack of understanding of the role of welfare officers and her complete ignorance of the people with whom they have to deal from time to time. It seems as though the member for Koolpinyah has nobody on her mind except the people who move within her particular social circle and displays a totally rednecked attitude to anybody who moves outside that sphere.

Mr Speaker, it is intolerable that any member should bring to this House particular cases in relation to matters such as child abuse, particularly where incest is involved. It is impossible to debate individual cases and I believe it is totally inappropriate that they be brought into this forum or any other public forum. Only a complete lack of understanding on the part of the member would allow her to raise particular cases in the House, as she did last night. Let me remind the member for Koolpinyah and all other members of this House that the welfare officers in my department work specifically within a statutory role at all times, a role which defines the welfare of the child as the first consideration. This applies particularly to securing care and guidance for the child which promotes the child's welfare and the maintenance and development of family relationships which are in the best interests of the child. The whole Community Welfare Act has been developed and is administered with this statutory duty as its foundation. Let me also remind all honourable members - and this is a very important point to note - that our jails are full of innocent people. If you do not believe me, ask them.

If the honourable member for Koolpinyah had any knowledge whatsoever of the ramifications of child abuse and the delicate nature of investigations into cases of child abuse, she would have been able to handle the cases that she referred to in a far more professional way. She has done herself no service whatsoever in bringing the matter to this Assembly. The role of welfare officers, of course, is to investigate allegations, no matter where those allegations come from, so that they can be satisfied that children are not being abused. I can understand that a number of parents, when an investigation has begun, would feel rather perturbed. I would certainly hope so. Such investigations are extremely difficult to carry out. As a responsible parent, if the allegation were made by one of my 2 daughters that I had been incestuously assaulting her or, for that matter, making suggestions of an incestuous nature to her, I would have some grave concern that something was wrong with that child. I would be looking for all the professional advice that I could obtain to examine the overall situation that resulted in our arriving at that circumstance.

I believe that the honourable member said last night that, because of the attitude of a particular officer involved in one of the cases she cited, the parents did not want to accept any advice or counselling. It was being offered but, to their way of thinking, not in the appropriate way. I would have thought that, if the honourable member for Koolpinyah could have opened her eyes just a little bit further than her little social circle, she would have been able to advise the parents herself to obtain appropriate counselling. She did not bother to do that. She chose to come to this Assembly and denigrate all welfare officers.

There are in excess of thousands of children in this Northern Territory, out of a population of about 140 000, who are being sexually abused. As a Legislative Assembly of this Northern Territory, we must take on board the responsibility for doing something about that. I concede that, in investigations of this nature, some people will be hurt but I will not sit back and see those children continually abused and turn my back on it and warn my welfare officers off. The budget debate will disclose, over the next week, that this Northern Territory government has taken this particular issue on board in a very responsible way. In fact, the budget allows me to increase my staffing allocations within the welfare area by some 23 people. I will be giving more details on how those 23 people will be deployed but it is an indication that we definitely are very much aware of the need for a consolidated effort in this particular area.

The adoption case that the honourable member cited, once again, was a matter where the honourable member only had to represent her constituent properly. If she had come to me or to one of my officers, she could have been advised on the very complicated issues that surrounded the case. I do not intend to try to explain it. The person herself came to me and I think that she would be able to tell you, Mr Speaker, that she received very satisfactory representation. The matter is being handled properly. There is no blame whatsoever on my welfare officers in that case in particular, as was alleged by the member for Koolpinyah last night. I concede that the case was an extremely difficult and unusual one. The personal matters involved in the first adoption complicated the second one and that made the issue very difficult to handle. I urge the people in Koolpinyah, if they have any problems in relation to my area of responsibility, to come and see me, not the local member, because they will obtain a better result.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the Minister for Education made some statements tonight on the situation at Imanpa school. I would normally reply

immediately but I have a number of other issues that I wish to raise. He referred to a number of dates which I wish to check in Hansard before I reply on that matter. I will turn to the other issues and come back to that matter, probably tomorrow night. I would not like to get him wrong.

I would like to read out a letter which I received from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War which comes from the coordinator in Alice Springs, Dr Peter Tait. I would like to read it into Hansard because it has a number of questions for the Minister for Mines and Energy to which he may wish to reply but which are not in a format which would be acceptable for questions without notice. It states that the Medical Association for the Prevention of War is concerned about the possibility of nuclear waste reprocessing and disposal facilities being set up in central Australia. It states:

Our concern relates both to the hazards this would expose central Australians to and the encouragement this gives to the wider nuclear industry. Could you ask the Minister for Mines and Energy for us in the forthcoming sittings what the current state of planning and activity on this issue is.

The specific questions are:

What was the outcome of the recent inquiry into low-level waste disposal undertaken in conjunction with the federal government? Is there any definite proposal to begin implementing the recommendations of the Chandra Hallenstein Report? Has federal government approval been sought for the importation of any nuclear wastes? In regard to nuclear waste reprocessing and disposal, has the Department of Mines and Energy worked out the quantity of sand that would be required to be mined for production of the synroc necessary to dispose of 1 t of high-level nuclear waste? Has the Department of Mines and Energy worked out the volume of synroc that this would produce and hence the volume required for disposal? Is Mines and Energy aware of how many tonnes of high-level waste Australia has to dispose of?

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Tait.

The Minister for Mines and Energy may wish to reply in some future adjournment debate to some of those items or provide the information to honourable members.

I want to speak about 2 issues that arise from this year's issue of 'Education NT'. It is a publication that I read quite avidly. In this issue, it has adopted a particularly apposite way of setting out 2 stories. On a left-hand page, we have 'Independent Schools Move Ahead', a story on the Darwin International Grammar School and, on the right-hand page, we have 'Boarding Schools for Alice'. The boarding school for Alice refers to St Phillip's College. The Darwin International Grammar School was discussed at some considerable length both inside and outside the House when it was first raised some time ago and I think that I made my position quite clear.

Mr Harris: You were off beam, weren't you?

Mr EDE: I don't think so because what has happened is pretty well what I feared. The honourable minister will note that I did not, from that point onwards, start predicting its failure. I could see what would happen and I

did not intend to allow myself to be accused of causing that failure. I left it up to the honourable minister to announce the fact that parents should find alternatives for 1989 because of the dangers. He did so, and that was his duty. I commend him for having the courage to make that statement.

I am worried by the way that these projects attract the government's interest and then the government tends to be sucked in further and further. When the school first indicated that it would have problems with boarding, the Minister for Education said that he would assist it in finding accommodation for the students. I presume that he meant something more than simply ringing around the motels and boarding houses to ascertain whether they had any vacancies over that period. I was anxious to know whether that indicated an extension of the commitment of \$1.45m per year which the government had already made. I am particularly worried because I saw the editorial in the NT News the other day in which the writer appeared to be urging the government to make some millions of dollars available in the form of loans.

Mr Harris: Why didn't you ask me this morning?

Mr EDE: I was not here this morning.

I would like to hear whether that was a beat up of a government release to prepare the ground for an announcement of that type or whether, in fact, the government has been able to assess the current situation with regard to the Darwin International Grammar School. I wonder whether the minister would be prepared tomorrow, in the adjournment debate or possibly by means of a ministerial statement, to allow Territorians to hear exactly what the situation is in relation to the Darwin International Grammar School. The minister may be able to inform the House about the number of overseas students enrolled, the type of students we hear about so often in relation to the university, the DIT and, more recently, the Darwin International Grammar School. The minister might wish to inform us of the costs and benefits in that area.

I would like to contrast the alacrity with which the minister jumped in to support the Darwin International Grammar School, a brand-new operation with no local track record, with the government's tardiness in moving to assist St Phillip's College. That school has been established for 23 years as a residential college catering to students from remote areas extending across to the Queensland and Western Australia borders, south as far as South Australia and right up through the north. That school has attempted to provide teaching facilities for grades 7 to 9. I am aware that, at the time when money was being made available to the Darwin International Grammar School, people from St Phillip's College were complaining about the fact that the department did not want to talk to them about assistance for its programs. It may be that the government has reconsidered and decided that it will not need to spend \$1.45m each year for the next 6 years on the Darwin International Grammar School and will provide some assistance for St Phillip's College. The minister does not usually hide his light under a bushel in these matters so perhaps he could let us know what the situation is in relation to St Phillip's College.

The final matter I wish to raise relates to the responsibilities of the Minister for Mines and Energy. It specifically concerns the outstation at Mirridi. Honourable members may recall the many occasions on which I have spoken out on the subject of water supplies for outstations in my electorate. Of course, they will remember Duck Pond, where the government said that there was no water. However, by looking at the geological structure of the country

around Tennant Creek, we were able to establish that there was a possibility of finding water under the dolomite layer. I wrote to the then minister and that course of action was then attempted and, lo and behold, the water flowed to the surface. That community now has quite adequate quantities of very good water. After having attempted for some time to obtain a water supply for Mirridi, I hoped that the minister would take that reminder on board because it is in the same geographic area.

However, I received a reply from the minister stating that:

Drilling at Mirridi outstation is not included in the current drilling program due to higher priority needs for essential services on other Aboriginal communities. The outstation has not been included in the drilling program due to lack of evidence of permanent residency proposals for a significant number of persons.

Mr Speaker, it is rather difficult to take up permanent residence when you live 45 km away from the nearest outstation which has water and rely on water carted on a trailer behind a tractor. Nor is it surprising that, given the conditions of the road, that tractor has broken down. It is very difficult to expect people to live under such conditions in order to establish their right to a water supply. People need water before they can live there, but it would appear that they have to live there before they can get water. That is rather difficult but it is the basis of the minister's method of making decisions about water supplies for outstations.

Mr Setter: People make their own decisions to go and live there.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in response to that interjection, many people have made the decision to live at the new subdivision at Sadadeen. They did not wait 2 years before they got their water supply. It was already there.

We have subsequently attempted to find an old BMR bore which we have heard about on the east side of the Buchanan Hills. My notes tell me that it is something like 131° 19' south. We were told that the bore was used by BMR staff up until 1976 and that, whilst there was some seepage around it, the bore itself was almost dry. We were wondering if, with that relevant information, the government might reinvestigate to determine whether it is simply a matter of re-drilling or checking up on the foot valve, as well as analysing the water. BMR would probably still have records of the flow rates, the depth at which water was obtained and so forth. Many years ago, when my father was involved in drilling bores with an old mud-puncher, we had a method that we would use in a situation like that. We would drop half a stick of gelignite down the hole. Quite often, that established quite a good flow.

I am told that there is a bore at the place called Pinyala, which is a very important dreaming site on the Wampana track. I believe that that bore, which is east of the Buchanan Hills, may be worthy of investigation. If the minister is too lousy to provide people with some water before they actually live out there, he may be able to have a look at an established bore to see what prospects it may offer. Teddy Morrison is a person who has worked for many years with the local Wulain Association, an organisation assisting outstations in that area. They have done a great job and, now that he is older, he is very keen to move back to his own country with his extended family. I think this is a case which the honourable minister should take on board.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, several weeks ago, Justice Maurice handed down his report on the Warumungu Land Claim. Not long afterwards, I made a call for the Warumungu people in Tennant Creek to set up their own land council to administer their land. This is consistent with a view that I have held for a long time, that the 2 land councils in the Northern Territory, the Central and the Northern Land Councils, are too big, too cumbersome and too remote from some of the areas that they supervise. I felt that the handing down of Justice Maurice's findings on the land claim presented an opportunity for us to have our own land council to supervise the Warumungu people.

That drew a pretty quick response from the Central Land Council which stated that it had an office in Tennant Creek and was quite capable of doing the job. A local Aboriginal said that I did not know what I was talking about and that the Warumungu people were happy with the Central Land Council looking after their affairs. Mr Speaker, I would like to read into the Hansard the comments of Mr Justice Maurice relating to a Barkly region land council. He said:

I am firmly of the view that the single measure most likely to enable the claimants to fully realise the fruits of their victory, to rekindle satisfaction and pride in being Warumungu, to ameliorate the concerns of townspeople and others whose interests are affected by the claim, and to give the best chance for the development of appropriate working relationships between landowners and other people of the region would be the establishment of a Barkly region land council. Of course, this should not be done unless it is the wish of the Warumungu themselves, but their views should be given with a full understanding of the alternatives and without the intercession of the Central Land Council or its agents. They have a vested interest in the maintenance of the status quo. The views of the surrounding groups might be sought as well, to see if they want to remain with the existing land councils or throw in their lot with the new Barkly-oriented organisation.

The judge went on to say that there were several bases on which the setting up of a new land council might be justified.

My views as to the desirability of doing so have been formed with the benefit of having been involved in this large and complex inquiry. They were not lightly reached. Foremost amongst these reasons is the cultural distinctiveness of the Warumungu and their immediate neighbours from the Aranda groups to the south of the Devonport Range. This has many implications which I need not spell out here. In cultural terms, the arbitrariness of the existing land council boundaries is well illustrated by the fact that the line between the Northern and Central Land Councils respective spheres of influence divides Warumungu territory. Rockhampton Downs, for example, lies within the Northern Land Council's bailiwick.

The judge went on in some detail, but the point I wish to make is that I do not resile for one moment from the stance I took suggesting that the Warumungu people should have an opportunity, as the judge suggested, to have their own land council. The assessment of the desirability of that should be made by the minister's office without any interference, intercession or involvement by the Central Land Council. Let us be honest about it, Mr Speaker. The Central Land Council has a vested interest. It is a bureaucracy comprised of many people. It is not in its interest to see another land council established over which it has no control or influence. I



was not surprised by the reaction of the Central Land Council and I did not reflect on it in any derogatory way. However, I believe it is almost impossible for people in Alice Springs or Darwin to administer land in Tennant Creek or Borroloola, which is what is required of them. They do not have the resources or the network that even the government has, and government finds it difficult enough.

The other point that has come to light is the real difficulty that some people have with the Central Land Council. The judge went on to discuss it in his comments relating to the land within the claim that is owned by Mr Malcolm McAskill. Herein is another reason why a Warumungu land council should be allowed to set up in its own right without the interference of the Central Land Council. I would like to read into Hansard another paragraph from the judge's comments. He says on page 257 of his report:

Mr McAskill has been subjected to shabby and disgraceful treatment by the Central Land Council. Even in the final submissions tendered on behalf of the claimants, there is not the slightest recognition that he might have been badly treated. On the contrary, he is disparagingly portrayed as a gambler who foolishly brought any detriment he may suffer upon himself. I do not believe his treatment by the land council and its advisers has been understood by those on whose behalf they have purported to act.

The claimants struck me as sensitive people. The whole episode inspires no confidence in the ability of the Central Land Council to deal sensitively and efficiently with the sorts of issues that are likely to daily arise if the recommendations in the first part of this report are fully implemented.

Mr McAskill is a popular and well-respected figure in the town. His treatment may well be seen by many as the measure of what they might expect from this remote, hidebound bureaucracy. Little wonder then that Mr McAskill was not prepared to trust the land council by taking up its offer to negotiate a lease to which, of course, no land trust would be bound. But the story does not end there. Mr McAskill, on 4 March, learned from a newspaper report for the first time that it was being claimed there was a sacred site, Wartijilpungara, site No 789, on his land.

In 1985, some female Aboriginal witnesses spoke in general terms about the location of this site. It was said to be near the Eldorado Mine. Hilda Johnson Nappananga said a hill close to the mine and just to the east of it was called Wartijilpungara. She mentioned that there was a little creek at that place as well. Bunny Nabarula described it as being not far east of the slaughter yards but used to be a billabong there, now someone had fenced it, put a dam in and ran horses there. No witness expressly associated it with the Juno Horse Centre. Significantly, counsel for the claimants did not do so either, despite its importance and several weeks when it would have been opportune to mention it. Indeed, the more likely connection from the evidence given was with Mr Smith's grazing licence. The site was not shown on the map.

Mr Speaker, a great deal of media coverage has been given to the treatment that Mr McAskill and the Juno Horse Centre suffered as a result of the Warumungu Land Claim decision. While the decision may show that he has a case for detriment, what the judge is highlighting is the absolute arrogance and

the hidebound, bureaucratic approach of the Central Land Council towards people whom it believes it can ride roughshod over. I want to say that this is not the way of the Tennant Creek Aboriginals. They do not have this kind of attitude locally and they would be most uncomfortable that this sort of treatment was being dished out to their friends and neighbours in the community.

That is all the more reason for the federal minister to consider seriously the appointment of a new land council in the Northern Territory to take into account the aspirations of the Warumungu with the grant of their new land. Such a land council, based in Tennant Creek, could also represent the interests of people at Elliott and out on the Barkly Tablelands, as far east as Alexandria Downs and even up into the Nicholson River Land Claim area, because many of the people are related by skin and many are geographically centred around Tennant Creek. It is an absolute irony that, from the Alexandria Station, we send representatives to the meetings of the Northern Land Council every time it has one and that the Northern Land Council manages, on behalf of the traditional owners, the land of the Borroloola community. I am not reflecting on the Northern Land Council's attitude or capacity. I believe it has given it its best shot, but it is extremely difficult to manage land like that from such a long way away. Here we have a golden opportunity for the local people in Tennant Creek to be their own people on their own land council and make their own decisions about their land. They would have their own bureaucracy in Tennant Creek and look after themselves.

I would put it to the Central Land Council that it has had the carriage of representing the Warumungu people during the course of the land claim, and it has obviously been successful because Mr Justice Maurice's recommendations are quite clear about what should happen. I do not know of anybody in Tennant Creek who is overly concerned that the Aboriginals have been given their land, and everyone is keen for the matter to be settled as soon as possible. Under those circumstances, it would be quite reasonable for the Central Land Council to retreat to the areas south of Tennant Creek over which it has a jurisdiction and let the Warumungu people manage their own land.

I fail to understand why it is so important for the Aboriginal people of Alice Springs, who mainly make up the Central Land Council and the bureaucracy of the Central Land Council, to have a sphere of influence in the Warumungu area. Over recent years, we have heard people from the Daly River and occasionally from Groote Eylandt and other areas saying that they want to have their own land council. I think they are reflecting the frustration that many people feel with being supervised, organised or administered from areas a long way away when they would really like to take control of their own affairs and manage their own land.

As I have said publicly, I have spoken with Jack Gidgegari, who is one of the traditional owners involved in the land claim. He made it quite plain to me, without any questioning at all, that they would be more than happy to see the Central Land Council go and for themselves to be in charge of their own affairs. Later, Mr Bluey Frank was brought on the radio to say that I did not know what I was talking about. I would just say that, judging from the statements of Aboriginal people whom I have asked which way they would like to go, they are more than ready to bite the bullet. I invite the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to send his own representatives to Tennant Creek to make an assessment for himself about who ought to administer the Warumungu land that will be granted when he makes his decision. He can then decide who are the people who should have the final say in the matter. I would ask the minister to be mindful of the fact that, while many people may be advocating that the

Central Land Council or others should do the job, it does have a vested interest. Whilst it served the Warumungu people well during the course of the claim hearing, it is now time to let the people have a say in what they want to do and run their own affairs.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, the matter of Marron's newsagency has been raising a fair degree of heat in the media and even in this House over the last few weeks. I would like to put my position, which I have made known to people on a personal basis in Alice Springs, people who have telephoned me about the demolition of the facade of Marron's building. I can feel, as do many people, a wrench to know that Marron's building was totally knocked down. It was one of the first buildings I recall seeing when I first came to Alice Springs about 20 years ago with a group of school kids from down south. It was opposite the Flynn Memorial Church. However, after much consideration, my view is that, if some buildings are of such significance to the community, the community has to convince the local council or the Territory government of their value and, if they are privately-owned, that they must be purchased, restored and maintained.

To lose the Marron's building was a wrench, but it was getting old. There was to be an attempt to preserve the facade only. There were 4 verandah posts and a sloping iron verandah. The front of the building was of asbestos cement with some brickwork lower down. It was a nondescript facade which would have been difficult to incorporate into a new building without its looking rather weird and odd. My point is that, if a case can be made that a building is of significance, the government should be persuaded to buy it. Of course, the government does not have an endless supply of funds even in good times. In all honesty, I do not think anyone could say that Marron's building was of such value that it should have been preserved at all costs.

Adelaide House, which is just across the road, has been preserved, mainly by the Uniting Church. It was the first hospital and has some very nice stonework. It has some fascinating, passive air-conditioning devices built into it. It is a building that is really worth saving. Marron's building did not fit into that category. It is rather a sad state of affairs that the people who had bought the building from Mr Ted Marron virtually had to act like thieves in the night to knock the building over.

Mr Ede: Why did they?

Mr COLLINS: Because it was not economic to keep it there. The rates in Alice Springs, particularly in the CBD, have risen by about 50% to pay for the mall. It would not have been economic to have maintained the original building. That is a sad state of affairs but it is the truth of the matter. I maintain that, if people want to save buildings, they should have a very good reason for doing so and they should start to lobby early before the value increases. Such buildings need to be identified early so they can be bought without putting an excessive strain on the public purse.

However, we cannot preserve every building simply for sentimental reasons. That brings me to Billygoat Hill. There are 4 houses at the base of Billygoat Hill where rezoning has been permitted. There has been some condemnation of people who want to rebuild that particular area. I believe Mr Floreani, the National Party candidate for Flynn, owns 1 old house there. There are others - and they are all constituents of mine - who are keen to see some redevelopment there. Those buildings are old but they certainly do not warrant preservation in any way, shape or form. In fact, they are a fire hazard. One of my very close friends lives next door to Mr Floreani's block

and there was almost a fire there recently when someone was careless with an iron. That is the sort of house which could be a real death trap. I am keen to see some redevelopment there. That is my position on that matter.

On at least 1 occasion, I have told members of this Assembly of what I learned in Jerusalem. Within the constraints of the safety regulations there, people can build any building whatsoever in the city. However, the facade of every building, whether it is skyscraper or an ordinary house, has to be made of Jerusalem stone, which is a yellowish sandstone limestone material. In the late afternoon or early morning, the whole city has a golden glow which is very appealing. I would not like to make it mandatory, as obviously is the case in Jerusalem, but a similar idea could be used to give a little outback flavour to Alice Springs. People could consider the use of verandah posts, which seem to have been banned, and the old bull-nose verandah which we associate with outback station homesteads. That would create a nice effect and I think the idea should be promoted. I welcome any support that any members from the area might give to encourage people to employ that feature on their buildings. It would not be costly but it would be quite effective.

I mentioned Expo last night. Among its features, there are outback windmill arrangements and corrugated iron tanks tastefully decorating the scene which give an outback favour to the Expo site. The promotion of such an idea in Alice Springs would add the touch that visitors are looking for. People have been saying that the old Alice is gone, and the town is not the same.

I have attended perhaps the last 19 Old Timers' fetes in one capacity or another. Alice Springs people came together marvellously in support of the Old Timers last Saturday. There has always been marvellous support for the fete from all sorts of individuals and groups. I think there was double the number of people that I have ever seen at such a fete and they stayed for much longer this year. People were enjoying themselves and it was good to see people catching up with friends. When I could be doing the same, I regret sometimes that I am stuck there helping to raise a dollar by making the odd pancake and giving the member for Stuart indigestion, as he says. He should not eat them so quickly; he should learn to enjoy them.

During the year, I was asked to chair the Old Timers' auxiliary. The chairman's role is much easier than the secretary's. I believe I did my job reasonably well but I fully acknowledge how much hard work and organisation was done by the committee and the staff and by so many clubs and other bodies. In fairness, I could not begin to name names because so many clubs and individuals really go out of their way to help the Old Timers. The people of Alice Springs responded marvellously. The amount of money taken was about the same as last year. At first, I felt that was a bit disappointing because it was the biggest crowd ever and they stayed longer. However, that is a sign of the times. People do not have the spare cash that they have had in the past. The Lions' Camel Cup and the May Day procession run by the Youth Club were also down in takings this year. It was good, I think, that we were able to maintain at least the status quo for a group of Territorians who have given their best years to the Territory and who are in need of our assistance. To me that was okay.

In certain ways, the old Alice Springs has gone - the buildings and so forth - but there was an atmosphere that said that the people were still around and those who were new were capturing the charm and the enjoyment of the day. On behalf of the Old Timers, I would like to record thanks to everybody involved for their support and the great day that everybody contributed to.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I must say that I was very interested in the member for Fannie Bay's first speech as Chief Minister yesterday and I was particularly delighted by the comments he made, particularly his reiteration of policy with regard to this government's interest in developing trade with South-east Asia. I would like to quote from his speech, if I may, because I think it is important ...

Mr SPEAKER: I advise the honourable member that he is unable to revive an earlier debate, unfortunately.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, does that refer to an earlier debate at some previous time or an earlier debate today?

Mr SPEAKER: An earlier debate during this session.

Mr SETTER: I accept your advice, Mr Speaker. It is a shame, however, because his words were very relevant. Perhaps, if I can put what he said into my own words, I will continue.

The Chief Minister intimated that the location of the Northern Territory relative to the huge marketplace in South-east Asia means that Darwin as a port of entry is ideally situated for the Northern Territory, and indeed Australia, to take advantage of that enormous market.

Mr Dondas: We have been saying that for 30 years now.

Mr SETTER: My colleague says that we have been saying that for 30 years. I am not quite sure that it has been quite that long ...

Mr Dondas: No, longer.

Mr SETTER: I have not been here for 30 years so I take his advice on that. I recall that the honourable member was driving taxis here some time ago ...

Mr Dondas: Not in Darwin.

Mr SETTER: Not in Darwin? Oh well, never mind. In Hong Kong?

The Chief Minister went on to talk about the political, economic and cultural human relationships that we have been able to develop with South-east Asia over this period. He indicated that our past efforts are beginning to show results and assured us that they will be continued. I must say that I was very pleased with the Chief Minister's approach to this matter.

As you would be well aware, Mr Speaker, on a number of occasions in the Assembly, I have drawn attention to the potential of that South-east Asian market. It is absolutely enormous, and I must compliment Nortrade and the Department of Industries and Development on their excellent efforts in that region over the past 8 or 10 years. As you would also be aware, Mr Speaker, our various Chief Ministers have visited that region. As recently as August last year, the previous Chief Minister visited Jakarta and the eastern provinces of Indonesia. Of course, Indonesia is only 1 country relative to that whole basin of potential trade for Australia in South-east Asia.

Some 12 months or more ago, I was lobbying in government circles for the reestablishment of a trade working party with Indonesia. Some members would recall that, 4 or 5 years ago, we did have a trade working party in operation.

It met on several occasions but, for one reason or another, it fell by the wayside. I suspect after reading the minutes of those previous meetings that there were too many people on that working party. There were about 20-plus people on either side and it was totally unworkable. I am pleased to report that, earlier this year, the working party was reestablished and the Northern Territory side of the working party contains about 6 to 8 people, some of them public service people and some from private enterprise. I am very pleased to see the eminent private-enterprise representatives who are on that working party.

The role of the working party to date has been to investigate, research and identify areas which perhaps inhibit trade between our 2 countries, and areas which might assist trade. There is a whole range of those. The one that immediately comes to mind, of course, is regulation. Certainly, in the past, Indonesia has been very regulated in its approach to exports and imports. Another would be communication and transportation. As you would well know, there is no permanent, organised shipping service that runs on a regular basis between eastern Indonesian ports and the Northern Territory - none whatsoever. That is something that has inhibited trade for quite a long time now. The reality is that, if you have 300 t or 400 t of product and you want to charter Perkins Shipping, it would take its vessel to one of those northern ports, load it up and return. But there are not very many importers or exporters who can collect together products in that sort of tonnage and, therefore, vessels have not been plying these waters very regularly at all.

Shortly after the working party was established, we had the opportunity to meet the Indonesian Ambassador in Darwin. That was some 3 or 4 months ago. The results of those discussions were very encouraging indeed. We were given every assistance by the Ambassador and Dr Joseph Halim, the local Indonesian Consul in the Northern Territory. There is also a lady whose name is Mrs Ari Wahyuni who heads the Indonesian Trade Office in Sydney. She has offered considerable assistance to the committee in the interim period.

In recent times, I had the privilege to accompany Mr Geoff Chard who is, I believe, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development, on a visit to Melbourne where the Bicentennial Trade Exhibition was being held. That was about 4 weeks ago. Indonesia participated in that particular trade exhibition. I believe about 14 private Indonesian companies were represented there. There was a whole range of products displayed from, as we heard mentioned earlier, rattan products through to textiles to tyres and motor vehicle spare parts. It was quite amazing what was available. Of course, virtually every country in the world was represented at that exhibition.

A few days later, in the Australian pavilion at Expo, the working party met with a group of officials from Indonesia who had come to visit their Expo site and attend the trade exhibition in Melbourne. I will run through the various people who represented Indonesia at that time. First, there was Mr Algamar, the Chairman of the National Agency for Export Development in Indonesia. Mr Herlambang was there. He represents the Chamber of Commerce in Indonesia which is called Kadin. As many people who deal with business people in that area would well know, business is much better facilitated if you can deal with Kadin which represents private enterprise in that country. Also there were: Mr Slamet, who is the Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia in Sydney; of course, Doctor Halim, Consul of the Republic of Indonesia in Darwin; Mr Djauhari, the Manager of Garuda in Sydney; Mr Natanagara, Indonesian pavilion manager at Expo in Brisbane; Mrs Wahyuni, whom I mentioned before; and Mr Harahap, who is the Vice-Consul in Sydney.

On our side of the delegation, I mentioned Mr Chard. There was also Mr Mike Gallagher, Mr Ian Silvester from Perkins Shipping and Mr Bob Matthewson who is a director of Timber Wholesalers. Unfortunately, we received an apology from Mr Cliff Emerson, who is the President of the NT Cattlemen's Association. I think that should be the Executive Director of the NT Cattlemen's Association. Of course, I was there also.

The discussions which took place there were extremely interesting. A considerable amount of cooperation was extended and there was a very receptive reaction from the Indonesian delegation. We discussed and identified a whole range of issues which were of mutual interest to us. We decided to go away and conduct some further research, and we have been invited to visit Jakarta later this year. They have suggested that November would be an appropriate time because there will be a major trade fair in that city at that time. I hope that, at some time in mid-November, the working party can visit Jakarta. I also hope that our Minister for Industries and Development and perhaps even the Chief Minister may be able to visit Indonesia at some time before the end of the year to reinforce the work that has been done by the working party to date.

One aspect that has become very clear to us is that, in international terms, the Northern Territory is seen as a very small market. Whilst we in the Territory think we are a very important market, and indeed we are, in regional terms and world terms we are a very small market. The best strategy, therefore, is not to say: 'Hello, we are from the Northern Territory. We are here to help you'. The approach to adopt is: 'We are from the Northern Territory and our capital city is Darwin, which is the most economical and efficient port of entry into Australia for South-east Asian goods'. If we can sell the concept of using the Port of Darwin, with its excellent loading and unloading facilities - facilities which are under-utilised - together with cheap backloading rates on road transport between Darwin and the southern capital cities, we will obtain a good response.

We really do have something to sell. Members of the working party firmly believe that, within 5 years, the concept I have just outlined will result in perhaps millions of tonnes of product moving across the wharf in both directions. Our only concern is that the backloading capacity of road freight into Darwin will be very quickly taken up by the incoming product. Once that capacity is absorbed, of course, full freight costs will be applicable whilst, at present, the freight companies are running many empty trailers south and therefore offer cheap backloading rates. That would no longer be the case.

Hopefully, we will have a railway by then. That is when we can really start to talk. That railway will be able to take product over the Darwin wharf and have it into warehouses in southern states within 7 to 10 days. That is about one-fifth or one-sixth of the time currently taken to ship goods to southern ports, to wait for berths and then to have containerised goods held up for an other 4 or 5 weeks in customs or because of industrial disputes. What is really needed is a feasibility study to identify all the issues so that we know exactly what we are talking about in dollar terms. I recommend to the government that we undertake a feasibility study into this whole transportation exercise. We can then take that report into South-east Asia and sell the concept. There is no doubt in my mind that business people in the Northern Territory and throughout Australia will be lining up to export and import through the Port of Darwin.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, I support everything that the member for Jingili has said tonight. Unfortunately, I am quite sure that you have

heard that concept expressed as often as I have during the last 14 years. Depending on the attitude of the federal government of the day in relation to the railway, the concept of using Darwin as a land bridge is still only a dream.

Mr Setter: I do not agree with you. We are starting to make some progress.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, tonight I am calling on 2 ministers, the Minister for Industries and Development and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. In some respects, I suppose what I have to say supports what the member for Jingili has been saying. What has really retarded the growth of our agricultural and horticultural industries in the Northern Territory and, to a lesser extent, our seafood industry, has been the lack of capacity to airfreight cargo from Darwin to the markets my colleague has just spoken about - markets such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and possibly even China.

Whilst reading the paper tonight, I noted a very interesting advertisement which hopefully might be the catalyst to changing our capacity to provide produce for those markets. The advertisement says:

Exporters, airfreight to Hong Kong with transshipment services. Martinair Holland, the Dutch wide-body specialist in air cargo, are proud to be serving the Northern Territory export market with a series of DC10 all-freight charter flights to Hong Kong for the duration of the fruit season. For further information on flight schedules please ring ... Martinair Holland.

The phone number begins with 02, which is the Sydney code.

Mr Speaker, I would call on the Ministers for Industries and Development and Primary Industry and Fisheries to take note of this advertisement and have one of their officers to follow it up. In fact, they should go so far as to offer some departmental support in trying to inform Northern Territory exporters of this advertisement. The NT News is readily available to people who live in Darwin, but it is not readily available to the people in the Douglas-Daly area. People who live on small farms out in the rural area might not get a paper for 3 or 4 days at a time. I do not know how long this particular advertisement will run, but I believe both departments have a vested interest in trying to find out further details from this company which is prepared to schedule DC10s through Darwin to the Asian locations of the lucrative markets we have heard so much about in the past 5 years or so.

Territory produce has never been given a fair go because we have never been able to get it on the aircraft. As most members would know, over the last 5 to 6 years, Qantas has been the only international airline flying in and out of Darwin on a regular basis. More recently, we have had Singapore Airlines and, in the last 12 to 18 months, Royal Brunei Airlines. As I understand it, Royal Brunei Airlines is moving about 3.5 t to 4.5 t of Territory produce a week to its region. I also know that, during the season, Qantas is taking full capacity loads of almost 20 t of rockmelons per shipment. Our growers could possibly grow 100 t or 150 t per week for those markets. However, it is no good growing the produce unless you can get it on an aircraft and ship it overseas.

Obviously, our primary producers have also opened up markets in the southern states. In some instances, we are fortunate that our produce is



ready for the southern markets prior to their own produce coming onstream and our growers have been able to obtain a reasonable price. There is no reason why our growers are not able to produce, in 1 season, 2 to 3 crops of considerable proportions.

As members would be aware, there has always been a very active overseas interest in live seafood from Australia. We have an abundance of prawns and fish in our region. Our biggest problem in selling chilled fish is that we have never been able to put the product on aircraft. In those days, Qantas said it could get the fish to Singapore but could not guarantee getting it to the Tokyo or the Hong Kong market. Martinair is offering transshipment services. We cannot deny the role that Perkins Shipping has played in relation to both import and export, but barge operations are far too slow for this type of produce. It has to reach the market quickly to avoid spoilage and to retain a high quality which will gain a better price for our producers.

I ask that the Minister for Industries and Development and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries alert their departments to this advertisement, make inquiries and contact the company in Sydney. They should ask if there is anything those departments can do to highlight that this service is coming into operation through Darwin, and see what kind of assistance we can give to it. I wish it well. Certainly, flying a couple of DC10s through Darwin each week to Asian markets will stimulate what is happening in the Top End. Indeed, we know that the Alice Springs region can produce high-quality citrus fruits but does not do so because it cannot compete with the southern market. If these aircraft are flying through on a regular basis, in 5-years time there is no reason why the citrus industry could not be expanded in the Alice Springs region.

Another matter that I want to raise this evening relates to visas and immigration. We are opening a tourist office in New York and a couple more elsewhere to encourage international travellers to come to this region. I am a little disturbed by an article in tonight's NT News which states:

Canberra: The federal opposition has criticised a government plan to streamline the issuing of visas to Japanese tourists to Australia. The opposition tourism spokesman, Mr John Sharp, said the move was unnecessary and would represent discrimination in reverse.

What a load of nonsense, Mr Speaker!

Mr Ede: What would you expect?

Mr DONDAS: What a load of nonsense! We know that there are thousands of tourists in the Asian region who want to come to Australia but are being frustrated by 2 factors: first, they cannot get a seat on a plane and, secondly, some of them apply at our immigration offices or our consular offices and wait for months for a response. If you are on a holiday, you do not want to wait for months: you make up your mind you want to go and you want that visa.

More importantly, in New York, where the Northern Territory government is to open an office, there are some 4000 to 5000 inquiries a week from people who want to come to Australia. I am not saying all of them will necessarily visit the Northern Territory but even if only 10% or 15% do it would be better than nothing; it all adds up. According to our budget papers, we are looking for 1.1 million tourists. They will not all be Australians. We need international tourists and that market is growing all the time. If the

streamlining works in Tokyo, let that be the precedent to streamline every other Australian office overseas to encourage tourists to come here.

Mr Speaker, I am quite dismayed that we have John Sharp. I do not think he has thought it through. It might have been an off-the-cuff remark but, when you start thinking about all the work that the Australian Tourist Commission and various state tourist commissions have done, this is distressing. We are all vying for the international market and we have some dunderhead in Canberra who says that the government should not streamline the operation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would remind the honourable member that he must refer to honourable members in other places by their correct titles. I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the word 'dunderhead', and would refer to that honourable gentleman as a parliamentary colleague.

More importantly, if we are to encourage people from the international scene to come to this region, we should not be frustrating them but welcoming them with open arms. Why should all the expenditure on tourism by the Northern Territory, the states and the Commonwealth go down the gurgler because we cannot install a decent facility? The biggest problem at the Darwin Airport is that people can disembark at 4 pm and still be there at 6 pm! Let's hope that there is some good news in the budget next week.

More importantly, I do not support the remarks made by the federal opposition about the visa situation. I would certainly hope that some of our parliamentary colleagues in the southern states are able to get to the opposition tourism spokesman and inform him that tourism plays a very important part in the Australian economy. More than ever, because of the unfortunate cutbacks we have suffered at the hands of the federal government, we rely very heavily on tourism development. Back in 1978, all we had was a small tourist bureau with about 6 staff for both Darwin and Alice Springs. Today, over 150 people work for the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I reiterate my hope that the Ministers for Industries and Development and Primary Industry and Fisheries will take notice of my comments in relation to the advertisement in tonight's paper and encourage their departments to follow it through to find out what assistance they can provide. Such assistance may comprise a phone call or a quick note to producers or, perhaps, a press release welcoming this airline to the Northern Territory to take Territory produce to those Asian markets.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION  
Government Precinct Plan

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 543 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Assembly reject the proposed government precinct plan for Darwin. 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 for the Northern Territory, the humble petition of citizens of the Northern Territory respectively sheweth that the proposed new government precinct plan for Darwin, by demolishing the current Legislative Assembly, Supreme Court, Nelson and Wells buildings and erecting new buildings in their place, is a development which is not in the best interests of the public in these straitened financial times and will saddle the community with an enormous debt many years into the future. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly rejects plans to go ahead with the above development now and, instead, consider the encouragement of regional industry capital investments throughout the Northern Territory where appropriate, which would create jobs for Territorians in the present and the future and stop the drift of people away from the Northern Territory.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1988-89  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 17 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, after 10 years of self-government, the Territory is at an economic crossroads. We can choose to build a uniquely successful community on the bedrock of our resources or we can choose to continue on the slide that will turn us into the backwater of the Australian nation. Together we can forge the resources of the Territory - the minerals, crops, herds and the spirit of independence that makes us Territorians - into a community that provides satisfying jobs for us and our kids and an environment that allows people to develop and grow, or we can continue to lurch from crisis to crisis in which jobs and people are lost to the Territory. These are the choices that confront the Territory and this budget fails because it does not address them.

The budget should have been framed to unleash the positive forces of the Territory community. Instead, it is a lacklustre budget that reflects the dearth of ideas and leadership in the community. The Territory economy is in trouble. Population has declined. Over the last 12 months, more than 9000 jobs have been lost, and the July figures from the Bureau of Statistics show unemployment has increased to 7.8% while the rest of Australia enjoys its lowest unemployment level for 6 years. Construction activity continues to fall and bankruptcies are higher than the Australian average. The sad thing is that these problems are not new.

During last year's budget debate, I drew the House's attention to a number of other trends: population growth slowdown, increasing unemployment levels,

slower growth and activity in the building industry and slower growth in vehicle registrations. All of these are key indicators of economic activity and all had red lights flashing 12 months ago. At that time, the government attempted to pass the figures off as an aberration. Unfortunately, the trend has continued as a result of the arrogant and irresponsible head-in-the-sand attitude of the government. Organisations like the Master Builders Association and the Confederation of Industry, which have pointed out the problems and asked the government to tackle them, have been accused of spreading doom and gloom as has the opposition. It is a classic case of 'shoot the messenger'.

Also, 12 months ago, I drew the House's attention to the fact that building approvals were down 35.4% for the year ended March 1987 compared to a national downturn of 8.8%. What did the government do to arrest this trend in the construction sector, which is a key employment area of government? In its 1987 budget, the government reduced its capital works program from \$317m to \$202m in real terms and it has been reduced even further this year. In hindsight, even the government must realise that the decision it took last year was disastrous.

At that time also, I drew the government's attention to the fact that it made its decisions in a strategy vacuum and that Territorians and Territory businesses had no clear goals set by the government. I also suggested 6 principles it could use in the absence of any of its own. In the continued absence of any such principles set out by the government, I repeat them now::

1. to identify population targets and a level of social and economic infrastructure required to facilitate our emergence as a state;
2. to ensure that there are training and employment opportunities for all Territory kids;
3. to minimise red-tape costs to entrepreneurial businesses willing to risk their money in the Territory;
4. to establish an effective, efficient and motivated public service;
5. to keep Territorians' money in the Territory through investment strategies; and
6. to ensure thoughtful social development policies aimed at improving the quality of life for all.

These principles are still valid and provide a stark contrast to the CLP's absence of strategy after 14 years in office.

Mr Speaker, when you look to the Treasurer's speech for a sense of direction or a hallmark of the new era, you find only one relevant sentence in the budget. This is it:

The Territory is making a transition from an economy underpinned by the public sector to one in which the private sector will take its rightful place as the cornerstone of future economic growth.

And who could find fault with that? It is a natural progression that should be, and is, taking place. But where, Mr Speaker, in the context of that broad

principle, is any concept of long-term planning by the government or of goals, objectives, or strategies? Where are the criteria by which we are able to judge the success or failure of this budget or this government? In my view, the lack of direction, the lack of criteria is judgment in itself. All that this budget offers is a series of promises. This approach to private enterprise was epitomised for me by a constituent, who is a small businessman. He said that, for the last 18 months, the CLP had been feeding small business people with promises - promises of projects and growth. He said that the only problem with that was that the bank would not accept promises as collateral.

The Treasurer has harked back to his old ways: tell the parliament and the people as little as possible. He is still functioning on a year-to-year basis without showing any vision for the future.

Let me make it clear that there are some good things in this budget: the freeze on rent and most charges and the capital works expenditure in some job-creation areas. There is, however, no unifying thread binding the whole thing together. It is a series of one-off decisions that sometimes contradict each other. Even in recognising the importance of the private sector, the Treasurer has not addressed the real nature of the private sector in the Northern Territory and that, of course, is small business.

Small business is what the Territory economy is all about. Success in this environment consists of some 10 jobs here and 5 jobs there: constant, stable, sustainable growth. This is what this budget ignores almost totally. One welcome exception is the raising of the payroll tax threshold, something we in the Labor Party have been pushing for for some time. Another area that would have been of benefit to small business is the \$4.6m set aside for industry assistance packages. But, according to the Treasurer, this has been reserved for major, new industries and, as he pointedly said last night on the 7.30 Report, industries from outside the Territory. That is a real retreat into the past; back to the days of NTDC cronyism, suspicion and unfair competition with existing businesses. Businesses do not want handouts: they want the opportunity to get started and to compete on an equal basis in the marketplace.

Territory small businesses could have been assisted very effectively through an expanded capital works program, but this budget contains a drop of nearly 22% in real terms in the allocation for capital works. The Treasurer states that the real expansion is in off-budget items: the airports, the Darwin-to-Katherine transmission line and the Anderson project. But those projects together, if they go ahead on time, will not bring expenditure on capital works for 1988-89 up to last year's level, which was inadequate in itself.

Of just as much importance is the incredible attitude of the government to regional development. The amount of capital works expenditure allocated to projects in Alice Springs has declined, as a percentage of the total capital works, from 12% in 1986-87, to 11.3% in 1987-88 and 7.7% this year. In money terms, the amounts for those years are \$56m, \$32m and now \$21m. For the benefit of honourable members opposite, Alice Springs has as many problems as Darwin yet it finds its share reduced while concentration is placed on reviving the Darwin economy. The Berrimah-line mentality is alive and well in this government and I know that you, Mr Speaker, must be as disgusted as I am by that fact. For this Territory to develop as a community, all people must believe that they are being treated fairly. This budget does the opposite. It reinforces the view widely held outside Darwin that the government thinks that the Territory ends at the Berrimah lights.

It is the cash allocation on capital works that is the real measure of the government's commitment to the construction industry and small business and it is obvious that its commitment is low. Its lack of planning and foresight is the direct cause of the boom-and-bust cycle in the building industry. The government not only stood by while the building industry declined but gave it a kick in the guts by withdrawing government efforts in the construction sector. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of government expenditure in the Territory economy. Whether the financial frauds in the government like it or not, government expenditure is significant and must be managed. This means that government expenditure in the construction area should be used to smooth out peaks and troughs not, as this government has done, to accentuate both.

In his speech, the Treasurer has mixed together capital works and the purchase of capital items in an attempt to cover up the decline in capital works. In fact, there is almost a 50% increase in capital items expenditure at a time when the economy is crying out for every single dollar possible to be placed in capital works. It prevents the government putting money into priority areas. Much of this spending is unavoidable due to past neglect of key capital equipment items like radiology equipment and the failure to put in place a proper replacement structure for other items.

Another area that affects small business is the allocation to the Trade Development Zone. It is clearly time to review our objectives and operations in this area. Over the past few years, we have invested more than \$20m in the zone and we are now looking at investing another \$42.m this year. We cannot continue to assume that jobs and businesses will appear just because we hope that they will. The government cannot continue to put off the deadline for those jobs and businesses just because they do not appear. Last year, the then Treasurer promised that 10 businesses would be in place by the end of the year and, of course, that was the last in a whole string of government promises. Recently, the Chief Minister said that there would be thousands of jobs before the end of the century, conveniently well after he will be gone from the scene.

Mr Speaker, I emphasise that the TDZ was a concept worthy of support but now must be reviewed and hard decisions made. I welcome the decision of the Minister for Industries and Development to undertake an independent review of its operations. I would point out particularly that there is unrest in the contracting industry at the potential for the zone to become a haven for subsidised companies competing in the local market against them instead of creating new jobs in new markets as it was designed to do.

The lack of an integrated development strategy is most clearly indicated in this budget by the decision taken by the government to increase water charges by 2¢ per kL. Clearly, the government considered that an extra \$14 a year for the average householder would not break the bank and it is probably right. But, equally clearly, it has not considered the effect of this decision on what the Treasurer has identified as one of our growth industries - the horticulture industry. This decision will have a major impact on that burgeoning industry. Margins are already very fine due to poor soil, distance from markets and competitive factors. This decision will have a major impact on the future viability of some of those engaged in the horticulture industry. To be more positive, I would hope that the Treasurer will take a specific look at the implications of that decision for the horticulture industry. I share his enthusiasm for the horticulture industry and certainly think it is one of the bright spots on the economic horizon.

I turn to the human services sector of the budget. These are the services that enable people to participate effectively in the community and to play their part in economic development. They are an essential part of the social fabric. In both areas, there have been cuts in real terms. In education, funds for primary and secondary education have been reduced by \$3.4m. That comes at a time when schools have already been squeezed. Many schools are now faced with the prospect of increasing school fees simply to raise enough money to cover basic expenses. Others will be forced to reduce the quality and range of services that they offer. Already we have seen the demise of school councils in all but 1 of Darwin's high schools. What is next: Larger class sizes, classes accommodated in demountables, reductions in consumables, reduction in the range of courses or cutbacks in libraries? Those are the sorts of choices facing school communities.

At the DIT, departments find that they do not have materials for students. In the trades area, a lecturer has been allowing students to work on his own car because that is the only way they can get automotive experience. Fine arts students have been buying their own materials so that they can have a practical course rather than one which turns them into art critics.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in health, things are so bad that many people are reviving the old adage: when in pain, take a plane.

Mr Dale: You know that is not true.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, last year ...

Mr Dale: You and the sex symbol. You are the only ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The opposition listened in silence yesterday to the Treasurer's budget speech. I would ask that the Chair provide the same protection to the Leader of the Opposition while he is making his response.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order.

Mr SMITH: Last year, the attack was focused on community-based health care. Health centres were closed; the primary care clinic at the hospital was closed. The result of that was that people who used those facilities previously were forced to use general hospital facilities. This year, in response, the squeeze has been placed on the hospitals. The hospitals have been cut by \$7m in real terms. Hospitals throughout the Northern Territory are fully stretched. What is to give in the hospital system under these new funding arrangements? What services will be examined? Will the already long waiting times be extended? What is certain is that many of the already overworked staff at hospitals will leave, unable to face the pressures of work and the knowledge that they have been ignored by government.

Who has been there all the time as Treasurer, and as Minister for Industries and Development, playing an intimate part in all this mismanagement? None other than our latest Chief Minister and Treasurer, who admitted to his recent party conference that the CLP government had made some appalling mistakes. That is certainly not news to anyone outside the CLP, but it appears that the Chief Minister is trying to imply that he had nothing to do with it. If anyone was in a position to understand what was happening to the economy, it was the member for Fannie Bay. Nevertheless, throughout this era of appalling decisions, he issued not one word of criticism and now, as Treasurer and Chief Minister, he wants us to believe that this government has

finally seen the light and is about to embark on a new era of far-sighted planning. Pigs might fly, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the government had spent more time governing the Territory and less time on the internal machinations of the CLP, the circumstances which are forcing Territorians to pack up and leave might have been addressed.

In this budget we may finally have run the fiction of balanced budgets to ground. Of course, the honourable Chief Minister cannot help himself and refers to the proud record of balanced budgets, but even his own budget papers disagree with him this time. For anyone who has some doubt about that, I invite him to turn to page 13 of Budget Paper No 3 which puts in clear perspective the limitations of the Consolidated Fund. The New South Wales Commission of Audit described consolidated funds as 'tennis club accounting'. The Chief Minister's own document reveals the true nature of the Territory's financial situation - a public sector loan debt of \$1300m. This year, the government has to find about \$160m in loan repayments before starting to frame the budget.

On top of that, other potential and actual liabilities that this government is funding, or may one day have to fund, include \$175m from unfunded superannuation payments and \$160m from investments such as Yulara and the Darwin and Alice Springs Sheratons. The level of indebtedness has risen to over \$14 000 per Territorian, much higher than the \$7400 that has so worried the New South Wales Premier. As a priority, this government has to admit to its deficit budgeting - and I think we may have reached that stage - and outline a policy of economic management that addresses the debt level.

The opposition appreciates the additional financial information supplied in Budget Paper No 3. The move from a single-line approach to a more comprehensive and functional approach is something that we have been asking for over a number of years. The information supplied in Budget Paper No 3 is particularly useful in determining the real financial position of the government, and I would urge members opposite to read it because they may then know what is going on. The government's approach to budgeting is shown to be amateur in the extreme. Its own budget papers now tell it that it does not run a balanced budget and that the Consolidated Fund, on which it relies so much, is not an accurate reflection of the state of the Territory economy. Similarly, its attitude to economic development is amateurish. Its favoured approach is an attempt to kick-start the economy on the basis of the big bang theory. It aims at producing many jobs overnight and creating an impression of activity whilst the reality is that few long-term jobs and little productive capacity result. The Anderson proposal is a fine example of that approach.

The down side to the government's approach is that it largely ignores local business, with many employees and materials often being imported for the duration of individual projects. It is an approach that can temporarily push up prices in the building industry so that, once again, small businesses trying to expand and home builders are likely to suffer. It is an approach that, for all the money spent, may lead to no long-term increase in employment or any increase in living standards for Territorians. It is an approach that is based on panic and is intellectually poverty-stricken. It makes no attempt to tie in the long-term goals and aspirations of Territorians to government policy.

At this point, I should clarify my own attitude to larger projects. Large projects initiated by private developers will be welcomed by a Labor



government as long as they are not looking for unreasonable government support and are not in conflict with the main thrust of the Territory economy. We welcome the initiatives being developed to utilise our gas reserves. We only wish the minister responsible was not such a gasbag himself.

We must not forget that the Northern Territory is a small-business economy and that the economy will grow through the encouragement of small business. What the Territory needs over the next 10 to 20 years is stable and sustainable growth, growth that is bedded on local industries and skills and supported by government through market identification, research and the education system. We should aim to create real and long-term jobs. We should be targeting import replacement and value-added industries. This approach can use local skills, local capital and is necessarily on the scale of local industry because it is part of that industry.

The basis of the opposition's approach to economic development is this: new activity must be directed chiefly to adding to Territory production capacity. Funds should be allocated to assets that generate Territorian cash flows. New industry should be directed towards adding value to Territory produce. Under a Labor administration, the Territory would no longer be regarded as a quarry or farm available for rape by southern or multinational interests. Value must first be added here.

New economic activity should form forward and backward linkages with existing industry and, for those who do not understand that concept, I will give a couple of examples in a minute. Such activity should process the inputs and outputs of present day Territory industry. Greater efforts must be made to buy the Territory product. Local business must be seen to produce the goods and buyers must be encouraged to check the NT product first. I will also give an example of that later on. Government mis-specification and freezing out of Territory products must be stopped.

Under a Labor administration, public assets would be managed efficiently. Taxes and lands would not be gifted to favourite business interests, as has happened here recently. A venture capital corporation that we would like to establish will assist determined entrepreneurial activity consistent with the above plans. Our public sector would be managed in a manner designed to encourage excellence, reward initiative and divest or redeploy unproductive assets. Public sector trading enterprises would be given a commercial charter and freedom from bureaucratic and political interference.

Having outlined the basic principles of the opposition's approach to economic development, I will explain what they mean in real terms. First of all, they mean that government must get out of the hair of small business as much as possible. Small business is naturally competitive. It wants to compete on an equal basis without government interference and with as little red tape as possible. Secondly, it means that government has a role to play in identifying small business opportunities or market niches. It can do this through research, marketing and, where necessary, infrastructural assistance. This involves refocusing government activity and thinking in key departments. There are a number of areas of opportunity which can be quickly identified. Each of them, if developed, would lead to additional full-time and meaningful jobs in the Northern Territory economy.

The crocodile tannery is an excellent example of the forward and backward linkages that can be developed with existing industries. I am advised that the fully developed cashew plantation at Wildman River, with 1 million trees, will have the capacity to support a sprinkler manufacturer, a polythene pipe

manufacturer and a bee-keeping industry in the Top End. Government assistance in identifying such opportunities is essential. Other industries will arise independently of existing industry. There are market niches for orchids, cut flowers, wilderness tours and small secondary industries, to name just a few.

Government has a role to play in providing venture capital to business in the Territory. I am not referring to packages that will give some businesses an unfair advantage over others, such as firms in the Trade Development Zone competing against local industries. I am referring to starting capital to enable local business to compete on an equal basis in the market. We want to pick winners, so this capital will be repaid on commercial terms with low-start loans. Under a Labor government, such a scheme, either in conjunction with the private sector or run entirely by the government, would be managed by commercially-oriented people. While I have the opportunity, I would like to ask what happened to the proposal the government announced 2 or 3 months ago to enter the venture capital area?

Mr Perron: We are still looking at it.

Mr SMITH: You are still looking at it. The old mirror job.

Labor in government will not play favourites and will not play games with Territory taxpayers' money. It will provide every opportunity for entrepreneurs with good ideas to get started, so that their expertise can operate to create jobs in the Northern Territory.

Government has a responsibility to provide an effective and appropriate social resource structure. Our schools and tertiary institutions have to be centres of excellence, able to provide an educated and skilled work force. Our health system has to be funded to give people confidence. Our welfare system has to provide a safety net for people who fall out of the system.

Government has a responsibility to make sure that money works harder in the Northern Territory, and we must keep as much development work as possible in the Territory. The ISO is a good start and has been appreciated, but we must now look towards the provision of development agreements on major projects. The Confederation of Industry has raised this matter with the government, but received no response. The basis of the confederation's scheme is that the government should encourage major developers coming into the Territory to take a very close look at local businesses which may be able to supply them with goods and services. The strategy to achieve this aim would be development agreements, which could go so far as to say that developers will only purchase goods and services outside the Territory when those goods and services cannot be supplied at a competitive price within the Northern Territory.

No one is arguing for a feather-bedding approach to local business, but the government has an obligation to ensure that as much work as possible on major developments goes to businesses in the Northern Territory, and quite clearly that is not the case at present. A scheme utilising development agreements would eliminate the bickering that is currently going on between the Business Council and the Chamber of Mines over whether local industry is getting a fair deal from interstate mining companies setting up in the Northern Territory. I want to make the point again that, on this side of the House, we are not in the business of feather-bedding companies in the Northern Territory. We are saying to those companies that we will do everything in our power to ensure that they can compete on an equal basis with companies from interstate for work that becomes available in the Northern Territory.

Certainly, they have a responsibility to run efficient businesses and to be price and service competitive.

Secondly, government departments have to educate themselves on what is available in the local manufacturing sector. One of the most frustrating exercises for local business is convincing public servants that they have the capacity to provide products for government tenders. All too often, tender documents are structured in a way that precludes local products being considered.

Government must also encourage the burgeoning Aboriginal economy. It is time we moved the land rights debate along and, as a government, stopped opposing Aboriginal land ownership and started encouraging Aborigines to use their land to provide an economic future for themselves. Aborigines are doing this with significant results in a number of cases, most of them outside Darwin. If we look at what is happening in Kakadu, at developments in Tennant Creek and in Alice Springs, we see that Aborigines are starting to carve out for themselves a very significant role in the future of the Territory. That process will proceed much faster through the government working in cooperation with Aborigines on economic development rather than continuing to oppose legitimate land rights claims. The great advantage with Aboriginal spending is that the great majority of it stays in the Territory.

To get this economy moving again, the government needs to increase the amount of money in the capital works vote so that there is an increase in real terms. It needs to ensure that the increased vote is equitably distributed between regions, as it quite clearly is not at present, and it also needs to ensure that it is primarily allocated to projects that will enable local firms to tender for the work. It cannot be stated too often that the major way government can boost job opportunities is through the creation of capital works. With the completion of major projects like the Channel Island and Katherine Power Stations, the government had a unique opportunity to pump-prime the economy through a mix of capital works projects. It has failed to do this, and the boost many expected and the economy required will simply not occur.

As part of this redefinition of the government role, we will set in place a review of public service operations that will cut out patronage and introduce industrial democracy processes aimed at promoting more efficient work practices, a better quality of service to the public and higher morale among officers. We will also provide public servants with a clear set of government policies and directions that will enable them to work more effectively. These reforms will result in a 10% improvement in efficiency, at the least, over the next 2 years: a saving of \$30m. The majority of this money will be injected into capital works projects. This can be done without a loss of jobs in the public service.

It is important to open the books of the Northern Territory and subject them to an independent audit in order to determine the Territory's true financial position. It is important that a broad-ranging debate be initiated on the desirable level of debt in the Northern Territory, consistent with the aims of promoting economic development and ensuring that an effective human services structure is in place. Mr Deputy Speaker, no one denies that it is necessary to have a level of debt in the Northern Territory. What is important is that we establish the level of it and determine whether that is the level of debt we really want rather than falling into it by accident. As part of that review, we need to look very closely at existing areas of debt, particularly the continuing debt contributions to Yulara and the 2 Sheratons.

Once an agreed level of debt has been arrived at - and it will certainly be lower than the present level, which is higher than the annual budget of the Territory - procedures will be put in place to claw it back to that level.

It is necessary to look closely at all areas of expenditure to ensure that the government is getting value for money. In this context, I repeat that we support the independent review which the Minister for Industries and Development has commissioned in relation to the Trade Development Zone. A similar review could well be undertaken into the operations of Nortrade.

Government needs to establish a small interdepartmental, multi-disciplinary task force to research and plan major project development in the Northern Territory. In the short term, such a task force is necessary to ensure the maximum economic benefit to the Territory from the relocation of the 2nd Cavalry Unit. Another area for a task force is in the exploitation of our oil and gas reserves to ensure that the maximum development takes place as quickly as possible. It is important that we maximise the opportunities available to us, and one of the most efficient ways to do that is to use public service high-flyers - and we have a number of them - to get on with the job of attracting investment into the Northern Territory.

I have outlined Labor's broad principles in relation to the present state of the Northern Territory economy. It is quite clear that there is something seriously wrong with the Northern Territory economy at present. The problems will not go away. They will not be solved by promises that something is going to happen tomorrow, next week or next year. The only way they will be solved is for the government to sit down and address them. It must recognise the state that we are in and work from that base, rather than attempt to fool the people of the Northern Territory that everything is rosy.

The Chief Minister and Treasurer has failed with this budget. It provides no basis for the government's plans for the future. It has no strategy for getting out of the economic mess that we are in. It relies on the same old rhetoric and it trots out the same old statements, but it does not provide any of the answers.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I think the shame of today is the lack of commitment of the Leader of the Opposition in debating the Appropriation Bill. His heart just was not in the speech he just gave. He stood in front of you, Mr Speaker, and there was no way in the world that he wanted to say what he had to say. I think that that was demonstrated in the way he delivered the opposition's response to the budget speech and to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr Speaker, it is also significant that today the government will have 4 speakers on the budget and the opposition will have none. If there is ever to be an indication that there is nothing that the opposition has to say about this budget, it will be demonstrated in this Chamber this afternoon.

The facts are simple. The Leader of the Opposition cannot count. As an economic spokesman for the opposition, he is a dismal failure and he has a demonstrated record of that. Let me go back to Wednesday 23 September 1987 when he asked the following question:

The Northern Territory Land Corporation has a trust account which appears in the quarterly financial statement along with all other trust accounts. For the 3 months ended 30 June 1987, the closing balance of that trust account is shown at \$48 018. For the 3 months

beginning 1 April, the opening balance is shown as zero. I do not expect the Treasurer to have the answer to my question but I would appreciate his obtaining and supplying it. What happened to the \$48 000 that was in the trust account at the end of one financial quarter but was not there at the beginning of the next?'

My response to that was simple. He asked a supplementary question:

Can I point out to the Treasurer, who again has demonstrated appalling ignorance about his own financial ... ?

He was interrupted there, Mr Speaker. My answer was simple:

I will provide the Leader of the Opposition with that information during the course of these sittings.

Mr Speaker, it became clear during those sittings that he simply did not understand what he was talking about. He could not tell the difference between a quarterly account and an annual account, and the reasons for that are on the public record for everybody to understand.

On Tuesday 23 February 1988, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'The latest quarterly accounts showed that Territory taxation was down 7% on estimates in the areas of stamp duty and payroll tax. Can he confirm this situation?' The answer was that the last time we issued financial statements, the Leader of the Opposition could not tell the difference between an annual and a quarterly account, as I have said, with regard to the Territory Lands Management Corporation. The Leader of the Opposition, the opposition spokesman on economic affairs, has difficulty differentiating between the annual and quarterly accounts. As Hansard has shown, he cannot add up. In fact, the calculations indicated that the amount was 1.9%, not 7%.

I bring those 2 matters to the attention of honourable members to illustrate a simple point: the Leader of the Opposition suffers from a serious deficiency as an economic spokesman - he cannot add up.

In the papers he presented yesterday, he raised a range of issues. It may be sad because I believe he is a better man than his speech writer. However, in terms of the papers he presented on the topic of debt, it is clear that he has no regard for economic realities and cannot add up. I do not intend to go into this in great detail because the Treasurer will do so when he sums up, but let me give some examples which show why I have trouble respecting the ability of the Leader of the Opposition to calculate.

The papers which he tabled in this Assembly contained the following obvious errors. He said that we had a \$2400m contingent liability or total liability - I am not sure of the exact words that he used. Let me give some examples of how the Leader of the Opposition was out by more than \$1000m in his calculations.

Mr Smith: Go away.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has interjected. I ask him to go away and come back into this Assembly with more commitment than he displayed today and to get it right next time.

The papers and the documents tabled by the Leader of the Opposition double counted the semi-government loans and loans lent to authorities. His error in

that regard was \$251m. The paper that he presented treats the Territory's leasing obligations as liabilities when, given that they are all operating leases, no such liability exists. The error was \$161m.

Mr Smith: Talk to South Australia.

Mr COULTER: I will speak about South Australia in a moment, in particular in relation to the article in The Australian today. I would like to see the Leader of the Opposition go down to Mr Bannon and apologise to him.

The Leader of the Opposition's paper treats the government's investment in Yulara and loans to the 2 Sheratons as liabilities when, in fact, they are assets yielding cash on future sales. The error was \$157m. His paper also overstated superannuation liabilities by ignoring the accumulated funds set aside already by the government. The error was \$84m. It misread the PAC report on furlough and recreational leave entitlements by apparently treating the annual cost as an outstanding liability. The error was \$110m. It ignored the income stream from electricity sales which match the Power and Water Authority's take or pay gas commitments. The error was \$275m. The total of the obvious errors in the schedule amounts to \$1038m, leaving the actual total liabilities in his list as \$1389m. Mr Speaker, that is the type of economic spokesman that the opposition has.

Mr Smith: On top of what? On top of loans?

Mr COULTER: It is a shame. Mr Speaker, he cannot add up.

Mr Smith: On top of loans?

Mr COULTER: The public record shows it, and it is a shame. It is a shame when we are talking about business confidence and it is a shame when we are talking about encouraging people to come into the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, it is a disgrace.

A little while ago, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned South Australia by way of interjection. It was interesting to hear his assertions about balanced budgets and what constitutes balance and what does not. I hope that he intends to be consistent and will send copies of his criticisms of the Territory budget presentation to the Labor Premier of South Australia, Mr John Bannon. In The Australian today, Mr Bannon proudly announced a \$4.3m budget surplus. Mr Bannon says, and I quote: 'I am now in a position to report that the final result is a consolidated account surplus of \$4.3m.' Mr Bannon has arrived at that position by precisely the method to which the Leader of the Opposition takes such great exception. I am sure Mr Bannon will appreciate being ticked off and told how he is misleading the public of South Australia because, obviously, he would have no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition in the Northern Territory either. I have been brief in describing his track record because I want to get on to the positive side of this budget which the Treasurer has brought down for us all to enjoy.

As I said, Mr Speaker, not 1 opposition member will rise to his feet this afternoon to comment on this budget. That is indicative of the opposition's attitude and its ability to talk about the Northern Territory economy. Perhaps we should be grateful that opposition members will remain silent for, if they were to follow the lead set by their leader, the House would be the poorer for it. His record is abysmal and I point out again that he suffers a major deficiency as an economic spokesman: he cannot add up.

Mr Speaker, as indicated in the Treasurer's budget speech, much of the thrust of government economic activity is generated from the portfolios of Mines and Energy and Industries and Development. Great responsibility for the Territory's resource development rests with my departments and those of my colleagues the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. It is a task that we will tackle with enthusiasm.

To recapitulate on the stimulating theme of the budget speech, the Territory is locked into a course of full-on development at a pace of full speed ahead. The development strategy is the only real course open to us to increase the pace of the Territory's economic growth, which is the only way in which Territorians will win better business and employment opportunities, a higher standard of living and a higher standard of government service. For the past 3 years, we have been putting behind us the days of a Territory economy driven primarily by the public sector. Those early days of initial growth after self-government, geared to a visionary financial agreement with Canberra, are finished. That was the easier way and in one way or another we probably all regret that, to use the unforgettable words of Mr John Reeves in the unfortunate period during which he was the Territory's member in the House of Representatives, 'the party is over'. That period - although I would hope that no Territory representative would ever describe it as a 'party' - has indeed been terminated by a federal government disinclined to make any allowance for the decades of past Commonwealth neglect.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, it is a shame that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's only contribution to this budget speech is by way of interjection.

We could have wallowed in regret, but we did not. Instead, we undertook to reshape the Territory economy and alter the government's role from the instigator of development to the facilitator of private-sector involvement. That has been a gradual and somewhat painful process and, in some manner, all Territorians have paid a penalty. Nobody has missed out during the past 3 years of enforced restraint. Now Territorians are set to reap the rewards. This budget loosens the reins on restraint to some degree as the Territory gears up for a period of renewed growth and enthusiasm.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Once again, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's only contribution to this debate is by interjection. He will remain silent until next week. As I said, that is probably fortunate for Northern Territorians.

I believe that the decade of the 1990s will witness a new economic boom in the Territory which will surpass the rapid growth periods after Cyclone Tracy and after self-government. That boom will be related to huge growth in the Territory's offshore oil industry, expansion of the uranium mining industry, the establishment of value-added manufacturing industries, continued growth in mineral production, fish production, beef and buffalo production and agricultural and horticultural production, and the development of the north as Australia's premier defence post.

With all that resource development will come great new business and employment opportunities and associated rapid population growth as people come to the Territory looking for the land of opportunity. The petty, parish pump grizzles and complaints so beloved of this parliamentary opposition and its

hangers-on will be swept aside in a tide of growth and enthusiasm. They will be stranded and they will be hopeless by themselves.

It is my privilege to be an integral part of this build-up towards the 1990s. The mix of portfolios which I administer makes me, in effect, the de facto minister for resources and development. My approach will be to knit together the objectives of my departments in the context of the common theme of necessary and productive Territory development which gains maximum benefits for Territorians.

Electricity is in many respects the common denominator in development across the whole industry spectrum. No Territorian needs to be reminded about the high cost to government of a high-standard electricity supply service. However, Mr Speaker, that will change. It is a chicken-and-egg situation. Electricity will become cheaper when more consumers use it and more consumers are hard to find when the price is high. We will break that vicious circle. Potential consumers of large quantities of gas and gas-powered electricity are currently talking to the government about connecting to the gas pipeline and the electricity grid. A fortnight ago, I convened a meeting in Alice Springs of representatives of key companies and organisations associated with Territory gas production and delivery. Also involved were proponents of large-scale gas usage and I have since spoken directly to others in this category.

Honourable members will recall that, earlier this year, the government called for expressions of interest in major gas-related projects. What rotten bad luck for the member of Nhulunbuy to rise to his feet before the Appropriation Bill was brought down by the Treasurer and try to embarrass this government about the proposal for a gas-stripping plant. It is simple. We are committed to major gas developments and the opposition fell right on its face on that particular issue. In response to the government's call, 8 submissions were received and at least 3 of those related to very big projects indeed. They are the industry people I have been talking to and coming to terms with. I mention this to forestall any accusations the Leader of the Opposition might be considering making about empty promises or pie-in-the-sky projects. Honourable members will remember the day he sat in this House and shook his head at the gas or petrochemical proposals that I advanced to you, Mr Speaker.

Firm submissions have been made to government, and we are dealing with them. We are completing studies on gas quality and availability and we expect to be in a position to reach decisions on projects before this calendar year is out. An important part of our considerations will include the future of the massive Petrel 4 gas deposits in the Bonaparte Gulf, currently estimated to be in the range of 3 million tonnes.

It was not so long ago that a previous Chief Minister, now the member for Barkly, stood in this House and talked about the Gas Task Force. Mr Speaker, I have read your speech on the potential of the petrochemical and refining industries for the Northern Territory. I know that you share the vision of the development of our energy resources here in the Northern Territory. Indeed, the previous Leader of the Opposition, now Senator Bob Collins, congratulated you. He was another man of vision. What a different story we have in the Territory today, just 4 years later. He has been replaced by a laughing sideshow alley clown who simply nods his head.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the minister to withdraw that reference.



Mr COULTER: I withdraw.

Elf Aquitane has now spent about \$20m on a drilling and testing program at Petrel 4 and decisions about what will happen to the enormous quantity of natural gas are imminent. This can be measured, in fact, by the decision of the Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria to buy into the project. It has taken a 7% equity from Sterling. That is the kind of vision which the Victorian Labor government displays but which cannot be recognised by the prophets of doom and gloom who live in Darwin, just 180 km from Petrel 4. That is the type of incompetence which the Leader of the Opposition displays. The operator of Petrel 4 is assessing an option to construct a 185 km pipeline along the seabed to Darwin.

Mr Speaker, with your extensive knowledge of the oil and gas industry, you will have grasped the magnitude of the opportunities currently before the government. My objective, and I am confident of attaining it, is the establishment of a Territory supply source for major commercial and industrial users of gas and gas-powered electricity. That would have a substantial effect on the Territory's electricity production costs. Importantly, it would give us added flexibility in attracting further big consumers by allowing us to put together industrial tariff packages.

It is an unfortunate fact that the Territory has missed out on big industrial opportunities in the last couple of years simply because power authorities in the states have been able to undercut us on electricity costs. I can recall 2 specific instances where we have lost big industrial plants to interstate competition because of subsidised tariff packages which we could not match without adding to the cost burden on Territory domestic users. That will change in the near-to-medium future. The economies of scale will at last start to work for us rather than against us once we have established major consumers in the Territory. We are continuing to add lesser commercial and industrial consumers to the electricity grid and the Chief Minister mentioned in his budget speech yesterday that the Moline and Pine Creek goldmines will be connected soon. Other mining operations are also planned to join the grid. All this means substantial growth in the industrial sector of the Territory economy with more business and employment opportunities.

Mr Speaker, this budget will develop growth in the Northern Territory. I was concerned yesterday that some of the more biased reporters in the media would have made headlines with reports of water costs rising by 2¢ per kL. That was not the case ...

Mr Ede: People in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek would like to see water go down by 2¢ per kL.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, there we go. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will not rise to contribute to the debate but is prepared to do so by interjection. We have shamed opposition members so much that it appears that they now intend to rise to their feet.

There is light at the end of the tunnel for small business and domestic electricity consumers. The more gas we use, the cheaper it becomes for the government to produce gas-powered electricity. At the very least, the establishment of large-scale gas consumers in the Territory will provide stability to our electricity generation cost structure. I would hope that the government could find itself in a position, at some stage in the future, to examine options for domestic tariff reductions, as the member for Stuart has said. That is a very real possibility.

I should add immediately that the cost to government of producing electricity remains of deep concern. Discussions are in progress with the Commonwealth about the continuation of the Territory's electricity subsidy, which is to say the Commonwealth contribution to the debt it saddled us with when we took over Stokes Hill Power Station at self-government. That subsidy is critical to keeping down the cost of electricity in the short term. The government has not increased electricity tariffs since October 1986. We acknowledge that those tariffs are high and we would be loath to increase them even further.

I could talk for the rest of the day and through the night about the Territory's glowing future prospects but it is necessary, within the context of this debate, that I address the application of budget initiatives in my portfolios.

Reference was made in the budget speech to an additional \$4.6m to be provided to assist the establishment of major new industries. It needs to be made clear that these funds are additional to those used by the Department of Industries and Development to assist local business in its growth, expansion and marketing plans. Apart from some preliminary processing and refining of minerals, the Territory's secondary industry base is under-developed relative to the levels of our state counterparts. Major disincentives have contributed to this lack of industrial development, particularly in manufacturing enterprises, and these include the Territory's cost structure, small local markets, isolation from wider markets, infrastructure deficiencies and high energy costs. As a consequence, traditionally the Territory has been heavily reliant on continuing growth in mining, tourism and pastoral activities and on our vigorous construction industry, particularly in the housing sector. Some manufacturing has taken place but this has been confined mainly to the supply of food and beverages, some metal fabrication and the production of building materials for local markets.

However, recent infrastructure development and a change in the emphasis of government policy have dramatically altered the outlook for expansion of industry in the Territory. Important factors include: completion of the gas pipeline from the Amadeus Basin to Darwin, which offers the potential for generation of low-cost power and for the supply of gas to industries with high energy consumption; establishment of the Trade Development Zone to foster export-oriented manufacturing activity; positive reaction to international marketing from investment promotion, especially in Japan and among our South-east Asian neighbours; and, wide-ranging government assistance and support to promote growth and development of new industries and to stimulate expansion and diversification within existing businesses.

All of this has done much to improve the long-term prospects for expansion of the Territory's industrial base. An important further strategy will be to build on current primary production by targeting expansion and diversification into new business ventures, having regard to the principles of: value addition to primary industry products; import replacement; expansion and diversification within existing enterprise; export market orientation; pioneer industry development; and the introduction of new technologies.

The Territory has vast resources of minerals, oil and gas and we produce large quantities of beef, cattle and buffalo. We have substantial seafood production capacity and we could have great potential for commercially viable agricultural products. However, the reality is that, to date, little value has been added to our primary produce within the Territory. All of our minerals and most of our seafood product are exported to processing plants in

other parts of Australia or overseas. Most of our beef cattle is transported live to abattoirs in Queensland or South Australia or, along with buffalo, shipped live overseas. The Territory government is firmly committed to changing this situation. Our initiatives and strategies are being directed towards maximising the processing of products from the Territory's primary and resource industries within the Territory. The government is also determined to reverse the current trend for the Territory to import most of its requirements for manufactured products. Strategies and incentives will be implemented to encourage substantial business enterprise which will pursue the replacement of imported manufactured commodities with locally-produced goods.

The drive to carve out export markets in Asia will continue with new vigour and enthusiasm and, in this regard, I will be personally undertaking the role of the Territory's salesman among the government officers and company boardrooms of Asia. The 'you come to us' scenario is just not good enough. Whether it is as an agent of the Department of Industries and Development, the Trade Development zone, the Department of Mines and Energy or the Power and Water Authority, it will be my task to go to Asia and the world and persuade people of the benefits of doing business in the Northern Territory.

At the Trade Development Zone, funds have been allocated for 1<sup>st</sup> new factory sites this financial year, and 2 new factories are under construction for new tenants who will be announced at the appropriate time. The zone is a much-favoured target for attacks from members of the opposition, and I give them this message today: the government has committed itself to the Trade Development Zone and we are in it for the long haul. We will not be distracted by small-minded whingers and we will not be deterred from the long-term objective of establishing a vigorous, export-oriented, manufacturing zone in Darwin. The Trade Development Zone is a vital plank in this government's economic strategy for the gilt-edged future of the Territory. There have been setbacks, and probably there will be other setbacks in the future, but we will fulfil our objective.

We will do this without the support of the opposition and that is unfortunate. I cannot understand why honourable members opposite will not support the activities of the zone and its certain and bright future. The cynical and disgraceful attacks by the Leader of the Opposition, in particular, on virtually every participant in the zone, its staff and its consultants, represent a major negative contribution to the Territory's growth. I foreshadow that, while I am the responsible minister, he will get very little joy from me on any matters he wants to raise in connection with the Trade Development Zone. His track record is dreadful and I will not be trusting him with any information which I judge to be of a commercially sensitive nature. He will get no privileges whatsoever. I will be happy to cooperate with him in other respects but, in relation to the Trade Development Zone, he has already done too much senseless damage and he has shot his bolt.

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

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable member from completing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, 2 important Mines and Energy initiatives in the budget deserve the attention of honourable members. The first is the \$2m ring road project in the Pine Creek mining region. This area is highly prospective

for gold and tin and contains many deposits which, on their own, are not commercially viable to develop because of infrastructural costs. The ring road project will widen existing roads and tracks so that large transport vehicles can run between mine sites, transferring ore to production centres at the larger mining operations. In this manner, previously marginal deposits will be developed without heavy capital costs and production from the region will increase substantially.

Another major initiative is the \$1m intensive geological program. This merges sweetly with my overall approach to the government's role in the development of resources. In simple terms, the 1-year program will be gathering detailed information about the Territory's mineral and energy resources in known prospective regions. That information will be packaged in databases and displayed in geological maps so that willing investors in resource development can be supplied with all the basic knowledge they require. The program will employ up to 15 specialist staff and will be additional to the department's ongoing geological survey work.

Mr Speaker, I repeat a running theme of this address: the Territory has to do the hard work if we want investment here. We cannot sit back and wait for it to happen. The intensive geological program ...

Mr Ede: You have been doing that for 30 years.

Mr COULTER: ... is an excellent example of the aggressive and positive way in which the government needs to be doing business. Let us have a look at the results. This was mentioned in the budget speech too. One example is gold production - and I refer the member for Stuart to that simple basic fact.

Mr Ede: My electorate is the biggest producer.

Mr COULTER: And you have done a lot to develop that.

Mr Ede: I have.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, there was \$1200m of mineral production this year. It is a success story that has been unrecognised by the opposition until now, in particular by the Leader of the Opposition. However, his willing deputy has entered the fray. I hope that he has changed his mind and now intends to get to his feet to talk about this development budget. I also look forward to his contribution on the goldmining sector and the development that is happening in his own electorate. He keeps knocking the Territory economy. The seventh-largest mine of the 125 mines in Australia is in his electorate. I will be pleased to hear members of the opposition get to their feet and say, for once, that it is a good thing. We have heard it by interjection. Let us hear the reinforcement of that ...

Mr Ede: I talk about it in debates. Why don't you fix up the road out there so that we can have more of them?

Mr COULTER: ... in his contribution to this debate, Mr Speaker. Enough of this nonsense! Enough of the Leader of the Opposition standing before us reading a speech that some economist has written for him. Let's have a bit of heart in this debate. We are talking about that one-sixth of Australia that we all love so dearly and want to see developed, and I will be interested indeed to hear what he has to say about that.

Many of the new initiatives in the Power and Water Authority budget are directed towards improving electricity and water supplies in regional areas. Some \$720 000 will be spent on converting the Elliott Power Station to natural gas fuel, and 2 high-speed generators will be installed at the Yulara Power Station to boost output. Almost \$600 000 has been allocated to develop a new bore field at Pine Creek and work totalling \$3m will continue on the pipeline from Darwin River Dam to McMinns. This will increase the capacity of the water system supplying Darwin and outlying regions.

The sewer rehabilitation program will continue in the Darwin suburbs of Rapid Creek, Nightcliff and Fannie Bay and a further stage will be started at Larrakeyah. The Rapid Creek sewage pumping station will be modified at a cost of \$170 000 to reduce odour problems and prevent further sewage overflows into the creek.

Work is now under way at the Manton Dam to provide recreational facilities for the people of Darwin and its environs. An amount of \$930 000 will be spent on this project to open up the dam for activities like sailing, water skiing and power boating on a body of water free from the threat posed by marine stingers and crocodiles. However, I cannot guarantee the constituents of the Northern Territory freedom from the danger of the Leader of the Opposition's presence in Manton Dam. They should be aware that he may venture out there. May I say that the Minister for Industries and Development lives south of the Berrimah line referred to by the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution to this debate. The dam has been drained to a level which allows the clearing of submerged trees and construction of a boat ramp. The design of the road works is complete and clearing of the road area is in progress.

An adequate water supply system will be available to the residents of Mandorah and the Cox Peninsula by the end of this calendar year. It is planned to introduce a system which involves an off-take from Imaluk Springs. Water can then be pumped to an overhead tank from which residents can draw their supplies.

These are just a few of the highlights of the extensive range of new initiatives contained in the 1988-89 budget. The budget emphasis is on continuing Territory development but, at the same time, the delivery of essential services to the community has not been neglected. In summary, it is apparent that the Territory has passed through the worst of the period of restraint that we have been forced to live and work with. The reins have been loosened, the rewards are ready to be reaped and the Territory is on the doorstep of a new period of prosperity. The 1988-89 budget is the government's blueprint for economic growth.

Mr Speaker, I conclude simply by saying that the Leader of the Opposition cannot count. The opposition spokesman on economic affairs cannot count. It is unfortunate for members opposite that he did not give them a copy of his speech before he tabled it here in the Assembly. I ask members of the opposition to go through his written speech. There may be a new Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber in the near future, because of his mistakes. I hope not because, whilst he is the Leader of the Opposition, we on this side of the House are assured of being in government for a very long time indeed.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill for 1988-89.

Apart from mining, tourism is the Northern Territory's biggest industry. Last financial year, tourism injected more than \$300m into the Territory's

economy and provided full-time employment for 9000 people. It is our fastest growing industry and, in the past 5 years, overseas visitations have risen by 20% while arrivals from other parts of Australia have risen by 17%. In the 12 months to the end of June this year, more than 800 000 tourist visitations were recorded, as compared to 709 000 in the previous financial year. This is an incredible performance in a year when Australian tourism generally was severely affected by Expo. It is a credit to the professionalism of the staff of the NT Tourist Commission and the NT Tourist Bureaus.

It is also a credit to successive governments from this side of the House, which have recognised the massive economic benefits of the expansion of the industry. Bold decisions were taken - decisions which have since been vindicated - such as the decisions to build the casinos, the highly successful Yulara International Tourist Resort and the Sheraton hotels.

The dilemma of protecting the Territory's unique environmental and cultural resources while, at the same time, providing the amenities that our visitors need has been overcome through close and friendly cooperation between the Tourist Commission and the Conservation Commission. We are constructing the \$6.7m Berry Springs Wildlife Park and have vigorously encouraged the development of other new attractions and services, many of which promote Aboriginal involvement in the tourist industry. The Hermannsburg restoration, the Kings Canyon Wilderness Resort and the Crocodile Hotel at Jabiru are but 3 examples.

More than \$600m worth of tourist-related facilities have been built over the past few years. Air services have increased markedly. Domestic carriers to Darwin and other ports include Australian Airlines, Ansett, Ansett WA, Ansett NT and East West and 5 international airlines now service the Territory: Qantas, Garuda, Singapore, Royal Brunei and Merpati. Soon we hope to have another from Thailand. In addition, all of the major coach lines have regular and charter services bringing in hundreds of tourists each day. The Northern Territory is also one of the most popular destinations for campers and caravaners.

Our forward visitor targets are now achievable. We aim for 1.1 million visitors by 1990 and 2 million by the year 2000. Because the industry is so critical to the Territory's future, the government has provided additional funds in this budget to enable the Northern Territory Tourist Commission to promote the Territory as a year-round destination with emphasis on the December to April period. This year's allocation of \$16.139m represents an increase of more than \$1.3m on last year's. International tourism will be a major source of revenue from now on and international visitors are the most likely to fill the current wet season gap. To reach these overseas markets, the commission will almost double its international marketing budget to over \$1.6m. The themes to be used will centre on the Northern Territory's summer as an alternative to Europe's winter, and the idea that the NT is a year-round holiday destination.

The success of our drive to attract overseas tourists is largely due to the excellent work of our international offices. To broaden our access to overseas markets, especially North America, we will open NT Tourist Commission offices in New York and Vancouver, and \$327 000 has been provided for that purpose. Until now, we have been servicing this market of 310 million potential visitors with a Los Angeles-based staff of 3. It is extremely important that we take advantage now of the impact made by the 'Crocodile Dundee' films. There has been an amazing demand by Americans and Canadians for more information about the Territory, and this must be properly serviced

by us as quickly as possible while it is still on the boil. The films have also created heightened interest in northern Europe, which is an important source of tourism to Australia.

Scandinavia is an area we need to concentrate on particularly because, although Scandinavian visitation to Australia is high, the Territory's share is well below what it could be. I had the pleasure of being invited to dine last night with a group of Scandinavian travel agents who are visiting the Northern Territory. They had spent the previous couple of days on Melville Island experiencing Aboriginal involvement in tourism. They came back raving about the place and were looking forward to visiting Kakadu National Park. To lift our game throughout northern Europe, the commission will appoint a new officer to cover Scandinavia. Prudently, we have decided to locate that officer in London.

For the promotion of Northern Territory tourism on the domestic market, the commission will spend more than \$2.6m on an Australia-wide campaign. The activities of Territory bureaus interstate will be lifted by the opening of new premises, the refurbishment of old ones and by increased expenditure on marketing. Attractive and convenient new offices will be opened during September in Sydney and Perth, whilst the Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Parramatta offices will be completely redecorated and modernised.

Because it is important that the number of experienced senior travel consultants at the bureaus be fairly constant, 2 roving consultants will be appointed to alleviate staffing shortfalls and to provide greater flexibility. To give our consultants a better understanding of the overall national marketing campaign and to foster closer ties between the Northern Territory and the interstate bureaus, a travel consultants' exchange program will be introduced. Training will be stepped up as well, and an accelerated advancement scheme will be introduced to enable new travel consultants to be reclassified after satisfactorily completing 12 months of service. It should be pointed out that the additional cost of these staff initiatives will be less than \$150 000 and that the benefit will far exceed the outlay.

The expansion of the commission's computer network has continued and now the information centres at Katherine and Tennant Creek can immediately access up-to-date information on all aspects of Northern Territory tourism and operators. Studies currently being undertaken by the Tourist Commission will help to identify gaps in the NT product and to provide new opportunities for investment. This research will define each proposal in terms of accessibility, accommodation requirements and natural and man-made attractions.

One of our continuing problems in the industry is the lack of stable, well-trained hospitality employees. Unfortunately, the available staff is mainly itinerant. Earlier this year, independent observers suggested that some 30 projects providing another 2600 rooms were due for completion by 1991. This would create full-time work for another 2500 people. Clearly, a properly-trained, permanently-based work force would be preferable, not only because of the benefits to the tourist industry, but because of the predictable benefits to the real estate and retailing industries and to the Northern Territory business community generally.

To accurately identify needs, and to define the initiatives that must be taken in conjunction with the travel industry and the general community, the Northern Territory government has commissioned the development of a 5-year tourism training strategy. I anticipate that this strategy will provide a

platform for the future upgrading and improvement of standards as well as enabling operators and investors to plan ahead confidently. Incidentally, the Tourist Commission, which has long recognised the need for proper staff training, has an ongoing internal scheme designed specifically to develop attitudes and skills which will generate excellence in the services the commission provides. However, it is the opening up and development of the Territory's natural resources which, in the long term, will ensure that the Territory becomes Australia's premier tourist destination.

The provision of substantial funds in this budget for access roads and visitor facilities will properly open up the all-seasons wonder of beautiful Litchfield Park which will add considerably to the continued development of Top End tourism. Another exciting initiative, which I believe will become a tremendous recreational resource for the Darwin area, is the planned completion later this year of the Berry Springs Wildlife Park. Everybody privileged to have followed the construction of this zoo will soon know why it has attracted the interest of zoologists around the world. Berry Springs Wildlife Park is destined to become one of the world's great zoos, and it will be a unique tourist attraction in its own right.

The tourist industry in the Top End will welcome our plans to develop the upper Roper River area for visitors. Centralian tourism will be boosted by the further development this year of the West MacDonnell Ranges. It is important that more and more areas be opened up for tourism to take the pressure off places like Kakadu, Ayers Rock and the Katherine Gorge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will now turn to other matters which come under my portfolio, matters relating to the operations of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission.

An investigation into the Northern Territory racing industry is currently under way. The consultant undertaking the investigation has been asked to report back by the end of October. In the meantime, a more equitable formula for the distribution of industry assistance funds has been adopted following consultation with the racing clubs. The new system, which is based on a formula adopted in Queensland, replaces the previously arbitrary arrangement and provides for the principal clubs to receive rebates totalling 65% of base-year stake moneys incremented by 10% per year. Incidentally, there is a strong possibility that the 1989 conference of the Australian and New Zealand Greyhound Association will be held in Darwin.

The Northern Territory TAB is moving to include 'All-Up' betting in its system and I expect to be able to make an announcement shortly about its introduction. The expansion of casino gaming activity and increasing interest by groups of gamblers from Asia have reinforced the need for a government-controlled surveillance system. Initially, \$65 000 has been provided for a system in the Darwin casino which will give access to the casino's existing security and surveillance facility. This system will give the commission's officers far more effective control and will greatly assist in the detection and elimination of malpractices.

The proliferation of video gaming machines in licensed clubs throughout the Northern Territory has created a need for substantial controls in the interests of members of these clubs and of the government. A licensing system controlling machine standards and persons in the industry has now been drafted and this budget provides for the employment of an appropriately qualified technical officer to administer these controls.



About \$4.3m from profits and commissions should be transferred to the Sport and Recreation Development Fund this financial year from Sportslotto, sweeps and Instant Sports Lotteries. Profits from Territorian lotteries should see around \$150 000 distributed to various Northern Territory charities and non-profit organisations.

It has been recently estimated that deliberate avoidance of liquor licence renewal fees has been costing the Northern Territory tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. All state authorities in Australia have been concerned with the prevalence of this offence and have established a national committee through which information on interstate liquor purchases can be exchanged. The Northern Territory has maintained close relations with the states and, until now, has been totally reliant on their information. The commission has just completed the installation of a statistical database for liquor licence renewals. From now on, the commission will be able to accurately check and assess returns lodged by licensees. Already other states are seeking confirmation of data and documentation from the Northern Territory and I am pleased to say that the speed and efficiency with which we have answered requests with our computer system has cemented our credibility with the interstate authorities. Within the budget is a provision to update and expand further the effectiveness of the system with a view eradicating avoidance practices.

We are justified in expecting a great future for our tourist industry but everybody should bear in mind that our reputation in the marketplace internationally and nationally can easily be damaged by thoughtless and irresponsible criticism. I appeal to everybody, particularly those on the other side of the House who lately have chosen to ignore the figures available to them, not to undermine the enthusiasm and confidence of our tourist operators through rumour, innuendo or ignorance. The Northern Territory's tourist industry is in good shape and has an extremely bright future. The infrastructure is now in place for rapid and sustained expansion. Anybody who really has the Territory's interests at heart should do everything in his power to accelerate, not retard, that expansion. I commend the Appropriation Bill to the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the remarks made by the Chief Minister and Treasurer. This government is committed to the security and future of the Northern Territory and it is a pity that members opposite are not quite so committed; otherwise, they might rise to contribute to this debate as well. That future depends on a range of factors, but 1 major and very vital factor is the availability of a skilled work force. This is why we have more than doubled the 1988-89 budget for labour market programs - from \$1.25m last year to \$2.9m this year. Before I detail this year's initiatives in this area, let us look at what the Division of Employment and Training achieved last year.

More than \$0.5m was spent on the apprentice program. Assistance was provided for travel and accommodation to attend technical training courses away from home. This included interstate travel for courses not conducted in the Territory and intrastate travel for apprentices from Alice Springs, Groote Eylandt, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Jabiru. Where we have apprentices in trades in which training is not available locally, the best possible training is sought interstate. Our glazing apprentices are trained in Hobart, aircraft mechanics and pastry-cooks in Adelaide, instrument fitters and bakers in Perth and jewellers, dental mechanics and screen printers in Melbourne. Other interstate training, such as in printing and some of the building trades, is carried out in Brisbane. Of course, this is quite costly.

We are proud of our apprenticeship system which is producing the top-quality tradesmen and women essential to our economic future.

I do not have to explain to honourable members the impact of the economic constraints imposed on the Territory by the federal government. These constraints severely limited employment opportunities available to our young school leavers. In order to address this issue, the government last year allocated \$1.5m over 4 years to create additional employment opportunities. A total of \$650 000 was spent in 1987-88, resulting in more than 250 positions in the Territory work force being filled by school leavers. At \$2600 per position, it was excellent value for money. It not only gives young Territorians a sound start to their working lives but also underwrites the future of the Northern Territory by ensuring we have an enthusiastic and well-trained work force.

Last financial year, the Department of Labour and Administrative Services addressed the specific employment and training needs of Aboriginal people in both rural and urban areas. Our school leaver initiatives include programs specifically designed for Aboriginal people. These include 2 very successful stockman courses and a private sector group intake scheme which has resulted in permanent jobs with a range of Darwin companies.

The field of Aboriginal employment and training is littered with failed schemes, wasted money and lost opportunities. Providing training is just one factor in the chain. Ensuring that we have the commitment of the people being trained and meaningful employment when the training is complete are just as vital. This government is attempting to avoid the pitfalls by asking Aboriginal people to identify the areas they believe will provide opportunities for their communities. This means that the government must be prepared to become heavily involved in the area of Aboriginal development. We have done just that. A wide-ranging Aboriginal employment and economic development policy and strategy has been approved and is funded in this budget. It commits almost \$800 000 of Territory funding to some very positive ongoing programs. It will provide access to millions of dollars of federal Aboriginal employment and development funds allocated for training, employment and advancement initiatives. The policy we have put in place provides for real jobs in revenue-generating areas of employment. The results will not be seen overnight, but these programs will make inroads into the unacceptably high level of unemployment in remote communities.

The Division of Employment and Training has initiated the formation of an Aboriginal Employment Development Advisory Committee to develop employment opportunities and skills training in Aboriginal communities. The fundamental objectives are employment equity for all Territorians, income equity and a reduction in Aboriginal welfare dependency.

The government recognises that young Aboriginal people are the most disadvantaged of all young Australians. We are addressing this situation by placing the highest importance on access to quality training opportunities for young Aboriginal Territorians. It is these young people who will play a vital role in the future development of the whole Aboriginal community. The government is continuing the highly successful group intake scheme for urban Aboriginal people. The group intakes are providing the means for young people to gain the skills and confidence necessary to enter successfully the mainstream work force. They are the first of their kind in Australia and the Employment and Training Division is presently planning to expand the range of courses available.

The government's major push is in the remote areas of the Territory where 70% of our Aboriginal people choose to live. The thrust of the government's policy in this area is to provide appropriate training and basic skills and to assist communities to identify enterprise and employment opportunities. Areas that are being investigated by the communities include retailing, transport, tourism, construction, agriculture and community and commercial management. Among those programs being developed are Aboriginal tourism management training, basic furniture construction skills and small business management training courses.

Initiatives which are under way will provide training and employment opportunities for a significant number of Aboriginal people this year. This is just the start. It is the government's belief that these initiatives will lead to the Aboriginal people taking a giant step towards meeting the challenges of the future. Such positive results will do much to counter the pessimism about employment which exists among some Aboriginal people and the wider community.

On a broader front, the government is also committed to the Australian Traineeship System. Last financial year saw the introduction of 4 new traineeships and the employment of more than 100 trainees. In addition, we have provided funding directly to industry training committees for training development projects. The \$2.9m available this year will provide for a continuation of existing programs and the introduction of a range of practical new initiatives. These include an additional \$780 000 for Aboriginal employment and training, \$880 000 for school leaver programs, \$100 000 for group training companies and a further \$80 000 towards employment strategy proposals.

As I said earlier, the major thrust will be directed towards programs which will create meaningful long-term employment. The government will be working with private sector employers to provide training for urban Aboriginal people. We will also be continuing our public sector group intake programme. In 1989, we intend creating a total of 440 employment and training positions for those who will be leaving school at the end of this year. These programs will be similar to those offered this year, but we will be working even more closely with industry to identify new and innovative approaches to youth employment.

The Northern Territory government has developed close links with the federal Department of Employment, Education and Training to ensure that our directions complement those of the Commonwealth. Some 280 positions will become available under the government school-leaver program. There are 166 positions in Darwin, 60 in Alice Springs, 24 in Katherine, 20 in Tennant Creek and 10 in Nhulunbuy. There will be 20 base-grade positions plus a further 24 traineeships created in the public service in 1989. These are not jobs plucked out of thin air to soak up youth unemployment. They are positions which experience has shown will become available as natural attrition creates vacancies at all levels in the public service.

Fifteen new apprenticeship positions will be subsidised through the group training schemes and 89 prevocational positions through the Northern Territory Open College. A further \$60 000 will be provided for vocational and prevocational part-time courses. The government is negotiating with the private sector for an additional 12 cadetships over and above the 12 we have put in place this year. A further 125 positions will be offered under the work programs conducted by the numerous industry training committees.

The enormous economic changes we have experienced in the Territory in the past 3 years have had a considerable impact on our labour market programs. The government must be in a position where it can respond quickly and effectively to these and any future changes. School leaver initiatives, remedial and prevocational programs, Aboriginal employment and training and close liaison with the private sector have been major factors in controlling a very difficult situation.

We are now taking a further step and developing a total employment strategy which will see us through to the 21st century. The consultancy firm of Street, Ryan and Associates has been engaged to look at all aspects of employment and training. Its report will not be simply an assessment of where we are today. It will include a dynamic computer model which will allow us to assess trends and changing economic circumstances in the future. The overall results of this consultancy will give us a further avenue to ensure a sound future for the Northern Territory and for our children. That does not impress the member for Stuart. He is not worried about the future.

Mr Ede: It is jargon. The last refuge of a scoundrel.

Mr McCARTHY: Just compare it to the dollars and you will see that it is not jargon.

I am pleased to announce that the government will be providing funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis with the federal government to support 2 private group training companies which are about to be established here. These companies will employ apprentices and trainees who will be rotated through industries for their on-the-job training. Some 60 new positions will be created by these companies, 36 in Darwin and 24 in Alice Springs. Government funding of \$100 000 has been made available for administrative support to run these companies.

I turn now to the government's commitment to equal opportunity in the public service. Funds have been provided for the continuing implementation of equal opportunity management plans. A service-wide survey will be conducted this financial year to build up our database in this important area, a critical factor in ensuring that these plans do more than pay lip service to the ideal. Further women at work training courses are planned, 1 in each of the 2 major centres and possibly a third in Tennant Creek. Similar courses run by the New South Wales government for people with disabilities, Aborigines and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds are being investigated with a view to introducing them into the Territory. Another initiative included in the budget is the development of a new classification review system. Earlier this year, the government endorsed recommendations for a category review and possible broad-banding in the Northern Territory Public Service. \$100 000 has been appropriated to engage a firm of management consultants to perform this task and to suggest and evaluate future options.

The past 12 months have seen a consolidation of the role of the Work Health Authority. There has been a substantial drop in premiums for workers' compensation insurance and an increase in the degree of competition. The authority has been a major factor in this change and it will continue to monitor the situation. For example, premiums in the construction industry fell from 18% of wages to 12%. A comprehensive database has been established and has resulted in a great deal of information and practical assistance being made available to employers and workers.

The authority has placed much greater emphasis on safety and rehabilitation. Clearly, it is best to prevent accidents occurring but, when they do happen, it is in everybody's interest for the injured party to be back on the job as soon as possible. The budget ensures this good work will continue.

The Government Printing Office is one of my responsibilities and it has experienced a positive turnaround. Whilst turning over an increased amount of work to the private sector, the Government Printing Office made a small profit in 1987-88 - a significant turnaround in terms of the previous year's loss of \$300 000. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government Printer and his staff on their diligence and the success of their efforts to cut costs in this key area.

The Properties Section also is in the business of saving the government money. It is the quiet achiever of the administrative services area of my portfolio and has the unenviable task of attempting to satisfy public sector demand for office accommodation. Despite the administrative changes last year, operating costs have been reduced and a strategy is in place to reduce these costs further. Government services in Katherine are about to relocate to the new government centre and this move will prove more efficient in both costs and services.

This budget contains some very positive initiatives for local government. One is the increase of \$0.5m in the capital assets program. This new initiative commenced with an allocation in 1987-88 of \$1m. It was introduced to meet the needs of communities in the area of fixed assets such as council offices and workshops, and heavy mobile plant such as earth-moving equipment. It followed a comprehensive survey by the Office of Local Government to establish the needs of some 50 major communities and the priorities of those needs. The survey identified a 6-year program to rectify needs found in 1987-88. This year's allocation of \$1.5m, a substantial increase, will sustain this very worthwhile program.

These facilities are being used by many communities for revenue and employment-generating activities. They also allow communities to perform much of the work carried out previously by outside contractors or government departments. I do not have to remind honourable members of the substantial cost of services at many remote communities in the Territory. Self-help programs save the government money because it does not have to provide that particular service to the community. There is also the factor that the revenue generated flows back into the community and lessens the dependence on government funding in other areas.

Another initiative in this budget is an additional \$250 000 for community council operating subsidies. These subsidies recognise the genuine efforts being made by many communities to manage their own affairs with increasing effectiveness and efficiency. The budget sets the financial framework for many other initiatives in the local government area. I have commenced dialogue between municipal councils and the town camps. The long-term aim is for councils to deliver municipal services to all residents. Any suggestion of separation within local government areas is not in the best interests of Territorians and, through this initiative, I intend to remove any potential for this to occur.

Discussions have started with the Jurnkurakurra Association at Tennant Creek about community government. This proposal would take in the 30 outstations and some 1200 people in the Barkly region which form that

association. Ultimately, it will provide for a more efficient servicing of their needs. To date, community government has focused on major communities although the Yugul Mangi Community Government Council, which was created in May this year, is a significant development because it includes a number of non-contiguous outstations and pastoral excisions. The Jurnkurakurra initiative has potential to advance the concept further and make community government available to outstations on a group basis. Naturally, these initiatives will take time to talk through so that all parties are fully consulted. For the information of those people who insist on claiming that the Northern Territory government is somehow body-snatching Aboriginal people into community government, I say yet again that the pace of the movement towards self-determination will be decided solely by the people themselves.

I am rather surprised, that members opposite do not take up the cudgels for community government a little more often because, in here at least, they proclaim their support for community government. However, the land councils are out in communities undermining the good work done by the Office of Local Government in talking to communities and in establishing community government councils. The land councils go out in force and, by telling untruths, are able temporarily to convince people that we are attempting somehow or other to abort the land councils. While this is occurring, members opposite do nothing to support the Territory government and the Office of Local Government in the good work that is being carried out in the area of community government ...

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I ask the member for MacDonnell to withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to repeat his remark.

Mr BELL: What I said was: 'Since the government buckets the land councils regularly, I suppose they think it is tit for tat'.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sorry. The honourable member may resume his chair. There is no need to withdraw.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is nice to have that clarified.

There is no doubt at all that land councils are attempting to break down community government in the Northern Territory. They have called for a 5-year moratorium. They have taken that considerably further in correspondence and I for one am surprised at the silence of members opposite, particularly the member for Arafura who, at the dinner in Darwin on 1 July, commented publicly on the very good work that community government is doing in the Northern Territory. Nevertheless, when the land councils attempt to break down the ability of communities to manage their own affairs, members opposite do not condemn the land councils as they should.

The Office of Local Government field officers perform a valuable role in talking to communities and in being available to provide information when requested without intruding into community affairs. They do that very effectively. They are a group of people for whom I have a great deal of respect. They are the eyes and the ears of the government to ensure the efficient provision of services in remote areas. They perform a role far more complex than simply providing information about community government. They

are the first contact with government for the vital employment and training initiatives that I mentioned earlier. They also provide a link with the communities in terms of the delivery of government services and ensure that any problems are brought to the attention of the relevant departments.

As indicated to last year's Local Government Conference, the operational subsidies to municipal councils have been concluded after a 3-year phasing out period. This is part of the Northern Territory's move to statehood. None of the states provides a general operating subsidy to its municipal councils. An end to operational subsidies is in line with the user-pays principle. The government remains fully committed to encouraging local government for all Territorians. We see both municipal and community governments as essential links in ensuring that our citizens have the maximum input into decision-making at the local level. Despite necessary cutbacks in some areas, the level of financial support for local government in the budget is proof of that commitment. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the budget.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, just over a month ago, I was honoured by being appointed as minister responsible for the newly-constituted Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. During the press conference at which that appointment was announced, I told members of the press how appropriate I thought it was that the minister responsible for primary industry matters in the Northern Territory should come from a rural electorate.

Mr Ede: Come on! Its urban. You can't call that the bush.

Mr REED: If you listen you might learn something. There is a bit of a risk, but you should try anyway.

Since Katherine is far and away the fastest growing town in the Northern Territory, some of my town-based constituents may query my description of my electorate as being rural-based. However, one does not have to go very far from the main street of Katherine to see how important the primary industry sector is to the fortunes of that town and its people. Nor will anybody who knows about the Northern Territory dispute that the primary industry sector is of fundamental importance to the well-being of all the people of the Northern Territory and not just those who earn their living directly from such activities.

Since this is the first opportunity that I have had in the Assembly to outline to honourable members the activities of the new department, my contribution to this debate this afternoon will include not only details of the dollars and cents to be spent in the next financial year, but also some comment on the activities that my department will be pursuing and the directions in which I, as minister, want to see it go. Describing the department as 'new', of course, belies the fact that it has existed in a variety of forms, though with similar functions, since before self-government. In those 10 years since self-government, the value of the primary production sector has increased from just under \$38m in 1977-78 to an estimated \$170m in 1987-88. Even accounting for inflation, that is an impressive increase, an increase which has occurred in all components of the primary industry sector.

The department's budget is divided by activity, with an overall allocation this year of \$39.9m, an increase of some \$4.4m over last year's allocation. The divisions, in the order they will be addressed, are: animal industry, plant industry, fisheries, and industry support.

I will outline the proposals and budget allocations for the animal industry division of my department. I turn first to the pastoral sector. Over the last decade, government involvement with the beef and buffalo industries has related primarily to the program to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis from the Territory herd. This has been, and will continue to be, a difficult campaign due to the extensive nature of the NT industry. It has been a costly campaign for individual pastoralists. Very substantial progress has been achieved and the program is on target for the declaration of disease-free status in respect of both diseases in 1992. This will be a very significant achievement for both government and private enterprise.

By far the largest item in this year's budget relates to expenditure on the BTEC program. PTEC nationally - and I say 'nationally' because BTEC is a Commonwealth program which the Northern Territory supports - has cost \$800m so far, and is estimated to cost a further \$200m to complete. In the Northern Territory, the cost of the BTEC program so far is \$87m, with an anticipated additional requirement of \$55m to complete the program. At stake are national beef exports worth over \$2000m per year and Northern Territory export and store sales worth \$100m per annum. The projected allocation in this year's budget is \$20.233m, which represents just over 50% of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries' 1988-89 recurrent expenditure. The \$20.2m, together with a \$1.7m cash carryover from last year, is a substantial increase over earlier estimates and represents an increase of some \$6.4m over last year's expenditure of \$15.515m.

The BTEC management has now been given more flexibility in the decision on how funds are to be expended, which will provide the industry with what it will consider a more immediate and reasoned response to claims. Firm management decisions by my predecessor and by my department have resulted in significant savings compared with earlier projections. In particular, the decision to reduce the level of compensation for unmusterable stock has resulted in a projected saving of \$2.5m over previous estimates, and the cessation of compensation for bush stocking in December 1988 will prevent an ongoing drain on compensation payments. It is worth remembering that the BTEC campaign has been funded by special levies on the cattle and buffalo industries and by specifically targeted government expenditure. BTEC is funded 50% by the Australian Cattle Industry, 20% by the Commonwealth government and 30% by the Northern Territory government.

As the program winds down to a monitoring role beyond 1992, additional support in the form of development-oriented research, development and advisory services will be required. This will take advantage of changes in management practices and of structural changes that have occurred on properties during the course of the BTEC program. My department is already planning for such a change of role.

The key BTEC objectives for 1988 are to remove the impending-free line for TB north of Renner Springs, and to finalise destocking of 70% of the remaining infected bush areas. We are on target to achieve both of these objectives. This will result in the industry in the Northern Territory regaining easier market access to South Australia from the Barkly Tablelands and south, and allow my department to concentrate on implementing effective testing programs on controlled stock by producers in the Gulf, Victoria River Downs and Top End regions. 1988-89 will be a big year for BTEC in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, to maximise beef and buffalo output, the government will continue to encourage a closer interaction between industry and government which will recognise the central, driving role of producers. Research



programs will be aimed at the identification of efficient herd and land-management systems to improve livestock quality and productivity and, where appropriate, to reduce the cost of production. Close consultation has taken place in recent times with the industry, through the industry advisory committees, during the formulation and submission of specific research initiatives for funding. The industry will continue to provide a major contribution to research and development priorities by way of a joint industry-government advisory committee.

The department has been successful in attracting funding from private enterprise for research which will be directed toward the development of projects which will support further development of the industry. Utilisation of industry funds in research programs is being increased by the application, in 1988-89, of some \$200 000 of Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation funds so that industry is committed to the programs and so that researchers are responsive to industry needs.

The government is continuing its deregulatory efforts with periodic reviews of all legislation and increasing emphasis on self-regulation by industry. Also, this year, my department will continue its research into rangeland management and improved pastures including the provision of a formal mechanism for industry input. \$20 000 will be provided in this year's budget for the conduct of short technical and business management workshops, particularly for industry. These will be provided on properties and at other centres such as the Katherine Rural College. Assistance for training will, where appropriate, be provided by utilisation of assistance programs under the Rural Adjustment Scheme.

A major initiative this year will be the upgrading of government advisory programs by the provision of a multi-disciplined team in each of the major production regions. Advisory programs are to be developed in consultation with industry. The core team of specialists and extension personnel will be provided with training opportunities that maintain high professional standards in the service. The delivery of services to industry will be maximised by research and advisory programs that will emphasise on-property demonstration sites to encourage rapid uptake of technologies.

Work will continue on the identification of impediments to processing of beef cattle and buffalo in the Northern Territory and on identifying measures to eliminate these obstacles. Market research will examine the potential for live export markets.

Mr Ede: You have been going to do that for years.

Mr REED: Members opposite might be well-advised to listen, Mr Speaker. As I said earlier, they might learn something. It is very interesting to note that the shadow minister for primary industry has not even seen fit to enter the Chamber. That gives a clear illustration of how much importance the opposition places upon the importance of primary industry in the Northern Territory. It further underlines the negative attitude of the alternative government in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, promising markets have been developed and are developing for live stock export of heifers and some young males whilst at the same time there is a continuing demand for slaughter stock. In the last 3 years, live export numbers have increased significantly each year and, although one needs to be wary, the industry is anticipating further increases in the short term. Last year, approximately 30% of the nation's total live cattle exports went out through Darwin.

In the case of the buffalo industry, substantial levels of private investment are required to achieve the herd control required by the BTEC program. Towards this end, an announcement has been made recently about a buffalo development scheme which will facilitate the retention of a significant number of disease-free buffalo breeders for domestic herd build-up. \$1.9m is provided in the budget for this purpose. It is anticipated that, in the relatively short term, this scheme will significantly increase the number of buffalo breeders behind wire in the Northern Territory. Development proposals from buffalo breeders are being received and evaluated. The final date for submission of development proposals is 30 September this year, and it is the government's intention that industry loans totalling \$1.9m will be allocated by the end of this year. Feedlot trials will continue to examine the economics of buffalo and cattle feedlots. To this end, significant support funding is also being provided by the Australian Meat and Livestock Research and Development Corporation.

Mr Speaker, as the member for Koolpinyah would agree, goats have a potential for export as live animals as well as for meat products and fibre production. This year, my department will concentrate on 2 specific strategies. The first will be the maintenance of a research herd to define disease, parasite and nutritional constraints and the optimum means of overcoming these. The second will be the dissemination of information on the current and potential local and export markets.

The dairy industry has seen dramatic developments in recent times. In my own electorate of Katherine, the Rowlands Dairy expects to increase its milk production from 2 million litres per annum to 7 million litres per annum this year. The government has provided considerable support to the dairying industry in the past and will continue to do so. Market research and market development assistance will be provided to expand production and to identify new products and new markets.

The main, intensive animal industries, besides those I have already mentioned, are eggs, poultry meat and pig meat production. Expansion opportunities for these industries are largely restricted to growth in the local market until such time as Northern Territory grain production becomes available at competitive prices. Consequently, assistance for this sector will be limited this year to the provision of diagnostic, production and advisory services for existing industries.

Mr Speaker, the total allocation for 1988-89 for the Animal Industry Division, excluding BTEC, will be \$5.113m. This is a substantial increase over earlier years and \$1.4m more than the 1987-88 expenditure.

I turn now to the plant industry. In recent years, the plant industry sector has experienced a mixture of difficulties and outstanding successes. The Douglas-Daly, Katherine and Adelaide River grain farms have had difficulties, largely because of a number of consecutive years of below-average rainfall. These harsh conditions have made successful cropping very difficult indeed.

Despite the problems associated with adverse seasons and pioneering new crops in new areas, there have been encouraging trends which provide confidence about the future. However, grain farmers are now looking to diversify activities conducted on their farms. This has commenced already. Some have diversified into tourist operations, whilst others are utilising the land for the production of and fattening of cattle. My department will continue to support the development of the grain industry in the Northern

Territory to the tune of \$1.3m this year, and I will detail that expenditure shortly. We are confident that the industry will ultimately prosper and meet the growing demands of the Northern Territory market. For the time being, however, diversification will assist properties to become more economically viable.

Mr Speaker, the government commitment to the grain industry is further demonstrated by its continued support of the Douglas-Daly Research Farm, which will be expanded this year. \$240 000 is provided in the budget for the construction of additional staff residences.

One of the major success stories in recent times has been the horticulture industry, where there has been a manyfold increase in the value of production since self-government. The gross value of Territory horticulture production in 1977-78 was \$500 000. This year, including nursery products, it is estimated to top \$15m. My department is developing new options to facilitate further growth.

The table grape industry is now well established in central Australia and this financial year will expand from a \$300 000 industry to one worth more than \$1m. The government will continue to support this expansion with the establishment of a permanent research facility at Ti Tree. When fully operational, 2 staff will be employed full-time in research activities at this facility. I look forward to a visit to this area within the next couple of weeks. I have heard a great deal about the potential of the industry in the Ti Tree area and the hard work that has gone into it, and I look forward to seeing it at first-hand.

Mango and melon producers can be considered to be in something of a consolidation phase this year. However, my department will continue to provide staff resources to assist these industries.

There are 2 other crops on which the government will expend considerable resources over the next couple of years. Honourable members will be aware of the pilot project established at Wildman River over the past 4 years to prove the viability of cashew nut production in the Northern Territory. I should add, Mr Speaker, that the current world market in cashews is worth \$500m annually. This project was established by CSR 20th Century Foods in conjunction with the Territory government and CSIRO. In January 1987, the CSR Consortium was replaced by Nabisco Commodities Limited. A variety-environment trial is now being established at the Coastal Plains and Douglas Daly Research Farms and at Katherine, as well as Wildman River. Nor is Nabisco the only company showing interest in our potential. A number of other groups have come forward in recent months. Nevertheless, Nabisco is showing a great deal of interest in the possibilities to the extent that it flew its world expert on cashews from London to the Territory for a recent and very successful open day at the Wildman River plantation.

My department will be working closely with private enterprise in future research on this exciting prospect. A 3-year, \$450 000 research project is expected to be finalised shortly. This project is to be jointly funded by the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth and private enterprise, and will include investigations into entomology, termite control, nut processing and product marketing. The Northern Territory contribution to this project will be in the order of \$40 000 per year. Considerable private enterprise interest is now being shown in the growing of cashews, and the prospect for a new major industry based on cashews is brighter.

The second major crop under investigation is kenaf. Honourable members may be aware that earlier this year Cabinet approved a \$965 000 project to develop a proposal to attract commercial investment in a pulp-paper industry in the Northern Territory based on locally-grown kenaf and perhaps other non-woody fibres.

Members interjecting.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, I hear further interjections from the members opposite. Something positive is being spoken about and, of course, they get all prickly when one looks to the future and sees a few bright prospects and opportunities for development in the Northern Territory. They prefer to talk doom and gloom, but that is not our way so they will just have to listen.

More than \$500 000 will be spent by the government on this project during the current financial year. The majority of this expenditure will be spent on a series of consultancies which will include pulping and paper-making tests on Northern Territory kenaf, preliminary analysis of potential mill sites, development of a computerised crop-growth model for kenaf, identification of potential growing areas in the Northern Territory and further market analysis for pulp and papers. A prospectus, which will contain the results of these investigations, is to be prepared and will be available in March 1989. The prospectus will be provided to a range of potential investors in Australia and overseas who will participate in further and more detailed assessments of the potential for a pulp-paper industry in the Northern Territory.

For some time now, the government has been concerned about the spread of weeds in the Northern Territory and their effect through lost production and land use, in particular on the pastoral industry, public recreation, conservation and the tourism industry. The weed control program in both the northern and southern regions of the Northern Territory will be expanded, and \$1.3m is provided in this year's budget for that purpose. In particular, additional staff have been appointed in Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek. An amount of \$185 000 is provided to continue joint biological control research with CSIRO. Satellite remote-sensing techniques are being assessed for their usefulness in detecting and mapping weeds.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the fishing industry, which is the third major area of my department's responsibility. A total of \$2.305m is allocated in this year's budget to the fishing industry, which is one of growing importance and great potential for the Northern Territory. The commercial fishing industry will continue to receive strong government support.

There is more good news here and all sorts of positive stuff, so the member for Stuart will not necessarily be interested, Mr Speaker. However, we hope that some of his colleagues might learn something from it.

The value of fish landings in the Northern Territory by commercial fishermen in the 1987 calendar year was \$44.6m. This does not include the catch by the bulk of the Seanorth and Kaohsiung Fishing Guild fleet nor the value of other items such as pearls. In terms of value, the major component of the landings was prawns, which accounted for \$38.9m of the total. There has been a general increase in landings, which reflects a greater use of Darwin as the port for the fleet in northern Australia, rather than increased production from Territory waters. This was one of the goals of the port and industry development program which the government initiated in recent years which resulted in the construction of the Frances Bay Mooring Basin, a project much denigrated by the opposition but which is now operating exactly as

predicted by the government in attracting vessels and shore-based fishing industry facilities to the Territory.

To attract further fishing industry to Territory waters, the sum of \$6.2m has been allocated to build an East Arm fishing industry facility, \$3m of which will be spent this financial year. The facility will provide berthing for unloading and bunkering for a pair of trawlers, together with access to adjacent industrial land suitable for fish processing or storage. A pontoon measuring 40 m by 15 m will provide berthing on both sides to enable catches to be unloaded at all stages of the tide. By making use of a natural spit of land, road costs will be minimised and, by using an adjacent shallow basin, the extent of dredging will be reduced. The pontoon will be connected to a 200 m rock causeway by means of a 70 m long-hinged bridge. The access road will be to sealed rural road standard. Water, power and sewerage connections will be provided. Provisions will be made for bunker fuel, either from road tankers via a pipeline to the pontoon or from a storage tank adjacent to the access road.

The government expects that almost all of the \$6.2m allocated to this project will be spent locally. Approximately \$2m of the cost is in the provision of headworks: roads, water, sewerage and electricity. A further \$2m will be spent on the construction of the causeway and dredging of the basin, and the remainder on the construction of the access bridge and the pontoon which the government expects will be fabricated locally.

The purpose of the facility is similar to that of the Frances Bay Mooring Basin, namely to encourage and facilitate the adoption of Darwin as the home port of the fishing fleet operating in north Australian waters. The design will be complementary to the subsequent development of a fishing industry port in the East Arm area. As a consequence, land will be made available for associated and downstream industries. Already 1 company has indicated considerable interest in developing a \$5m fish processing plant on land adjacent to the off-loading facility.

I would say in passing that the Frances Bay Mooring Basin has been an incredible success. It was the subject of a great deal of criticism as a result of the negative approach of members opposite, who said that it would be one of the great failures. I look forward to more positive support for the new project, which shows great potential to increase the fishing throughput and the basing of fishing activity in Darwin, with subsequent downstream runoffs.

Jurisdictional arrangements have recently been agreed upon with the Commonwealth government, under the offshore constitutional settlement, in respect of 6 fisheries in waters adjacent to the Northern Territory. These arrangements will permit the Northern Territory to have a greater influence on fisheries development in northern Australia in the coming year than has been the case in the past. The agreement with the Commonwealth, under which Taiwanese and Thai fishermen presently operate in north Australian waters, comes to an end this year. Negotiations are in progress to implement new arrangements which will give greater emphasis to the achievement of real benefits to Australia and to the Northern Territory in the exploitation of its local resources.

The emphasis in industry development this year will be on the known demersal and pelagic fish resources in waters beyond the coastal fringe. Whilst barramundi and crabs are still most important, opportunities for expansion exist elsewhere. Programs to be mounted in support of the industry

emphasise product planning and development, market intelligence, quality assurance, transport and handling. These aspects mainly relate to the post-harvest phase and indicate the importance of achieving the greatest possible added-value from the catch. Assistance with gear technology will be provided on a needs basis.

Some basic steps have already been undertaken. Studies in conjunction with the Queensland Fish Board on the shelf life of tropical fish are well advanced. A seafood identification book, which includes species information and identification, is with the printers. Initial negotiations have been undertaken with the Commonwealth government on coherent plans for the development by Australians of fisheries based on offshore fish stocks. These will be further pursued with a view to formulating specific plans as a basis for licensing and the management of catching operations integrated with post-harvest activities.

Fisheries management underpins all facets of fishing activity. In recognition of changing industry needs, I intend to introduce legislation for a new Fisheries Act in October 1988. A draft bill will be distributed to all involved in the fishing industry prior to presentation of the bill in October to ensure that all facets of the industry are satisfied with the proposed new legislation.

The current barramundi and threadfin salmon fishery management plan expires in December. A full scale review is in progress, including consultation with all interested parties. Specific management arrangements for recreational fishing in the Mary River system were introduced at the commencement of the season. The effectiveness of these will be considered, together with needs in other areas, from the point of view of both recreational and commercial fishing pressure. Other aspects of fisheries management to receive particular attention include mud crabs, for which a management plan has been in place since 1986, and revision of plans relating to fisheries which have been the subject of offshore constitutional settlement arrangements.

A Northern Territory pearl industry development plan was commenced earlier this year. The aim of the plan is to develop pearl culture based on pearl oysters harvested from waters adjacent to the Northern Territory. The plan will be administered under Northern Territory law by a joint authority consisting of the Territory and Commonwealth ministers responsible for fisheries. The first collection of oysters for pearl culture under the plan is anticipated this year and farm development will proceed at the same time. Four licences have already been issued and I expect shortly to be in a position to make a further announcement about pearl fishing licences.

In addition, a significant proportion of the total Fisheries Division allocation of \$2.305m is comprised of operational and salary expenditure for research programs. These programs are designed to monitor the status of Northern Territory commercial and recreational fisheries and support development projects based on them. Major research effort will be directed towards barramundi stock assessment and further understanding of the biology of this species. Assessment of pelagic and demersal fish stocks will also be undertaken to underpin development plans in these areas. The significant prawn research programs already under way will be continued and an amount of up to \$396 000 will be provided this year by the Commonwealth under offshore constitutional settlement arrangements. Studies on pearl oysters will be introduced to support the Northern Territory pearl industry development plan. A prawn fishery by-catch study and fish disease investigations will also be undertaken.

There has been a clear shift in emphasis in the manner in which the government views fishing resources. This particularly involves a greater recognition of recreational fishing, including its potential as a tourist attraction and the significant contribution that makes to the economy. For the first time, recreational fishing has the status of a full program in the budget with an allocation of \$292 000. A major report and survey of recreational fishing has recently been undertaken, indicating that it turns over about \$60m annually and underpins the employment of about 700 people. Broadly based consultation has been conducted to obtain the views of interested parties on the recommendations of these studies and a structured plan has been introduced to implement the agreed approach. The goal is to optimise the social and economic benefits of recreational fishing to the Territory.

Emphasis will be given to opening up access to fishing locations and the development of maps for this purpose. Discussions have commenced in relation to access to Aboriginal land and to pastoral properties. Attention will also be directed to the development of opportunities for light game fishing in coastal waters, educational programs and assistance with the development of organisations and clubs concerned with recreational fishing. Enhancement of fishing opportunities has a significant priority and will include the establishment of artificial reefs and fish aggregating devices. This project recently took a step forward with the placement of the hull of the Marchant 3 on the Fenton Patches just outside Darwin Harbour.

Recently in central Australia, a beta-carotene demonstration project was commenced as an aid to investors to provide real data for planning of industry development. The demonstration cultures of the brine algae which produces the beta-carotene pigment are growing well and this initiative will be monitored and developed during the year. Expenditure of \$39 000 was required to establish the demonstration. Expressions of interest are on hand from interstate investors, 2 of whom are current beta-carotene producers.

To demonstrate my department's ongoing commitment to aquaculture development, a pilot barramundi hatchery is under construction and is expected to be completed by the end of September.

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, a pilot barramundi hatchery is under construction and is expected to be completed by the end of September. Some of the buildings of the old Stokes Hill Power Station are being modified for this purpose. The capital commitment to this project totals approximately \$430 000. The hatchery will endeavour to develop and demonstrate the technology for artificial breeding of barramundi and produce fingerling fish for local use. This will introduce a new concept by expanding fish stocks for recreational and commercial fishermen. In conjunction with the University College of the Northern Territory, research is to continue with live aquaculture feeds. This project, funded by the Reserve Bank of Australia, is producing valuable results with an algae feed used in prawn hatchery production.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to industry support. As well as the technical and advisory services my department provides to industry, it performs a number of other functions which are of significant importance. Under an agency arrangement with the Commonwealth, the department is responsible for the agricultural quarantine service in the Northern Territory. Quarantine officers this year, as well as performing their normal inspectorial services, will be involved in research programs including those relating to fruit fly, European foul brood disease (a disease of bees) and date quarantine.

The department will also provide an economic advisory service to industry and to government on the economic outlook for various industries and will give specific advice on the economics and market opportunities for various commodities. \$294 000 is allocated in the budget for this purpose. I have mentioned a number of assistance schemes for primary industry operated by the government. I would like now to briefly outline the budget allocations for some of the more important of these schemes. I should add that the assistance and subsidy schemes operated by the government are designed specifically with the situation of the Northern Territory in mind. They assist primary producers in overcoming disadvantages brought upon them by the remoteness of the Northern Territory or by unfortunate natural occurrences.

With the breaking of the drought in many areas of the Northern Territory, an amount of \$1.372m is provided in this year's budget for drought relief subsidies - mainly for restocking of properties affected by the recent drought - and a further \$200 000 is provided for the drought relief loan scheme to provide loans for primary producers whose properties are still drought-affected. \$250 000 is provided for the milling industry support scheme which will allow the Grain Marketing Board to purchase grain to meet local production shortfalls caused by the drought. The grain industry support scheme this year received \$800 000. This scheme provides advances for farmers for working capital to assist them in the planting of grain crops in the coming season.

Finally, a provision of \$400 000 is made for the fertiliser freight subsidy scheme which exists to assist producers to overcome the high cost of transporting fertiliser to their farms. I am pleased to be able to announce that I have set the rate of subsidy this year at \$95 per tonne, which is the same rate as that which existed last year.

Honourable members will be hard pressed to find these amounts in the budget papers relating to my department tabled by the Treasurer. In fact, the subsidies and assistance amounts are outlined in allocations to the Department of Industries and Development which will administer the various schemes. Officers of both departments will work closely together in assessing these various applications. Whilst the financial administration of the various schemes will be handled by the Department of Industries and Development, responsibility for the assessment of applications under the various schemes will remain with the officers of my department.

Perhaps I should mention one significant exclusion from this year's budget. The bull purchase scheme which operated last year has been wound up. This scheme, which was introduced to assist pastoralists to upgrade the quality of their breeding stock, has achieved its purpose and has been discontinued by the government.

Mr Speaker, I have outlined details of a number of major projects which will commence or are continuing this year. Existing industries will continue to develop and there are very real prospects for major new industries relating



to cashews, the production of paper from kenaf and the production of beta-carotene.

I commend the activities of officers of my department over the last 12 months and, of course, the primary producers with whom they have worked successfully to increase the output of the Territory's primary industry sector. To maximise services to industry, close liaison between Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries officers and the private sector will be promoted. This year, officers will be spending more time in the field and less in their offices. They will be talking with the producers, the pastoralists and the fishermen to find out exactly what their problems are and helping them to find ways of overcoming these.

As I indicated earlier, primary industries in the Territory have a bright future. The primary industry sector continues to be an extremely important one in the Territory economy. Indications are that the coming year will see increased production levels in both land and sea-based industries. I have instructed my department to become increasingly responsive to the needs of primary producers and I am confident from my discussions with them that this will happen. Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Debate adjourned.

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 103)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in the unavoidable absence of the shadow attorney-general, I advise that we do not intend to oppose this legislation although my colleague will offer some critical comment.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I apologise to yourself and to other members of the Assembly for being inadvertently trapped in a conversation of great delectation. Far be it from me, however, to indulge to such an extent that I am not able to provide a reasoned assessment of the government's legislation, specifically the Justices Amendment Bill now before the House.

Mr Speaker, in his second-reading speech the minister outlined the 2 purposes of the bill. The first purpose, contained in clauses 3 and 4, is to amend the process of serving summonses by mail. I do not propose to discuss at length the process involved in the service of summonses by mail under section 27A of the Justices Act or the administrative processes involved in that. The opposition has considered the increased range of circumstances under which mail service of summons is to be carried out and we have no hesitation in supporting that increase. Presumably it will result in a more efficient and cost-effective method of service. There are no great issues of public policy relating to that and we are quite happy to support it.

The amendments to section 105B of the Justices Act are of a slightly more serious nature. They enlarge the category of people able to provide a written statement in committal proceedings. As the Attorney-General indicated in his second-reading speech, the legal position has been that it is not possible for a written statement, and therefore a cross-examinable statement, to be made by a person under the age of 14. As was pointed out by the minister in his second-reading speech, the government is returning to the common law position whereby the court will be able to determine the admissibility of such statements. He said that the age generally accepted as offering what he referred to as a 'rule of thumb' is 11 or 12 years.

In supporting both provisions of this bill, one must observe that the second contrasts with the far more contentious amendments to the Police Administration Act, which moved radically away from the common law position. It is interesting that, in this particular case, we are moving back the other way. I hope the Attorney-General will be able to advise the Assembly, and myself in particular, of exactly why the government has had a change of heart in that regard. I am interested in the policy decision that is implicit in this particular change because I detect a degree of inconsistency in the government's position and I think it deserves further explanation.

In relation to the first change to be effected by the bill, it would be helpful if the Assembly could be advised of the administrative benefits and dollar savings anticipated to be achieved. I do not expect that the Attorney-General will be in a position to provide that information to the Assembly today but I certainly hope that he will be able to do so at a later date.

In conclusion, I indicate the opposition's support for the Justices Amendment Bill and I remind the Attorney-General of my 2 questions. I would like to be informed of what savings the government expects to achieve from the increased class of offences for which mail service of summonses is to be acceptable. Secondly, I would like to study the collective heart and mind of the government in relation to its move back to the common law position, which is in marked contrast to the stance it took in relation to the Police Administration Amendment Act.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this bill and in doing so to address at least 1 of the questions raised by the member for MacDonnell. He raised a second question which, I must say, inspires me to make some comment about the application of common law. I will address that later in my speech.

It is pleasing to see that the opposition supports the increased range of matters in which the postal service of summonses is permitted. At present, such service must be carried out personally if an alleged offence is one which would lead to a term of imprisonment or to a fine exceeding \$200, with or without a term of imprisonment. The new provision will apply to offences under the Traffic Act or the Motor Vehicles Act or where, under legislation, the offence is punishable only by a fine, without any upper limit on the size of that fine. I commend the government for this step.

I would remind honourable members, particularly those from the central region - such as the member for MacDonnell - that there have been many concerns about the availability of police to deal with various problems in widespread locations. I must say that I think our police force and its response times are excellent but I know from many discussions with police, particularly in the smaller communities like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, that one of their great frustrations is the great amount of time which they have to spend on delivering summonses or chasing people around to deliver summonses.

Another issue is the inordinate amount of time that police seem to spend sitting around the front steps or in the parlours of courts waiting to be called in what are often relatively minor cases. Sometimes, police are unavailable to carry out their basic function of protecting the community because of periods of up to 2 days spent waiting to testify in court. Anything that helps to free police officers to carry out the job that they are basically employed to do will certainly be supported by me. In the future,

perhaps the Attorney-General may wish to consider how court procedures might be adjusted so that they do not force hardworking police officers to spend long periods sitting around courts awaiting the pleasure of lawyers and the judiciary. In many cases, after waiting for a day or more, police officers find that one or other of the legal representatives has decided that they themselves are not ready and has asked for an adjournment of the case. That is naturally very frustrating to the police officers. I would ask the Attorney-General to give some consideration to the matter. I know that the police force would greatly welcome some relief in the administrative procedures of the court that would enable them to get on with their job and minimise the amount of time wasted in hanging around the steps of courthouses awaiting the pleasure of the legal profession.

The member for MacDonnell raised a matter when he was dealing with clause 5 of this amendment bill. I appreciate his support for the clause but he also indicated his surprise that the government was moving towards a common law approach in relation to hand-up briefs. He seems to be somewhat confused. Apparently he thinks that the government may be schizophrenic in its approaches to statutory and common law applications in different situations. In reminding him of the position that he has taken in respect of clause 5, I refer to the position he and his colleagues took when the Police Administration Amendment Bill was debated in this Assembly earlier this year.

In many respects, the common law has provided the basis for many of our laws. The common law comprises the accumulated decisions and trends that have developed in the judiciary's decisions over centuries. Those decisions change and shift but, in many respects, the common law remains the fountainhead of many of the laws of the land. However, when the common law starts to become more complex or when the conventional practice in the common law trends away from the direction which represents the intent of the legislature, it is quite appropriate and proper that the legislature should move to clarify its will by making some statutory provision to ensure that the laws are the laws of the people's elected representatives and have the effect which the parliament, the voice of the people, desires. Of course, that is why statutory laws are given precedence over the common law. That long-standing practice has been followed in Australia since the earliest colonial days and it is quite proper that the will of the people should be properly expressed. If the common law trends away from the direction which the people or the legislature consider appropriate, the legislature has a responsibility to use its statutory law-making powers to clarify the law's intent.

I would remind honourable members opposite that, in the debate on the Police Administration Amendment Bill, they defended the common law against statutory law with great zeal until, in the most interesting schizophrenic performance I have seen in this House for some time, they said: 'The common law is not good enough with respect to the protection of the rights of detained people, such as the right to silence etc'. They demanded that the safeguards contained within common law were insufficient and that they ought to be provided by way of statutory law.

Mr Bell: You were trampling on the common law so solemnly that we had to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, this legislature was merely trying, in accordance with previous practice, to express and clarify the will of the parliament with respect to the interpretation of common law relating to the detention of people for purposes of questioning and charging, whilst leaving intact the long-standing common law rights of citizens. At the request of the legal fraternity, the government agreed to discuss the provision of statutory

safeguards in relation to various matters, including the right to silence. That was a specific request which the legal fraternity made in the much-vaunted document that the opposition was carrying on about.

When, as the minister responsible for police, I stated that we were considering the possibility of amending statutory provisions, including those relating to the right to silence, suddenly I was said to be interfering with the right to silence. All I was doing was following up on undertakings I made in this House, at the request of the legal fraternity and the opposition, that we would examine exactly those things. I wish the opposition would develop some degree of consistency in its approach.

I support the clarification contained in clause 5 of the bill before the House. It is a sensible clarification in respect of hand-up briefs. I hope that my comments have helped the member for MacDonnell to become a little better-informed on the interrelationship between statutory and common law and that he can see quite clearly that there is no conflict in the government's approach. It is a consistent approach. If members of the opposition were a little more consistent in their understanding of common law and statutory law, we would not have had half the arguments we have had this year.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to thank honourable members for their support for the provisions of this bill. There is probably very little need for me to say anything further in relation to the member for MacDonnell's claims that the government is supporting the common law in one sphere and ignoring it in another. The member for Nightcliff has explained that in such a way that I believe even the member for MacDonnell would have full comprehension. I hope so. Possibly he could go over the Hansard when he has a spare minute and pick up a few pointers.

In response to the questions the member for MacDonnell asked in respect of savings, it is almost impossible to quantify cash savings because we are dealing with the productive time of serving police officers. Obviously, the cash cost to the community is the same, whether a police officer spends all day serving summonses or preventing crime. It is almost impossible to quantify the cash savings that postal service of summons would effect. However, being a person who has spent many days attempting to serve summonses, I can certainly guarantee that the time of police officers can be spent in far more productive pursuits. The community will gain cost-effective policing and I suppose a result of that will be savings in the operation of our police force in terms of prevention of crime and location of criminals.

The purpose of the amendment in relation to hand-up briefs, to clarify the matter for the member for MacDonnell, is to enable the evidence of younger children to be presented to the court without subjecting them to the trauma of cross-examination or court appearance. It is a statutory provision enabling the witness to provide evidence by means of a statutory declaration rather than in an oral presentation which would involve him or her being subjected to cross-examination. The removal of the specific age limitation, as was rightly said, reflects the common law understanding that children of 10 or 11, depending on their maturity, know the difference between a lie and the truth. The provision does not exist in any other jurisdiction and it is right that we remove it from ours. I thank honourable members for their support and I hope the question of the common law has been satisfactorily resolved.

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.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 117)

Continued from 25 May 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this simple legislation proposes to move the responsibility for reporting to this House on the Treasurer's annual financial statements from the Auditor-General, where it presently lies, back to the Treasurer. It is a proposition that we do not have a problem with. The rationale was expressed in the second-reading speech. The Treasurer's financial statements are the responsibility of the Treasurer and are the records available to the public in respect of his management of the portfolio. It is appropriate for the Treasurer to present to the parliament the information contained in the statements.

This occasion provides us with an opportunity to continue to push for improved reporting standards in the annual financial statements. As I said in a previous debate, we were encouraged by Budget Paper No 3 and the additional information supplied therein. I hope that similar efforts are made within the Treasurer's department to increase the amount of information available in his financial statements. I believe that the Northern Territory has been left behind by developments in government financial accounting in other parts of Australia and overseas. I am happy to acknowledge that we are in front in some other spheres of government but that is not the case in this area and it is important that we make an effort to catch up because not only will the people of the Territory benefit but the government itself will benefit.

A very telling statement was made by the Auditor-General in his report last year. His assessment was that, at present, the manner of keeping the accounts of the Northern Territory is such that even the government cannot use the information in a meaningful way to help it in its planning decisions. That is quite a staggering comment from the Auditor-General. In fact, the comment was so staggering and his indictment of the government so severe that the Business Review Weekly ran a story on his report in an edition late last year.

Mr Perron: I suppose you gave it to them.

Mr SMITH: No, I didn't. I was quite stunned to see that it got that far.

It certainly does not do much for the Territory's image interstate and overseas when an independent authority like the Auditor-General delivers such damning statements about the state of the Northern Territory's accounts. I hope that the government has taken that message on board and is preparing its accounts in a manner which provides it with information it can use as a basis for planning and, equally importantly, provides the public of the Northern Territory with a fair and accurate assessment of the current state of the Northern Territory's accounts. With those few words, I indicate that we support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I support the bill. I too would like to talk a little about methods of reporting.

Basically, an accounting system is a report. Accounting systems have been evolving ever since a monk from Florence worked out in 1650 that all assets equal liabilities or, for every debit, there is an equal and opposite credit. That principle set in train the development of double-entry accounting. Unfortunately, governments have taken a while to catch up with the very modern trend established by that monk some 350 years ago. The Northern Territory government is one of those but it certainly is not alone. Governments throughout the western world have been slow to take on accrual accounting. In my contribution to this debate, I would like to clarify a few of the terms that are bandied around on this subject so that honourable members will know exactly what I am talking about when I use them and why I support the concept of accrual accounting.

The basis of accrual accounting is that the financial record of the activity is related back to the period which the report covers. If a service is performed during a period and the actual payment for the service is made after the end of that period, the accounts are adjusted to apply the subsequent payment to the period when the service was performed. This happens with both the receipts and the expenditure of funds. They are often the easiest ones. It is a matter of ensuring that your debts and your liabilities are matched up to the period which is under discussion.

Of course, other areas have to be covered within the system. These are generally referred to as non-cash items. An example of a non-cash item is the provision for insurance. A given organisation may work on an insurance period of 12 months from one April to the next. In May, a payment is made for the April to April period of the previous year. However, it does not appear in the accounts of the period for which the insurance cover applied. The same practice, when applied in respect of items like air fares and long service leave, which tend to accumulate over time, means that the accounts may show a very inaccurate reflection of the state of the organisation.

In accrual accounting, items such as those I have referred to are given as accurate an expense value as possible and are included in the accounts during the period in which the liability is being created. The value of such items accrues on the asset or liability side of the balance sheet until such time as the actual payment is made. In the case of long service leave that may be a period of some 10 years. The result is that the total amount does not appear only in the year in which the 10-year period expires, thus avoiding a distortion of the accounts in that year in terms of the total period over which the liability has been accrued. The amount would come out of a balance sheet item rather than off the income and expenditure and would have the effect of equalising out a cost that has been accruing over an extended period.

Another item which tends to cause problems in government accounting systems is depreciation, which I will deal with later in more detail. The essential problem is that a government asset, such as a school or other public building, is unlikely ever to be sold. Thus, the commercial practice of attempting to include the actual worth of assets in the value of a business, is not appropriate to government.

I would like to speak about the need to match assets and liabilities. This is one of the problems that often arises in debates such as the one we have been conducting during the last couple of days. We have talked about liabilities and the different classifications of liabilities, which I will define in a moment. In an accrual accounting system, it is essential wherever possible to match assets and liabilities. A good example is where a

government borrows money and then on-loans it. Obviously, the borrowing creates a liability whilst on-lending creates an asset. The cash asset exists as soon as the money is borrowed, a borrowing which creates a liability. The cash asset is converted into another form of asset when it is on-loaned. In government as well as private enterprise, it is very important to attempt to set up the relationship between those assets and liabilities so that when one of them is matched to the other it is easy to assess the global financial position of the organisation. That is necessary for the purpose of matching interest rates and periods for the purpose of long-term cash-flow management.

Liabilities is a subject which has been debated repeatedly in this House. I recall seeing a definition of 'liability' in Mr Otto Alder's paper to the Public Accounts Committee. I noted at the time that the definition would have meant that, in the event of contracts having to be paid out, all the unpaid wages would be incurred as a liability at that time.

A liability should be defined more carefully as the legal requirement to pay out for goods or services actually received. Liabilities are then broken up into current and deferred, for recording on the balance sheet. Current items are generally defined as those which will fall due within the ensuing 12 months, whilst deferred liabilities are those which may fall due a number of years into the future - for example, long-term loans.

The subject of contingent liabilities has brought members on both sides of the House unstuck on a number of occasions. A contingent liability is an off-balance-sheet item. They are not listed on the balance sheet. Contingent liabilities are liabilities which may arise in the future, given a certain act or a certain occurrence taking place. For example, a contingent liability is generally included in the balance sheet when there is a case at law which may go one way or the another. It is generally the habit of auditors or accountants to establish what they believe is the maximum amount that the organisation could be liable for should it lose the court case, and that amount is included as a contingent liability.

Assets are generally referred to as those items which are alienable. If you have an item which is alienable, you are able to sell it or get rid of it in some way. It is generally classified as an asset and valued as closely as possible to the amount which would be obtained through its sale or disposal. This creates a particular problem for governments. For example, roads are very expensive to build but they cannot normally be sold. Thus, there is a difficulty in determining their commercial value. If a mining company built an access road from a major road into a mining lease, it would probably wipe off the value of that road immediately unless it decided that it increased the value of the total lease, in which case it might decide to wipe it off over the period for which mining was expected to continue.

For government, however, there is a real need to manage assets such as roads by having a figure which is commensurate with depreciation. It does not put that into a depreciation account but into a sinking account which basically fits in the same place on a balance sheet. By placing it in that sinking fund and building up funds there, it is able to overcome the problem that a new road may require very little maintenance expenditure over the first few years yet require extensive maintenance later. Those bumps are able to be smoothed out by the use of sinking funds. In government circles, that is often seen as commensurate with depreciation and used for the purposes of asset management.

Program budgeting is something which is coming more and more to the fore. Even some members opposite are starting to believe that it should be a major part of our accounts. It is a matter of defining what the government wants to achieve through the use of resources and then being able to match the achievement against the resources used. Another technique is the building in of failure criteria. I put the Minister for Education on notice that I will refer to this when we discuss the master teacher concept as set out in the revised version of 'Towards the 90s'. Proposals like that should actually contain a set of criteria which, if not met, will establish that failure has occurred.

What happens so often is that programs deviate from their original purpose. Whilst the program might be achieving something, it might not be the same thing it was originally established to achieve. However, attempts will still be made to justify it. If we move towards program budgeting, we must ensure that the program is tight, lean and efficient and that we define its failure before we start. Having defined its failure, its success can be measured. In that way, rewards or admonitions can be introduced and efficiency improved. I am sure that those honourable members opposite who survive the next election will be very happy to see how a Labor government puts these concepts into place.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I too support the legislation. However, I will take the opportunity to make some comments on the Financial Administration and Audit Act and the way the responsibilities under that act are carried out within the Northern Territory.

We are led to believe that the government is attempting to shake off its lethargy and I am led to believe that program budgeting is a concept that is developing within government. I am also led to believe that accrual accounting will follow at some time after that process has been developed. It is my belief that neither of those processes can really be successful unless the reports that are made to this House by various departments reflect the government's desire to develop a more fulsome accounting method.

It is not unknown in other governments throughout Australia for financial administration and audit acts to actually determine the method by which departments report to ministers and, thereby, the parliament and its constituency. It is not unknown for such financial administration and audit acts to insist that departments submit reports, not 8, 9 or 12 months after they have expended a certain amount of money - and the Clerk can pull me up if I am wrong - but within 3 months of the end of a financial year. Amendments to our Financial Administration and Audit Act along those lines would be very worthwhile. It would also be worthwhile to insist that departments include such things as performance criteria within those reports.

I hope that the Chief Minister and Treasurer will, in the not-too-distant future, inform the House that he intends to conduct a general review of the Financial Administration and Audit Act so that it reflects the general trend in the attitude of governments to accountability. There is no political risk in achieving a more accountable system of reporting to the parliament and the population. The real danger for any government lies in speculation, when people do not know how departments are performing or how money is being spent. Speculation, albeit based on ignorance, is dangerous to governments in terms of questions being asked about whether taxpayers' dollars are being wisely spent.



When the Chief Minister rises to speak in this debate, I would like to hear his thoughts on the matter of public accountability. Does he think it would be worthwhile for the Financial Administration and Audit Act to require departments to present their annual reports to parliament within a very specific period of time and to present far more detailed and relevant information than is currently provided?

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I did not realise that the debate would become so complicated. This bill does nothing more than reinforce the precept of ministerial responsibility in relation to the Financial Administration and Audit Act.

At present, the Treasurer's annual financial statements, although signed by the Treasurer, are conveyed to this House by the Auditor-General. It is properly the role of the Treasurer to present those statements to this House. I am told that the Treasurer's position is a thankless one and, if the Treasurer is to put his head in the noose by signing those accounts, his parliamentary colleagues could at least afford him the final glory of being able to pull the lever himself. I would also like to make the point that I believe that the Treasurer's financial statements should be in this House prior to the third reading of the Appropriation Bill, to allow for proper and informed debate on that bill.

It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to use the constructive advice offered last year by the Auditor-General in an attempt to denigrate the government and to imply that the Northern Territory accounts were being improperly kept.

Mr Smith: I did not say that at all.

Mr PALMER: The Auditor-General in no way made the imputation in his report that the Northern Territory accounts were being improperly kept. Rather, he suggested that the government should look at ways of keeping itself better informed. There was no suggestion from the Auditor-General that the government was not informed or was not properly informing the electorate.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, being in opposition, finds himself in the very fortunate position of being able to offer extremely simplistic advice on an extremely complicated subject. To merely say, in an off-handed manner, that the government should move towards accrual accounting pays no recognition to the non-commerciality of most government assets. It pays no regard to the actual nature of the government accounts, which is the cash accounting system. That is a critical fact which needs to be recognised.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke of a sinking fund. In other places, that would be known as hollow-logging. I am sure that the taxpayer of 1988 would not be very impressed to find out, 20 years down the line, that his taxes had been stuck away in some sinking fund for the benefit of taxpayers in the year 2000. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition chose to offer extremely simplistic advice on a complicated problem. I suppose that is the right and the role of the opposition but I wish that its members would occasionally take that role a little further and look at matters in depth. Perhaps, at some future date, we could debate in depth the system of government account-keeping and do so in an informed manner rather than the simplistic manner in which the opposition addressed it today.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, in responding to matters raised by honourable members in this debate, I believe that there is a very real danger

of governments being led by the accounting and audit industry and, perhaps, politicians with too much time on their hands, into myriad complicated accounting systems which seem to do little other than employ more bureaucrats and fill the archives with volumes of material which are unlikely ever to be read.

Victoria is an example of a place where the bureaucracy seems to have picked up the whole box and dice and is forever putting forward more complicated accounting systems to provide more information, to the point where it is now talking about total state balance sheets and arguing that a state government should run its accounts in much the same way as a company like P&P. The idea is that all assets and liabilities and all the bits in between are listed and presented to the people as, supposedly, the balance sheet of the state.

Mr Smith: Why shouldn't you?

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I think it is a load of nonsense. It is an attempt to employ thousands of unproductive people to shuffle bits of paper between themselves. When departments are as large as those in Victoria, there is probably a vested interest involved. The argument may well be: 'If we subdivide all these figures further next year, we will need more and more people'.

Mr Speaker, can you imagine the balance sheet? How do we place a value on the Darwin River Dam? Do we value it as a water-skiing spot?

Mr Smith: It has been done already. Part of the asset ...

Mr PERRON: Do you ask the Valuer-General what a willing buyer would pay for it to a willing seller? Is that how we should put a price on it?

Mr Coulter: Give us a valuation on the Berry Springs turn-off.

Members interjecting.

Mr PERRON: What about schools?

Mr Smith: It was a little bit better than that.

Mr PERRON: You ought to listen. You might learn something.

The member for Stuart said that something like a school is unlikely ever to be sold and, indeed, that is unlikely. Yet we are supposed to go around the Territory and put a value on every single school building. Is it market value that we are talking about? We have government archive buildings. We have law courts and roads. Are we to go out and value all the roads, the vacant Crown land, the mountain ranges and whatever and record them as the state's assets and place them alongside liabilities and see if we are making a profit each year in that sense? Things seem to be drifting in that direction but I believe it is a nonsense and that politicians should start to resist such measures.

As I see it, accounting is a system whereby parliament is informed of the results of Appropriation Bills that are passed through the House when the government reports back to parliament in considerable detail, as indeed we do. Perhaps we will pick up modifications contained in accounting systems other than that which we are now using. Certainly, the system is evolving. The

budget documentation provided to honourable members this year differs from anything provided previously and certainly contains more information. Whether it will be used or not is another matter.

Accounting has another value, of course, in terms of its use as a management tool. I think that is where it has a really important role. It helps departmental managers to assess performance and spending levels and it helps ministers to come to grips with their departments and what they are doing. Those are very important roles, but it would be absurd to go to the lengths described by the member for Stuart.

He said that we should not regard roads simply as something people drive along to get from one place to another but as assets which are depreciating. He argued that we should have a sinking fund to which we allocate funds every year because we know that, in 5 years time, we will have to reseat the edges and so forth. He said that in that way we can account fully for the whole thing. We would have such marvellous information that we could sit here and say: 'Yes, that bit of road between these 2 places has reached the stage where it requires the expenditure of money. We have the money in the bin so no one need worry about that at all'. Mr Speaker, it totally ignores the whole question of politics.

We are here to develop the Territory and to respond to the needs of people. Many of the responses that governments make, and rightly so, do not necessarily make good economic sense. If we were to do a strict financial calculation based on economic criteria, and to apply it to roads in the Northern Territory, we probably would not have built half the roads we have built. I am sure honourable members opposite would not advocate that we stop building roads to remote settlements, roads which in many cases are probably not used very heavily. They are very long and they are enormously expensive to maintain but, of course, we will keep putting them in. Who wants to apply economic criteria to that sort of thing? I certainly do not and I doubt whether honourable members in this House would expect to hold onto their seats for very long if we were to run the Northern Territory totally on economic criteria.

The member for Nhulunbuy spoke about requirements in relation to annual reports of departments. He suggested that they be subjected to specific requirements in terms of the elapse of time before they are presented to parliament. I believe most departments table their annual reports within a certain period. The member for Nhulunbuy, however, wants those reports to contain much more detail. I am not sure when honourable members found the time to read the last batch of departmental annual reports. During the time I have been a minister, I have seen many of them come across my desk and I am sure that they would have taken thousands of man-hours to compile. They are very voluminous. They contain minute detail on an enormous number of transactions and activities carried out by departments. Take, for example, the Department of Lands and Housing. The number of transactions and activities undertaken by that department in a year is enormous; they include the preparation of leases and lease conditions, and what happens? We see them tabled in this House. I do not think the front covers of half of them are ever opened. I suppose they are stored in archives. Perhaps departmental officers refer to them from time to time. I doubt very much whether any people outside this Chamber use them.

A couple of the annual reports are probably useful documents. Obviously, the annual report of the Port Authority is important. People outside the Northern Territory look at it to see how things are going. The annual reports

of the Trade Development Zone and the Department of Industries and Development are probably read as well, but I really doubt whether the annual reports of the other departments are ever looked at. Yet we have a politician arguing here that he wants more detail. He wants the government to put more public servants to work providing it. He thinks that will solve the problem of people thinking that the government is doing things in a sneaky way or wasting taxpayers' money.

Some of the contributions to today's debate from members opposite cause me some concern. I believe that there is a tendency in the states for the information bureaucracy to take the lead and for politicians to be afraid to ask whether all the information is needed. Will we use it? Is it a useful management tool or will it identify something that we cannot identify today? Goodness me, how much of a burden is the taxpayer expected to bear in terms of paying the salaries of people who are just shuffling papers? This country needs producers to help pay the salaries of us all and, the fewer people we employ to shuffle paper, the more chance producers will have to produce.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 119) and the Electricity Amendment Bill (Serial 120) (a) being considered together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a statement by way of personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Now I will finish my initial speech relating to comments made by the Minister for Mines and Energy on the extent of the Territory's debt.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon we heard a vitriolic attack ...

Mr Perron: Is this a personal explanation or are you going to make a statement?

Mr SMITH: I am making a statement by way of personal explanation and I have been given leave so I will proceed.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon I was subjected to a vitriolic attack by the Minister for Mines and Energy ...

Mr Coulter: No you weren't. I stated the facts.

Mr SMITH: ... concerning my remarks on the extent of the Territory's debt situation.

Mr Perron: You did double count, though.

Mr SMITH: I will come to that.

I want to start by saying, as I said yesterday, that our information came from 2 sources. The primary source was a PAC Report. For our definition of what constitutes a liability, we are indebted to Mr Otto Alder. I am pleased to see him in the gallery today. In the evidence which he gave to the PAC, he said, and I quote: 'Actual liabilities are amounts which are recognised as having to be paid to parties under contractual arrangements'. That is very important, Mr Speaker. I will keep referring to it because it provides the solid foundation upon which we based our claim about liabilities.

I move now to the lease situation, which the minister wanted to dispose of completely in terms of liabilities. The South Australian government, which complies with an internationally-accepted accounting convention in measuring its indebtedness, includes the present value of leases and similar liabilities in its table of borrowings. I have that table somewhere on my desk and can show it to the minister if he wishes to see it.

The minister claimed that leases in the Northern Territory are operating leases and therefore do not give rise to an asset or liability. The information supplied by the Public Accounts Committee indicates that the leases held by the Northern Territory government are normally for a period of between 2 and 10 years with options and are, in fact, not operating leases but financing leases.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr SMITH: You wouldn't have a clue what I was talking about. Don't shake your head meaningfully.

For confirmation of that, I refer the minister to the relevant accounting standard, AAS17 or ASRB1008, where he can confirm it for himself.

Turning to the questions of Yulara and the Sheratons, there is no doubt that contractual arrangements have been entered into to meet cash shortfalls on the Yulara and Sheraton deals. That, of course, is consistent with the definition of liabilities given to the Public Accounts Committee by Mr Alder. The PAC report states, in relation to Yulara, that: 'The cumulative cash contribution entered into by the Northern Territory government is estimated by the PAC to be \$164m by 1996'. That is, a contract exists for the Northern Territory to pick up a cash deficiency at Yulara. Our calculation of \$97m was based on the present value terms of that commitment.

The PAC stated that the liabilities of the Alice Springs Sheraton were \$49m at June 1987. Nothing could be clearer than that and that is the figure that occurs in our accounts. In relation to the Darwin Sheraton, the PAC assessed a net loss of \$23.5m through to 1996. We estimate that to represent a liability of \$11m, which is the figure we used.

In respect of superannuation, the minister actually admitted that there was an unfounded liability of \$201m. The reason for the difference of \$84m

between his figure and ours is the result of the government's decision not to fund accruing liabilities; that is, the current value of the entitlements that one day will have to be paid. I recognise that some funds have been set aside by statutory authorities but not enough not to incur this liability.

I turn now to recreation leave entitlements and furlough. Page 24 of the PAC report states that the annual cost of recreation leave is \$46m. This means that, at any given time, the government has an outstanding liability over and above that allowed for in the budget papers. Clearly, it is a liability. There should be no argument on the furlough question. The PAC report is unequivocal on page 25: 'The furlough liability at 30 June 1987 is \$5.5m'. That is not an annual payment or an annual accrual but the then existing estimated liability. The minister's calculations on air fares indicate a liability of \$10m only. The purpose of my figures is to allow comparison of this government with the states and, therefore, one must take into account the ongoing liability of this unique commitment. It is a simple accounting exercise to add to the admitted \$10m liability the present value of the annual stream of payments due for recreation fares and the fares for travel from isolated areas.

In terms of the liability for take or pay gas commitments, it is irrelevant whether we are getting electricity or not. It is a liability in terms of the statement made by Mr Alder. I will read it again: 'Actual liabilities are amounts which are recognised as having to be paid to parties under contractual arrangements'. There is no doubt that there is a contractual arrangement between the Northern Territory government and the relevant gas authorities which involve the Northern Territory government making regular payments over the next few years to meet those contractual arrangements. That is a liability. It does not matter, in terms of the estimation of the liabilities of the Northern Territory, whether income is received for the sale of gas or electricity.

Mr Hatton: I thought we were already buying the minimum volume of gas.

Mr SMITH: It is irrelevant to the liability.

Mr Hatton: Are you adding this as the total liabilities?

Mr Ede: Ask Otto Alder. He said it.

Mr SMITH: That is right.

Mr Hatton: Send his accountant off and get another one.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: If the government does not like the opinions given to it by Mr Otto Alder, perhaps it could terminate his employment.

Mr Speaker, in respect of the double counting, there is no doubt that we have made an error and we acknowledge that. It is the sort of error that is inevitable when the government adopts a hide and seek approach to its debt. The government obviously intended to make it difficult to identify the debt and the information is presented in a confusing form. I understand that we are the only people ...

Mr Hatton: Brian, you have got it wrong again.

Mr SMITH: There goes the member for Nightcliff. The information was supplied in the Treasurer's annual statement.

The mistake made by the opposition reinforces the call that we have continually made for the government to immediately adopt accrual accounting and present financial statements which accurately reflect the financial situation. These would include a balance sheet which would require the presentation of details of assets, total debts and other liabilities outstanding.

Mr Coulter: What you are saying is that you got it wrong.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, for years, the minister opposite has denied that the Northern Territory has a debt. I am pleased that he accepts now that we have a debt and that we are arguing about the size of that debt. The next step in the education of the honourable minister is for him to understand the nature of the loan requirements.

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I draw your attention to standing order 54. This is a personal explanation. The honourable member is not permitted to raise any debatable material.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition sought the leave of the House to make a statement.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, after misleading the House on a number of occasions, the honourable minister has finally admitted that we have a debt in the Northern Territory. The minister has now advanced an argument as to the extent of that debt. I think that is a significant advance for economic debate in the Northern Territory and the next significant advance will be when the honourable minister opposite understands what the debt consists of. Judging from the comments he has made today, he does not understand yet.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

This morning, in company with other honourable members, I had the opportunity to attend the Long Tan Day presentation at the cenotaph. I have with me the speech that was delivered at the ceremony and, for the benefit of honourable members who were not present, I would like to read it into Hansard:

While searching for Viet Cong north-east of Baria in Phuoc Tuy province, D Company 6RAR was ambushed and immediately engaged in heavy combat with a Viet Cong battalion. Greatly outnumbered, surrounded and attacked on all sides by the enemy, the men of D Company fought and maintained their perimeter. Poor weather and heavy rain prevented any air support from helping them. After 3 hours of heavy fighting and not being able to overrun the Australian defences, the Viet Cong withdrew, dragging some of their dead and wounded with them, leaving 245 of their dead scattered around forward of D Company's defensive position.

For its courage and gallantry in defending its position, D Company was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation by the President of the United States. Also, individual soldiers of D Company won a Military Cross, a Distinguished Conduct Medal and 3 Military Medals for their part in the action and 4 of them were also mentioned in dispatches.

It is also not so well known that the Royal Australian Armoured Corps sent in armoured personnel carriers to assist and bring A Company reinforcements while helicopters from the Royal Australian Air Force flew in supplies of ammunition and the Royal Australian and New Zealand artillery provided fire support by dropping some 3500 rounds of artillery fire on the enemy. Without the added help of these units, D Company would have suffered considerably more casualties than they did. D Company lost 17 good young men and suffered many more wounded in this action and the Armoured Corps also lost 1 of its men in this battle.

Due to the valour of the day, they have chosen Long Tan Day as their day to remember all Australians who served in Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War, not only our infantry but all of our forces, be they army, navy or air force, as they all gave their best for their country. We will always remember Long Tan as being a fitting day for all those who served in Vietnam to remember.

It is not generally known to the public that the Vietnam war was a war not a conflict, as those who fought in it know only too well. It was also Australia's longest involvement in any war. It lasted 10 years and, over that 10 years of blood sweat and battle we, the Australian forces, lost not one of our men to the enemy as prisoners of war. I think that says it all for the discipline and superior training of our Australian troops in Vietnam, a tradition that still prevails in the services today. It is something not only for our troops to hold their heads high about but also something that the Australian public should be proud of. The services of these men and women are at last becoming recognised.

Mr Speaker, I read that into Hansard because it was indeed fitting today that we recognised the Vietnam Vets and it was interesting to have the opportunity to speak to the Vietnam Vet counsellor at today's ceremony and to talk about some of the problems that he has faced and some of the expanded services that he now offers right throughout the Territory. He will take the opportunity to speak with the Minister for Health and Community Services about some of the counselling services that are offered by his department in an attempt to cover all the needs of the Vietnam Vets.

It was a privilege and an honour to be able to attend that meeting this morning with all the Vietnam Vets and I am very proud that they are being remembered. One particular incident at today's ceremony really touched me. Many members would know Mr Lacey from the Stock Squad, who rides a horse at many of the shows throughout the Territory. It is a Waler, Mr Speaker, and you would remember that Walers were the original horses that were sent to the Middle East campaign. His young son, who would probably be 3 or 4, was at the ceremony. Seeing him gave me a real recognition of our future and the ideals that the Vietnam Vets fought for in that particular war. At the bottom of the order of service were the following words: 'Remember the dead but fight like hell for the living'. It really touched my heart to see Mr Lacey's son standing at the back of that ceremony and it made me realise what the future really means for young Australians. I am so proud that we had the Vietnam Vets over there defending us at that time.

Mr Speaker, it has been a long-term project of mine to have Darwin's part in World War II recognised. Many people down south do not realise that Darwin was bombed 69 times and that 450 people lost their lives here. People do not believe that deaths of that nature and extent occurred on Australian soil and



on our wharf during World War II. It did happen and I have begun a personal campaign to have Darwin recognised as Australia's Pearl Harbour. One of the projects that I have taken under my wing is the development of the aviation museum. I have visited the Aviation Museum in Korea and I have had the opportunity of being escorted through that museum, which is a fitting memorial to the Korean War. I have also been to Seattle and had the opportunity to see the Boeing Aircraft Museum and the way in which aviation is presented there.

In the budget speech, the Chief Minister and Treasurer mentioned that an allocation had been made for the establishment of an aviation museum in Darwin. That museum will cost some \$1.4m. The land has been set aside and is currently being rezoned. The land is opposite the old Winnellie fire station site. I am developing that particular project, on an agency basis, with the minister responsible for museums, Hon Daryl Manzie. I believe that it is the first step in the development of a range of fitting memorials to our aviation personnel, as well as our artillery services and the people who died at sea in the various conflicts. I would like to see 3 fitting memorials in Darwin to the armed services - the army, the air force and the navy - so that we do not forget what occurred when Darwin was bombed on 19 February 1942.

Of course, this Assembly precinct accommodates several of the reminders of the destruction that was caused by the bombing. I would anticipate that, with the construction of the new parliament house, the wall of the original post office and the actual bomb site will be preserved and developed to add to the memorials that we are seeking to develop in Darwin. The searchlight glass, which is in the hallway, is also a very important relic and should be preserved.

I am in close consultation with the President of the RSL on the range of issues that I have outlined here this evening. The cenotaph will be moved over to Bicentennial Park.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not again!

Mr COULTER: Yes, again. I believe the planned relocation will provide an ideal situation for the cenotaph. The number of people marching in the Anzac Day parade is increasing each year, with the Vietnam Vets etc. Of course, with the arrival of the 2nd Cavalry Unit in a few years' time, the Anzac Day parade through the streets of Darwin will be an enormous march. The number of people participating could easily double. I think it is only fitting that we remember the Vietnam Vets and all returned soldiers. The money allocated in the budget and the projects that are planned should enable us to ensure that we remember these events in a very fitting manner and that we do not forget those people who have given us a future and who defended us in our hour of need.

We are all just passing through. None of us are here for very long and the following words are a fitting reminder to us: 'Remember the dead but fight like hell for the living'. Those words are very apt.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, it was my intention to speak this evening on the same subject. I support the comments made by the Leader of Government Business. The Long Tan Day memorial service this morning, which I attended with some honourable members now present, was very moving. On a previous occasion when I attended the memorial service, only 4 or 5 other people were in attendance. Today, however, I felt that at long last the Vietnam Vets had been made comfortable enough to join with their colleagues to recognise Long Tan Day, which is designed to commemorate the 10-year conflict that was the Vietnam War.

Of course, the long war in Vietnam caused considerable problems for returned servicemen. It was a war which was unpopular with the public. It was not supported by the politicians, and yet our troops were in Vietnam fighting for a considerable number of years. They returned home to an antagonistic public and, unfortunately, unlike most of our other returned servicemen from previous wars and conflicts, were unable to obtain a catharsis of the effects of their horrific experiences through the support of the general public and their families. In the majority of cases, they were embarrassed by the fact that they had been involved in the war. They were not recognised by government at any level and they certainly were not supported by people generally either. It must have been a terrible situation for them, to come back from that conflict and face that sort of environment. There were no welcoming committees, no support for the work that they had done, the terror that they had survived or the loss of friends whilst they were away. It was really very difficult for them. I was pleased today to see such a large attendance at the memorial service.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to be in Washington DC to visit some trade officials. Following my meeting, I had some 25 free minutes before I was due to catch an aeroplane. I took the opportunity to ask the driver of my vehicle to take me to the Arlington War Cemetery area so that I could see the Vietnam War Memorial there. I cannot recall ever having been moved so deeply by a physical memorial to men who paid the ultimate price in fighting for their country. If any members have an opportunity to visit Washington at any time, I suggest that they visit that memorial.

It is an incredible memorial. There is nothing particularly significant about its architecture. In fact, it is extremely stark. It is a slight mound at the top of the Reflection Pool near the Lincoln Memorial. A small pathway is set into the mound, sloping downwards for about 100 yards before making a right-angled turn and ascending. Beside the path which leads into the interior of the grass-covered mound is a wall of black marble which rises from about 18 inches in height to some 12 feet at the point where the path turns. The wall continues for about 100 yards beside the path on the way up from the interior of the mound, diminishing to about 18 inches in height again. Inscribed on the wall of black marble are the names of all the United States servicemen who died in the Vietnam war.

I always thought that the Vietnam War was costly in terms of the number of persons killed, but the significance of the numbers did not actually come home to me until I began to look for a particular name. A friend in Australia had asked me to photograph the name of a particular American who had died in Vietnam. The first step in finding the name was to inspect the record of names. At the entrance to the memorial, underneath a glass-covered table to protect it from the rain, is a large book about the size of the London telephone directory. That book holds the names of all the American servicemen who were killed in the Vietnam war. To try and find an individual name in that book is quite an experience. The names of men and women are listed in alphabetical sequence in row after row, where each person's service designation, rank, number, date and location of death are recorded. At the end of each entry is a number which refers to the panel where the name appears on the marble wall. The panels are not listed in alphabetical sequence but in what appears to be a random manner, although I understand there is some rationale for this.

It is an incredibly moving experience to walk in the sunlight past panel after panel in order to find the names of particular people. At long last, that experience seems to be having an effect on the American public.

Visitations to that area are now becoming so great that additional parking areas have been provided and efforts are being made to create extra walkways to reach the site. The memorial is a tangible recognition of the sacrifice made by so many and, at long last, people are recognising that. Visiting the place was a very moving experience for me, as was my attendance at the service today.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset today I would like to make it quite clear that, as long as my constituents see fit to elect me as their parliamentary representative, I will represent their views and requests, whether the honourable members opposite like it or not.

I refer in particular to the Minister for Health and Community Development's remarks in last night's adjournment debate, during which he tried to bounce me with all his bellicosity and bluster. I do not take too kindly to people trying to come the heavy with me or making uncomplimentary remarks about my constituents, who do not have parliamentary privilege to reply. One of his colleagues tried this on me and my constituents last year and it went down like a lead balloon. Methinks the honourable member could learn a lesson there.

It is just as well we have 2 other ex-policemen sitting as members of this Assembly. There is no comparison between them and the Minister for Health and Community Services who tried to bully me because I aired certain welfare concerns brought to my notice. Who does the minister think he is? Does he think he is going to shut me up when worried and harried people come to me for help in easing their problems and ask to put their point of view to me when no one else will listen to them? This model of a perfect minister would have me say: 'It is not nice to publicise your case or your point of view. Go home and put up with it. No one wants to hear you'. That may be the way he treats his constituents but it is not mine.

The minister stated that it was intolerable that I brought anonymous details to this House of certain child abuse cases. He went on to elaborate his point of view with a personal notation which I found more distasteful than he said he found my remarks. The only good thing I can find to say about the minister today is that he supports his welfare officers. I do believe, although I have directed certain criticism at those officers, that the minister did the right thing by supporting them.

When presented with a situation, I am prepared to be impartial about it. On the other hand, when it comes to seeing both sides of a story, the minister is so one-eyed he is practically a Cyclops. It is true that there is far too much child abuse in the community. Adults do completely nauseous, disgusting and revolting things to little children and these people, men and women, deserve the full extent of legal retribution. They are the lowest form of life. However, in trying to bring these repulsive creatures to justice and in casting the net for their apprehension, great care has to be taken that innocent parties are not accused. This sort of thing, which is the result of over-enthusiasm and sloppy work practices of doctors and welfare and interviewing officers in the case of child abuse, eventuates in an overkill which is counterproductive and subsequently passes over real cases of child abuse.

We all know of the 100 or so cases of alleged child abuse in England recently which proved to be complete furrphies, due to sloppy diagnoses of cases by 2 doctors and the sloppy follow-up work of welfare officers who, one was led to believe, may have had personal reasons to act as they did. What

happens to the people wrongfully accused, mainly men? How do they adjust to life again? With great difficulty. I freely admit that. I know many teenage girls have unfortunately been abused, to their lifelong detriment. On the other hand, some take advantage of the current concern of welfare authorities and perjure themselves to their relatives' detriment for their own personal reasons, which may include the desire to achieve freedom from home restrictions or freedom to chose unsuitable companions and so forth.

The Minister for Health and Community Services seems not to be interested in justice in these cases or even to having public attention drawn to them. It is okay if he draws public attention to them but he does not want me to do so. This was very apparent in his overbearing attempt in the adjournment debate yesterday to intimidate me into silence. The situation will soon be such that a normal father in a loving domestic family situation will be frightened to kiss or cuddle his daughters or where elder brothers, uncles or other older male relatives will be reluctant to engage in normal horseplay in the family situation because of the fear of being accused of making incestuous advances.

The minister should take a good look at where he is leading his welfare officers. His attitude seems to be that any bloke suspected of committing an offence is guilty until he proves himself innocent. It would suit the honourable minister better and give his position in the community much more prestige if he said: 'We will seek justice at all costs', instead of doing a Lord Nelson at Trafalgar as he seems to be doing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I presented a petition from people in the Northern Territory who feel that the construction of a new Legislative Assembly and nearby government buildings is not the right thing at the right time. Many people, including many of my constituents, are worried and concerned. It was that worry and concern which prompted the petition. I was approached repeatedly by people expressing their concern, especially after they had read and heard remarks of the previous Chief Minister on the subject. I have heard the arguments about the life of the existing buildings being almost finished and about providing jobs in the construction phase. The Northern Territory certainly does need more jobs and this building does need repairs from time to time. To me, however, it is adequate. It is not grandiose. It has no oak panelling or stained glass windows but it does the job, particularly when one considers the time we spend in it. This year we will be here for 30 days but usually it is 25 or 26 days a year.

The ordinary people in the community are not silly. They compare putting up a new building here with putting up a new home. The existing home might not be grand but they make do with it. They paint it and put on additions if it is not too flash, until they have enough of the ready to splurge on a new one.

The states of Australia built their parliament buildings when they had buoyant economies. The Victorian parliament, for example, was built in the 1850s when the economy of Victoria was extremely buoyant because of the gold rush. But what are we doing, Mr Deputy Speaker? This government wants to demolish this building and to build a new one at a time when we have a very flat economy. In this demolition, it will completely do away with much of our history although I was very pleased today to hear the Minister for Mines and Energy become the first minister to make any comment about preserving the heritage that exists in this building in terms of the old Darwin post office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want now to touch on the cost of the new building. The figures have been extremely rubbery to date. One could say that they have been extremely buoyant - they have gone up and down like a rubber ducky in the bath. A number of questions need to be answered. We have to be told exactly what the rights of the developer will be and under what terms and conditions this building will be demolished and a new one erected. We need to know about the time scale and a whole range of other details before the public will be happy with the proposal. I will say here that I will avail myself of the briefing which the Minister for Transport and Works has kindly offered to me, although I have not been able to do so to date.

Various ministers have made great play about all the construction jobs that will be available to local people. On the surface, that might sound pretty good. It is my information, however, that a recently-built hotel on the Esplanade - which I must say occupies a very interesting niche in the range of hotel accommodation in Darwin and is a very well-constructed building - was built mainly with interstate labour. What guarantee is there that a builder or contractor will use exclusively local labour? He could very well use interstate labour, so where are all these local jobs in the construction industry going to come from?

What happens when we translate the figure of \$80m or \$100m or whatever it is going to be, into regional development? It could not possibly be spent all in one hit anywhere else in the Northern Territory. It would have to be divided up to the best advantage of everybody.

With the current building proposal, all of the money will be spent in Darwin and very little benefit will flow to the rest of the people in the Northern Territory. There may be construction jobs in the initial building phase - whether they are interstate jobs or not we do not know - but there will not be a great deal of continuing production. We will not use the parliament any more often than we do now. The parliament's staff are already employed. I cannot see how a new parliament house will generate any additional employment once the construction phase is over.

If this money were put into developments costing \$5m, \$10m or \$20m in places throughout the Northern Territory, the building projects would be smaller and more likely to create local employment in the construction phase. Such regional projects would be of definite benefit to the communities in which they occurred and would provide ongoing employment. The Northern Territory would be creating future jobs for the young people of today because these regional developments would encourage young people to stay where they were, rather than them drifting down south or up to Darwin and, often, being out of work in the process.

We have heard honourable ministers opposite speak about putting a value-added component into our primary industry. What better way of doing it than by constructing these developments in places throughout the Northern Territory? My main concern is with primary industry, whether it is mining, horticulture or agriculture. If we were able to add value to our produce instead of exporting it, not only would we provide jobs for the people in the Northern Territory at present, but we would provide long-term, wealth-creating jobs for the future. The Minister for Mines and Energy spoke of this very issue in his speech to the Appropriation Bill this morning. I believe that the Northern Territory government's money would be far better spent on, and it would be far better to encourage a developer's money to be spent on, developments throughout the Northern Territory which will provide ongoing support for our diverse primary industries, rather than on a new government precinct.

In the short time left to me, I would like to touch briefly on my attendance at a constitutional development meeting. I was rather disappointed at the submissions I heard. I believe that a great many people have the wrong idea and believe that the be-all and end-all of the constitutional development process is to have a committee of citizens of the Northern Territory formed, comprising representatives of every minority group one can think of. I was rather interested to hear one view put forward by a person who did not want any parliamentarians on such a committee but wanted a woman on it. Obviously, that was directed at me. My shoulders are broad, however, and it doesn't really worry me.

I am in the process of writing a submission myself. What is more, Mr Deputy Speaker, together with the President of the Litchfield Shire Council and your good self, as a member of the committee, I will be issuing the committee with an invitation to come and speak in the rural area so that local people can hear the committee's point of view in relation to constitutional development for the Northern Territory and, more importantly, so that the committee can hear theirs.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I have just listened to some unbelievable nonsense from the member for Koolpinyah and I will take an opportunity, after I have spoken on the matter that I wish principally to address tonight, to deal with the last 2 matters that she raised.

The main issue I wish to discuss tonight had not crossed my mind until it was raised with me in the course of a recent discussion with a ringer. I happened to be in Alice Springs and was chatting with a fellow who raised a very interesting point which I consider to be valid and worthy of some consideration. Ringers in the cattle industry still play a vital part in our rural economy. They don't earn big dollars. I think the man who spoke to me earned about \$240 per week plus keep. They work in stock camps and on stations for fairly extended periods of time and, not all that frequently, they come into town for a bit of a break and relief.

Traditionally, ringers would take the opportunity to stay at the local pub in places like Alice, Tennant and Katherine. They would roll out their swags down the back or in a room somewhere. In days when the pressure of tourism was not so great, the relationship between these fellows and the hotel proprietors was such that they could do that, and stay for a week or so. They would have the opportunity to cash their cheques or run up a bit of credit whilst having a few pleasant ales amongst their friends and relaxing prior to returning to work on the properties.

The point that this fellow made to me - and it is quite valid - is that our active encouragement of the tourist industry has led to a great improvement in the quality and range of services and facilities for tourists but made things more difficult for people like himself. The poor old ringers, jackaroos and bushies are coming into town and finding that the price of somewhere to stay is practically beyond their means and that it is a bit harder to get credit around town. These ringers believe that, in many ways, they have been left behind by the growth and development that is occurring in the Northern Territory. I can understand that concern. Because of the nature of their work and their peer group, they don't fit in at places like the Sheraton or, for that matter, the new Oasis motel. In the Alice, they used to be able to throw down their swags in one of the back rooms at the old Stuart Arms and to cash their cheques at the bar. When they were starting to run out of money, the barman would tell them and they would think about going back to work.

Perhaps it would be of real value if we gave some consideration to what we can do to encourage backpacker organisations or the YMCA, or some body of that sort, to provide low-cost accommodation for the ringers and the bushies coming into town. What they need is a place where they can throw down their swags and stay while they cash their cheques or whatever. With the growth and development of the Territory, some consideration should be given to the people who have been the backbone of the Territory for a century. We must ensure that we do not forget our roots as we grow and develop and that we provide a place in the sun in the new Territory for the people who made the Territory. Most of us, at least at the back of our minds, take great pride in the history of the Territory, and these people epitomise its history and traditions.

I think that is a matter which we should address and I would ask that the government - perhaps through the Minister for Tourism or the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries - endeavour to facilitate the provision of some support for these people so that they feel recognised and accepted. They need to feel that their role in the Northern Territory is still valued. It is important that they be made happy and comfortable when they visit town, and that suitable accommodation is available to them at an affordable price.

Having said that, I would like to turn now to some comments made this evening by the member for Koolpinyah. The last matter she raised dealt with the parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Development and the submissions which have been made to it. She said that, rather than have a group of parliamentarians receiving the views of the community, we should form a group of people drawn from interest groups all over the Territory and set them the task of developing a constitution.

I find it quite frustrating to see how ignorant members of this House can sometimes be about the activities of the parliament. Members of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, including members opposite such as the member for Stuart, the Leader of the Opposition, and the member for Arnhem, put a great deal of effort into its activities. In this House, several speeches have been made and documents tabled explaining the activities of the committee to honourable members at great length. Documentation has been sent to the electorate offices of members to assist them in advising their constituents regarding the processes leading to the formulation of a Northern Territory constitution.

If the member for Koolpinyah actually sat down and read some of that material, instead of whingeing and whining in this place as she is wont to do from time to time, she would find that 1 of the booklets which has been sent to her contains an outline of how a constitutional convention would be formed. Rather than complaining and carrying on as she does in here, she would be well-advised to put forward some constructive suggestions. It is proposed that the constitutional committee, which may prepare a discussion document and a draft constitution, will be asked to provide recommendations to this House on the formation of a constitutional convention of Territorians to ensure that there is a broad representation of community views in the process. That convention will take on the task of developing a proposed constitution which will be put to the people of the Territory by way of a referendum.

I would ask the member for Koolpinyah, together with other honourable members, to take the opportunity to read the discussion document on a proposed new constitution along with the other documentation. I also urge honourable members to canvass the issues in their electorates so that Territorians become familiar with them and so that we do not see a repeat of the ridiculous situation which occurred in Tennant Creek last month when the member for

Barkly complained publicly about not having been advised of the committee's visit or the issues generally. He said that he had not had time to read the documents. Those documents were tabled in this House in October 1987 and 12 copies were delivered to his own electorate office - yet he claimed not to have known about the meeting. His constituents did not know about it because he had not been doing his job as a local member and keeping them informed.

He then turned around and sanctimoniously criticised the committee for actually going to the community to ask people for their opinions on that document. Of course, many of them did not know anything about it because he had not done his job and advised them about it.

I will deal only briefly with the other point raised by the member for Koolpinyah because, quite frankly, I am becoming a little frustrated. She advised a month ago that she would be presenting a petition in relation to the proposed State Square project. In presenting it this morning, she stated that she was putting forward views being expressed by people in the community. I do not doubt that many of the views that have been expressed in that petition are the views of people in the community. Anybody who has canvassed the issue would understand that. However, it is really frustrating to see a member of this House, a member who was once a government minister, displaying such incompetence in terms of the simplistic pap she came out with in this Chamber. She talked about spending money on \$2m and \$3m projects throughout the Territory rather than on a single project here. She imagines that her approach will provide a marvellous cure for the Territory economy whereas the State Square project will not. Judging by her comments, the next 12 months would not be sufficient time for me to give her even a basic understanding of economics and government financing and to explain to her why her views are absolute nonsense.

Certainly, she can walk around the community and sell her simplistic version of the situation. No doubt most people out there will say that it sounds like a much better idea. She has not grasped the fact that it is not government money that is being poured in in the first place. She says that we should encourage the developer to take a different approach - her approach. But what if the developer says: 'I don't want to do that. I want to do something else'. Are we supposed to say, 'Well, you can't do that, because we want this other thing to happen'? I wonder if she will tell us when she believes that it is appropriate to provide a decent Supreme Court building in the Northern Territory, not just for the Northern Territory Supreme Court judges but for the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, the Federal Court and the Family Court?

Mr Bell: The Federal Court and the Family Court have separate buildings.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, they will all sit in the one courthouse; that is the objective. When is she going to provide for that building? What will happen when the temporary facilities that we are using now - and they are just temporary facilities - are no longer available? What will happen to the judges then? Shouldn't we be providing for them, thinking ahead? Of course we should. In addition, when does she think it will be appropriate to provide a parliament house to the people of the Northern Territory, with reasonable facilities for the staff of the Assembly, so that it can function reasonably efficiently? The member for Koolpinyah can talk about her backyard shed for as long as she likes. The fact is that the parliament is a building of the people. It is a significant public building and today this building has reached the end of its economic life. It needs to be replaced.



Mr Ede: Rubbish.

Mr HATTON: The life of the building could be stretched out for 1, 2, 3 or even 4 years. That could be done. This place doesn't leak - it seeps! Ask the Clerk of the House. It has to be repainted every wet season because the water comes straight in through the walls. It doesn't have to come down through the ceiling! This building is overdue for replacement. If we are going to put up a parliament house, we should build a parliament house for the future.

If the member for Koolpinyah does not want to put any capital works into Darwin - and we have been hearing debates in this House for some time about the problems being experienced by the construction industry - what is she going to do to help the subcontractors and the contractors to get work in the next 6 months?

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this morning I asked a question of the Attorney-General and I must confess that I became a little bit heated with him. I was greatly surprised afterwards when the Clerk informed me that he did not have a record of my question. Apparently it has gone astray somewhere.

I am sure that the Attorney-General will be gracious enough to believe that I would not have asked why I had not received an answer if I had never written the question or had not believed that it had gone through the system. I can assure him that I have been expecting an answer to the question since March. It has gone astray somewhere and I apologise to him for criticising him in respect of a question which he did not have. I can assure him that I will bring a copy to the Assembly early next week when I return from Alice Springs.

The matter is important and is of considerable concern to me. I quoted in this House figures that had been given to me from a source which I believe to be impeccable. I felt that I should also have the official figures. My question sought official figures since the introduction of the Criminal Code in relation to cases heard in the Alice Springs courts. The particular cases involved are those in which someone was slain - and I use that word carefully. I asked about the number of cases in which people had been convicted and what they were convicted of - murder, manslaughter or committing a dangerous act. The latter apparently seems to be accepted as a charge under the Criminal Code from time to time.

I also wanted to know an average of the head sentence, as it is called by the court, on those people who had been found guilty of slayings and the various categories into which they fall. I wanted to know the average time spent in jail by people convicted of the offences I have mentioned. I appreciated that this would not be easy, because some people would still be in jail. However, I would like the closest figure possible.

You may well recall, Mr Speaker, that the figures that I gave in this House indicated that no one was convicted of murder in Alice Springs in the period I am interested in, that the average head sentence imposed on anyone found guilty of slaying was 4½ years and that the average time spent in jail was 20 months. That was of concern to me. I believed that I had a question on notice seeking accurate figures from the minister. It seemed to me as though I were being fobbed off and someone did not want me to know what the accurate figures were. I began to feel that the government did not want people to know the figures because it believed that, if people did not know

the figures, they would not worry about them. I can assure members that the people in Alice Springs are aware of the figures because I gave them to the press after having been attacked in various ways by various people, including lawyers and even a judge on one occasion - Justice Nader.

That brings me to 2 points that I would like to make in relation to this matter. I do not particularly care if I am attacked for my statements. If I make a wrong statement - and I do not believe that I have - I am prepared to wear it. I believe that there has to be a mechanism whereby the opinions of people in my electorate can be brought into the public arena. Everything that I have said in here, I have also said outside. I do not believe that anybody can accuse me of cowardice or hiding behind parliamentary privilege. Someone must express such concerns and I do not see why, if they are brought to my attention, I should not do so. I will wear the flak. As reported in the Centralian Advocate of 29 June, Justice Nader got stuck into me in one court session in Alice Springs in no uncertain manner. In essence, he said that there was no way that he would have any politician influencing sentencing in the courts in any way, shape or form. I am well aware, as I am sure the judges are also aware, that they are often considered to be a law unto themselves. They have to make the decisions about sentencing and I can appreciate the concern about influence on an individual level. However, the message of the public must somehow be communicated to the judiciary. I am prepared to stand up and do that.

The good justice gave me quite a lambasting in the Alice Springs Court and it was reported in the press. On the following day, however - and I really appreciate this from Justice Nader - he effectively stepped down from the bench and made a statement relating to what he had said the previous day. In a sense, he partly apologised. However, he did raise many good points and he gave a few indications of matters affecting sentencing, particularly in relation to the Criminal Code.

I believe that, as a representative of my electorate, I should bring people's concerns into the public arena. I have tried to shy away from individual cases. My concern has always been with the overall pattern. Justice Nader invited me to look at the cases. I am sure it would take me months really to do justice to all the matters he raised although I will attempt to address some of them. Justice Nader has indicated some areas where there are weaknesses in the law and one difficult problem which has to be taken into account.

You may recall, Mr Speaker, the many occasions when this House has debated the issue of alcohol, its relationship to crime, what we should do about it and whether sentences should be increased or decreased for crimes in which alcohol is a factor. Many of these debates took place in the context of considering the different versions of the Criminal Code. Parliamentary Counsel informs me that the problem dates back 600 years and, no doubt, if the historical records were available, it would be seen to go back further than that. It appears that our current position may be interpreted as follows. If someone takes a few glasses of alcohol to give himself the Dutch courage to slay somebody, that person would be regarded as being in control of all his faculties and the sentence should be increased. On the other hand, if someone has become so sloshed that he is supposedly incapable of knowing what he is doing, that is a mitigating circumstance.

Mr Speaker, if you were a defence lawyer and doing your job, as I believe defence lawyers should, I am sure that you would say to the judge and jury: 'My client was just so under the weather, so sloshed, that he couldn't have

possibly known what he was doing. That is a mitigating circumstance and he should get a very light sentence if found guilty'. That issue will not be easily resolved.

The judge made a number of pertinent points in his remarks. I have given a copy of them to the Attorney-General and I am sure that he will instruct his department to look into the issues and see what may need to be done. It may be that the problems are unintended results of the Criminal Code. I agree that the job of a judge is to interpret the law. When a judge sees that the defence is able to use particular interpretations to make our law look weak and makes that clear in a particular case - as Justice Nader has done in what seems to be a fairly exceptional case - I welcome that. I would like to see it happening more often so that we can be informed that the intent of this House is not being carried out in practice and that we need to do something about it. I welcome Justice Nader's statement and I seek the leave of the House to table it so that other members can read the substance of his comments.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, in my remaining moments, I would like to present a petition. I have received a petition from 29 citizens of the Northern Territory which does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with requirements of standing orders. The petition reads as follows:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, we the undersigned citizens of Alice Springs urge the Northern Territory government to establish an animal shelter in Alice Springs to aid in the control of the population of domestic dogs and cats and by doing so contribute to the protection of the environment and to the appointment of an inspector. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the petition.

Leave granted.

This petition consists of some extra pages which have arrived since the original petition was presented a couple of days ago. I was asked to chair a meeting of the SPCA group and the Cat Society in Alice Springs some time ago to discuss this matter. The Minister for Tourism and member for Araluen also attended and promised to assist in obtaining some funds for a facility which, given that over 1600 signatures have been collected, is clearly needed. A major concern is that, with the floating population of the town, many people leave without making proper arrangements for their animals and simply abandon them. They are not game enough to have them put down and, often having to leave at short notice, are unable to find a place for their pets. Hopefully, an animal shelter will enable many of these pets to be properly placed and not just left to go wild, affecting the environment and hurting the native birds and animals there. I support the petition to this House.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, during the last sittings of the Legislative Assembly, I presented a petition from a number of my constituents. That petition requested the installation of air-conditioning in the 3 preschools in my electorate. I know that I have spoken on another occasion about this matter, but it is very important. It certainly is worth raising in this place again because I believe that I have a responsibility, on behalf of my constituents, to continue to work and fight for the best interests of those people and, indeed, their preschool-age children.

There has been a considerable amount of support for this particular campaign. It is reflected in the number of letters, phone calls, personal approaches, letters written to the newspaper and newspaper articles written as a result of the publicity. For example, an article entitled 'Tots' Hotboxes' appeared in the NT News on 3 June 1988. A letter saying that 'preschoolers deserve to be cool too', by parents from Moil Preschool was published on 7 June 1988. Another headed 'Begging for Preschoolers' from A. Holland of Anula was published on 16 August 1988 and 'Preschoolers in Hotboxes' appeared on 19 May 1988. There have been a number of others.

The minister has indicated that the government has not changed its policy with regard to this matter. I must say that I am disappointed about that because I was rather enthusiastic when I saw an amount of \$1.295m allocated in this year's budget under the heading of 'New Capital Works - Education'. I thought that, at long last, I had finally achieved success. Alas, Mr Speaker, it was not to be. That money has been allocated for the air-conditioning of some primary schools which have not previously been air-conditioned. I must say that I am quite surprised to learn that there are primary schools in the urban areas of the Northern Territory which are not air-conditioned. The minister has assured me and assured the House, however, that some of that money may be available for the air-conditioning of preschools where a need can be established, identified and justified.

The minister indicated that the current policy is to air-condition withdrawal areas only. A withdrawal area is just a small room within the preschool where a class of children can sit on the floor, listen to a story which might take 10 or 15 minutes, cool down and then go back out into the humidity. That is better than nothing but it is certainly not satisfactory.

The minister raised a concern, which I know is shared by some other members of this House, about the possibility of creating health problems for children. In the past, it has been the practice for children at preschool to run in and out. In other words, they have been frequently inside and outside the buildings. Today's programs do not allow for that situation. I have discussed this with a number of preschool teachers and they have all told me that the current programs allow for the children to spend an hour or so inside and then go outside for a similar block of time. They no longer wander in and out.

During the wet season, the humidity is about 90% in the northern suburbs of Darwin. Often, the temperature is something like 34°C and it is raining cats and dogs. The children cannot go outside. They are confined to the immediate covered area of the preschool. I have been into those preschools at that time of the year and I have seen the perspiration on the brows of the children, the teachers and the mums who have been there assisting. I can tell you that it is more than we should expect our young people and those adults to cope with. It is not a fair go.

I would hasten to add that there are certain situations which do not warrant air-conditioning, and some parents have expressed their opinion to that effect. Almost every preschool has a different design. They were constructed at different times from the 1950s until very recent times. The designs have changed considerably. The location of buildings often does not take advantage of the prevailing breezes, which I am sure they were intended to do. I have pointed out in this House on an earlier occasion that, in the older preschool premises, the wall panels are fixed to the height of about a metre, which does not allow any ventilation at the height where it is most important for the little tots. When there is a breeze, it flows across the

upper levels of the room. Many of these preschool buildings are poorly designed and poorly located and frequently they are surrounded by trees, particularly acacia trees which have fairly dense foliage.

I know that the member for Palmerston would be very interested in the situation at the Gray Preschool, which I visited recently. It is located in one wing of the Gray Primary School. There is a partition between one of the primary school rooms and the area where the preschool is located. The air-conditioning duct opens into the primary school area but does not continue into the preschool. For some reason, our planners have decided that preschool children and their teachers on one side of the partition should not have air-conditioning whilst, on the other side, slightly older children and their teachers enjoy an air-conditioned environment. I just cannot understand the logic of that.

I understand from what the minister has told me that he has instructed his department to investigate all of those areas in our various primary and preschools that do not have air-conditioning. I am quite sure that this investigation will identify a number of situations where the heat build-up in particular classrooms is totally unacceptable. In fact, I can quote from a report from a Mr Johnson of the Work Health Authority who has undertaken considerable investigation into some of the preschools. He says:

The result of my measurements at the 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.

This gentleman is eminently qualified to assess the situation and has prepared a report which I find quite concerning, and I am sure that the parents share my concern.

The minister has given an undertaking that, where problems are identified, consideration will be given to installing air-conditioning on the basis of need. I appreciate the minister's commitment in that regard because I think it is certainly a move in the right direction. I understand that we are still working within the limits of the existing policy guidelines but I believe that there is room within those guidelines and within the budget to allow for the installation of air-conditioning in preschools where the need is identified and justified. I am sure that the minister supports that view.

There is no doubt in my mind that, particularly in the northern suburbs of Darwin and in Palmerston, there is a considerable need for air-conditioning to be installed in quite a number of preschools. I give an undertaking to my constituents that I will continue to pursue this particular matter in whatever way I believe is necessary. I will be liaising and cooperating with the minister in his endeavours to satisfy the various requests that have been made in this regard.

In the time that is left to me, I would like to support the member for Nightcliff in his rebuttal of the comments made by the member for Koolpinyah in her reference to the sitting of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development which took place several weeks ago in Darwin. What the honourable member did not understand, of course, was that that particular meeting of the select committee was held to take formal, verbal submissions from a number of

people who had responded to a call from the committee, earlier this year, for submissions on matters contained in the documents which were tabled in this House in October 1987, as the member for Nightcliff indicated. Following that call, a number of people gave written responses expressing their points of view. That meeting was designed to give those people the opportunity to appear before the committee.

It is a shame, and the member for Koolpinyah picked up this point, that the majority of people who have made submissions to the committee have presented their case in a narrow way; in other words, they are virtually single-interest groups or persons. They have a limited point of view. They do not have an overview of the situation. Each is pushing his or her own barrow. I suppose that is fine because, over time, we will have proposals from a wide range of different groups, and we will be able to put those into context, assess them and compile a report covering them. However, I think it is very important that the member for Koolpinyah understand the context of the hearing, including the fact that it was not open to the public.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought I should rise tonight in the adjournment debate to respond to the member for Koolpinyah, who has apparently commented again in relation to welfare officers and their endeavours to combat the child abuse problem we have in the Northern Territory. Apparently, most of her comments were based on the assumption that, when a constituent comes to her with a problem such as the one she depicted in another recent speech to this House, her only options for dealing with it are to raise it in this House or to send the person away. That is obviously the basis upon which she made her rather inane comments the other night, including her claim that the welfare officers should be sacked from their jobs. It shows that the honourable member has very little understanding of the problem of child abuse throughout the Northern Territory and, for that matter, Australia.

The point I was trying to get across to her last night was that she should educate herself a little more about the whole issue so that she could take more effective action. I certainly invite her, or any other member of this House - and undoubtedly members will be confronted increasingly with this issue - to obtain a briefing on some of the enormous problems which welfare officers, police officers and others face in dealing with the issue of child abuse.

Apparently, the member said that I am a one-eyed Cyclops and that I am only interested in the children. Believe it or not, that is precisely where my interest lies. The fact of the matter is that the weight of the law in this matter is heavily loaded in favour of the perpetrator of offences. Neither legislation nor other assistance is particularly effective in helping young people to get out of situations of abuse.

I understand that the member said that I am not interested in justice. I am vitally interested in justice, particularly for people who have absolutely no resources available to them for obtaining justice for themselves. Once again, I am talking about the children.

The member said that my attitude to her was one of intimidation. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me tell you that, in child abuse cases throughout Australia and the Northern Territory, one of the major influences that is brought to bear against the victim of abuse is intimidation by the perpetrator. Such intimidation is often brought about by the perpetrator going to the local member or the media and beating up a case. Of course, once

the child learns of that, she or he is utterly intimidated from taking any further steps to safeguard herself or himself from future abuse. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am vitally interested in intimidation.

The member apparently said that no normal father would be involved in such a situation. I wonder how we define a 'normal' father. Is a normal father defined by virtue of belonging to a particular socioeconomic group? The evidence in the courts and in other types of investigation certainly does not bear that out. The fact of the matter is that perpetrators of child abuse cases, in some instances, are otherwise thought to be pillars of society. That is a fact of life.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I said last night that jails are filled with innocent people and if you don't believe me just go and ask them. That is usually the case when investigations are conducted, particularly in the area of sexual abuse or, to use another word, incest. When the perpetrator is questioned or the matter is brought into the open, the perpetrator claims to be innocent. The usual defence is that the welfare officer, or in some cases the police officer, has been listening to lies told by a wayward child and, in so doing, is simply assisting that child to sever her relationships with the family.

Let me say that there are a number of cases where that is precisely what has happened. There is no doubt about that. When investigations proceed a little further, it is found that the child has been lying in her allegations. Under the mandatory reporting provisions, teachers are sometimes the first people to be advised. They then take steps to bring the matter to the notice of welfare officers or police officers and, on investigation, there are many cases where it is eventually found that the girl has been lying.

I hope honourable members, particularly the member for Koolpinyah, can understand that there are cases that are a little touch and go, borderline cases. They may not have reached the stage where police action is possible and the action that is available to the welfare officer, through legislation, is to safeguard the child by putting her somewhere safe for a short period. Obviously, in cases where the offence has taken place, the offending parent will scream, kick and yell. Such a parent needs to get to the child. The parent needs to intimidate the child so that she or he will say no more. That is the best defence.

A balance must be achieved in investigations into matters which are incredibly difficult to handle. The fact of the matter is that welfare officers simply cannot walk away from these cases just because somebody who is otherwise a pillar of society comes to them and says: 'Why are you taking my child away from me?' If they were to respond by saying, 'Sorry Mr Jones, manager of business X', the child would be plunged straight back into the situation that she had been enduring for quite some time.

One of the other statistical facts of life is that, in many cases, 2 girls are involved. The elder may have been abused and suffered intimidation for a number of years and the usual thing she says to her younger sister is: 'If you tell anybody, daddy will have to go to jail. If you tell your teachers, I will be taken away from home and mummy won't be able to get any money to feed you kids and buy you clothes, and you won't be able to go to the pictures etc'. That type of intimidation occurs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that the member for Koolpinyah will avail herself of a briefing from my department. The work carried out by the welfare officers in my department is substantial. Unfortunately, the statistical data

that we have available to us indicates that there are - and I hate to say this - probably thousands of instances of child abuse presently occurring in the Northern Territory. Together with the Attorney-General, I am looking into the question of the inadmissibility of the uncollaborated evidence of a minor, a matter which is being addressed throughout Australia. We are looking at various ways of questioning young people. We are also looking at ways of protecting all of the rights of a suspected offender so that the Crown does not have an unfair advantage. One thing, however, is clear beyond doubt. We have an absolute duty to pursue this issue. I do not see that we can turn away from what I believe is one of the most horrific things that confronts society today, simply because a person who is a pillar of society yells and screams.

I want to touch on one other matter. During question time earlier this week, I said that I was amazed that I had to use government backbenchers as an appropriate opposition in this Assembly in terms of having some sensible questions asked, particularly in the area of health and community services. It was quite interesting today to see that the second question of any significance in that area was asked by the former opposition spokesman for health and community services, the member for Arnhem. During one of my answers, I said that the shadow spokesman for health and community services seemed to do nothing to inform himself about what was occurring in this portfolio. In fact, I have waited for 3 days of these sittings for him to ask me a question regarding meningococcal meningitis in central Australia, right in his own patch. He has only to walk out his door and he will trip over it. However, no question has been asked.

Mr Bell: I haven't got the backup of a good department, Don.

Mr DALE: The honourable member apparently is among the top 10 sex symbols in the Northern Territory. He certainly is not in the top 5 of the opposition ranks and as soon as the Leader of the Opposition gives that portfolio responsibility back to the member for Arnhem, the better the people of the Northern Territory will be represented by the opposition in this Assembly.

The member for MacDonnell seems interested only in running around stirring up industrial relations problems in the portfolio. Here is yet another example. He has called a meeting: 'Attention doctors and nurses and interested people! Are you concerned about the proposed move of the detox and 5A unit into our living areas? General Meeting, Monday 22 August, 12 midday, on site at the hospital. Support speaker will be Neil Bell MLA, shadow minister for health'. They have been misled a bit there, haven't they? Some 9 questions or objections have been put forward as well as a number of other matters which the honourable member is apparently going to discuss. The fact of the matter is that I have already attended a public meeting with these people and responded to all of their questions. My staff have been talking to them over a number of months in relation to this issue and a number of other issues relating to the Royal Darwin Hospital.

In the last couple of weeks, all people who reside next to the site where the Alcohol Detoxification Unit is now located have been written to and asked to respond to various options for the satisfactory relocation of Ward 5A into what is now the ADT unit. I have been advised that they have all agreed to the outcome of the negotiations which have taken place, including the construction of fences, the installation of lights and all sorts of other things. I am convinced that the steps that we intend to take to completely isolate the ADT unit, transferring it to a location adjacent to the main entrance road of the Royal Darwin Hospital on the extremity of the living



area, are quite appropriate. I believe that the people who reside in that area will be quite satisfied with the move. Officers have been negotiating with all parties involved and I am satisfied that those moves will cause the residents on the hospital campus no problems whatsoever. The only problems that will arise will be those stirred up by the honourable member opposite and some of his party colleagues who attended the same meeting as myself.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah raised a couple of points which bear further discussion. The first relates to the Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

The select committee has 2 major problems at the moment. The first is the problem of differentiation between the work of the committee as a committee on constitutional development and the issue of statehood itself. The 2 matters have become confused. Obviously, the constitutional development work has to proceed and we will require a constitution before statehood. At the moment, however, the timing of one does not necessarily have anything to do with the timing of the other. The point that I have been constantly making to individuals and to community groups is that, no matter what their attitude is to statehood, most people accept that it will occur at some stage in the future. The exception is the small minority which still hopes that Australia will become a unitary nation without states. However, even those people, generally accept that, if that massive constitutional change ever comes about, it will be a long way in the future.

If people accept that the next constitutional development in the Northern Territory will be statehood at some stage, they generally accept that there is a need to discuss a constitution which, after all, will be the embodiment of the principles of our society and its very lifeblood. It will be a document that will indicate what we are and how we hope to live together. It will express the nature of our relationship with one another. It will mark whether we, as a society, have reached maturity or not. In effect, the measure of our maturity will stand or fall on the nature of that document.

It is a shame that, in many people's minds, the 2 issues have become mixed. I was out bush at the time, but I was told that the ABC ran a segment on the hearings of the select committee in Darwin. The introduction to the story showed the previous Chief Minister displaying the 'Toward Statehood' banner on one of his vehicles. It then went on to talk about constitutional development. That is hardly the sort of presentation which leads people to separate the 2 issues.

I believe that the work of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development will take a considerable time because the second major problem that we face is that people's knowledge, not only of constitutions but also of the basic political institutions in our society, is sadly lacking. It is lacking not only among Aboriginal people, for whom we are preparing a political education process at the moment, but also among non-Aboriginal people. Most people have a far more cynical attitude towards political institutions than I have. It is a shame, but I think it is necessary that we address the whole problem of political education before we will be able to say realistically that we are developing a constitution for the people.

Statehood must be granted on the basis of equality with the existing states. Members here may be able to appreciate more readily than the average Territorian, who often is not all that interested in politics, the sad truth that there is very little point in attaining statehood unless we have 12 Senators. The crux of the matter is the political pressure which can be

exerted in Canberra in the various wheelings and dealings that go on in the party rooms and on the floor of parliament, which make or break many of the deals between states and the federal government. Maybe we will have to make it compulsory for Territorians to be either a Senator or on the staff of one. However we go about it, 12 Senators is the bottom line of statehood.

The other point I want to make before turning to a more contentious subject relates to the boundaries of the new state. It is unfortunate that we have even raised this matter. I know that it is contentious and I know that there are all sorts of problems with it but I am most disappointed that, to date, nobody has seriously raised the idea of the expansion of the borders of the Northern Territory to take in the natural dimensions of the new state. I believe that it would be perfectly natural for the southern boundary to be moved further south, taking in a large proportion of the Pitjantjatjara lands that have much in common with the Aboriginal people in central Australia. The pastoralists there all look towards Alice Springs as their centre. I believe that we may be able to organise it so that we get the boundary down as far as Roxby Downs.

I believe that a line should be drawn through to the 90-mile beach, to delineate our southern and western borders. That would give us the Kimberleys. I doubt whether a move for the Pilbara would be realistic; that would probably be asking Western Australia for a bit too much. However, I believe that people in the Kimberley area increasingly see Darwin and, to a lesser extent Katherine, as their natural focal points. They are thousands and thousands of kilometres from Perth and they must sometimes feel very isolated in terms of the distance from their state capital. Whilst that may not be such of a problem now that they have an outstanding Labor government in charge of the state's affairs, they must feel that there would be considerable advantages in throwing in their lot with us.

Previously, I have hesitated to raise the issue of the borders of the new state in relation to Queensland. It certainly would not have been possible to discuss such issues rationally with that state's previous Premier. I believe, however, that we should be considering the possibility of a boundary which runs in a straight line from South Australia's eastern border directly north to the Gulf of Carpentaria. That would give us the Georgina area, where we are having major problems developing our eastern connections into Queensland. By happy coincidence, it would also give us Mt Isa. We would then have a state with the mineral resources and the potential to really make a go of it. It would give us a definite kick-start. We must remember that the current borders were the product of navigators and people who drew lines on maps of a country that they had never seen and were not intending to travel over. Often, they were done from the poop deck of a passing square rigger and they have no rationale beyond that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have talked to a number of people about the possibility of varying the existing boundaries. Everybody seems to agree that it would be a great idea but nobody is taking it on seriously. I realise that it would require referendums in the states of Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. Given that the High Court may require the holding of a referendum of the Australian states on the question of Northern Territory statehood, that may be an appropriate occasion on which to raise the whole question of the boundaries. It may be that some of the other states would like to fix up some of the anomalies that they have and we might actually achieve something.

I see that the Minister for Education is in the House. I would like him to provide me with some information in relation to developments at high schools in Alice Springs. The first of these relates to the language courses at Sadadeen Senior High. There was a class in German and a class in French, but I have been told that both have been discontinued. I am quite happy to be corrected by the minister on this, but I have been told that students are no longer able to undertake those courses during school hours. If students want to continue with them, they will have to do so outside usual school hours.

The students who wish to continue in those courses will be placed under enormous pressure. Some of them had the minimum number of units that they required in order to matriculate. However, halfway through Year 11, they have been told that 1 unit is to be dropped. If they take a free period at the time when they previously had a French or German class, they will not be able to matriculate because they will not have accumulated sufficient units. Their only alternative is to attempt to do in 3 half-years what everybody who happened to choose other subjects has 4 half-years to accomplish. I believe that, when the Department of Education publicises a course and says that resources will be available for students to follow that course through to matriculation, it is morally bound to continue that course for the appropriate number of years.

Mr Collins: There is often only 1 student.

Mr EDE: I notice that the member for Sadadeen said that there may be only 1 student. In this instance, there were 5, 6 or 7. I know that numbers are down, but it seems that those who have shown the fortitude and determination to continue are being made to pay for the sins of those who have dropped out. That seems to be monumentally unfair. If the government makes a commitment to students, it has a moral obligation to follow it through, no matter how few students are involved. That applies unless the students say, voluntarily, that they are happy to take a change in course because they do not mind either way. In this case, however, where a student may have had a strong motivation to take a particular course with the aim, for example, of pursuing a career in foreign affairs, he would have good reason to feel that he had been severely disadvantaged. It sticks in my craw that these students' total careers, their whole lives, could be warped by this administrative decision which has been made during their last 2 years of school. They made a choice of courses in good faith and then the government pulled the rug pulled out from under them. Now they have been left to wear the consequences. Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot see that there is any fairness or equity in that.

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

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to respond to the comments of the member for Sadadeen in relation to sentences handed down by courts. I think he was referring to Alice Springs matters relating to murder or manslaughter, which he described in very emotive terms.

Before I go any further, I do accept the honourable member's apology in regard to his claim this morning that he was awaiting an answer from me in relation to a question on notice. He now realises that the question had not reached me. I certainly believe that his intentions were honourable in regard to that accusation. Most certainly, when I receive his written question, I will be able to supply a written answer.

This morning I castigated the member about some of his comments on the subject of sentencing. It is important that this House and the community

realise that in doing so I was not indicating that members of this Assembly should not be free to make comments regarding the judiciary and actions that occur in court. I think that most members would realise that, in our democratic system, that right must always exist. However, I am concerned to correct any inference that anything improper has been occurring in respect of sentencing.

The Centralian Advocate of 1 June made specific reference to the comments of the member for Sadadeen and I quote: 'Mr Collins said, "It was put to me that judges have been going to extraordinary lengths to persuade juries not to bring down murder convictions"'. On 22 June, in a letter to the Centralian Advocate, the member for Sadadeen said: 'Judges, in summing up to juries, have appeared to go to extraordinary lengths to direct the jury not to find the defendant guilty of murder'. The inference was that, for some reason, judges were taking it upon themselves to interfere with the normal processes of a trial and were going to lengths which were out of the ordinary in order to influence the decision of a jury regarding the finding of a person guilty or not guilty. That is a pretty terrible accusation and it would certainly cause great concern to the judiciary and to people involved with the law. I can assure the honourable member that, if the substance of his comments were correct, appeals would be laid very quickly and there would be a great hue and cry. I think that such accusations made against the judiciary should draw a response, both from the judiciary - as has occurred in this case - and from myself.

I do not want to give the impression that there are no difficulties in relation to what the community sees as inadequate sentences for crimes which it considers very serious. Being a father, a husband, a property owner and a member of the Territory's community, I have concerns about the level of crime, particularly the level of violent crime, and about the appropriateness of punishments that are meted out in relation to them. I have had those concerns for a number of years. However, when we look at the facts and the details, sometimes we find that our fears are misplaced. I think it is important that politicians who want to address such matters have a level of understanding of the area they are dealing with which will enable them to address specific issues rather than making general claims which can be inaccurate and which can cause the debate to head off in directions which are totally unproductive in terms of the actual problem.

In Alice Springs, since 1 January 1984, there have actually been 17 prosecutions for murder. Only 2 of those went to jury trial because 15 defendants pleaded guilty to a lesser charge, either of manslaughter or of committing a dangerous act. Of the 2 cases which went to jury trial, 1 defendant was found not guilty, which is a decision made by the jury and not the judge. The other was found guilty of manslaughter. Of the 17 defendants, only 1 had to be sentenced by a judge for manslaughter.

The introduction of the Criminal Code in 1984 changed the law slightly from the previous common law. At common law there were 3 types of murder: intentional murder, reckless murder and felony murder. Under the code, only intentional murder and felony murder remain. The Territory no longer has murder by recklessness. Reckless murder now falls within the ambit of section 154, which relates to manslaughter or dangerous acts. Murder is the most heinous crime, being intentional killing of another or intent to do grievous harm. Our law is humane in that the mandatory term of life imprisonment for murder in the Northern Territory is imposed only upon those who intentionally kill or inflict grievous bodily harm. The burden of proof in murder and the evidence required must show that there was an intent to kill or intent to inflict grievous harm.

The figures for Alice Springs reflect the type of person who commits crimes in Alice Springs. In the 17 cases which I mentioned earlier, 14 of the accused were Aboriginal. It is an unfortunate fact that the investigation of crime and the prosecution for crime is hampered by the fact that, in many cases the accused, the accused's victims and the witnesses were intoxicated at the time of the commission of the offence. When that is the case, it is very difficult to prove that there was an intent to kill or to inflict grievous harm. Therefore, it is to some extent understandable that the prosecution has accepted a guilty plea to a charge of manslaughter instead of proceeding with a charge of murder.

Mr Collins: That is plea bargaining.

Mr MANZIE: It could be. It is something which I do not agree with.

It is also open to a prosecutor to accept a plea in relation to a charge of manslaughter if he feels that there is insufficient evidence available for any of a number of reasons. As I have just said, these might include drunkenness affecting witnesses, unavailability of witnesses and so forth. Without looking at each specific case, it is not possible to say why the prosecutor made a decision to accept a lesser plea.

In the 17 cases, for a number of reasons, only 1 person was found guilty of manslaughter by a jury. Another person was found not guilty. There were 2 jury trials, and I can assure the honourable member that in neither case did the judge influence the jury to arrive at a particular verdict. This relates to the reason for my concern this morning at the accusation that judges were somehow influencing juries in relation to matters in Alice Springs.

I think the member for Sadadeen's real reason for concern is not the notion that judges are influencing juries to bring down incorrect decisions. He is concerned that there could be some problems with the Criminal Code and the way we, as a society, apply the law to the offence of murder. That is a completely different matter and, if it needs to be addressed, it has to be addressed by members of this House. Accordingly, if the honourable member is aware of specific instances where he feels the law is incorrect and that, as a result, people are getting away with breaking the law or not being subject to the sanctions applied by society because of some inadequacy in the Criminal Code, he should place them before the House. Such instances are far removed from any accusation that judges are influencing juries to bring down incorrect verdicts and letting offenders go free as a result. That is incorrect, as were the inferences in newspaper stories at the beginning of June, that judges were causing the major problems.

Once again, I advise the honourable member that he has the opportunity to bring specific details to the attention of the House or to me personally, or to address the issue in terms of perceived breakdowns in relation to specific legislative areas. In either eventuality, the problems can be considered and an assessment made as to whether the law is carrying out the intention of this Assembly or whether it is inadequate and therefore requires change. I ask the member for Sadadeen to be a little circumspect in his approach to bringing to the community's attention what he sees as problems in relation to the judiciary. He should remember that members of the judiciary have a very difficult job and are constrained by precedents set by the High Court in a number of areas. Many problems which people believe to be caused by the judiciary actually relate to laws made in this House. I repeat that, if the honourable member can bring specific problems to our attention, we will certainly look at them in detail.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to respond to some of the comments made by the member for Nightcliff in relation to the recent visit of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development to Tennant Creek. I believe that I should put the record straight in relation to that visit, which could best be described as an unfortunate shambles. I am a great supporter and advocate of statehood and it cannot come quickly enough as far as I am concerned. Nevertheless, we all have quite a job to do in bringing the community with us in the charge.

In the case of the committee's visit to Tennant Creek, the community received less than 10 days notice of the committee's arrival, by way of advertisement. That might seem unimportant to people from outside. It might seem to be an adequate period of time. However, I submit to members of the committee that 10 days, or less than 10 days, is not a terribly satisfactory period of notice. I would have liked to have been at the meeting of the committee because I had a few things that I wanted to put before it. However, I found myself in a circumstance where I had committed myself to go to a meeting of my constituents in the McArthur River area. People planned to come from miles around to discuss the establishment of a new school at McArthur River or at the Heartbreak Hotel site. It is a pretty controversial issue in the area and it is one that I have been following for some time. The meeting had been organised for nearly 2 months and I had been committed for over 2 months to attend it. To cancel my attendance at a function like that, which is pretty important to the people concerned, in order to attend a meeting in Tennant Creek of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development was not a reasonable thing as far as my constituents were concerned or in terms of my attitude towards them.

The member for Nightcliff suggested that I had not done the right thing by my constituents in not properly advising them of what was going on. He said that I should have circulated papers and done this, that and the other. He seems to think that he is the policeman for the world. I would just like to make the point that the papers that were sent to my office by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development were dispatched promptly to various interest groups in the community. As soon as they arrived, I posted them out. I did not follow them up with any of the people I sent them to. I left it to them to contact me.

I point out again that, when the advertisement was run for the meeting in Tennant Creek, it did not state that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the contents of the papers distributed by the committee, the local member or by anyone else over a period of time. As far as the advertisement was concerned, it was just an opportunity to rock up and have a yarn about statehood, which does not seem like a satisfactory approach. It was, indeed, another unfortunate aspect of the meeting.

The committee held a meeting in Alice Springs prior to its visit to Tennant Creek. The ABC reported that 5 or 6 people went to that meeting and that it did not draw much response from the community at all. When they heard that news, people contacted my office asking what the meeting was about and whether they should attend. I told them what I knew about it, which was what was in the paper. I suggested that they ought to go along even if they only went to listen and learn. The committee duly arrived in Tennant Creek. Subsequently, committee members walked up and down the main street knocking on doors saying, 'Please come to the meeting. We do not want to have another poor showing like the one we had in Alice Springs'. That threw some local people off balance.

Mr Ede: I am a member of the committee and I did not knock on doors.

Mr TUXWORTH: You are the one who should have. You would have got a lot more people to attend the meeting.

Mr Speaker, I would just say that the locals found that very off-putting because they were not really sure what they were in for. Before the committee even arrived in town, one of the Aboriginal group's spokesmen, John Havnen, got off to a pretty early start. He gave everybody a fair broadside just to cover his bets, so to speak. I know John pretty well. I am sure that, while he has serious reservations about statehood and what is occurring, he does not feel as strongly about the issue as his press release and radio statement would indicate.

Mr Bell: You have never made an ambit claim.

Mr TUXWORTH: The member for MacDonnell said that I have never made an ambit claim and I think that is a fair way of describing what Mr Havnen was about. It was not necessary. However, he was working from a position of not having been briefed, not having any papers, not understanding what the meeting was about and a feeling that, in spite of those circumstances, he had to attend and make some positive contribution.

I would just like to come back to the member for Nightcliff's proposition that, as the local member, it was my job to circulate the committee's papers, to canvass the issue in the community, to urge people to attend meetings and generally to promote statehood at that level. I would like to put it on the record that it is not my job. There is a committee which has the resources of the public service and the government behind it. That committee can do most of those things. I am more than happy to promote the cause and the arguments, but it is the committee's work to get out into the community and canvass the issues.

Mr Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left, I would like to put a few points on the record. The first is that the committee should come back to Tennant Creek. Before it does so, it should circulate a brief and simple paper on what it wishes to discuss at the meeting. When I say 'brief', I do not mean a 173-page document such as the one circulated about a year ago. The average Territorian is not interested in that and most people do not understand it. The committee should take the trouble to invite members of organisations or individuals whose opinions it would like to hear, to attend the meeting and express their views. That would go a long way towards getting discussion started. Simply throwing an open pitch down the centre and hoping for everybody to turn up will not work.

One of the things that I wanted to put before the committee for its consideration - and I will just throw it into the ring tonight - is the need for the issue of constitutional development to be introduced into our high schools. The Minister for Education might like to consider whether it should be studied as a current affairs topic or under another heading such as history, political development or social science. There is a whole range of ways in which it could be done. I am now coming to the view that the move to statehood will be much slower than we would like. One of the reasons for that is the total lack of understanding in the community of constitutional issues.

If we start with children who are now 14 or 15 years of age and make it a subject that they study in high school during the latter part of their education, when they leave school they will have some understanding of

the Territory's constitutional position and what the Territory should aspire to. We will have done ourselves a big favour. The simple truth is that, within 4 or 5 years, all of those young people will be voting. They are the people who will be asked to vote on the constitutional issues. More importantly, children at school have a tremendous capacity to take home to their parents the issues which are the current topic in the classroom.

Looking around this Chamber, I see that most of us are at the age where we are likely to have teenage children. Some of us have children in primary school, and I am sure that many of us have had the experience of hearing our children bring home issues which they have become aware of through their school studies. I believe it is probably better for us to try to work on the parents by means of the children than through media campaigns, meetings and bombarding letter boxes with the principles and the ideals of statehood. I leave that thought for the Minister for Education and members of the committee to consider. It was one that I intended to put to the meeting in Tennant Creek.

I leave this last thought for honourable members of the committee and members of the House, and whether they agree with it or not is up to them. Mr Speaker, at present, statehood has mine, yours and Buckley's chance out there in the community. It just does not have a prayer. We have a great deal of work to do to get the community even to consider it - not to consider whether we should have it or not but just to consider talking about it. The community is not interested. I would say to the members of the committee that, whilst that may be the situation today, it can be turned around. That will only occur, however, as a result of the joint efforts of members of this House. It will not be turned around by political games played by people, like the member for Nightcliff berating politicians for not informing their constituents. I can tell him that, if he would like to try doorknocking in Tennant Creek to sell statehood, he would be flat out finding 1 person in 50 who would be interested even in talking about it. People are just switched off.

I am prepared to work with the committee in trying to change that attitude, which does not exist only in only Tennant Creek. To do that, all members of this House will need terrific support from the committee and access to the available resources of government. I ask the committee to come back to Tennant Creek but, in doing so, to take into account of some of the things that I have said. When it does come back, I would like to have the opportunity to appear before the committee and to put forward some comments from the point of view of the local community.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, in opening Education Week on Monday, I commented that it was a period when we could look at some of the positive aspects of our education system and turn away from the negative aspects for a while. A great deal of progress has been made in the Northern Territory education system and it is an opportune time to reflect on that. For example, recently I presented a Times Literary Award to Sadadeen students. They had won the ward in an international competition in which they competed with many other schools throughout the world. The standard was extremely high and the Sadadeen school received a special award for the best overseas entry. Furthermore, a number of our students go down south to compete in various interstate competitions and often do extremely well, finishing in the top 5 or 6 amongst students from all over Australia.

I am very pleased tonight to mention another positive event that has occurred. I have been advised by telephone today that Bushfire Radio, an



educational radio program for children in the Northern Territory bush, has won 3 awards at the international Pater Awards in the United States. I am sure honourable members will be aware of Bushfire Radio but some may not be familiar with the Pater Awards. They are the radio and television equivalent of the Academy Awards. The Bushfire Radio program is incorporated into the programs of 55 bush schools south of Newcastle Waters and Borroloola in the Northern Territory. The program originates from CAAMA Radio in Alice Springs each Tuesday and Thursday, with educational material supplied by the Northern Territory Department of Education. The department supplies booklets to accompany each program and these are distributed to 1300 students twice weekly.

The program, which was initiated by CAAMA in 1980, was trialed in 1986 and gained instant success, winning its first award last year. It received the Australian Public Broadcasting Association's Golden Reel Award for the best education program. Now it has achieved unheard-of success at the Pater Awards ceremony in the United States, defeating entries from 46 other countries to be declared the best children's program and to win the award for the most creative use of sound. The awards to CAAMA were judged by a panel of 14 international judges. Bushfire Radio is distributed to many schools which are unable to pick up CAAMA Radio, including some in South Australia and Western Australia.

Another recent positive achievement in education has been the signing of an agreement between the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and the Commonwealth government. The agreement involves looking at sharing resources and rationalising curriculums in areas like Kintore, where a number of states are involved in education programs. This is a positive development and I commend it to honourable members. It is important that members inform themselves about such programs and achievements.

The NT Department of Education provides an important service by taping educational programs provided by CAAMA and distributing them to communities on request. The department has participated actively in Bushfire Radio, and CAAMA Radio is to be applauded long and loud for its work in producing it. The Pater Awards to Bushfire Radio, including a third Australian Pater for the best original music, will be presented at World Expo in Brisbane next month. The program has attracted a great deal of feedback from students in isolated schools and it is interesting to note that many young Territorians have suggested ways in which the program could be improved.

Another positive event that has occurred lately is in relation to the National Art Award. I am very pleased to mention here that Serena Shannon, a student at Yirara College has won the NT section of the National Art Award. She has been requested to attend a special presentation ceremony in Sydney on 26 August 1988. Judging is continuing for the Australian award, and it is possible that Serena's work may be chosen in that also. I am sure that I speak for all honourable members when I wish her well in that exercise.

I would now like to respond to a number of issues which have been mentioned in this evening's adjournment debate. Firstly, the member for Jingili raised the issue of preschool air-conditioning. I was a little disappointed, given the context in which he raised it. I respect his position, and I have always indicated that. I have acknowledged publicly that there have been problems with the design of some of the older buildings in the Northern Territory, in terms of heat problems. I felt I had made the government's position very clear. We must look at priorities and we are doing that at the present time. We are looking at primary schools, and preschools

will be assessed in that process. I have made that very clear. If a need is shown to exist in a particular case, the government will look at providing air-conditioning.

Guidelines have to be set, and that is being done at the present time. Without them, every member would be seeking air-conditioning for preschools. Many parents are still querying whether or not preschools should be air-conditioned and we need to take their concerns into account. The guidelines will be presented and money has been made available for situations where a need is fully established. I cannot say more than that. I felt that I had covered the issue fairly well before the member for Jingili spoke tonight. I respect his views and I have stated that we are moving to address the problems.

The member for Barkly spoke about the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. He said he felt that the committee's visit to Tennant Creek was a shambles. That is not correct. I believe that members of the Tennant Creek community were given the opportunity to make comment at the meeting although some confusion may have been caused by the use of the words 'public hearings'. The hearings of the select committee were intended to enable members of the public to present submissions and oral evidence. The public was invited to attend and that needs to be made clear. It was not a meeting where everyone could just rock up and make comment to the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. It is acknowledged that there were problems in relation to the announcement of the committee's arrival in Tennant Creek. I certainly do not agree, however, that all members of the committee were running up and down the main streets of Tennant Creek knocking on doors. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I did not carry out that particular activity and I know at least 2 other members of the committee who did not.

The committee wants and needs the assistance of other members of the Assembly. We are not saying that it is their duty to help, but we feel that they should be out there talking to the community about how important it is for people to have a say in terms of how they would like to see a constitution developed. It is only through the work of local members in their communities, particularly in areas where they are well known, that members of the community can be encouraged to come forward and give evidence to the select committee. This sort of involvement by local members will be a key factor in getting people to come forward and present their views. The views which the member for Barkly has expressed tonight in relation to the process of constitutional development and the way the committee is going about its work are of interest to the committee and will definitely be taken on board.

He spoke about the introduction of the statehood issue into high schools. I have no problem with that. My main concern relates to how it is to be done. Whether we like it or not, there are 2 sides to the statehood story and, unless it is presented in a fair manner, we can run into all sorts of problems. As Minister for Education, I am looking at ways of introducing the topic into the school system in such a way that it will be put forward fairly so that people can discuss it.

I might say here that, although people often say that children do not know enough about government, schoolchildren in the Northern Territory are very well-informed on the subject. I am sure every member in this Assembly would be aware that, on most sitting days, we have groups of schoolchildren in the gallery. Although I do not know how members of the opposition involve themselves with schools, I know that government members attend schools and speak to classes about various aspects of government. That is all part of the

process. I believe that, in the Northern Territory, we fare quite well in that regard and that some of the states could learn from us. Mr Speaker, if you go into the schools and talk to children, you will find that many hundreds of them have visited the Assembly. I am not saying that they all agree with the behaviour of some members in the Assembly but at least they know what it is about. I commend the staff of the Assembly for the way in which they inform the children about the procedures and operations of the Assembly.

I suggest to honourable members that there are ways in which we can promote the concept of government. Members should attend their local schools and talk to schoolchildren. Over the next few months, I will be looking further at introducing the topic of statehood into the school curriculum. It has to be handled with care and I am sure honourable members would acknowledge that. Otherwise, an unfair position could be put either for or against statehood. As Minister for Education, I will be ensuring that the issue is addressed responsibly.

Mr Speaker, I recall that the member for Stuart raised a matter in relation to various high schools in Alice Springs. I will read through the Hansard and check to see exactly what he was talking about in order to address his concerns later during the course of these sittings.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to spend a little time this evening talking about the development of the Yulara Town Advisory Board, for the benefit of the Minister for Conservation, the Minister for Health and Community Services as minister responsible for local government, and perhaps for the benefit of the Minister for Tourism as well.

Mr Dale: Local government comes under the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government.

Mr BELL: Be that as it may, my involvement with the growth process of local government at Yulara has been characterised by pleasure and pain. Like any small community, Yulara has its tensions. Because it is a small community, it is often difficult for people on different sides of the fence to keep out of each other's way. In this evening's comments on local government arrangements at Yulara, I will concentrate initially on some of the pleasant aspects before seeking some answers from the minister responsible.

The Yulara Town Advisory Board was established in May last year and it was very much a bipartisan response on the part of the government and myself. I was heartened to see the town advisory board reconstituted with some elected members. At that stage, there were serious concerns about small and large local issues. Some of these have been easily resolved, such as lighting problems on some of the walkways. Others continue to be bones of contention, particularly so are housing allocations and aspects of housing policy. However, I believed at the time that the advisory board was formed, and I still believe, that it has a contribution to make in terms of obtaining local input to resolve local difficulties.

I am a strong supporter of local government at Yulara and in other communities in my electorate. It has been very disappointing, therefore, to find that for various reasons the town advisory board seems to have been ignored by both the Northern Territory government and the Yulara Corporation. That bothers me considerably. The fact of the matter is that there have been 2 vacancies on the board. One has existed for the larger part of this year, and the minister responsible has done nothing to ensure that it was filled.

Mr Manzie: Is it a nominated position?

Mr BELL: One vacancy was a nominated position and I will come to that in a moment. The other was an elective position which, to my knowledge, has still not been filled although it became vacant in January or February this year. The Minister for Conservation is actively involved in this matter and I would appreciate him giving some consideration to it.

I understand that, on 17 May, the minister responsible for local government was informed by the board that it was prepared to accept amendments to the board's constitution. The board received an acknowledgement from the minister's office on 24 May. On 7 June, the board informed the minister of the appointment of a new secretary. On 15 June, it received advice from the minister that he had not ratified the amended constitution. On 17 June, there was an acknowledgement from the minister's office of the notice about the secretary. On 31 June, one of the nominated members of the town advisory board resigned. I understand that he is yet to be replaced. More than 6 weeks have elapsed since his resignation, a situation which bothers me considerably. Those 2 vacancies on the advisory board have not been addressed and they badly need to be addressed. The fact that that has not been done is, to my mind, a dereliction of duty.

There is another more general issue in respect of Yulara which needs to be resolved by the government. It is whether Yulara is simply a resort or whether it is a town which should be moving towards the development of municipal functions. There is no doubt in my mind that the government should be working much harder in that direction. Mr Speaker, you will recall the passage of the Yulara Town Village Management Act and the subsequent variations in policy which allowed elected members on the Yulara Town Advisory Board. I had high hopes that the newly-constituted board would be in a position to resolve some of the difficulties. I have been involved personally with my constituents at Yulara in relation to many of the issues that have been of concern to them. I like to think that I have been involved constructively although I know there are some people at Yulara who do not share that view. However, one cannot please all the people all the time, as I am sure the Minister for Conservation knows only too well.

Mr Manzie: You got some of the facts right, Neil, but you got the causes wrong.

Mr BELL: Well, I will look forward to a ministerial statement on Tuesday about the reconstitution of the town advisory board. Even better, I look forward to a response from the minister responsible for local government to the approaches being made to him in respect of a community government council being set up at Yulara. I know that there is a feeling among the longer-term residents, people who have been there for 3 to 5 years and feel they are part of the place, that a suitable local government arrangement is desirable. I look forward to a bit more action from the government in that regard. It is certainly demanded by my constituents and I hope they will get some satisfaction in the near future.

There are 2 other matters I want to mention briefly. They have already been raised in the adjournment debate by other members. The first is the comments of the Minister for Health and Community Services about the placement of the detoxification unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital. He really cannot help himself. I know that when he gets on his back foot he tends to spit and scratch a bit.

The fact is that the decision to place the detoxification unit in the staff accommodation units is not acceptable. He was misquoted or misinformed about where the place was. I know of 1 newspaper report in which he stated that the proposed location is 100 m away from the nearest dwelling unit. That is not the case; it is about 10 m away. I think that his attempts to obfuscate this matter are less than worthy of himself and the government. Further, I have received a copy of a petition which I hope the minister will table. It expresses the views of his constituents who live in the area and who are not happy about the placement of the unit. I hope that he will see his way clear to present that petition.

The final matter that I want to address was raised by the Leader of Government Business and the member for Ludmilla, who both spoke about Long Tan Day. Like them, I have been very moved by the belated recognition of the Vietnam Veterans. However, I do not want to attempt to disguise my position or my views. I was, indeed, one of the students who attended Vietnam moratoriums in the 1960s. I think it is probably worth my placing on record, as somebody who has that background, that the notion that Australian soldiers who fought in Vietnam were personally unworthy was never a view that I shared, however critical I might have been of Australia's involvement in what I saw then and still see today as essentially a civil war. The rehabilitation of those soldiers and their fallen comrades in the public mind is belated. I am very pleased to see it and I very strongly support it. I draw a distinction between people who were critics of Australia's involvement in Vietnam and those who saw fit to take a particular side. However critical I might have been of Australia's involvement, I was not inclined to do that. That is a distinction that may be lost on some people.

In conclusion, let me say this. I concur strongly with the views of the member for Ludmilla and the Leader of Government Business in their support for Long Tan Day. I hope that my comments will be regarded as adding to the belated recognition and respect which Vietnam veterans are now receiving from the people of this country.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table my warrant revoking my nomination of the member for Katherine as Deputy Chairman of Committees and nominating the member for Sadadeen, Mr Denis Collins, to act as Deputy Chairman of Committees when requested to do so by the Chairman of Committees.

TABLED PAPER  
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee  
Sixth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the sixth report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

STATEMENT  
1988 Constitutional Referenda

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, on 3 September, Australians will go the polls to vote on 4 referendum questions. The Northern Territory government has examined in great detail each of the 4 proposals and their implications for the Northern Territory. As a result of that examination, our advice to Territorians is that they should vote 'No' to each proposal. They are not in the best interests of Australia or the Northern Territory. They are a cynical attempt by the Australian Labor Party to deceive and manipulate the Australian people.

Territorians cannot afford to be taken in by the slick marketing campaign, a campaign which is designed to make the proposals sound simple and wholesome. The facts are otherwise. Behind 4 supposedly simple questions lurk 33 changes to the Constitution, changes which would add 13 pages to the present 30-page document which has served Australia well since federation, changes which would disadvantage the Northern Territory, changes which are intended to strengthen Canberra's arm. The advertising hype promotes wholesome-sounding values like fairness, freedom and democracy. It assures us that it is in our interests to let the Labor legislature protect our rights. Territorians should know better than that. These soothing platitudes come from the same government that last year was ready to dog-tag Australians by introducing the ID card. Honourable members will recall that the same argument was used in favour of the Australia Card. According to the Hawke government, that also was in our interests.

Mr Speaker, forget the advertising. The reality is that the referendum proposals, if adopted, would reduce individual rights, seriously undermine the independence of the Senate, interfere with the powers and functions of the states and discriminate against the Northern Territory. Is it any wonder that Territorians should vote 'No'? Far from giving the people of Australia fairness, freedom and democracy, the proposed changes to the Constitution endanger those rights we already enjoy. Strip away the packaging and we find the same old Labor line: less say for Australians and more control for Canberra.

Through 4-year terms, the first referendum proposal purports to offer Australians the superficially-appealing prospect of fewer parliamentary elections by enabling future federal governments to extend the life of the House of Representatives for an extra year. Given that the Territory Assembly has a 4-year term, people may ask why they should oppose such a change. We oppose it because of its real intention. It is an attempt to destroy the

essential checks and balances which are fundamental to our Australian federal system. The Hawke government says that 'a 4-year maximum term will ensure that governments can get on with the job of running the country'. The Prime Minister and the Attorney-General, Mr Bowen, have gone on record stating that 'the public will be spared the disruption caused by having too many elections'. It all sounds deceptively simple: all Australians have to do is approve 4-year terms for both the House of Representatives and the Senate. There is, of course, nothing whatsoever in the proposal to prevent a Prime Minister from calling an early election at any time he wishes. But we are not told that, nor are we told that the federal government has ignored the recommendation of its own Constitutional Commission that there should be 3-year fixed terms for the House of Representatives.

Mr Speaker, you will not find much in the advertising hype about what would happen to the Senate as a result of this proposal. A 'Yes' vote will not ensure that a government serves out its term: what it will do is reduce the term of Senators. The proposal is to cut the terms of Senators from 6 to 4 years, and to end the system whereby half the Senate rotates with each election. This means that Senate terms would be synchronised with the terms of the House of Representatives. The federal government has refused to adopt the commission's recommendation of fixed terms for the Lower House, but it is quite happy to abolish fixed terms for the Senate. Where is the logic? Why has the federal government ignored the advice of its own constitutional experts? \*What is the hidden agenda? The answer is clear: the real purpose is to strip the Senate of its powers and independence and to deprive it of its constitutional role. It will permit a Prime Minister to sack the entire Senate should it disagree with the government.

The ability of the Senate to resist the demands of government has allowed it protect the people against dangerous laws like the ID card. This integrity is now under attack. No longer would the Senate be able to act fearlessly in the public interest nor in the interests of the states and the territories. Should a Senate attitude not suit the government, then a Prime Minister need only call an election for both Houses of the parliament. All the present Prime Minister would have to do is to persuade the Governor-General to issue the writ. This proposal is designed, purely and simply, to give the federal government greater control over the Senate by allowing the ruling party in the House of Representatives to push laws through the Upper House under the threat of an early election. The Minister for Justice, Senator Tate, admitted as much when he told the parliament that the proposal for simultaneous elections, contained in the first referendum question, meant that it would be in the Senate's interest not to push to the brink too many propositions too early in the government's life.

The first referendum proposal strikes directly against the interests of the people in the smaller states. It could all but silence their legitimate voice in Canberra. At present, Victoria and New South Wales have 90 of the 148 members of the House of Representatives, giving them the muscle to dominate the other states and territories. In the Senate, each state has 12 representatives and, therefore, is afforded some protection against this dominance. Territorians know very well the dangers of being overridden by the interests of those in the more populous states. Left unprotected by our lack of Senate representation, we have fallen victim, time and again, to the dictates of the simple majority in the Lower House. By reducing the Senate to a feeble appendage of the House of Representatives, the federal government stands to gain even greater control over the states and the Northern Territory.

It is well known to honourable members that the Labor government has long been hostile to an independent Upper House. The former Attorney-General, Senator Evans, launched his anti-Senate crusade by stating that the 'way to abolish the Senate, or at least to muzzle it, is to white-ant it from within'. When the Senate safeguarded our democratic rights and acted in the interests of all Australians by blocking the ID card, Treasurer Keating described the Senate as 'the swill of Australian politics'.

This first referendum proposal is not new. The Australian people rejected this idea in referendums in 1974, 1977 and 1984. Each time, they have recognised that the attempt to introduce simultaneous elections would undermine the independence of the Senate, making it a mere rubber-stamp for the government of the day. Labor's Senator John Button confessed this in 1977, saying that the Labor Party wanted to see the proposal passed because, in his words, it 'limits the significance and influence of the Senate'. Once again, the proposal has been taken off the shelf. This time it has been dusted off and dressed up in the guise of fewer elections. Despite Labor's \$3m sales pitch, the goods remain the same.

With regard to fair and democratic elections, the federal Labor government wants Australians to believe that the second referendum proposal is to provide for fair elections in Commonwealth, state and territory elections and that this is what a 'Yes' vote would achieve. That is not the purpose of this proposal at all. Put simply, the second question is designed to take away from the people of the states the right to determine the laws governing their own state elections through their own state parliaments. It means, in effect, that the people living in Sydney and Melbourne would decide how Territorians, Tasmanians or Western Australians elected their own local member of their own state or territory parliaments. It seeks to establish a pre-eminent role for Canberra over the states and the states' constitutions. As a political observer, Malcolm Mackerras, noted in a recent letter to *The Australian*: 'The second proposal, fair elections ... represents the ultimate in centralism'.

This proposal would not guarantee fair elections. Already some states have the so-called 'one vote, one value' in their electoral systems. Despite this, the Labor governments in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia would stay in power with 48.7% of the vote, 47.8% of the vote and 46.5% of the vote respectively. At the federal level, the Hawke government could win the next House of Representatives election with only 47% of the vote. The referendum question will not change this situation. All Australians need to be aware that this referendum proposal would give the High Court unprecedented new powers to intervene directly in state polls. This would strike directly at the principles and practices of federalism. Our Constitution defines the powers and functions that states referred to the Commonwealth on federation. It does not confer on the Commonwealth the power to impose on the sovereignty of the states.

Concealed in the second referendum question are a number of highly-technical and complex changes to the Constitution which extend to 13 new clauses. The advertising hype certainly does not make that clear. For example, under the proposed new section 124C, a redistribution on the new 10% rule must take place before a general election can take place, unless the election is held within 1 year of the commencement of the amendment. In the case of the Northern Territory, this would probably compel a redistribution for the next Legislative Assembly general election. Canberra would be telling us how to manage our own affairs. Mr Speaker, we have had more than enough of that and we do not want any more!



Already major flaws have been discovered in the fair elections bill. As these constitutional proposals were pushed through parliament, an embarrassed government had to admit that, if passed, the bill as it stood would have outlawed the government's own planned system of self-government for the ACT. It would also appear that the bill would have invalidated the electoral system used in Tasmania over a very long time. Other mistakes have since been uncovered forcing the federal government to patch up the bill. Labor is quite prepared to legislate in haste, and I have no doubt that lawyers will be able to litigate at leisure if we follow this course.

The third referendum question proposes that the Australian Constitution requires the recognition of local government by the states. Local government has been regarded, historically and constitutionally, as a matter for the states. Already, most states have given recognition to local government in their constitutions. This is the case in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia and soon will be in Tasmania and Queensland. In the Northern Territory, the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, in its 'Discussion Paper on a Proposed New State Constitution for the Northern Territory' has recommended that a constitution provide for some recognition of local government. The key question, therefore, is whether it is appropriate for local government to be acknowledged in the Commonwealth Constitution or whether this should remain a matter for the states and the Northern Territory.

A further 2 questions spring immediately to mind. What did the Constitutional Committee recommend, and what lies behind the proposal? Once again, the federal Labor government has ignored the considered views of its own appointed experts. The Distribution of Powers Advisory Committee, which advises the Constitutional Commission, was strongly opposed to the idea of Commonwealth constitutional recognition for local government. This committee was of the view that it was undesirable to entrench in the Constitution another level of government which would be in competition with the states.

The Hawke government's insistence on pushing ahead with this third referendum question is a devious and back-door way of furthering Labor's long-held desire to circumvent the powers of the states and to introduce a system of regional government responsible directly to Canberra, not to the states. The third question may well be the first important step to reviving Whitlam's scheme for regionalised local government. Mr Hawke, in one of his Boyer lectures, said that we must have a federal government with unquestioned powers, and went on to argue that this meant eliminating the states and dealing directly with what he described as 'relevantly demarked geographical areas'.

What Labor seeks from this question is powers over local government comparable with those presently held by state governments. A 'Yes' answer would clear the way for the federal government in Canberra to interfere directly in local government matters. I do not believe that we would want a bar of that in the Northern Territory, nor would local government gain from a 'Yes' vote. The proposal guarantees local government absolutely nothing: it will not protect councils from forced amalgamation; it will not prevent the arbitrary and unfair dismissal of councils; it will not require a state to maintain local government in all parts of the state; and it will not guarantee satisfactory funding for local councils. I can also make the observation, from the Northern Territory's point of view, that the proposal will not extend recognition to local government in the Territory. The reasons for this are no doubt best known to the federal government. They have certainly not been communicated to us.

No constitution can be based on uncertainty and vagueness. This proposal, by virtue of its uncertainty and vagueness, will be open to countless interpretations and will have to be tested in the High Court at the expense of taxpayers and ratepayers. Local councils have already paid dearly for this referendum, including a cut in road funds announced in the May economic statement. We all deserve better than that.

The fourth question, relating to religion, jury and property, is a cynical attempt by Labor to implement a mini bill of rights through the back door. Having failed to persuade us to swallow this once before, the Hawke government has simply changed the description on the menu hoping to dish it up under another name. Here 3 questions of immense importance to all Australians have been put together in a take-it-or-leave-it package. I shall examine them one by one.

The first issue is the right to trial by jury. The trial-by-jury proposal is flawed and dangerous. The principle of trial by jury, which dates back to the Magna Carta, already rests in the Australian Constitution. Any person charged with any serious offence under Commonwealth law has a right to a jury trial. By tampering with the wording of the Constitution, the government is only meddling with this existing right. The creating of an arbitrary cut-off point, such as that proposed, will give rise to anomalies, and there will be a loss of flexibility in determining the fairest way to conduct complex cases involving expert evidence.

I do not accept that the Constitution should fetter or restrict legitimate options for state or territory governments as to the use of jury trials. There are a number of good and proper reasons why jury trials may not be appropriate. These include circumstances where the lives of jury members may be put at risk or where major fraud and white-collar conspiracy trials present problems at jury-trial level. The majority of criminal trials are governed by state and territory laws and those laws should govern jury trials. I will leave it to the Attorney-General to discuss this issue in more detail and to deal with the ramifications for the Northern Territory criminal justice system.

The second issue is the freedom of religion. That we have freedom of religion is unquestioned in Australia today. To suggest that this is under any great threat would be absurd. If there is any threat to freedom of religion, it is contained in this referendum proposal. There is a very real concern that, if this proposal becomes law, the opponents of funding for church schools will be provided with a powerful weapon to reopen the High Court challenge to state aid. They will be able to do this because the proposal omits the very words from the Constitution which last time stopped their challenge. In the DOGS Case, in 1981, the High Court relied on those words to deny an injunction which sought to prevent government financial assistance to church and independent schools. In this bicentennial year, the federal government is moving to revive the divisive bitterness of the past and to jeopardise education funding for 750 000 Australian schoolchildren. The Catholic bishops of Australia have advocated a 'No' vote to this question. That surely speaks for itself.

I turn finally to the question of acquisition of property on just terms, a matter that has dire consequences for the Northern Territory. At present, the Commonwealth cannot pass a law to acquire property other than on just terms, with 1 exception: it does not have to provide just terms when acquiring property from a territory. The proposal now before all Australians seeks to extend this discrimination against the Northern Territory. What it will do is

allow the federal government to confiscate the property of the Territory government without the need to provide any compensation. This, Mr Speaker, is indefensible and unacceptable.

It would appear that this denial of just terms, in large measure, is directed to enabling the Commonwealth to continue to expropriate the Crown lands of the Northern Territory and many of its pastoral leases for Aboriginal and other purposes without compensation. As every honourable member is well aware, virtually all Territory Crown land, including its parks, reserves, water control and supply districts, the stock reserves essential for the control of stock diseases, other public purpose lands and many of its pastoral leases, are subject to claim or have been granted to Aboriginal land trusts. The Constitutional Commission itself concluded that the Commonwealth ought to pay just terms for land acquired for Aboriginals even when acquiring Aboriginal reserves. The commission says it would be 'wrong in principle' not to pay compensation. It is wrong not to pay compensation whether the property is being acquired from the Territory or a state.

Once again, the federal Labor government has ignored the advice of its own commission. It cannot be correct in principle to constitutionally entrench in a permanent way a particular fundamental human right of great importance such as the guarantee of just terms on any acquisition of property applicable across the whole community, and then to provide one exception with permanent effect applicable to one particular type of legal entity, just to suit some convenient transitory political purpose. Again, I have no doubt that the Attorney-General and Minister for Lands and Housing will wish to elaborate on this issue. It is unthinkable that the Australian Constitution should entrench discrimination and permit the treatment of the Northern Territory as a second-class entity. All 3 constitutional proposals contained in the fourth referendum question imply a strengthening of our rights. The reality is quite the opposite: they are a threat to rights that we currently enjoy.

In conclusion, I believe that Australians have every right to be concerned about threats to the rights, freedoms and protections that we enjoy under the Australian Constitution. These referendum proposals are a continuation of the assault which we have seen waged very clearly over the years through the abuse of the Commonwealth's external affairs power. It is time to call a halt. Australians are being asked to vote on 4 referendum questions which have been designed to conceal their real intention and which are being marketed deceitfully and with a cynical political motive. Open and honourable debate would have produced an overwhelming 'No' vote, and that is just what these questions deserve.

The federal Labor government has spent \$40m of taxpayers' money to bring forward these issues for referendum. The Constitutional Commission comprised 5 eminent Australians and was assisted by a further 37 experts who were members of the advisory committees. The commission met formally on 29 occasions and sat for a total of 70 days. Over a 2-year period, it sought the views of Australians. It made more than 100 recommendations for constitutional changes. Its recommendations are not reflected in the 4 referendum proposals. Why not? Why has there not been open and honest debate? Just what is the charade which is being perpetrated on Australians? Serious questions deserve serious answers. The Hawke government is proceeding, in its now familiar stealthy fashion, with its socialist and centralist agenda. Having lost out over the ID Card, it has staked a considerable amount of taxpayers' money on selling us this constitutional package, but this too is unacceptable. Territorians must be on their guard. We have already lost too much under Labor. A 'Yes' vote will give Canberra

more control, at our cost. I am confident that Territorians will have the good sense to vote 'No', 'No', 'No', 'No'.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by deleting all words after 'that' and inserting in their stead:

this Assembly recommends to the electors of the Northern Territory that, on 3 September 1988, they vote to allow the federal Constitution to be altered so as to:

1. allow maximum terms of 4 years for members of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament;
2. (a) provide fair elections for the House of Representatives, the state parliaments and legislatures of the mainland territories, based on the principle of 'one vote, one value' but subject to permissible limited variations in the numbers of electors in each electorate in each state or territory;
- (b) confer the right to vote in Commonwealth, state and mainland territory elections on all Australian citizens over the age of 18, subject to certain qualifications;
- (c) provide for the fair determination of electoral divisions for elections for the House of Representatives, state parliaments and legislatures of the mainland territories;
- (d) prohibit multiple voting; and
- (e) guarantee to Australian citizens over the age of 18 the right to vote in elections subject to certain qualifications;
3. provide for the establishment and continuance of a system of local government, with local government bodies elected in accordance with the laws of the state and empowered to administer and to make by-laws for their respective areas in accordance with the laws of the state;
4. (a) extend the right given by section 80 of the Constitution to trial by jury for offences against laws of the Commonwealth, and to confer a like right to trial by jury for serious offences against the laws of the states and territories;
- (b) ensure that acquisition of property under state and territory laws, and acquisitions under Commonwealth law from persons in the territories, must be on just terms; and
- (c) extend to the states and territories the existing prohibition on Commonwealth interference with religious freedom.

Mr Speaker, this government's opposition to these amendments to the Constitution is no more than a deception. It is a cheap political trick. It is cheap political grandstanding to curry favour with the government's allies in Canberra. They are not even supported by people like the Queensland Liberal Party which has suffered for years under rigged boundaries in that state - the so-called 'Joh-mander'. They are not supported by the ex-Premier of Victoria, another Liberal, Mr Hamer. They were not even supported earlier by the Liberal Party in Canberra which previously signified its support for the majority of the items here. It signified its support for the 4-year term and it signified its support for 'one vote, one value'. What happened? When they perceived that there might be some cheap political mileage to be made through appealing to people's fear of change and that perhaps they would be able to cloud the waters and confuse the Australian people, they decided they would oppose it. This government has joined them and will forever pay the price for that because the people of the Northern Territory want democracy. They want it here in the Territory, and they want to see it around Australia.

This government will allow reasoned and rational changes to the Constitution to be opposed by itself and its allies for the sake of cheap political grandstanding. It is simply trying to divert people's attention from the terrible mess that it has got the Territory into and its own refusal to institute the electoral reforms that we have been proposing for the Territory. It is attempting now to bolster its chances by confusing the people of the Territory.

Let us have a rational look at the Constitution. The Australian Constitution was developed at a series of national constitutional assemblies held during the 1880s and 1890s in the lead up to federation.

Mr Coulter: We do not even have the Constitution.

Mr EDE: You do not have a copy of it?

Mr Coulter: I have a copy, but we do not have the Constitution.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, copies are easily obtainable.

Mr Coulter: How do you know? Have you seen the original?

Mr EDE: I can give the minister a telephone number which he can ring to obtain a copy quite simply.

Mr Coulter: Have you seen the original?

Mr EDE: Let us have a look at the time when the Constitution was originally drafted.

Mr Coulter: It's in London.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Chief Minister was heard in silence. I would ask the Chair to protect the Deputy Leader of the Opposition so that he is given the same chance to deliver his reply.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The Chief Minister was heard in silence during his speech. I think it is fair and reasonable that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition be heard by the House in the same manner.

Mr EDE: Let us have a look at the situation in the 1880s and the 1890s when these gentlemen were meeting to frame our Constitution. It was a time before there were any planes or automobiles in Australia. It was a time before women had won the vote. It was a time before all the social security programs that were the hallmark of the early years of Labor government ...

A member: They were great years.

Mr EDE: I am ashamed that honourable members can say in this House that they were great years before we had child endowment, before we had old age pensions and before we had programs in place to assist such people in our society. Mr Deputy Speaker, if that is where members opposite are at, they will have to wear the consequences.

It was a time when the states of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria had their own navies patrolling the Murray River to ensure that their claims for sovereignty were protected. It was a time when troops had just returned from the Maori wars and the wars in the Sudan. That is the background. That is what history tells us of the period when people met to frame our Constitution. The big issues of the day were the promotion of White Australia and the removal of Asiatics and South Sea Islanders from Australia to be sent back to their own countries.

Another major part of the social background which impacted on those who met to frame this Constitution was, of course, the shearers' strike. That strike led inexorably to the rise of the labour movement and our own party, now almost 100 years old. At that stage, it was galvanising its forces to move from being an industrial to a political force. The rise of labour as a political organisation was in advance of the rest of the world. It had an impact on the people who met in the various constitutional conventions.

Who were the members of the constitutional conventions, Mr Deputy Speaker? We should have a look at them. The vast majority were representatives from the legal industry, the pastoral industry and big business. Not 1 woman was a delegate to any of the constitutional conventions. There were no representatives from any of the industrial organisations or the labour movement. The conventions were very much meetings of the people who then comprised the ruling classes of this country. They met in an atmosphere of some trepidation because of the rising power of the trade union movement and its movement into the political arena with the formation of the Australian Labor Party. Although I personally condemn it now, it was probably natural for the people who met as delegates at the constitutional conventions to see their task largely in terms of protecting what they saw as their legitimate interests.

One proposal raised at the conventions related to what the newspapers of the time referred to as the 'Senate lag'. Senators were to be elected for a term of 6 years, twice the length of a term in the House of Representatives. This was simply to attempt to curb the power of the House of Representatives in case the will of the people, as reflected by that House, ran counter to the interests of the previous government.

Mr Coulter: This is a great history of the Constitution, but what is your point?

Mr EDE: The previous government was able to maintain its power to thwart legislation and to inhibit change. That was the point. That was why Senators had longer terms than members of the Lower House, the House which reflects the

total will of the Australian people as expressed at the time of an election. That is why, ever since, conservative forces have endeavoured to maintain that situation. With the possible exception of the first 5 years after federation, the Senate never acted as a states House. As soon as groups such as free-traders and protectionists emerged, and with the rise of the Labor Party, the function of the Senate as a states House was quickly thrown out the door. The conservatives' argument that we have to protect the special powers of the Senate because it is a states House are in conflict with reality.

The Australian Constitution reflects a reality which may have existed in the 1880s and 1890s; it does not reflect the situation which exists 100 years later. It contains no reference to the Prime Minister, to Cabinet or to political parties. The Constitution was an amalgamation of the principles of the Westminster system with some modifications from the United States. It was felt that the Australian Constitution would represent a balance between those 2 systems. It contained a mechanism which would allow it to develop and change as the people and the body politic developed and changed. The fact of the matter is that constitutional change has not kept pace with changes in Australian society. It is for that very reason that people on both sides of the federal parliament have acknowledged the need for constitutional amendment and created the Constitutional Commission. That commission has canvassed the issues and agreed on the majority of the proposals contained in the referenda.

I would like briefly to run through the 4 referendum questions. Other members on this side of the House will do so in more detail after me. First, I will discuss the proposal for 4-year terms for the House of Representatives. The proposal of the Constitutional Commission was for a minimum 3-year term with a maximum of 4 years for the House of Representatives, with the Senate term being twice that length. The commission's original proposal also recommended the removal of the Senate's power to block supply during the 3 years following an election. That would guarantee terms of at least 3 years. During the fourth year, the Senate could block supply and the government could call an early election at any time. The Senate term would have been twice that of the Lower House, although not fixed. The commission released its proposal last October, at which time the federal opposition loudly condemned the suggestion of restricting the Senate's power to block supply.

In view of the opposition's position, the federal government decided not to proceed with the commission's recommendation in relation to the Senate's power to block supply and simply proposed a 4-year maximum term for both Houses of Parliament, with elections for both Houses to be held concurrently. The provision achieves the commission's principal objective of longer terms and more stable government without affecting the powers of the Senate.

Australians pay a heavy price for having too many elections. In simple expenditure terms, each election costs around \$50m. In the 42 years since the end of World War II, Australia has had 22 federal elections. Of these, 8 were combined House of Representatives and half-Senate elections, 5 were elections for the House of Representatives only, 4 were separate half-Senate elections and 5 followed double dissolutions.

Since 1949, there have been 21 federal elections. That exceeds the number of elections over that period that were held in the United States which has fixed biennial elections. Even though we have unfixed 3-year terms and 6 years for the Senate, we have had more elections than the Americans over the same period.

The Business Council of Australia has campaigned in favour of a 4-year term. In its view, the frequency of elections has an adverse effect on government economic decision-making which, in turn, has an adverse effect on private-sector planning and business confidence. A majority of democratic countries have a 4- or 5-year term. Of the 143 parliaments listed with the Interparliamentary Union in Geneva, as at 30 June 1985, only 3 had terms shorter than 3 years, 12 have 4-year terms and 128 have terms of 4 years or more. Australia has been lagging behind in the general move throughout the world to introduce a system of elections based on about a 4-year period.

Mr Hatton: It is the minimum term. Why did it take that out?

Mr EDE: It took out the minimum term because, to put in the minimum term, it would have had to have taken the other part of the commission's recommendation which was the removal of the power to block supply from the Senate, and it was your colleagues in Canberra who maintained that that was not on.

The bill introduced to amend the Constitution writes 2 new principles relating to fair election recommendations by the commission: first, in a democracy, all elections should be conducted on the basis of 'one vote, one value'; and, secondly, that citizens of a democracy should have an enforceable, inalienable and constitutional right to vote at elections. The commission believed that 'one vote, one value' was an essential principle of democracy, fundamental to the sense of many who participate in Australia's democratic polity. Dealing with the argument against 'one vote, one value', the commission stated that any attempt, however well-intentioned, to weight the votes in 1 electoral division against those in another for reasons of economic or geographical interest, contradicts the idea of democracy.

The commission selected a value of plus or minus 10% tolerance and that was based on the commission's regard for what it figured to be fair distribution. Plus or minus 10% tolerance, it said, already applies in elections for members of the House of Representatives and is established in the majority of the states for state electoral divisions. Looking at current electoral laws, the Commonwealth in 1984, New South Wales and Victoria in 1982, and the South Australian parliaments all passed legislation to require electoral divisions to attain approximately the same number of electors, plus or minus 10%. Tasmania's House of Assembly electorates follow the federal boundaries. Here in the Northern Territory we have legislated to comply to a 20% tolerance, and I was very interested to hear what the Chief Minister said in opposition to the amendment. At page 7 of his paper, he stated that, unless the Territory's election is held within 1 year from the commencement of the amendment, the Northern Territory will probably be compelled to have a redistribution for the next Legislative Assembly general election.

The point of the matter is that already we have 2 seats in the Northern Territory which are outside even the 20% tolerance. Those seats are Braitling, which at 2202 is below 20%, and Palmerston, the seat of the Minister for Mines and Energy which is above the 20% tolerance. We have other seats which are below the 10% tolerance like Arafura, Braitling obviously, Fannie Bay, Flynn, Karama, Leanyer, Ludmilla and, in fact, my own seat of Stuart. They are all outside the 10% tolerance but 2 of them are within the 20% tolerance. We need to have a review of the boundaries anyway, and there will be no practical problems in ensuring that, when that review is completed, we comply with the amendment after it has been passed.



As I said before, the gerrymander in Queensland, which divides the states up into zones for the purposes of determining the numbers per electorate, has been opposed, not only by the Labor Party but also the Liberal Party in Queensland. In fact, it is mounting its own campaign, its 'Yes' vote, for that particular item because the Liberal Party knows that, in Queensland, a government can achieve power with only 37% of the total Queensland vote. That is what is required to achieve government in Queensland. When the Chief Minister speaks about 47% and 48% of the vote being sufficient to gain government in some states, he is not taking any account of the wishes of the vast majority of Queenslanders to have change in Queensland. The majority of Queenslanders want that change, but the system is such that, if 37% of them do not want that change, it cannot be achieved under the current system. They are appealing to the people of Australia to help them to get that change, to give them fair and democratic elections.

It does not affect Queensland alone. In Western Australia, the Labor government has tried valiantly to overcome the gerrymander in the Upper House. There are still problems in that Upper House with the numbers of people in some of the areas. For example, Mainlands had 22 374 voters in November 1987, and Murray had 9002. Looking at the breakup in Western Australia between metropolitan and country enrolments, for the Legislative Assembly, it is 1.88:1 and in the Legislative Council 2.77:1. The Legislative Council in Western Australia has that problem of a rural gerrymander and the government there has been trying to do something about that but has been unable to eliminate it because it is unable to gain control of the Upper House. This is why those states are appealing to the people of Australia to assist them to overcome those problems and have fair and democratic elections. Honourable members may be interested to note that, in New Zealand, for example, the variation is in fact plus or minus 5% of the enrolment.

In the few minutes left to me, I would like to run briefly over the other 2 points: first, the constitutional amendment for local government. The point is that there are 833 state local government bodies which comprise some 8434 elected members. They employ some 9% of the civilian public-sector work force. They account for approximately 5.3% of all public-sector outlay and 4% of total taxation revenue. The proposal is to give proper recognition to the third level of public administration in Australia.

While there were local government bodies in existence well before federation, the functions which they undertake have expanded considerably since federation and now include a wide range of areas: social services, recreational and sporting facilities, town planning, arts and the environment. This would not give local government bodies enhanced powers to impose taxation.

Mr Coulter: It does.

Mr EDE: It will not provide that. The power, the tax base, rates etc of local governments will still be under the control of state and territory statutes.

Local government is a tier of government which has a very direct impact on people's lives. It provides an opportunity for participation in the political process by thousands of ordinary Australians. A point that should be noted is that support for this constitutional amendment has come from the Australian Council of Local Government Associations and the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors. Our own people in local government in the Northern Territory have made their feelings quite clear in relation to this issue. They want

recognition and they believe it is their due. On this side of the House, we support that and I challenge honourable members opposite to justify their opposition to this proposal.

The federal government has accepted the recommendation of the Constitutional Commission that proposed laws should be confined to the states. The Chief Minister told us that the Constitutional Commission's recommendations have not been followed. That is rubbish, Mr Speaker, in relation to this issue. The proposal may not be appropriate in respect of places like Christmas Island, Norfolk Island and some of the remote areas in the Northern Territory. That is why the Northern Territory was excluded. It is a territory. When it becomes a state, it will be included automatically. Again and again, we have heard honourable members opposite arguing that this is one of the reasons why we should be pushing rapidly towards statehood. Obviously, when we achieve statehood, we will have the same powers and responsibilities as other states in terms of the recognition of local government.

The proposal is not intended to prevent state governments from dismissing local government councils for incompetence or malpractice. It is expected, however, that the states will need to make provision for the election of new councils within a reasonable time after any such dismissal in order to comply with the constitutional guarantee of local government. Ministers opposite repeatedly ask members of the opposition why we do not wholeheartedly support its community government legislation. One of the problems is that it makes no provision ...

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable member from completing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the community government legislation contains no provision requiring the Northern Territory government, if it suspends or sacks a council, to ensure that an election for that council is held within a reasonable period. This government's community government legislation allows the government to appoint somebody to administer a council jurisdiction for an indefinite period. That is the track record of members opposite and, therefore, they can hardly complain about the proposal not applying to the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory government has had a period of grace since self-government in which to see the error of its ways and to straighten out omissions in the Community Government Act such as the one I have outlined. It ought to recognise the need for a full system of local government which guarantees a return to elected government within a specified time of an administrator being appointed. Hopefully, the situation will be rectified before we achieve statehood. If it is not, the Northern Territory will be contravening the Constitution as it will be after the referendum.

Indeed, members opposite may be opposing this proposal because they have no feeling for the substance of the issue or the support that is needed for local government, the third tier of government. They are constantly denigrating and knocking it and will not legislate to give it the basic safeguards that it requires. No wonder they are attempting to influence people to stop this constitutional amendment being passed! It will show them up for what they are. It will show up the inconsistency in their own argument

and show how they have persistently refused to amend their own legislation in respect of local government.

The further proposal relates to trial by jury. The commission summarised the reasons for its recommendations as follows:

Section 80 of the Constitution should be altered to guarantee trial by jury for serious offences against laws of the Commonwealth, states and territories. The section should be altered to ameliorate problems which may arise with respect to the venue for trial. The legislatures of the Commonwealth, states and territories should have express power to make laws with respect to waiver of trial by jury, the size and composition of juries and majority verdicts. A guarantee of trial by jury would both entrench a fundamental right and be in the interests of justice in the community. It should be extended to the states and territories. Trial by jury for serious offences is a fundamental right and one of the cornerstones of democratic societies.

Section 80 of the Constitution was intended, according to the Constitutional Commission, to be a necessary safeguard of individual liberty. However, through an unfortunate choice of language, this intention was defeated and the current section is no more than a mere procedural provision. Currently, section 80 guarantees trial by jury only where the trial is on indictment for an offence against Commonwealth law. The vast majority of serious criminal offences are not covered by that provision. That is because the provision does not relate to state and territory offences and because parliament is free to decide whether a particular offence, no matter how serious, should be tried on indictment or by some other form of trial - for example, summarily. This amendment will ensure that, in respect of any offence for which the penalty is over 2 years imprisonment, whether it is a Commonwealth law, a territory law or a state law, with a few very minor exclusions, there will be trial by a jury.

Let us turn to the point about the acquisition of property over which the Chief Minister attempted to muddy the waters. Section 51(31) of the Constitution currently provides that the Commonwealth parliament 'may make laws for the acquisition of property on just terms from any state or person for any purpose in respect of which the parliament has power to make laws'. One important effect of section 51(31) is that, where property is acquired by the Commonwealth from a state or person, it must provide just terms. The aim of this new provision is to ensure that states and territories also be required to provide for the acquisition of property on just terms. That is the intention.

There is currently no constitutional requirement on the state parliaments or territory legislatures to provide for just terms in relation to acquisition of property. The High Court has said that the states may acquire property on any terms which they may choose to provide for by statute even though the terms are unjust. That is a statement of the High Court in respect of the interpretation of the current provision in the Constitution which members opposite are trying to maintain.

A recent example where it was alleged that a state failed to provide adequate compensation was in the Coal Acquisition Act of 1981.

Mr McCarthy: That was the NSW Labor government.

Mr EDE: That is exactly right.

The act provided that government may make arrangements for the determination of the cases, if any, in which compensation was to be paid and the determination of the amount and the method of payment for any such compensation. It went on to provide that the compensation was not payable as a result of any acquisition of property under the act except in accordance with those arrangements.

It is quite simple, under the current provisions, for the Commonwealth to avoid its constitutional obligations for payment on just terms by arranging for a state or a territory to acquire property on terms that are other than just and then, if necessary by using money granted to the state or territory by the Commonwealth, the state or territory, having acquired the land, could use it for the purpose which the Commonwealth wished to foster, including the transfer of the land to the Commonwealth. The current provisions are absolutely full of holes.

Mr Collins: What a con that would be.

Mr EDE: That is right. It would be an absolute con if they were to do it. It is quite possible under the current laws and that is what we are attempting to get around.

Members opposite argue that this does not include the Territory. What it would prevent is the Territory acquiring land on other than just terms. It does not require that any territory has to be paid just terms, and that is part and parcel of territory status. That is one of the reasons why people on both sides of this House are talking about moving towards statehood. It was stated that we are somehow a second-class entity. That is true. We are a territory, and a territory has second-class status. One of the reasons for moving to statehood is to attempt to change that.

Honourable members opposite have the gall to say that, because the Territory government misses out, they will oppose the ability of ordinary citizens of the Northern Territory and throughout Australia to be able to receive just and fair compensation for property acquired from them. What a dog in the manger trick! What a dog in the manger act to turn around and say that, simply because we have territory status, which is second class, and because they acknowledge all the rorts that can be perpetrated in respect of lack of compensation for land acquisition, they have decided not to provide that safeguard for average Territorians and for people throughout the rest of Australia. It is patently ridiculous.

Let us talk a little about religious freedom. Currently, section 116 prohibits 4 distinct aspects of involvement by the Commonwealth government in religious affairs. It precludes any Commonwealth law from establishing any religion, imposing religious observance or prohibiting the free exercise of any religion and it also forbids any religious test as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth. To date, the High Court has taken a narrow view on the range of laws which attract the non-establishment guarantee in section 116. I refer here to the DOGS case which has been raised by members opposite - the Defence of Government Schools. In that case, the prohibition on establishing any religion was given a narrow interpretation. In that case, the High Court held that the provision of financial assistance for private religious schools was not in breach of section 116. This provision will not affect that interpretation. By removing the word 'for' from the current section 116, an executive action - for example, financial

assistance which aids a private religious school - would not be in breach of the proposed constitutional guarantee. No doubt, honourable members will have seen the debate on television about this. The federal Attorney-General has made the point very clearly. The issue is one of education and not one of religion.

It is quite obvious that members opposite are trying to compound the difficulties that people are having in coming to grips with that concept, rather than doing their duty of explaining to people exactly what it means. The government has lawyers and officers in its own departments who are able to give clear interpretations of what it means. But it is unable to take a stand on what is good for the country; it is taking a stand on what is good for its short-term political purpose. Instead of saying that this is what it means and telling Territorians exactly what it means and that they need have absolutely no fears on that score, the government refuses to do that. It has taken the short-term, political road and decided that that is the way it will regard this referendum issue.

In this case, I am not only disappointed but also slightly surprised. I would have thought that honourable members opposite would have at least backed a couple of the referendum items, the ones that their federal counterparts have backed in the past. I did not think that they would slavishly follow their federal counterparts in the National and the Liberal Parties. They could have recognised the issues involved. For example, free and fair elections: how could anyone oppose that? And how can this government, after having amended its own legislation to provide for 4-year terms with no minimum period in the Northern Territory, turn around and tell the people of the Northern Territory to vote against that proposition at a federal level? It is outrageous and despicable.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 7

Mr Collins

Mr Bell

Mr Coulter

Mr Ede

Mr Dale

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Finch

Mr Leo

Mr Firmin

Mr Smith

Mr Harris

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Hatton

Mr Tuxworth

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Vale

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Provision of Health Care for Aboriginal Citizens  
by the NT Government

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning the following matter: the failure of the Northern Territory government to adequately provide for the health of its Aboriginal citizens.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil Bell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, at the outset of this public importance debate, let me assure you, Sir, and government members that this is not an abstract debate for me or for many of my colleagues, particularly the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura. This is a highly personal debate. I have witnessed too much pain in too many Aboriginal communities.

Without referring to any names that would now give offence to people, because some of the people I shall speak of have died, let me talk about the 22-year-old man who was the apple of his father's eye, a wonderful footballer, a brilliant guitarist and an initiated man who died of what was later referred to, and nobody really understood the reference, as a viral infection of the heart on Christmas Eve, 8 or 9 years ago. That was a tragedy for that family. I personally believe that, regardless of race, colour or creed, for a parent to be predeceased by a son or a daughter must be one of life's great pains. If that was not enough, 5 months later an eldest daughter, who had been one of the most intelligent kids that I had ever come across in the classroom, died of a chest infection that undoubtedly was contributed to by the difficult life situation in which traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people find themselves in 1988. I would talk further about a young man who is now lying in a coma in a nursing home in central Australia who was in one of the first classes of Aboriginal kids I ever taught. He was a bright, alive, intelligent, able young man - a sportsman, musician and a person dearly loved by his people. Another human tragedy.

I could go on like this for the time allotted to me in this debate, Mr Speaker. However, I will not. I think I have given enough details to convince the members of this Assembly that this particular matter of public importance that I have raised today is something of great personal importance to me as it is to all the communities and all the families whom I represent.

I believe that, in 2 respects to which I will be referring in my contribution to this debate, the government has failed consummately. Specifically, I believe this outrageous policy of mainstreaming, of treating all Territorians the same, is at the root of the difficulties that the government has in policy terms. It is at the root of the government's failure in this regard and is the first issue I wish to discuss. The second issue I will be addressing at some length is the question of Aboriginal health workers and the government's dealings in that regard.

In policy terms, mainstreaming is a disaster. It is absolutely meaningless for this government to treat Aboriginal communities as though they were part of the broader Australian community in policy terms. Nowhere is that clearer than in the context of health policy. The member for Arnhem will address that issue and will highlight the grim statistics. He will discuss the tragedy of malnutrition and the broader public health issues involved in providing adequate essential services.

Let me say at the outset that the philosophy of mainstreaming is at the root of the difficulties which the government has experienced with health policy. Time and time again, we hear the minister referring to specific issues that are taken up by the media. We have had the examples of TB problems in the Katherine region and meningococcal meningitis in central Australia. This government - and the media has a crucial role in public debate in this regard - has to come to terms with the fact that, whether one looks at social, political, economic or cultural criteria, Aboriginal communities and people who are suffering from these difficulties are not part of the mainstream population. For thousands of years, they have been leading a life that is fundamentally different from that of other Territorians and from that of other Australians.

The recent outbreak of TB in the Roper River region highlights the lack of concern that this government has for the health care of Aboriginal people in the Territory. TB is a symptom of the real problems. TB is a disease of the 1950s and one which has been virtually eliminated in white communities. 20% to 30% of the population are carriers. In Aboriginal communities, the incidence is higher. TB outbreaks are associated with poor living conditions such as overcrowding and inadequate supplies of water and with sewerage problems. Deeply involved with that is the fact that most of these communities are recently sedentary. The pattern of movement of Aboriginal people, whether on Aboriginal land or on pastoral leases or in fringe camps, reflects many of those traditional imperatives that this government, because of its policy of mainstreaming, fails to understand. Many Aboriginal communities are characterised by an under-supply of housing, poorly maintained water systems, blocked sewerage and roads in a state of disrepair.

One of the potential solutions or, if not a solution, at least one of the indicators of the right direction has been the outstation movement. This is a potential source for the resolution of many of these health problems. We all know the intransigent attitude that this government has adopted towards outstations. Basically, it does not think that they should exist. Those outstations deserve special attention on their own. I will therefore concern myself today with the range of Aboriginal communities, be they remote or be they urban communities. In the northern part of Australia, communities in the electorates of the members for Arafura, Arnhem and Nhulunbuy all exhibit the symptoms of a gradual decline in funding levels that this government has administered over a period of years. The consequence is that too many people are living in too few houses. There are leaking water mains and clogged toilets, and factors such as these all add up to a recipe for disaster.

In the south, in my electorate and in the electorate of the member for Stuart, there are communities where houses have been built but water has not been connected. Mr Speaker, that is not acceptable. On countless occasions, the member for Stuart has referred to the deleterious impact of the failure of this government to provide adequate water supplies. TB is just one of a number of diseases people living in appalling conditions can be subject to - appalling third-world conditions that are a blight on this nation and a blight on this Territory.

Of great concern in the Northern Territory is a significant incidence of eye and ear disease. Trachoma is endemic in Aboriginal communities and, if left untreated, can and does result in blindness. It is a known fact that, with an improvement in living conditions, the incidence of trachoma is reduced. The extent of hearing impairment is extremely concerning, particularly in view of the high incidence of infants under the age of 12 months who have ruptured eardrums which, if they become infected, can destroy the middle ear and cause severe hearing loss.

The social and emotional trauma of such illness, and its technical name is otitis media, cannot be underestimated, nor can the severe educational and employment disadvantages that result from such deafness be ignored. Recent research by the Menzies School of Health Research indicates a potential link between chlamydia and ear disease. Given that a link has been established between chlamydia and trachoma and that we know improved living conditions reduce the incidence of trachoma, a logical conclusion would appear to be that an attempt should be made to improve conditions in Aboriginal communities which would reduce both eye and ear disease problems.

Let me turn to the value of Aboriginal health workers. I note with some interest that there was an announcement on the news this morning that there was to be a Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Worker Conference. In the context of this debate, let me say that, unfortunately, I did not receive an invitation to attend the opening of this particular conference but I have been able to obtain from the member for Arafura a copy of the program, and most interesting it looks. I understand that the official opening ceremony was to be conducted by the Minister for Health and Community Services but, such is his devotion to the problems of Aboriginal health, that he could not see his way clear to fulfilling his obligation in that regard.

The value of Aboriginal health workers has long been recognised, certainly on this side of the House and we frequently hear ostensible support from the government. Its record of action, however, would not support the brave outpourings we occasionally hear from the honourable minister. There are not enough Aboriginal health workers in the communities to deal adequately with the issues that relate to the cultural complexities of skin groupings and the cultural complexities involved in interaction between the sexes. There are not enough trainers available to conduct the courses necessary and to instruct the workers, and it has taken an enormous amount of time to consider a career structure for the health workers. During the last sittings of the Assembly, the minister indicated that, in June this year, Cabinet would consider that task force report on Aboriginal health workers which was completed in February 1987 - yes, February 1987, Mr Speaker! It recommended a career structure for Aboriginal health workers.

The history of this is that the career structure has been discussed since before self-government. In 1986, some 8 years later, health workers met with the then minister, the now departed former member for Flynn, to discuss the need for additional designations of health workers. In 1986, a task force was established to consider a proposed career structure. It completed its report in February 1987. It was the first review of Aboriginal health workers since 1977. Not a bad record, Mr Speaker. I am being sarcastic, just for the literal mind of the honourable minister.

Mr Dale: We always know that.

Mr BELL: The Hansard of November 1987 reports the minister as describing health workers as the 'frontline workers in primary health care'. He went on



to say: 'These Aboriginal health care workers possess skills that make their role in the community as important as those of doctors and nurses'. Let me say - and this reflects the views of my constituents who are Aboriginal health workers - that the wage levels do not reflect that verbal commitment. The fact is that cleaners earn more than Aboriginal health workers do. A health worker needs to be at grade 3 level before earning more than a cleaner who is at the top level of his incremental scale. That is outrageous.

The levels of responsibility and remuneration have not been synchronised at all. Let us hope that the recommendations of the task force remedy this problem. The plight of health workers was publicly highlighted earlier this year when a respected and long-term employee, Mr Jimmy Liddle, resigned. He was frustrated and angry, and justifiably so. He had been waiting too many years for some action. What became apparent to him were the inadequate facilities in communities in which to undertake the examination of patients. For example, there was reference to a tin shed in which people observed the private consultations of others. The honourable minister may care to accompany me and see the clinic that has been the subject of representations from my constituents at Maryvale.

The pressure placed on health workers to assume further responsibility as a result of the unavailability of nursing and medical personnel has also been a matter of concern. The lack of ambulance facilities, inadequate housing and dangerous water supplies are others. In summer, when water levels are low, the high bacteria content results in children becoming ill with diarrhoea. The minister should be aware of that. Under this government, the work of health workers will continue to be of a bandaid nature as a result of the problems emanating from inadequate essential services. That issue will be further addressed by the member for Arnhem.

There is a logical link between the provision of essential services and community health. The government has been derelict in its care of its Aboriginal community. It is shortsighted in its approach to community health. There is no point in putting a bandaid on an infected wound without addressing the infection, to use a metaphor that might strike home with the honourable minister. Until the government provides adequate levels of well-maintained essential services, it will continue to have high rates of poor health in Aboriginal communities, and Aboriginal health care will continue to be expensive. It is time to reconsider the total health concept, to genuinely adopt a preventive approach and to improve the state of essential services.

Let me reiterate that this government has a serious conceptual problem. Its idea of mainstreaming services for Aboriginal people is a nonsense. The government is not meeting needs and it will not meet needs because it refuses to accept the distinctiveness of Aboriginal communities and the distinctiveness of the problems that characterise them. Whilst that is a general statement, I must say specifically that, as an Australian, I am offended by the statistics that my honourable colleague will refer to. The minister frequently refers to the work of health workers. He has failed consummately, as his government has failed consummately, to provide support for those health workers in exactly the terms that are required to solve the problems that I have addressed in this speech.

Finally, let me say this. I believe, Mr Speaker, that this government has had its day. It is only when we get rid of this government and replace it with a Territory Labor government that these problems, and their cultural, social and economic parameters, will be adequately addressed. Such advances will only occur under a Labor government. That is clear from this

government's lack of achievement. Its approach has been piecemeal and its occasional statements to this Assembly fail to address the fundamental problems of Aboriginal health.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, it is rather sad to see the honourable member finally start to do a bit of work in his area of responsibility only to cover old ground once again. I have given him so many opportunities to perform but it has become really upsetting to discover how difficult it is to draw some comments from him on this subject. I recall an occasion when, after I delivered a 60-page ministerial statement on the delivery of services to Aboriginals in the Northern Territory, he did not want to participate in the debate on that issue. Likewise, when I delivered a ministerial statement on the provision of services at the Royal Darwin Hospital, I can still remember his dulcet tones ringing across this House as he said: 'I am not interested in debating that issue'. He has much to answer for in terms of his performance within this area of responsibility. I can certainly see why the people who organised the Aboriginal health workers' function this morning did not invite him to attend. I definitely apologise for not being able to attend because I wanted to attend to this matter of public importance. The organisers obviously invited the most appropriate member of the opposition, the member who shows the most interest in the portfolio, the member for Arnhem. I do not know how many times I need to tell the Leader of the Opposition that his health spokesman is a non-contributor.

In November last year, I made a major statement in the Assembly on services provided for Aboriginals in the Northern Territory. Health issues were fully explored and all of the issues raised today were covered. We have never said that an ideal situation exists in terms of health services in Aboriginal communities. The health indicators document issued in November 1986 clearly illustrated that we are the first government in Australia to take the step to fully analyse the information so that we can develop a rational approach to the delivery of health services in the Northern Territory and, in particular, to Aboriginal people.

Referring back to that statement, let me place a few of the facts before the House. The statement on services had a number of major themes. The first was the need for self-management and community control of services within a community. That is vital to their chances of success. The second was that many of the reasons why Aborigines become ill or injured are very basic. The third was that money alone cannot solve the problems. My statement quite clearly pointed out the status of Aboriginal health in the Territory.

I then tabled the Aboriginal health indicators document prepared by my department. The health indicators document is the most complete and honest set of statistics on Aboriginal health ever prepared in Australia. The health indicators document has told us what the situation is. It is now the responsibility of this government, working with the Aboriginal communities, to ensure that the next group of health indicators show marked improvement in the status of Aboriginal health generally.

We are also one of the very few governments in Australia that has had the courage to adopt a policy which states that we wish to provide the same standard of health to all Territorians. That is what mainstreaming is about. Of course we take note of the cultural differences between Aboriginal people and others! The opposition's health spokesman contradicted himself in this respect. Why, for goodness sake, would we have Aboriginal health workers if we did not recognise cultural and social differences? Need I say more on that subject, Mr Speaker?

In the statement that I tabled last November, I sought to stimulate a debate based soundly on truth and a debate carried on in a spirit of responsibility and goodwill which could achieve a positive result for the people most concerned. Mr Speaker, I will now tell you how we will do this and what issues we need to confront in order to achieve our goal. Difficult issues abound in respect of Aboriginal health. These include the threat of AIDS, the high rate of sexually-transmitted diseases, trachoma, ear infections and outbreaks of diseases such as tuberculosis, meningococcal meningitis and diabetes.

The Northern Territory is a world leader in AIDS education programs directed at indigenous people. The Aboriginal AIDS coordinator with the Communicable Diseases Unit in Darwin has been appointed to the new Australian National Council on AIDS. She has been invited to make presentations to the World Health Organisation and to international conferences on the education of Aborigines or indigenous people.

In my statement last November, I informed the House that the presence of gonorrhoea among Aborigines is 4 times that among the rest of the population whilst syphilis is detected 74 times more often than in the general population. The AIDS STD education process within Aboriginal communities is absolutely vital in stemming this tide. The Communicable Diseases Unit will receive over \$2m to carry out programs, including AIDS STD, this year.

Trachoma is a massive problem amongst Aboriginal children, as the honourable member said, particularly in central Australia. The previous method of dealing with trachoma was daily eye-washing. The Territory piloted and then introduced a program of tetracycline eye drops on a wide scale, administered on a weekly basis. This program has had a dramatic success rate. We have not beaten trachoma but we have made a very good start. With the Territory-sponsored and chaired trachoma committee coordinating the efforts of the Territory and federal government agencies, we have the opportunity to make real progress.

Ear infections are a major problem for Aboriginal children. Middle-ear disease in Aboriginal children is prevalent throughout the Northern Territory. A study made in 1987 of children in a particular community indicated that no child over 12 months old had a normal ear drum. The disease otitis media is so widespread that many people in communities do not even realise there is a problem. We cannot realistically expect early results but world-renowned scientists have this task as their top priority and I believe that the school is reasonably confident of some success. The cause of otitis media infection has not yet been established but I have recently had discussions with the Menzies School of Health Research about its research into the caustic organisms which, at this stage, they believe may be chlamydia. This research will proceed and I believe there is every chance of isolating the cause of the problem.

In the meantime, with the Minister for Education, I have approved the continuation of the employment of a coordinator of ear health programs. We have also sponsored the incorporation of an Aboriginal Ear Health Coordinating Committee which will coordinate the activities of Northern Territory and federal government departments in this area. In all probability, there is no simple solution and no single cause of otitis media. Multi-faceted strategies, which include medical research, community health, hygiene and educational support, infant development programs, development of purpose-built amplification, classroom acoustic equipment and specialist support for classroom teachers, will gradually overcome the debilitating disease which has

such a dramatic effect on the contribution which 25% of our children, committed Territorians all of them, can make to the community of the Territory.

Meningococcal meningitis is a problem within central Australia. In central Australia at this time, we have had an outbreak of this disease, with 28 patients over the last 12 months. While this does not constitute an epidemic, it is still a problem which needs to be dealt with. It can be contained, and my department has programs in place to achieve that. It will cost us \$40 000 if we can contain it and significantly more if we have to vaccinate more widely at \$25 per shot.

Communicable diseases are one of the major problems in Aboriginal communities and, recently, we have had press reports of the TB epidemic in the Katherine region. In handling this epidemic, we tested some 500 people. The resources of my department swung quickly into action in Katherine. In the Katherine Advertiser yesterday evening, Dr Raut, an acknowledged expert in TB, is reported as saying that Katherine has no reason to panic.

Mr Speaker, the problems abound and so do the issues. We are addressing the issues systematically and realistically and we are involving Aboriginal people at every step. The need to foster greater community responsibility is the most important issue we face. There are a number of ways in which we are trying to foster this: firstly, encouragement of the establishment of health services controlled by Aboriginal communities funded by grants-in-aid; secondly, the introduction of an Aboriginal health worker career structure which recognises the proper role of Aboriginal health workers in the delivery of health care and in the prevention of health problems in Aboriginal communities; and, thirdly, training and employment of Aborigines. Recently, I approved bids for funding from the Department of Employment, Education and Training for post-basic skills training for health workers.

The bush tucker diet of traditional Aborigines used to be extremely good. Now they rely on community stores and they eat too much sugar, fat, salt and flour. Lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are the results. These causes of death can all be dealt with by changes in habits. Prevention is far less costly than sophisticated, long-term treatment such as renal dialysis and kidney transplants.

The matter of costs is a major issue. Out of a total budget for my department this year - that is, \$205.3m approximately - 50% will be spent on Aboriginal people, who constitute some 23% of the population. \$21m has been appropriated for rural community health services. A great majority of this is spent on Aboriginal people. The 250 Aboriginal health workers are vital in the provision of health services. The salary cost of these people is \$2.5m. I am extremely unhappy that a salary scheme proposed for Aboriginal health workers - and I hope the member for MacDonnell takes this on board - which, after long negotiations, has been agreed by government, has been rejected by the unions, the mates of the people opposite.

This morning, I was to open an Aboriginal Health Workers Conference which was funded by my department. However, as I said, I became tied up improperly in trying to respond on this particular issue. I am very pleased indeed that the member for Arnhem was able to attend and I am sure that he was able to glean from those Aboriginal health workers that they are pretty happy with the way the Northern Territory government is providing a career structure for them.

Of the \$5.4m allocated to mental health services, most will be spent in Aboriginal communities. Over 50% of our hospital services is taken up with Aboriginal people. We will spend about \$45m on Aboriginal health in hospitals in this financial year. In addition to this money, over \$6.5m is provided in grants-in-aid funding to Aboriginal-controlled health services. Aero-medical services, patient assistant travel, the recruitment and maintenance of doctors and nurses in rural communities all have dramatic cost implications. The government does not shirk any of that. As with all services to Aboriginals, health services are mainstream. We provide an integrated health service, not one which is specifically Aboriginal. This does not mean that we do not see that Aboriginal people have different needs. It means that Aboriginal people are an essential and important part of the population of the Territory who have the right to the same level of health services and, more importantly, the same level of health status as all other Territorians.

In relation to Aboriginal health, it is my strong view that an analysis which I heard from an Aboriginal health worker is absolutely the right way to go. This analysis said that sickness is like a river. Hospitals and community health clinics pull people out of the river and care for them. What we have to do is to stop people jumping into the river in the first place. To stop them jumping, we need to educate them, to get the basics right and assist as far as we can to create an environment in which Aboriginal people can live in a healthy fashion. The most important factor contributing to poor health among the Aboriginal population is often the environment they live in. My colleague will be addressing that matter in his response in a moment. But I certainly hope that, in the budget that will be handed down federally tonight, the federal government will play its role in providing funds for Aboriginal people and the essential services needed by Aboriginal people. There is no doubt that, in the Northern Territory budget, this government certainly played its part.

On a number of occasions, I have spoken about the need for education within Aboriginal communities so that the mendicant attitude of 'come and help us' is thrown out the window. The basis of Aboriginal health can only work if the Aboriginal people themselves play a major part in the provision of that service. I think that, in one of his saner moments, even the shadow spokesman on health and community services would agree with me on that point.

I have asked - in fact, it could be said that I have begged - the honourable members opposite to educate the people within their constituencies on the need for them to take certain steps so that their health may improve. Obviously, that is not the attitude the majority of them take. They would rather go out, sit down beside their constituents and talk about the poor water supply. They would not talk about their moving, perhaps, to where there is a better water supply or steps that they need to take to improve their health. No, they would rather come here, berate the Northern Territory government, go back to the Aboriginal communities in their normal, paternalistic way, pat them on the head, sit down beside them and watch them become sick.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in the discussion of this matter of public importance proposed by the member for MacDonnell, I support the comments he made about the need for better health services in outlying Aboriginal communities. When I listen to the Minister for Health and Community Services, it makes me frightened to live in an Aboriginal community. I must admit, however, that I have no option but to live in an Aboriginal community. He has all the statistics available to him to enable him to advise about the funds that his government intends to inject

into communities in relation to some of the programs that the department intends to embark on. I have been around the Northern Territory for some time. I have lived in the Centre and right through to Arnhem Land. I have seen conditions in the Aboriginal communities that are truly appalling. It is great to hear the Minister for Health and Community Services say that these programs are being placed in line with the department's policy. Sometimes, we do not see those policies put into practice in these communities. All the government does is create department after department and undertake reviews that create more jobs for public servants. In the end, we do not see the benefits of the promises that this government makes to Aborigines regularly in this Assembly. That is appalling. At least, government members should rise sometimes and say: 'These are the benefits that we are giving'.

I have seen some achievements certainly, but that is not enough to reduce the so-called 50% bed occupancy rate that the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory referred to when he was on his Australia-wide campaign, trying to save Ayers Rock when it was supposed to fall into the hands of my people. He said: 'We do not receive any revenue from the 25% of our population in the Northern Territory who occupy 50% of the hospital beds in the Northern Territory'. I was very annoyed when I heard that type of remark from a Chief Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you know the reason why those illnesses occur in these communities? It is because of the poor conditions that exist at the home level. You do not go to school if you are not dressed well. I would not be here if I were not dressed well. I would not be here if I did not have running water or electricity available so that I could wash and iron my gear. These are the sort of conditions that we have to live with. Kids who live in poor conditions, who have no water and no sewerage whatsoever, can be expected to get these sorts of sicknesses. There is no doubt about it. That is what we are trying to impress upon this government. It is not the fact that it intends to put so many public servants to look after this branch or that organisation by putting in another group out at Ngukurr or Umbakumba or anywhere else. We are asking the government to look at it from the home basis. That is where I believe we will see some benefits in the Territory. By that means, hopefully, we will reduce the number of people, both white and black in the Northern Territory, who are affected by these diseases and start to see some of the savings that we hear this government predicting so bravely in its budgets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you have heard my colleague outline to you a range of concerns that exist both in relation to the provision of essential services and the status of health within Aboriginal communities. The government's solution has been to employ health workers at wage levels that do not deserve any comment other than that they suggest an exercise in exploitation. Regardless of the intention stated about the provision of health care personnel, that will never serve to counteract the real problems that exist in communities, for example, the living conditions - and I elaborated on that earlier.

I refer the honourable minister to a visit which he made to Milingimbi at a time when he went there to issue certificates to some people there. A report was published following that visit written by a Debbie Grimwade. She wrote about living conditions in the communities. It was an appalling report that commented on dogs, poor health, bad sanitation, raw sewage and so on. That is the type of thing that we would like this government to combat.

The approach taken to the situation is yet another example of tokenism and bandaied health care. The lack of essential services in Aboriginal communities has been spoken about by the opposition on previous occasions. The government continues to ignore it and places it in the too hard basket. Continually, it attempts to put the blame on the federal government. This has become a very lame excuse. After so many years of self-government, no one believes it any longer. The way in which responsibility for Aboriginal services has been carved up in this government indicates its real position on the matter. Government members would rather not think about it.

The dissolution of the Department of Community Development may well have witnessed the separation of remote area, white welfare from Aboriginal field services. In addition, the Aboriginal Media Liaison Unit was eventually eliminated. Even with the merger of the Departments of Health, Community Development, Correctional Services and Youth, Sport and Recreation, absolutely no attention was given to how Aboriginal communities could best be served by the mega department. As for essential services, we saw them all mainstreamed. There may be arguments for that on the basis of economies of scale, but what about the concept of specifically targeting areas of need? I referred to that earlier, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Health and Community Services tabled a ministerial statement in November 1987 on the services provided for Aboriginals in the Northern Territory, and he referred to that in his speech earlier this afternoon. It is an indictment of the government's minimal commitment and arrogant attitude towards my people. He described a 'begging mentality' that allegedly exists in Aboriginal communities. He said: 'This state of mind allows an Aboriginal to sit back and complain about the lack of water, the fact that his toilet is blocked and does not work, that the prices in the store are too high and that a member of his family has just been taken off to jail'. Surely, any Territorian has the right to complain about such conditions - or is that right reserved only for those who can afford it?

He went on to state: 'The unreal expectations of the mendicant are perhaps never more clearly expressed than when a group of people establish themselves on a piece of land. There is little thought for the cost of access to services like sewerage and water in an isolated spot. Somebody else will pay for it'. Mr Deputy Speaker, from that, anyone would think that there is a lack of facilities on outstations only. What about the inadequacies in established remote and urban communities? Only too clearly the minister is aware of these problems. It is a bit startling to see them so obviously stated. Maybe he wants the opposition to reinforce them for the sake of his colleagues, and I shall do that. Access to clean water in sufficient quantities is still a major problem. Sanitation systems are still extremely poor in some communities and non-existent in others. I was very pleased to note from the budget papers that some funds are to be made available for communities within my electorate which have been in need of those facilities for some time. Food is not consumed in the quantity required for good health.

Any concerned or intelligent person would understand that the consequences of these problems is poor health resulting in a reduced life expectancy or actual death. The data contained in the publication 'Health Indicators in the Northern Territory' reveals a very disturbing picture of Aboriginal health between 1979 and 1983. Some of the more disturbing conclusions include that my people have a higher mortality rate than do non-Aboriginals, and we have a higher hospitalisation rate too. The hospitalisation rate for infectious and parasitic disease among infants has been increasing steadily over the years. That indicates that there is something wrong with the hospital system and that

we are not preventing these illnesses. The hospitalisation rate for respiratory diseases has been increasing among Aboriginals in recent years. That is another factor pointing to the lack of those facilities which should be available to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The report underlines the importance of infectious disease as a cause of death and hospitalisation amongst Aboriginal people. This information is devastating to me. As I said, it makes me scared to live in an Aboriginal community. It is even worse when it is understood that infectious and parasitic diseases are closely aligned with overcrowded accommodation, contaminated water supplies and unsafe sewerage systems. The data relates to the period 1979 to 1983, a so-called 'boom period' in the Northern Territory. I wonder if news of the boom could be heard in the communities. Certainly, it would not have been heard by those with hearing impairments.

Tuberculosis can be classified as an infectious, communicable disease. The data on the disease is revealing. In 1983, the notification rates for Aboriginals soared to 6.5 times that of the white population. It looks as if little has changed. We heard recently of problems in the Roper River region, where a significant number of people have been diagnosed as having TB. So much for the government's preventive health program. Were the inoculations too expensive or does the government usually wait to see what happens in the community before it acts? The minister says that there is little risk of contagion for a fit and healthy visitor. What about an unfit, local resident? There are many of them. Is the minister concerned only about tourists? He mentions them repeatedly in his diatribes.

The number of children who are admitted to hospital and who have come to the attention of child protection workers as cases of neglect, often as a result of malnutrition, is another area of concern. That is why there should be more programs to make parents more aware. Despite attempts to work effectively in communities through the provision of family centres and associated workers, the problem continues. I acknowledge that community centres have started to appear in Aboriginal communities whereby programs are being made available and advice given to mothers in isolated communities.

Mr Dale: And surely you are helping.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am. I visit most of my communities when the need arises and I talk to the people.

The minister laments that storekeepers have monopolised the supply of food for communities. What is he waiting for? Does he expect them to give up their profit margins and become benevolent? The government should take some direct action to ensure that Aboriginals are provided with an affordable supply of nutritious food. There are alternative means by which this can be achieved - for example, subsidised freight costs, community kitchens and the establishment of self-controlled market gardens.

There are a number of health care problems in communities, all of which require the attention of health care workers. There is no denying that all these people do an exceptional job and they must be congratulated. As was said earlier, I attended the health worker conference that is being held in Darwin at the moment. I congratulate them for continuing under less than satisfactory conditions. Regardless of how much they might achieve, however, they will continue to be faced with the problem of inadequate essential services. Of particular concern has been the mainstreaming of services. This has prevented a coordinated approach to the effective targeting of community problems.



Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, the opposition calls on the government to provide a policy for the cohesive provision of essential services for Aboriginal communities, specifically in relation to housing, water and sewerage. It would like to see a clear commitment to the establishment of essential services. It is a vital component of any real health policy. Failure to attend to this problem can amount only to neglect. This government deserves the condemnation of all Territorians and Australians who are committed to the health and well-being of members of the community.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise with pleasure to support my colleague in this discussion of a matter which is of major concern to this government. I am disappointed to hear the comments from the opposition in relation to a number of the problems with which people in Aboriginal communities are faced. No one is denying that there are problems in many communities. However, we should ask ourselves why there are problems in these communities and not keep coming back to the Northern Territory government. Members opposite should be looking at those problems and at ways they can help. What about the constrictions and the restraints that are placed on government in respect of some of those communities? For example, in relation to providing housing for teachers, we have often had problems in obtaining land. The opposition should be trying to help us provide improved services to those particular communities.

There is a whole range of issues relating to health. There are requirements for facilities, staff, training, education for the children, education for the community, capital works and adequate water and sewerage services. When we talk about sewerage problems, Milingimbi is a perfect example. Blockages to the sewerage system have caused the school to be closed on many occasions. But why? The community had a part to play and that needs to be acknowledged by the members of this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other important area is research. We have heard about issues like kava use, petrol-sniffing, trachoma and hearing problems. Research needs to be carried out in all those areas, and this government is doing that. It is no good saying that we are not doing it. The Commonwealth government did nothing about it for 70 years but, in the last 10 years, the Northern Territory government has done a great deal. We have done a great deal more than the opposition has done.

Health facilities are improving all the time and there has been greater cooperation between the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth at departmental level. There has also been improved cooperation among the communities themselves. The only people who appear to be negative on this whole issue are members of the opposition. It is about time they started to cooperate so that we can address the problems and resolve them.

Whilst I was Minister for Health, I helped to plan a facility at Gapuwiyak. A sum of \$585 000 was allocated by the Commonwealth and Territory governments for the construction of the facility, which included a new community health clinic and a new school complex of 4 classrooms, an administration block, library and staff facilities. In opening the school as Minister for Education, I appealed for community support for education throughout the Territory. I said: 'A good education does not just happen. We can build the buildings and the teachers can teach, but there must be commitment from the community. Only by attending school regularly can children realise their full potential'. It is exactly the same with health, as the Minister for Health and Community Services has indicated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government has done a great deal in terms of staff development. In the TAFE area, the NT Open College assists the Department of Health in training Aboriginal health workers on communities, mainly in literacy and numeracy but also in other areas if required. The Hansard record contains the comments I made in August 1986 in relation to Aboriginal health workers: 'Another initiative which the Northern Territory government continues to support is the Aboriginal health worker program. Aboriginal health workers, selected by their communities, have long been recognised in the Territory for their work in such areas as health education, communicable diseases and trachoma'. Further on, I said that I believed that the Northern Territory had become the first place in the world to recognise legally primary health workers.

We also are looking at the development of Aboriginal health worker programs at Batchelor College. Health education is important at the school level. Preschools run basic hygiene training programs which involve parents and Aboriginal teacher assistants. In all primary schools, ablution facilities are provided to enable all students to shower and wash and, in some schools, ancillary staff wash students' clothes, towels etc. The department provides washing machines and detergents where possible. The Departments of Education and Health and Community Services run a joint rural dental health program in the Alice Springs region which provides toothbrushes, toothpaste, and instruction for dental hygiene. Oral health surveys are conducted to provide base data for future operations. At Yuendumu, a trial program is operating to alleviate problems of chronic deafness resulting from middle-ear infection. No one denies that there are problems in relation to deafness. In addition, all schools are provided with listings of nutritional food for tuckshop sales.

Mr Deputy Speaker, things have happened and members of the opposition ought to get off their backsides and look at what has happened.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: At Yirrkala, school nurses ran health education courses for boys and girls. Bushfire Radio also has a strong health education component. In most school centres, health workers visit schools daily for health checks.

In terms of the curriculum, an Aboriginal health subcommittee is adapting Western Australian health material for use in Aboriginal schools. In-service training programs addressing health issues in Aboriginal communities were conducted this year at Ti Tree and Yuendumu. School of the Bush for outstations includes many aspects of health education. The primary SACE curriculum refers to personal care, hygiene etc. Pamphlets on trachoma and eye care are also distributed.

In a whole range of areas, the Northern Territory government has been providing information to educate people in the communities in relation to the very serious problems that can confront them. The Health Promotion Branch of the Department of Health and Community Services is conducting a series of workshops across the Top End aimed at encouraging Aboriginal communities and their health workers to develop health promotion materials at the community level. Adult educators are facilitators for these workshops, providing another good example of interdepartmental cooperation. Adult educators will provide assistance where Aboriginal health workers identify needs related to their communities. There are many local programs of this kind.

The NT Open College has prepared an alcohol instruction package and various materials on petrol sniffing. In community education centres, units on health are being prepared for all certificate programs to be introduced in 1989. These relate to areas of major concern such as alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, AIDS and kava use. FEPPi has also had an input which would leave the opposition for dead. It has addressed a number of issues and has run several health education workshops for parents in Aboriginal communities. These have covered ear and eye health, nutrition, AIDS etc. We have also been active in creating national awareness. I do not know where members of the opposition are when we inform the Assembly of what we are doing.

In August 1986, I spoke about some of our achievements and my comments are recorded in Hansard:

A national conference on volatile substance abuse, held in Alice Springs in May 1986, was another Northern Territory government initiative which recognised the need for the 3 areas most affected, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, to join together in efforts to combat the problem. As a result, my ministerial counterparts in those 2 states are joining with me to seek financial assistance for petrol-sniffing programs under the national campaign against drug abuse. At the same conference, it was decided that the Northern Territory Drug and Alcohol Bureau should provide a databank for petrol-sniffing programs throughout Australia.

I know that the Minister for Health and Community Services followed up those particular programs. We have been contributing on the national scene as well as in the Northern Territory and we continue to lead Australia in many spheres.

Quite frankly, I am amazed at the comments that have been made by members opposite about the capital works program. For example, in relation to water and sewerage facilities, in 1987-88, we maintained expanded water and sewerage facilities on 47 major communities, provided water to 400 minor communities and outstations and commissioned the drilling of 38 bores for new sources of water, a \$1m program. The member for Stuart made a great deal of noise about Soapy Bore and we have eventually organised that. I visited Soapy Bore and the water was up and running. It has, in fact, happened ...

Mr Ede: There were no teachers there by then!

Mr HARRIS: It is there though.

We have commissioned 2 major investigations for Kintore and Hermannsburg at \$100 000 each, supplied rainwater storage where there was a problem with groundwater quality and we have investigated various technological methods of improving water quality.

There is a whole range of things. During the 1988-89 financial year, \$11.9m will be expended on water and sewerage services for Aboriginal communities. This funding has been budgeted for by the Territory government and will continue the provision, expansion, operation and maintenance of water supplies to the 400 outstation communities and the water and sewerage services to 47 larger communities. The 1988-89 program includes \$600 000 for provision of water supplies to new excisions from pastoral leases, \$1.2m for drilling for water supplies to Aboriginal outstations, \$600 000 for equipment and an upgrading of water supplies at outstations, and \$825 000 for minor new works on larger communities. Some \$2.715m for new capital works has been allocated

as detailed in the budget. To say that nothing has been done in those communities is absolute nonsense - and the opposition knows that.

With regard to roads for Aboriginal communities, the reality is that a high commitment has been maintained by the Country Liberal Party government since self-government. This year, the budget contains a \$2.96m program compared to a \$2.14m program last year. It is not good enough for members of the opposition to say that we simply keep knocking the federal government. On the other hand, the federal government has not committed any funds to Aboriginal roads, and that is a matter that it should start to look at.

We touched on the area of research. This government established the Menzies School of Health Research which will investigate a number of problems in relation to Aboriginal health. No one is denying that those problems exist in the communities.

Compared with the government's record, let us have a look at what the opposition has done during that period. It has had plenty of time and opportunity to comment on the Aboriginal health worker program and to indicate what it thinks should happen. But no, we have heard nothing at all from the opposition. In November 1986, the Minister for Health and Community Services made this comment relating to health matters: 'It is amazing that these members in the opposition, who represent predominantly Aboriginal communities, will not raise their voices on the subject at all. All they do is what they have been doing for years in those communities and that is patronising the Aboriginal people'. That comment was made as long ago as 1986.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I had a quick look through the record at lunchtime - and I stand to be corrected and I hope the opposition can indicate that what I am saying is incorrect. I was searching for questions asked in relation to important health matters and I recall undertaking a similar search at one stage in respect of questions on education. There was 1 question in 1986 and that related to a sub-standard water supply at Anningie. In 1987, I think there were 4 questions on matters relating to health. This year, there has been 1 question on the Aboriginal Health Worker Task Force Report, 1 on replacement of the ambulance at Yulara - and there was 1 on that subject in 1987 - and 1 on manganese poisoning on Groote Eylandt. There were also 3 questions from the member for Stuart relating to water at Soapy Bore.

There is no doubt that this government has continued to support and promote the provision of services in Aboriginal communities. We will continue to do that. All members of the opposition have to do is get off their backsides, have a look at what the government has done and try to help us to provide the very important services that are required in Aboriginal communities. We should be working together, not continually ...

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

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 124)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 124) passing through all stages during these sittings.

By way of explanation, Mr Speaker, in case honourable members are a little confused, there are some bills relating to taxation matters which traditionally pass during the budget sittings.

Motion agreed to.

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

The purpose of the bill is to introduce amendments to stamp duty legislation to effect the measures that I announced earlier during these sittings. The bill proposes changes to be made to the duty to be paid under the specific heads of loan securities and marketable securities, and also amends the conveyance head of duty as a consequence of a new definition in the Taxation Administration Act.

The recent review by the Commonwealth Grants Commission highlighted that the Territory's revenue effort in loan securities is below that of the states. With this in mind, it has been decided to increase the rate of duty for loan securities from 30¢ per \$100 to 40¢ per \$100. In addition, the marketable security head of duty will be amended so that transfer by way of units of shares will no longer be possible. This will mean that share transfers will be assessed on the consideration or value, whichever is higher. The rate of duty imposed on non-broker deals will remain at 30¢ per \$100 of consideration or value of marketable securities transferred. However, while the changes will bring the Territory rates under these heads closer to those existing in most states, some concessions will still be available. For example, there will be no change to the existing concession for first-home buyers in relation to mortgages given at the time of the purchase.

Many loan securities involve property which is located in a number of states. The usual nexus for taking duty on a security document is the presence of property in the jurisdiction, with the amount of duty to be paid being in proportion to the amount of property located in the jurisdiction. The amendment clarifies the circumstances under which an apportionment of duty, to reflect that situation, will be taken into account. The amendment to section 6(11) of the Stamp Duty Act will remove that anomaly and will increase fairness as well as compatibility with state practice.

Section 8 is amended to clarify what is to be included when valuing land for assessment purposes. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 132)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill (Serial 132) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

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

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Payroll Tax Act by raising the threshold for payment of tax from \$300 000 to \$400 000. The advantage of the higher threshold is to be available from 1 July 1988. The amendment will benefit an estimated 300 local employers not only by freeing some 50 of them from the liability to pay the tax, but by reducing the amount of payroll tax that the remainder and many other employers will have to pay. By way of example, in cash terms, this means that a business with an annual payroll of \$500 000 will save approximately \$8330 in tax. I regard this as a very positive step in assisting local business and, in particular, those small enterprises which provide such an important employment base in the Territory.

A number of other consequential amendments are made to the act, and a definition of Australian wages has been included in section 6 to clarify the method of determining the correct rate of tax to be applied. The amended section, which reflects state practice, will have effect from 1 October 1988. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 129)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Business Franchise Amendment Bill (Serial 129) passing through all stages during these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

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

Under the Business Franchise Act, persons who sell tobacco and petroleum products in the Territory are required to be licensed. A fee, based on the volume of sales of the relevant product in a previous month, is to be paid by a licensee. It is of concern that a number of persons are selling tobacco on which an appropriate fee has not been paid. The consequence of this evasion is twofold: first, there is a loss of revenue and, secondly, those merchants who are complying with the legislation and only selling tobacco on which the appropriate fee has been paid are significantly disadvantaged by the unfair tactics of the evaders. These latter people have relied on a previous interpretation of section 92 of the Australian Constitution to avoid payment of the licence fee.

It is proposed that the Business Franchise Act be strengthened as an initial step in attacking this problem. As the people who have been avoiding the licence fee will now be aware, a recent High Court decision makes it clear that there is no basis for non-payment of licence fees where all retailers are subject to the same legislative requirements.

The government gives notice that the Business Franchise Act, where there is any doubt as to the requirement to be licensed, will be amended to accord

with the High Court interpretation. Those who have relied on the previous interpretation of section 92 of the Australian Constitution will be required to meet their responsibilities under the act. This bill introduces heavy penalties for failing to comply with licensing requirements. The penalties will include the possible forfeiture of the proceeds of sale of unlicensed tobacco as well as a fine of up to \$20 000 for selling such products in contravention of the act. These penalties will be of concern only to those people who attempt to avoid payment of the appropriate fee. The steps being taken by the government will ensure that those who comply with the law are not disadvantaged by unfair tactics adopted by a few. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Provisional Standing Order Relating to  
Public Accounts Committee

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that provisional standing order 21A relating to a Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as contained in the sessional order made by resolution of the Assembly on 28 April 1987, be adopted as a standing order and that the member for Katherine, Mr Reed, be discharged from further attendance on the committee and Mr Dondas be appointed in his place.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition welcomes the motion. The Public Accounts Committee has been in operation now for 2 years. The former Chief Minister indicated that it would be introduced on a trial basis and it is appropriate that the committee now become permanent. It is a fact of life in the Northern Territory. There was some question perhaps in the minds of some members of the public service in respect of the permanency of the Public Accounts Committee in the Northern Territory. There can be no doubt now because the motion will result in the committee being a standing committee.

I look forward to the continuing contribution of the Public Accounts Committee to public administration in the Northern Territory. I hope that, in future, certain personnel within the Northern Territory Public Service will realise that the Public Accounts Committee will not disappear and that it must be treated with a great deal of seriousness. Unfortunately, I believe there are individuals within the public service who do not accept the role of the Public Accounts Committee. They have been reluctant to accept the power that the committee has been given by the parliament. This motion by the Chief Minister will remove from their minds any doubt that they may have that we are about serious business and that we intend to prosecute that business with the full power of the parliament.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, it is incumbent on me to recognise the motion of the Chief Minister and to thank him for it. Over the 2 years of its existence, I believe the committee has performed a useful purpose and has matured to the extent where the government is prepared to recognise the ongoing commitment of the parliament to the continuance of the Public Accounts Committee by making it a standing committee.

The committee has worked well and probably has deserved the recognition that the parliament now intends to bestow upon it. Some 12 members of this Assembly have served at various times and for various periods of time on the committee and, since we were approaching a position of being a majority of the membership of the House, it was only a matter of time before such a motion was

adopted. It is gratifying that the current Chief Minister and erstwhile Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, a long-time opponent of the Public Accounts Committee, was available to move this motion and chose to do so. Let me close by saying that I think that it is a move forward. In time to come, the Public Accounts Committee will be recognised for its useful role and as the useful tool of parliament that it can be.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I cannot allow that to pass without the true irony of the situation being placed on the record. We all know that it was the member for Fannie Bay who, for years and years, made the famous statement every time that the member for Nhulunbuy raised the matter of a Public Accounts Committee: 'Public accounts are for us to know and for you to find out. When you are in government, you will know and we will have to find out'.

I believe that the thanks of this Assembly ought to go to the member for Nightcliff. When he became Chief Minister, he had the courage and the foresight to persuade his parliamentary colleagues to establish the Public Accounts Committee. It is a clear demonstration of how the Public Accounts Committee has become part and parcel of the political life of the Northern Territory that the member for Fannie Bay, given his previous statements, has served on the committee and supports it.

I think that the Public Accounts Committee is doing good work. I would like to see more public meetings and I have made that known. I think that, as the committee becomes more sure of itself, we will see that occur and that, in itself, will be another benefit to the public and its understanding of government accounts and of the work of the committee and where it stands in relation to this parliament and the public service.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, there has been some concern in some areas of the public service about the Public Accounts Committee. I have seen that as part of the learning curve of the public service as it comes to grips with the machinery of parliament, and of the members of the Public Accounts Committee as they found their feet with a view to becoming a permanent committee of the parliament. In part, the concern has resulted from the way the Public Accounts Committee has gone about doing some of its work and I accept partially any blame for activities which may have caused such concern during my period on the PAC. However, I acknowledge that we are all learning a little as we proceed.

I hope that, over a period, it settles down and we do not have some elements of the public service feeling that the PAC is trying to get the public service to grovel at its feet. I hope also that the PAC realises that, by and large, the public service is willing to cooperate with such committees when they go about their business in a sensible and businesslike way and are not asking for things that involve a great deal of work yet produce fairly trivial results. However, I am sure the committee will find a firm footing and its relationship with the public service will be improved as experience builds up on both sides and the element of trust develops further than it has so far.

Motion agreed to.

MAGISTRATES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 100)

Continued from 25 May 1988.



Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this bill which is not a particularly contentious piece of legislation. As the minister indicated in his second-reading speech, its purpose broadly is to provide for a system of relieving magistrates. As the minister explained and as my research into the bill indicated, there have been administrative difficulties in the local courts because there are logistical and cost problems involved with appointing acting magistrates for short periods.

Clause 6 inserts a new section 9A to provide for a class of relieving magistrates. Clause 5 expands the criteria for appointment as a magistrate. In his second-reading speech, the Attorney-General referred to the difficulties that are being experienced in finding people to be appointed as magistrates. The opposition is satisfied that this bill, while expanding the criteria for appointment of magistrates, will maintain the high standard of appointees.

I was interested in some of the comments made by the honourable minister in his second-reading speech. He referred to retired magistrates who have indicated their preparedness to serve as relieving magistrates, although the exigencies of full-time appointment would be beyond them in their retirement. I have no hesitation in commending the bill to honourable members as a step along the way to easing these problems in the local courts.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I support the bill. It is pleasing to see that the opposition is supporting legislation which provides for a very fundamental but obviously non-contentious matter. This has been a source of concern to members, and I know the Attorney-General has expressed for some time now some serious anxiety about the difficulties of recruiting adequate numbers of people to fill the magistracy in the Northern Territory, and this has had a number of adverse consequences.

The excessive workload that has been placed on the magistrates has led, in some cases, to quite serious physical difficulties for some of them. There have been some early retirements for a multitude of health reasons. In addition, of course, that sort of pressure, although I am not suggesting that it has happened, can be a potential source of a lack of opportunity to devote the relevant concentration of thought to the multitude of cases that are brought before magistrates. An increasing amount of criticism has come from many sections of the community about a number of decisions. I do not intend to participate in that except to say that, when a person is working in a circumstance of relatively low salary and with an exceptionally high workload, it would not be unreasonable to expect that, from time to time, some decisions or comments may be made that could be regarded as being of an intemperate nature.

The obvious solution to that, from the government's point of view, is to ensure that, firstly, the salaries of the magistrates are appropriate to the work at hand and, secondly, that there are sufficient magistrates or there is the capacity to have sufficient magistrates to be able to ensure that the workload is not excessive and that, therefore, they can devote the necessary time and attention to matters before them in the interests of justice for the community as a whole as well as the people who are standing before them.

I note that the Attorney-General made the point in his second-reading speech that salaries of Northern Territory magistrates are amongst the lowest in Australia while the workload is amongst the highest. This amendment will certainly provide assistance at least through alleviating the workload of the magistrates, and it is pleasing to note that the recent recommendations that

have been processed from the Remuneration Tribunal have substantially overcome the first part of that problem: the very low level of salaries. Combined with these legislative amendments, that should significantly assist the courts and the Attorney-General in the process of appointing additional magistrates to the existing vacancies that have been so difficult to fill.

I also support the appointment of a relieving magistrate. In his second-reading speech, the Attorney-General indicated that, whilst there is provision for acting magistrates, it is for very short periods of time and, when one is working in a small court system and seeking to draw from what is a very small bar, in many cases, as the Attorney-General described it, it is a matter of robbing Peter to pay Paul. If we were to do that, we would run the risk of very serious potential problems with conflicts of interest between the case loads of the people at the bar who may be appointed as acting magistrates, on the one hand, and their judicial duties as acting magistrates on the other.

I support the intention of the Attorney-General to provide an ongoing facility for the relieving of magistrates for periods of up to 6 months duration without necessarily relying on the availability of people from within the local bar. We should have the capacity and preparedness to look outside our own local bar to areas elsewhere in Australia or, if it were feasible, outside Australia. I understand from discussions with the Attorney-General that opportunities have been made available for appropriately qualified people even from outside of Australia who could successfully fill the role of a relieving magistrate. This would assist in the very important task of ensuring that the workloads available to the magistrates were appropriate so that justice could be done in the interests of all the community and in the interests of those people who are appearing before the magistracy. It would give magistrates the opportunity to have a reasonable life. Theirs is a difficult task and this would allow them the necessary time for careful consideration to bring to their judgments the wisdom that is so necessary in the judicial process. With those remarks, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support for this bill. It is important for me to state that we should be in no doubt that the community receives excellent service from our magistrates. They are not highly paid in comparison to members of their profession in private practice yet, without doubt, we have people of extremely high integrity and of extremely high standards of capability.

Everyone agrees that we must have flexibility in our ability to continue the high standard of service that magistrates supply to the community and we must have the ability to approve the high standard of relieving magistrates to enable the courts to maintain this excellent service when magistrates go on leave or, for other reasons, are unable to be available to attend their function in the courts. I thank honourable members for their support and commend 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.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1988-89  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 18 August 1988.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the Appropriation Bill, I will outline the major areas of the Northern Territory's budget for 1988-89 that relate to the health and community services portfolio. Before doing so, however, I will review briefly the performance of my Department of Health and Community Services during its first full year as a department in its own right so that continuity can be illustrated.

This CLP government recognises that development in the Northern Territory is vital. Some members of the opposition do not seem to realise why development is important. Without it, it would be very difficult to provide the services delivered by my department for all Territorians. This government cares about Territorians. I reject absolutely the naive notion embraced by the opposition that one must be a socialist to respond to people's needs. The funding allocated for my department's activities clearly demonstrates the CLP government's commitment to creating a society in which all Territorians can aspire to a far better way of life. My department provides services which affect the lives of every Territorian. Some might see a department like mine as simply looking after the sick or needy. We do that, but we do far more. We create opportunities for people in sport, the arts and culture, ethnic affairs, consumer affairs, youth activities and recreational pursuits. We also target programs at the healthy, to keep them that way. We do these things because we want Territorians to get more out of life than is possible through the mendicant mentality promoted by members on the opposition benches.

My department has just come through its first 12 months in its present form. When it was first created as an amalgamation of 4 separate departments, many people were sceptical of its ability to deliver the goods in terms of providing the level of services Territorians had come to expect. I am delighted to be able to say that this mega department has achieved far greater success than we had the right to expect in its first year. Not only did my department respond with vigour to the challenge of undertaking a range of initiatives introduced by this government, but it ensured the level of services to our community was maintained and even improved in some areas.

Honourable members will recall that, last year, this department faced the challenge of a \$5m cut in its budget and a massive reorganisation involving rationalisation of staffing levels. I invite the sceptics among us to eat their words. My department completed the year within budget, within the maximum staffing levels determined by Cabinet and with existing levels of service intact. All areas of the department, from the senior management team to junior clerks, have demonstrated the professional approach and teamwork necessary to meet the targets and priorities I set. Because of that, I am looking forward with confidence to the 1988-89 financial year.

In last year's debate on the budget, I announced such things as the closure of Howard Springs Health Centre, the closure of the Primary Care Clinic at the Royal Darwin Hospital and the leasing of the third floor of the Royal Darwin Hospital to a private hospital. Every one of these announcements was met with predictions of doom and gloom by members of the opposition and those in the community who support them. Howard Springs Health Centre was closed, but the services of a community health clinic offering domiciliary care, immunisation programs and so on are still provided to the local community which can now also boast 2 private general practitioners who

established practices when competition from the part-time, government-employed medical officer was removed.

In addition to achieving the reductions forced on us, we made much progress, raising the public's awareness about the very real threat of AIDS in our community, developing a new career structure for Aboriginal health workers, implementing a new award and career structure for nurses, providing respite care and residential services for the disabled, establishing an evaluation process in our hospital system, conducting successful negotiations for the construction of a private hospital in Alice Springs, developing preventive health programs and expanding psychiatric services and facilities.

My department has been able to introduce many new programs in correctional services designed as alternatives to imprisonment. These include the home detention scheme and the development of community service orders. We have established bail assessment and supervision services in Darwin's major court complex, encouraged recruitment of Aboriginal probation and parole officers and community corrections officers, expanded the Aboriginal community justice program and developed mobile work camps and youth facilities for specially classified prisoners. In the community services area, a child protection program, a review of welfare workers' workloads and further encouragement of community-based care programs continue to be goals of my department.

In economically-competitive times, I have paid special attention to consolidating the government's heavily-funded programs devoted to youth, sport, recreation, ethnic affairs and the arts. We have seen ongoing support for the Honda Central Australian Masters Games, continued development of sporting facilities in towns and remote communities, support for facilities such as the Ethnic Community Council's radio studio, administrative offices and interpreter and translation services, and further funding support for community arts and crafts organisations. All are proof of the government's balanced approach to enhancing the quality of life for citizens of the Northern Territory.

I now turn more particularly to the 1988-89 budget. The overall funding level of the Department of Health and Community Services will increase by 5.7% to \$205.4m. That represents a cash increase of some \$11m with about 35% of that amount or \$3.9m being devoted to the implementation of expanded services or new initiatives which will help create a better social environment for all Territorians.

An extra \$7.7m has been allocated for new capital works. This, added to the works-in-progress expenditure of \$8.3m, gives us a total capital works program in excess of \$16m. A cursory glance at funding levels for the capital works program last year indicates a drop of some \$4m when compared with this year's level. However, I remind honourable members that last year's program included 2 major one-off expenditure items: upgrading of the fire safety system and implementation of stage 1 of a chilled-water, air-conditioning system at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Together, these 2 items accounted for almost \$7m. Both were unforeseen expenditure items which had to be carried at that time. Expenditure on minor new works and repairs and maintenance programs has been increased in total by about \$1.75m.

If we want the Northern Territory to be a place where all of us can share in its future prosperity, we must provide all Territorians with opportunities for development and the security and encouragement to grab those opportunities when they arise. This principle applies equally to business, personal or social development. I have kept this in mind when considering developments or

initiatives in the delivery of human services to Territorians through my department. The Northern Territory as a whole will be hurt if we allow one section of our community to lag behind or to be treated differently from the rest. Divisiveness will only hold us back.

Before I outline some of the plans that I have in place for the development of new initiatives, let me establish firmly in the mind of everybody that there is no reduction in pensioner concessions, that the 20% child-care subsidy has remained, that aggressive health promotion campaigns will continue and that drug and alcohol programs will continue. No current area of departmental services is being cut to effect savings.

I turn now to the new initiatives. Honourable members will be aware of my concern about child abuse. I am pleased to be able to draw their attention the evidence in this budget of the government's commitment to child protection. As the responsible minister, I have a duty to the children of the Northern Territory to ensure their safety. To express this duty in a legal context, I must ensure that at-risk children are removed promptly from dangerous domestic situations and that they are given the protection and care to which all children are entitled. To this end, and with the support of my Cabinet colleagues, I have approved the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated child-protection strategy across the Northern Territory. Honourable members will recall that I announced earlier this year that a strategy was being developed to deal with the increasing number of incidents of child abuse being reported to my department. There are 3 major aspects to this strategy: increased community education; prevention programs; and increased rehabilitation work with victims, perpetrators and, where possible, whole families.

There has been no significant increase in the number of community welfare workers since 1984, despite an increasing workload as the number of reports of child maltreatment has risen. This budget provides for additional community welfare workers, many of them senior professionals, to liaise with community groups, other agencies and related professionals. Their role will be to provide training and effective parenting, to teach protective behaviour to children and to assist in implementing protective behaviour teaching in our schools. The budget provides increased resources to enable welfare workers to perform more effectively and to increase their professional skills.

Mr Speaker, you will be aware of recent press reports of problems in Victoria where it has been alleged that children who are victims of abuse have not been adequately protected by the welfare system. At the other extreme, in the United Kingdom recently, investigations of child abuse have been mishandled in a way that has brought a great deal of suffering to children and their families. Part and parcel of this child protection strategy in the budget is provision for the training of welfare workers in the development of protocols between themselves and other professionals and agencies. This will ensure that reports of child abuse continue to be investigated professionally and that maltreated children do not slip through the Northern Territory's safety net. Implementation and maintenance of this strategy will require employment of more than 20 extra professional and support staff. The program will cost the government \$522 000 this coming year and \$796 000 the following financial year. I am sure that honourable members will agree that such an investment in the Northern Territory's greatest resource, our children, is more than justified.

For some time, Territorians have been at a disadvantage in comparison with other Australians if they needed care or services for their mental well-being.

The Northern Territory government has been aware of this and, with its limited resources, has tried to overcome this imbalance. During 1988-89, my department will implement further development in mental health services by creating more support services in each of the Territory's major geographical regions.

I have also made provision for establishment of a sexual offenders treatment unit within the Tamarind House complex in Darwin. The proposed unit will provide rehabilitative services to people who come to the notice of the criminal justice system because of the sexual nature of the offences they commit. The specific aim of the unit will be to reduce the rate of recidivism among sexual offenders. There is an enormous cost to the community, as well as the trauma caused to the individual victim, if we do not ensure the safety of all Territorians from the risk of sexual attack. Reduction of the number of repeat offences will have quite an impact on related crime statistics.

This government has placed increased emphasis on community-based mental health services for some time now. The key advantage of this approach is that services can respond more quickly to community needs and expectations, as well as being economical. In this context, I have approved modifications to Tamarind House which will cost \$300 000 this year. In order to introduce and staff this expanded facility, a further \$390 000 will be available to the mental health services area of my portfolio.

My portfolio represents the integration of all the human services, except education, provided by the government. It touches on practically every facet of life in the Northern Territory. Therefore, it is imperative to remember that these services have a bearing on the overall well-being of the Northern Territory and its citizens. There is little point to economic development if we do not provide the balance of a satisfactory level and quality of services for the families who live and work here. Such services are a crucial element in our ability to attract more people and retain the Territory's reputation as a great place either to raise a family or to retire. We must encourage Territorians to seek a better lifestyle for themselves and to participate in the development of a social infrastructure which can meet the needs of all groups in our diverse society.

My department provides grants to community-based organisations for a diverse range of services including health care, services for the aged and disabled and services for families and children. Community-based agencies are best placed to serve the interests of local people. Such organisations will be encouraged to maintain and expand their role in creating better services for Territorians.

An area of great interest to Territorians is grants to sport and recreation groups. In this area, my department can concentrate on the positive side of its role in the community. Grants to community sporting and recreational organisations from the Sports Development Trust Fund will total about \$5m this year. From these grants, we fund travel subsidies for teams competing interstate as well as inside the Northern Territory. The system allows Territorians to achieve recognition for themselves as well as the Northern Territory at a national level. Distribution of these grants is based on the principles of self-help, community participation and local control of community facilities and programs.

This government will continue to support the creative arts through its assistance to many community organisations. Based on sound principles of local control, grants will support arts development programs, operational

subsidies, festivals, entrepreneurial activities, salary subsidies for artists, craftsmen and people with other special skills and so forth. Territory government funding has encouraged the development of a wide range of arts and crafts which are demonstrated in regular public performances and displays. Diverse community funding ensures that all Territorians have opportunities to participate in creative pursuits.

My department also offers professional assistance to these organisations through expert information, advisory and consultative services. Grant funds can be used for operational administrative purposes, organisation of major events, talent development, expansion of facilities, vacation care programs, recreational programs for all age groups, funding of youth centres, and in the sports travel subsidy scheme. This range of assistance applies equally to remote Aboriginal communities.

Community-based services will be further enhanced with the introduction of a palliative nursing service in Darwin. This service will allow some patients with terminal illnesses to be nursed safely at home with their families.

Grants are also set aside specifically to support young people who have decided to make their homes here and raise young families. During 1988-89, funds have been made available to build a 40-place day-care centre for children. The location of this centre will be determined on the basis of the greatest need in consultation with the Commonwealth and relevant planning bodies. This initiative will cost some \$450 000. In addition, I have approved funding for child-care centres at Karama in Darwin's northern suburbs and in Tennant Creek. These centres have been allocated total funding of \$243 000.

It is an unfortunate fact that, in the Northern Territory today, there is still a considerable number of people, many of them less than 25 years of age, who, for some reason, find themselves without a safe place to live. In recognition of the need to provide crisis accommodation to temporarily homeless people, this budget provides for an additional \$506 000 under the joint Northern Territory Commonwealth cost-shared Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, SAAP. An additional \$258 000 has been allocated for existing and new services under the joint Northern Territory Commonwealth Shared Home and Community Care Program. This program helps non-government organisations to provide services which enable frail, aged and disabled people to remain in the community rather than being admitted to health institutions. An additional \$86 000 has been made available for the provision of family support services by non-government organisations.

I have not forgotten that a large proportion of the Northern Territory population lives in remote areas in conditions closer to the harsh realities of the Territory's early pioneering days than the experience of our urban area. In the coming year, \$450 000 will go towards construction of health clinic facilities and staff accommodation in 3 remote communities: Harts Range, Lake Nash and Mount Liebig. These facilities will have a major impact on the quality of services available to people in those areas. I must make special mention of the health centre to be built at Palumpa at a cost of \$85 000. Palumpa is a rapidly-growing community with a commitment to self-reliance and independence. This has been demonstrated by the community's recent efforts in establishing a school there.

As everyone would be aware, Katherine is one of the fastest-growing urban areas in Australia. That growth will be accentuated when the Tindal RAAF complex comes on line early next year. In planning for that growth, I have

identified \$3.8m which will go into upgrading family health facilities in the town. This will be most evident at Katherine Hospital where new facilities will be built. When completed, the hospital will have 2 new operating theatres, a new delivery suite, central sterilising facilities and a new 20-bed obstetrics and gynaecological ward. My department has ensured that careful consultation has been maintained during the planning process with the people of Katherine, their representatives on the Hospital Management Board and the staff who will operate and work in the new facilities. Extra staff in occupational therapy and speech therapy services will be provided to meet the growing needs of the town.

As is the case across Australia, the prison population of the Northern Territory often exceeds the ideal design capacity of facilities. In order to address this situation and to provide for future contingencies in line with expected growth patterns across the Territory, I have approved construction of new, dormitory-style accommodation within Darwin Prison at Berrimah. It will be able to house 56 prisoners. I have allocated \$736 000 for the construction of this facility, a cost which is much lower than normal. The savings have been made possible by the projected use of prison inmate labour.

While on the subject of prisons, the people of Alice Springs will be pleased to know that a new institution will be included on the 1988-89 design list. The existing prison in Alice Springs was built about 50 years ago and is nearing the end of its economic life. I have commissioned a design team which will collate information from all those associated with the management and operation of the current prison. Their assignment is to prepare a brief seeking inclusion of a replacement prison on the 1989-90 capital works program with a cost estimated, at this stage, at \$15m.

My portfolio will have a budget this coming year in excess of \$200m. More than half of it - about \$116m - will go into salaries and related payments. About \$40m will go into administrative and operational costs and about \$6.6m will be put into capital equipment replacement. In recent years, financial constraints have kept capital equipment replacement programs to a minimum. This has resulted in some equipment being outdated or uneconomic to maintain. In order to address this concern, I began planning an aggressive replacement program in the last financial year. We can embark on this program from today.

The most significant allocation during 1988-89 will be the provision of \$1.7m to the Royal Darwin Hospital so that the highest priority items among its radiology equipment can be upgraded. Alice Springs Hospital will also benefit from an injection of funds into capital equipment. A computer-controlled system will be installed to improve its pathology services. This system will be linked to the Royal Darwin Hospital and will prove beneficial to both.

Not all money has been allocated to buildings and staff, and \$30 000 has been set aside to help develop research into what has come to be known as the Groote Eylandt syndrome. This money was to be matched by the Angurugu Community Government Council. I understand that the council has rejected the approach, but I am looking at other effective ways of achieving the required result.

An estimated \$40 000 will be required to prevent an outbreak of meningococcal meningitis in central Australia. Honourable members will also be aware of the need for my department's Communicable Diseases Centre to step up investigations into tuberculosis in the Katherine region. Such unforeseen demands on our public health system demonstrate quite well the unpredictable but necessary aspects of health care costs.



The Department of Health and Community Services remains the largest agency in the Northern Territory Public Service. It employed some 3700 people at 30 June this year. I have approved the employment of an extra 67 people during 1988-89. It is important to record here that officers recruited to every one of those positions will be engaged in the delivery of services to the people of the Northern Territory. In the area of general administration, my department continues to operate at the minimum staffing level commensurate with supporting our front-line teams, those people delivering services to you and your community.

In summary, it can be seen that limited resources are being used judiciously to improve the quality of life through the delivery of human services to a wide range of Territorians. We have not simply talked about the need to promote services: we have done the hard work and taken the tough, unpalatable decisions. We are now providing services to Territorians which are the equal, if not the envy, of the rest of Australia. We have reduced administrative costs and achieved efficiencies with 1 essential aim: to make each dollar go as far as possible in the provision of services to Territorians.

During the period since the amalgamation of 4 separate departments into the Department of Health and Community Services, there have been those in the community, in the opposition, and even inside the department, who said it would not work. The work of my officers this year has been exemplary. Their professionalism and their ability have helped them achieve a level of success in the last year, and in the formulation of this current budget, which will stand them in good stead for the future. I have been encouraged by the loyalty, good humour and dedicated spirit of public service displayed by the officers of the department during their first 12 months together. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government concluded his statement, and has left this House with only one conclusion to draw: this government wants nothing to do with local government. It wants nothing to do with the problems of real people. The cuts in local government funding contained in this budget and announced by the minister in his statement are part of a continuous and deliberate policy of neglect. This government's policy on local government, its policy on the needs of local communities and its policy on the responsibilities of the Territory government are summed up by its own policy on the referendum question on the recognition of local government. It is the policy to say 'No' and to go on saying 'No'.

There is no question that, while the CLP remains in government, the message to our communities is that the users are going to have to pay and the users are going to have to put up with it. This is how this government shares its responsibilities. It does not share its responsibilities through supporting the most direct and essential arm of government. It does not share its responsibilities through projecting and enhancing the role of local government. Really, all this government's policy comes down to is that, once a year, it hands down a bag of money to local government authorities and says: 'Get on with it'. And, every year, it makes the bag smaller while extending the responsibilities to the limit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a reason for this. This government is not, and has no intention of being, in contact with the real people and real people's problems. If any member of this government stood behind the public counter of any local government office, he would see precisely what its policy

has done to just and reasonable distribution of services to our communities. User-pays is all very well when there is sufficient structure, expertise and adequate ground rules, but we do not have those in the Northern Territory. This is the government's 'No' vote to local government. It is a 'No' vote to those dedicated councillors and staff who are struggling just to maintain services at standards which were considered elementary years ago. Above all, it is a 'No' vote to all Territorians who rely on local government for essential services. If the government were serious about local government, it would vote 'Yes'. It would vote 'Yes' to genuine program budgeting, both for and within local government, to adequate staffing levels and to training. Labor believes in the provision of adequate levels of funding to local government and local communities.

The devolution of powers and self-determination cannot happen in isolation and without a genuine will to assist at the Territory government level. We believe the local people should be effectively included in the decision making that relates to the areas in which they live. Local and community governments should be accessible and access should flow on to action. It should truly reflect the interests and needs of the people living in that area. It should not reflect the imposition of values and planning superimposed by a distant and bureaucratic machine.

We support the concept of homelands and outstations. This is in line with supporting Aboriginal people to lead a lifestyle that is akin to their traditional culture. The Office of Local Government has a very important role to play in assisting local governments and community councils to operate at cost-effective and socially-responsible levels of service delivery in their communities. We do not see local government as being inherently in conflict with the role of land councils. We believe the aim of both groups is to achieve a satisfactory quality of life for the people in particular areas. One in particular is concerned with the provisions of the Land Rights Act, whilst the other is intent on applying one of the sections of the Local Government Act. Both can achieve effective participation in major decision making by people at the local level concerned with land ownership and optimal living conditions in communities.

I would like to place on record that the role of land councils is vital in advocating the rights and interests of the traditional owners of the land. They are to be commended for the magnificent job they do in the Northern Territory. There is no doubt that most of the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory, and this is 28% of the population, would share this sentiment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this budget is an indictment of this government's past record and present intentions. It will mean hardship in the short term and do nothing to address the real and increasing problems facing local government in the long term. The minister made statements about money allocated to local government. When those statements are held up to the light and viewed in the context of the overall budget, the flaws are exposed. There is, in fact, an actual cash decrease of \$146 000 for the year 1988-89. When this is adjusted to inflation, it is apparent that, in real terms, the decrease is far more concerning. In fact, it is a real loss of \$2.296m.

This is not the sort of fact that matches up with the government's statement that it is committed to local government. It is certainly not committed to municipal councils. There has been a real decrease in that area by \$2.261m. Most councils have been expressing their concern loud and clear about reduced funding levels. They have left the government in no doubt as to

the consequences. We all know what it will mean for the average householder: fewer services, more charges, and increases in all sorts of areas. Already some new rates have been announced and others are in the pipeline. But, given the state of our economy, the ability to raise charges is extremely restricted. That means, of course, that the council budgets will be pruned and some services will have to go. We can expect the community services sector to suffer again. They usually do. They are expensive and are not a source of revenue. The fact that they are essential does not enter into this government's calculations.

The community councils have been given an increase in funding. It amounts to more than \$250 000 - a fraction of the cost of supporting the Chief Minister's ministerial staff. The program description area of this in the budget estimates is an exercise in oblivion, but it is hardly worth wondering exactly where will it be spent. \$250 000 is chickenfeed when you consider the number of community councils and their needs. This sort of money merely supplies wrapping paper to cover the problem. Of course, this is related to the concept of the user-pays system, something we will hear much more about in the future as the Northern Territory economy begins to slide even further into the mire.

The user-pays concept is particularly new in the Aboriginal communities. It is ideologically sound in that it is consistent with self-sufficiency, autonomy and independence. However, it cannot be implemented overnight. It will require gradual adjustment by the Aboriginal people and time will be necessary to enable its gradual and effective implementation. For it to be effective, it is essential that the communities have the ability to pay. Perhaps more thought should be given to how, in fact, this will be possible. What will happen to the already destitute range of essential services if there are difficulties with payments and debts accrue?

Mr Deputy Speaker, the concerns about the state of services in the communities include long waiting lists for housing to be built and maintained, the need for repairs to water and sewerage systems and poor coordination between the mainstream departments. In relation to employment training for Aboriginal people, it is heartening to see that the government has finally recognised the folly of its ways - that is, it has finally decided to include Aboriginals in the decision-making process in relation to determining what skills and employment options are required to enhance development in Aboriginal communities. This is to be commended and I look forward to seeing some positive outcome for the people in the future.

I can only hope the allocation of \$800 000 is adequate to address the problems. On the surface, it appears minimal. However, if it is a part of a bridging process linking into Commonwealth funding, then I trust that it is an appropriate allocation. Obviously, the bulk of the funding remains with the Commonwealth which continues to maintain the responsibility because the Northern Territory government is seen to be slow in dealing with its responsibility for Aboriginal people.

The establishment of the Aboriginal Employment Development Advisory Committee is a positive approach. The rhetoric on what its objectives and policies include is noble. What I want to know is the real detail on how some of it will come to fruition. The results will be available in time. It is important that they truly reflect some of the principles of equal opportunity and are not simply tokenism. The devolution of responsibility to community councils in conjunction with acknowledgment of the need for Aboriginal people to develop skills that will enhance community management are very much a part

of the Labor Party's policy. We would ensure that the allocation of funding could meet this objective.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I will take some time later to respond to some of the specific matters raised by the member for Arafura and his colleagues earlier in these sittings and during the last week or so through the media. However, initially, I will outline the budget for the Department of Transport and Works for the current financial year. Before launching into the detail which makes up the budget for the department, I would like to provide some broader information which I believe is every bit as significant as the raw data contained within the budget.

The Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works is a unique organisation in that it embraces responsibility for road, sea and air transport as well as acting as the government's construction authority. No federal or state department or authority has combined responsibility for such a wide range of construction and transport matters. As a result of this unique, broad-ranging make-up, the department has been at the forefront of Territory development in the decade since self-government. The end product of 10 years of dealing with practical problems demanding prompt, no-nonsense solutions is a department with a diverse range of skills and a can-do approach. Naturally, knowing the ridges, as individual officers of the department do, means that they are a team with a sense of pride and professionalism which belies the unfortunate stereotypes that are so often used to depict Australia's public service employees.

One of the most significant indications of a positive attitude within the department has been an ability to come to grips with the changes brought about by the necessary belt-tightening measures of recent times. This self-discipline, as exemplified by the corporate plan, is an excellent example of employer-employee communications and a credit to all personnel involved in its implementation and program. The significance of this in a budgetary sense is that this valuable experience has taught the department how to extract the greatest possible results from the finances available. Whilst this government continues to keep a firm rein on expenditure, it is pleasing to note that the allocation for the Department of Transport and Works has been increased by some \$11.43m over the expenditure for the previous 12 months and this has occurred against a backdrop of savings in administration and salaries through reduced staffing. Increased efficiencies within the department have allowed us to reduce our maximum staffing level from 1370 to 1296 this financial year.

As honourable members have learned already from the Treasurer, the Department of Transport and Works has been allocated \$182.35m for this financial year. The government is continuing its efforts to stimulate greater private-sector involvement in the Territory economy, but such a major change of economic direction cannot and should not be charted over night. The government must ensure that it is done in a commonsense and a realistic manner in keeping with contemporary economic realities. Common sense dictates that the government should continue to acknowledge the need of the construction industry, in particular the self-employed people who play such an important role in the Territory economy, by maintaining a capital works program and expenditure at acceptable levels.

The budget allocation to my department, which acts as the government's construction authority, reflects this commonsense approach to capital works. Proportionally, capital works again represents the major area of spending within my department's budget allocation and, once again, this money is being channelled into those areas that will provide the greatest possible stimulus

to the Territory's construction industry as well as projects which will lead to long-term economic development.

That does not mean that we have ignored community facilities. Some \$86.64m or 47.5% of the department's total allocation for the year will be channelled into capital works alone. That does not include, of course, capital items, repairs and maintenance and other income-generating factors. This is an overall boost in dollar terms in the capital works section of some \$7.35m on funding for the capital works in the financial year 1987-88. It is even more pleasing to note that, when adjusted for inflation, this figure represents a real increase of some 3.3% over spending for the previous 12 months. Public works will receive a total of some \$35.27m of the overall capital works allocation. While there has been a reduction in the total cash allocation for public works this financial year, there has been a sizeable increase in the money set aside for new works in this year's public works program. This allocation will provide a much-needed contribution in the private construction sector which, as the government appreciates, has been subjected to testing times of late.

Work is scheduled to commence this year on projects which include: a \$1.2m display and workshop area and a \$3.1m maritime museum display facility at the Bullocky Point museum and a \$1.4m aviation museum in Darwin; a \$2.4m extension to Batchelor College; an \$800 000 bus interchange at Palmerston which will be part of a total \$3.2m development for the satellite town; a \$500 000 upgrading of the law faculty at the University College of the Northern Territory; upgrading, at a cost of \$3.8m, at Katherine Hospital for provision of obstetrics, a central sterilising department and delivery facilities; \$2m worth of extensions to the Alice Springs police station; a \$600 000 upgrading for Numbulwar School; a \$3m police station at Alyangula; and \$1.32m for the humanities section for Aboriginal education at Batchelor College.

The budgetary net has been cast wide enough to embrace all regions of the Territory. We have been able to achieve a Territory-wide benefit by directing the thrust of our public works spending towards projects on the medium to small scale. In concentrating on such projects, we will provide direct benefit to the community, not only through the services the various facilities will eventually give to the public, but through the work which flows to Territory industry and to the community in general. However, while directing the thrust of our public works expenditure towards projects in the medium to small range, we have continued to recognise the economic need for government involvement in a number of key major projects. Using as a vehicle the department's Public Works Division, we have provided the horsepower to help drive the Territory construction industry. While such projects provide the initial economic impetus required by Territory industry, history has shown, not only in the Northern Territory but around Australia, that it is the major projects which provide the extra fuel needed to allow economies to operate in a higher gear. That is why the government has to continue to promote major projects capable of generating higher levels of employment and greater spin-off effects to local industry.

We are proud that, largely through the efforts of the Northern Territory government - and, I should acknowledge, the efforts of Senator Bob Collins as well - the federal government has now given the go-ahead for the redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. The redevelopment of Darwin Airport alone will be worth about \$65m and should generate at least 300 jobs on-site during the peak construction period. This is a key project, not only for the construction industry but, as we all know, other sections of the economy which

have been keenly awaiting the green light from Canberra on this development. I am sure that the confidence not only of honourable members of this House and the Northern Territory community but also of investors throughout Australia will be reconfirmed in this region of Australia that very much needs to get on with its development.

Mr Ede: Thanks to the federal Labor government.

Mr FINCH: I shall take up the interjection of the member for Stuart. As he heard, I acknowledged the very valuable work done by his colleague, Senator Bob Collins, who was most constructive.

Mr Ede: What about the member for the Northern Territory?

Mr FINCH: Over the last few months, the member for the Northern Territory also contributed to the lobbying effort in Canberra, unlike the very inactive members of the opposition in this House.

Mr Ede: That's rubbish!

Mr FINCH: My contacts in Canberra are far superior to those of the member for Stuart, particularly given his political allegiance. I can assure all honourable members of this House and their constituents that the achievement of an appropriate resolution to this problem came about through the efforts of both Senator Bob Collins during the last 12 months and the 3½ years of blood, sweat and tears contributed by members on this side of the House. I have no hesitation in giving credit where it is due, but I totally refuse to give an accolade to members opposite on this. They certainly do not deserve it. In concluding this short interlude, I acknowledge also the very good work done by my predecessor as minister, the member for Casuarina, and other parliamentary colleagues, particularly the member for Sanderson who also held the portfolio for a time, for their efforts over 3½ years towards resolving this issue.

Mr Speaker, because the Darwin Airport has long been such an integral part of Territory economic planning, the value of the project runs much deeper than either the immediate construction spin-offs or the obvious direct, long-term economic value to the Territory of a modern, functional, international terminal. All indicators from key sectors of the economy are that the Darwin Airport redevelopment project touches on an economic factor that is at once intangible and critical - confidence. Although the Federal Airports Corporation will be constructing the facility, the expectation that the project would be announced in tonight's federal budget speech was a key plank in our budget strategy.

Of course, the Territory government is involved in other major projects, such as State Square, to help provide extra economic drive. I will deal with that project in depth later but, for the time being, I will say that it will be worth \$87m to industry over 3 to 4 years and will create some 1500 jobs directly and indirectly, 480 on-site during the peak construction period. Of the total \$95m being allocated to the airport redevelopment and State Square, \$30m was included in Treasurer Keating's recent Loans Council announcement. That is an undeniable fact which honourable members might care to reflect on as this debate proceeds.

The third project in the development trilogy which the government actively supports is the \$100m Cullen Bay proposal. The government has committed itself to the construction of a \$6m ferry terminal and charter boat facility to be associated with the development. It is estimated that the initial

2-year marine and civil works phase alone will produce 200 jobs. The second construction phase, which will include the building of hotels and private accommodation, will generate 250 to 300 jobs at its peak. It is to be hoped that the developer, Darwin Marina Estates, will be in a position to begin work on the project soon and I am aware that steady progress has been made on the detailed design work and in attracting investors.

All the economic signs indicate that we are ready to turn the corner as far as the construction industry is concerned. Currently, several significant projects are occurring in Darwin and a number of private-sector developments are coming to fruition. The 3 projects that I have outlined - and there are others - in combination with the government's considered approach to public works expenditure, should see a marked upturn in the fortunes of the Territory construction industry before the end of the financial year.

Roads remain the other key priority in the government's strategy for Territory development. We continue to direct our attention to roads which are best-placed to serve the interests of tourism and other industries within the Northern Territory. This year's capital works allocation of \$51.4m to the department's Roads Division is an increase in dollar terms of more than \$13.6m over the previous year's figure of \$37.77m. The total allocation is made up of \$40.3m in pure roads funding; \$7.7m from the Department of Lands and Housing, which will be directed to headworks and subdivision projects; and \$3.3m for the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the majority of which will be directed to headworks and access roads for the \$6.2m East Arm fishing facility. Of the \$40.3m going directly to roads, \$24.9m is contributed by the Northern Territory government, with the balance of \$26.5m coming from the federal government. That clearly indicates a significant increase in the Territory's commitment and a marginal decrease in the federal government's commitment to our road systems.

Major initiatives in terms of national highways include \$5.7m for the Stuart Highway in the Tennant Creek region, \$3.8m for the Victoria Highway in the Katherine region and, in the Darwin region, \$2.2m for duplication of the Stuart Highway from the Howard Springs turn-off to Henning Road. In terms of national rural and arterial roads, \$2.1m will be spent on the construction of the Kakadu Highway and \$800 000 will be spent on the upgrading of access roads in Litchfield Park.

Under the category of urban arterial roads, \$3.6m will be spent on the completion of the duplication of Darwin's McMillans Road. In respect of local roads in the Alice Springs region, \$1m is allocated for the duplication of Larapinta Drive and \$1m for the Areyonga to Tempe Downs tourist link. In the Darwin region: \$1.58m has been allocated for the reconstruction of 14 km of the Arnhem Highway; \$2.7m for resealing 12 km of the Daly River Road - which will interest the member for Victoria River; \$1.15m for the sealing of Secrett Road between Farrar and Stevens Roads; \$1.2m for the Nightcliff bypass road; and, finally, \$1.5m towards infrastructure associated with the Cullen Bay development.

A total of \$32.58m will be spent in the area of repairs and maintenance this financial year. This represents an overall increase of \$2.5m on last year's repairs and maintenance budget. \$6.98m is allocated to public works for repairs and maintenance, an increase of \$1.1m. The Roads Division has been allocated \$25.6m for repairs and maintenance, an increase of \$1.4m.

The people who stand to benefit most from the increase in repairs and maintenance spending are the small contractors, those who feel most acutely

any fluctuation in the construction industry. In keeping with this government's philosophy, the department's repairs and maintenance budget has been structured in such a way as to ensure maximum benefit to small contractors. Growth in repairs and maintenance expenditure reflects the significance the government places on preserving the capital assets it constructed during the first decade of self-government. Given the boom in infrastructure development during the first decade of self-government, it is essential that the department has in place a comprehensive, ongoing plan to preserve this infrastructure. It is also of interest that the department is currently developing an assets management program which will help in the long-term management of major projects and infrastructure and also help in the forecasting of repairs and maintenance priorities.

As Minister for Transport and Works, my other area of responsibility is the Darwin Port Authority. Its total allocation is \$10.75m but this relatively modest budget allocation belies the level of responsibilities entrusted to it. For example, the mooring basin continues to experience substantial bookings which grow to 100% in the closed season for prawning. The basin, together with the proposed East Arm fishing facility, will support our strategy to turn Darwin into the base for the northern fishing fleet. We shall continue our efforts to attract additional shipping, both national and international, to the port. Only this month, we were informed that the Western Australian line, Stateships, intended to introduce a regular 3-weekly service from Fremantle to Darwin.

Darwin's geographic location should offer an entry point to Australia to vessels from South-east Asia. A railway, of course, would be an effective tool in marketing the Port of Darwin. In the meantime, we remain confident that the competitive backloading rates available on road trains, plus increasing efficiencies at the wharf, will eventually see more international shipping calling into the port to utilise the land-bridging advantage which the Port of Darwin offers. It is largely through increasing efficiencies and the provision of better facilities, such as the mooring basin and capital equipment like the Ro-Ro facility and the container crane, that the port is able to get the most out of its modest budget. I remain confident that, through the efforts of the Darwin Port Efficiency Task Force - a unique organisation that comprises all sectors of the port industry - we will achieve even greater efficiencies on the waterfront which will pay dividends in the form of increased shipping traffic. This will provide greater freight economies for the community and increased export potential for our growing manufacturing, mining and primary production sectors.

Already, the port is beginning to experience the benefit of having the services of 3 stevedoring companies. Until recently, the port operated with only 1 such company and additional competition is producing savings and efficiencies which will help to boost the port's reputation. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the initiative shown by a local company, Perkins Shipping, in initiating a regular Singapore service. Within a few weeks, Perkins expect to take delivery of a 2900 t container vessel which will be most suitable for mixed cargoes of the type which regularly come and go from the Northern Territory. That vessel will be of great benefit to the Northern Territory because it will provide a regular, scheduled service between Darwin and Singapore, with access to immediate transshipment facilities to the rest of the world.

Like the Department of Transport and Works, the Darwin Port Authority is learning to do more with less. It would seem that, as we progress towards the 21st century, public authorities will have to learn that this is the way to



the future. Because of increasing pressures on economies, both state and national, there will be a greater emphasis on leaner budgets with the additional likelihood of increased emphasis on user-pays principles. Both the Department of Transport and Works and the Darwin Port Authority are well-placed to adapt to such changes.

In the time remaining to me, I wish to address some of the continuing and irresponsible comments made by members of the opposition. I say 'irresponsible' because what the community really needs is a cooperative approach from all sectors. If members of the opposition ...

Mr Ede: What happened to the Tanami Road?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I shall address that interjection shortly, when I have finished what I am saying now.

What we need now is constructive debate, based on fact and not fiction. Time and again, members of the opposition and Labor candidates in Alice Springs demonstrate that they have a great deal of difficulty in interpreting budget figures and in adding up budget figures. They have a great deal of difficulty even in simply asking appropriate questions pertaining to their various regions and to their various shadow portfolio responsibilities. I despair at the lack of opportunity that the Northern Territory government has to be exposed to constructive debate. We welcome constructive criticism, but constructive criticism is based on fact not fiction.

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr FINCH: I will highlight some of that nonsense. I would have thought that the member for Stuart would have been most interested in the Tanami Road.

Mr Ede: Of course I am.

Mr FINCH: All he has to do, Mr Speaker, is ask what the program is.

Mr Ede: I asked when the last budget was announced, and you told me it was coming in this one.

Mr FINCH: The member for Stuart continues to lead with his mouth open and his ears closed. It is very difficult to put forward to him some constructive response. The Tanami Road is a road of increasing importance to the mining industry as well, of course, as to those communities in the region, isolated as they are. It is an extremely long road through very difficult country, with very poor materials available and a very poor water supply but, despite that, the Department of Transport and Works maintains and grades that road twice a year plus, and I say 'plus' to cover times when specific concerns occur. Not only that, it has an allocation in this year's budget, but I will not try to quote the figures off the cuff. I will give them to the honourable member later, but they are in the order of some \$300 000 or \$400 000 immediately. On the forward program, to come in later this year, there is a further stage that is being forecast that would add another significant sum. I will be happy to give the honourable member the appropriate information later.

All members on this side of the House would be aware that our unfortunate difficulty is that, in giving figures to members opposite, one cannot really be sure that they have the capacity to interpret them and understand what they really mean. In regard to major projects, a great deal of misinformation has

been spread about regarding the State Square project. What this project is about is, quite simply, jobs. It is about ensuring direct, definable benefits for the local construction industry. One might ask the reason for this. The answer is simple. If we look at the capital works program over the last 3 years, we can see that government, public-sector work is diminishing by natural means. We do not need to build so many schools. After the high rate of development since self-government, we are at a stage where we have built most of the schools and hospitals that we need. We have got on top of most, though not all, of the community-oriented programs and, as a result, there is a lull in the construction industry, particularly in the Top End. In Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and all other parts of the Territory, the program is quite healthy.

We had 1 project that was on the forward works program: a Supreme Court building. The member for MacDonnell has questioned whether it is justified. The justification is fairly simple. The judiciary has been operating under extreme pressure as the court building is almost 25 years of age. Originally, it was built to accommodate the needs of 1 magistrate and 1 judge and a few federal policemen. Certainly, the building has outlived its capacity to handle the workload of the judiciary which now requires 6 courts, not to mention 1 for use by the Federal Court. The building is no longer appropriate. In a technological sense, things have changed in the judiciary over the years. Matters of security are of increasing importance. It is still a fine building and this government is not about to knock it over, not by any means, but government had to assess whether to extend that 25-year-old building with a brand new, modernised section or whether to build a brand new structure. In the end, it is obvious to anyone that the most appropriate way to go is to build a custom-designed, tailor-made, modern and appropriate facility in the overall context of the State Square proposal.

In today's terms, the State Square proposal will be an \$87m project spread over 4 years. It will be a staged project that will provide an appropriate topping-up, a filling of the trough so to speak, for the construction industry. It will enable us to maintain a viable construction industry in Darwin and, at the same time, provide a facility that was on the forward program for a start. It will provide an appropriate facility for the parliament, and members opposite have made many denigrating comments regarding 25 members sitting for 30 days. I mention the staff of the Legislative Assembly who have had to put up with demountable accommodation. I do not know how old the dongas are at the side here, but they must be 40 or 50 years old and are most inappropriate for people to work in 365 days a year.

Mr Leo: There are no dongas down there. Go and have a look!

Mr FINCH: The member for Nhulunbuy interjects, and obviously he has no sympathy for those people who are dedicated to the ongoing operation of parliament.

I have made it obvious that I am more than happy to talk in detail about the State Square proposal. In fact, I have invited all members of the House to receive a no-holds-barred briefing on the project, and I am delighted to say that all 3 members on the crossbenches have taken advantage of that invitation. It should be noted that not 1 member of the opposition has taken advantage of that invitation. One can only imagine that, once again, they are not interested in hearing the facts.

The member for Arafura commented at length about local government. He mentioned a reduction in funding. I will mention 1 fact that he might like to

pursue with his federal colleagues: why is there no mention of funding of Aboriginal roads in the Territory's road program, with the result that we are now forced to take funds out of the local government budget for Aboriginal roads? Where is the commitment to Aboriginal communities by this federal government? The Territory government has shown its cards. It has shown its track record to be appropriate. I commend the budget brought down by the Treasurer, and I am sure all honourable members will agree with me.

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Gap ring was not even mentioned.

The budget presented to this House by the Treasurer was prepared at a difficult time because of the national scene of indebtedness, which has seen the removal of Australia's AAA credit rating, and the Territory scene in the past year which has never before seen so many people leaving the Northern Territory because they have no jobs, no money and no hope of getting any here in the future. People have lost heart, and not only those directly affected but everyone generally. Never before have I seen so many people leaving my electorate which, at approximately 84%, has the highest rate of home ownership in the Northern Territory. The number of people on my division's roll now is well down.

Mr Coulter: They have come over to my side!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The electorate of Koolpinyah used to have the second or third highest number of electors. Perhaps people are migrating to Palmerston, but I do not know what Palmerston can offer that we cannot offer in the rural area.

Mr Coulter: Ha, ha. They now have a swimming pool.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Except a swimming pool!

Never before have I seen so many 'For Sale' signs on fences and gates in the rural area as I see now. People are leaving because they have lost heart, and they are going down south seeking better conditions, better jobs or more stable employment, cheaper rent, cheaper goods and services etc. I do not agree necessarily that their reasons for leaving are correct, but they think they are. With a scenario like this, people will clutch at straws - and straws are what they get from this budget - that hopefully may agglutinate with others to form small rafts of security and hope. There is not much big, good news in the budget, but the little areas may turn the tide and start creating more employment opportunities which will bring more people to the Territory and stop this exodus.

Those concerned, and there are not too many in my electorate, will be encouraged by the freeze on Housing Commission rents. This is a good, electoral pork-barrelling action which makes one wonder when we will go to the polls next. The increase in payroll tax exemption from a level of \$300 000 to \$400 000 will definitely help medium-range business which no doubt will pass on the joy of this relief through increased use of small contractors, tradesmen and small business operators.

The 5% decrease in the compulsory motor vehicle insurance premium is good news also and will give heart to practically everyone in the Northern Territory. It might not be much, but it is a ray of hope.

To do away with the bed tax in relation to caravan parks is only common sense. As it was put to me, you bring your van to a caravan park in the Northern Territory and you are required to pay a tax to sleep in your own bed! This bed tax created ill-feeling in caravan parks in the Northern Territory that was out of all proportion to the money raised through it. It was another case of spherical confusion caused by the incompetence of a previous Minister for Tourism who also introduced the very contentious changes in school council regulations.

The Department of Industries and Development is to receive \$4.6m in this budget for the development of industry assistance packages. I hope this is directed to where it will do the most good: to the small entrepreneur in whom I have a great deal of confidence and who is often overlooked. I know of one chap who wanted to borrow about \$20 000 from the Northern Territory Development Corporation. To you and I and perhaps a few others, \$20 000 is a tidy sum of money, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we might save it. However, to this chap, it was a considerable sum and he could not obtain that loan from the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I believe that he had a viable operation but it was small bickies for the corporation. Perhaps \$20 000 was too small for it to see but, at the same time, the Northern Territory Development Corporation, as a lender of last resort, has lost thousands and thousands of dollars on many bigger projects.

The Chief Minister said in his speech that the value of horticultural production in the Northern Territory last year was \$13m. This statement must surely testify to the backbreaking work of so many small operators, many of whom live and farm in my electorate and have earned every dollar by means of what is a rare thing these days - hard work. I have repeated again and again that the time is fast approaching when our increasing horticultural production will saturate some markets and result at times in gluts. To maintain continuity of income and employment for the many who are in the industry, the government should give serious thought now to a value-added component to many of our crops so that, in times of overall increased production, whether by accident at first and then by design, the current horticultural industry can become firmly entrenched in our economy. Branching into a secondary industry from a primary industry adds jobs, hope, continued employment and people.

To touch on the fishing industry, I think it is pretty crook that the man who started or reactivated the idea of the pearl harvesting licences should be tossed aside. The fifth licence has not been granted yet. I refer to Mr Wally Rossiter who has been in that line of business for many years. He is a small business operator who is competent not only in his work but in the way he does business and, up to now, has been ignored. It is the great hope of the government that the 4 licences already granted will bring much more work to all the local companies associated with maintaining and equipping such vessels. I have been told that the reality will be far from these expectations. At least 2 of these licence holders are big companies from Broome. I bet that, when the vessels need a refit or maintenance in the off season, the chances of their returning to Broome will be pretty high. I have been told that the 4 licence holders are large operators. Good luck to them, but surely there is a place for a relatively small operator like Wally Rossiter to fit his level of activity into the scene where larger operators are working.

I was pleased by the reference in the Chief Minister's speech to a development relating to the exotic business of tanning crocodile and fish skins. This is excellent. What a pity it has taken so long to start a tanning industry in the Northern Territory. We could have been tanning our

cattle hides for years which would have helped development in the Northern Territory. With the goat industry established, although still in its infancy, I would like to see skins resulting from the goat meat industry included in any tanning operations. They are not really exotic, but they are not commonplace either. I hope that all the basic information needed to ensure its success is gathered before the new tanning company is established.

It is very pleasing for those of us who like the idea of decentralisation to see that \$2m has been set aside for a ring road around Pine Creek so that marginal mining developments can become more than marginal. It is also good to see that further development is planned at Litchfield Park. Visitor facilities will be increased at the 4 major places of interest. This will provide an enormous stimulus to the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. The more visitations at Kakadu National Park are restricted through the Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service charging entrance fees and closing sites to visitors etc, the more attractive Litchfield Park will look. It is closer to Darwin and has natural attractions equal to those in Kakadu.

The Berry Springs Wildlife Park sees the third and final year of a \$6.7m development. What the Manager of the Berry Springs Wildlife Park has done with the relatively little money available for this project has been nothing short of amazing. You could say that his blood is worth bottling. I hope that, when the development is complete, he stays on in some capacity. I have never seen a person with so much enthusiasm for his job and, if the Territory loses him, it will be to its great detriment.

BTEC is now in its final stages and there is a realisation that we may have irreparably damaged any buffalo industry we might have had by the indiscriminate shoot-outs of buffalo over the years. The encouragement offered to the industry of \$1.9m in support loans may be too little and too late. Special representations have been made to me that even more must be done to encourage the buffalo industry. The retention of high-quality breeding stock must be encouraged. I have said before that the Northern Territory government should be looking to other countries for the importation of selected breeding stock in appropriate ways - for example, as adults, juveniles, embryos or semen - to improve the existing breeding stock in the Northern Territory.

I was glad to see that research will continue in the cashew industry. I was very pleased to receive an invitation to attend the field day at Wildman River. I had not been there before and I believe great things are in store if the cashew industry can expand as it has expanded so far in what could be called a pilot project.

It was very interesting to read that the government is at least considering a release at Gunn Point of unserviced, residential land. I raised the subject recently in the local newspaper for which I write in the rural area. I believe there is a market for weekenders there. The land release is a subject on which there should be close cooperation between the Department of Lands and Housing and the Litchfield Shire Council because, to date, the council has not been notified of this development. I think it must be made perfectly clear from the very beginning that, if unserviced residential blocks are sold, they are unserviced and they will remain unserviced. Otherwise, we will have town people buying these residential blocks and then wanting bitumen roads, reticulated water, reticulated sewerage and all the services that go with a city block, without paying much for them.

I am pleased that over \$200 000 has been allocated for fire prevention, especially directed towards volunteer bushfire brigades under the control of the fire brigade. I have received a number of representations in relation to that matter. Of the total allocation, about \$78 000 will be allocated for uniforms, equipment, administrative equipment, motor vehicle maintenance and general operational expenses. \$60 000 will be spent on 4 new sheds, 1 each at Bees Creek and Virginia and a double shed at Humpty Doo. In addition, \$30 000 has been allocated for a grassfire unit module, and that amount includes a shed at Howard Springs. \$93 000 has been allocated for a new tanker at Palmerston to replace, I have heard, 'the beat-up old one that is currently used'. That unit was put together by members of the fire brigade and has served its purpose very well. The new unit should be something special. It has been designed by the Country Fire Authority in Victoria. As well as being an off-road vehicle, it will be able to deal with house fires. That is very important in our rural area.

It is good to see official recognition given to these volunteer brigades under the control of the fire brigade. I understand that the new Commissioner of Police is arranging a meeting with representatives and members of all the brigades at some time in September. I have been given a verbal invitation to this meeting and I have readily accepted that because of my great interest in their work. I believe that more encouragement will also be given to the competitions between these volunteer bushfire brigades. I refer not only to those brigades under the control of the Northern Territory Fire Service in Darwin, but to those which come under the auspices of the Bushfires Council, which has run its own competitions in the past. The more brigades in the rural area can join in these competitions, the more they will learn and the more encouragement people in the rural area will receive in the area of fire control and fire management.

In his speech, the Chief Minister touched on programs for increased control of that terrible weed, *Mimosa pigra*. A great deal has been done with very little result and I believe some lateral thinking might be necessary to try to control the problem.

Mr Collins: Send in the goats!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The member for Sadadeen raises the subject of goats. I believe they have been used ...

Mr Collins: They will eat almost anything.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They will not eat just anything! They have been used in small, pilot, eradication programs and perhaps greater consideration will be given to using the government goat herd which is not far from the location of the biggest problem area. Recently, when I drove along the Arnhem Highway to attend the Wildman River field day, I was amazed at the enormous increase in weed-infested areas along each side of the road. I had not driven through the area for about 4 years. *Mimosa pigra* is a terrible pest and any steps which might control it and bring all those areas of land back into normal production are to be commended.

Taken as a whole, this budget does not contain world-shattering good news, but neither is it all bad. It promises some help to little people and it may be the turning point for the Northern Territory to claw its way back again and develop a buoyant economy.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the budget as it relates to my portfolio responsibilities as Attorney-General, Minister for Lands and Housing, and Minister for Conservation with responsibility for museums and art galleries.

The area of greatest public impact within the Attorney-General's portfolio is the operation of the courts, both criminal and civil. In years to come, the Northern Territory government is to put considerable effort into improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the court system. In stating this intention, I must make it clear that this greater efficiency will not compromise in any way the high quality of services presently available to Territorians. In fact, the Territory government will go to some expense to provide our courts with access to state-of-the-art technology. This will include providing the courts with access to the most up-to-date, computerised, judicial information system in the country which will be introduced this year at a cost of \$1m and will serve the Territory's needs until well into the 1990s. In addition, I will ensure that the Territory's judges and magistrates have access to advice from professional court administrators to help the Territory's courts operate as efficiently as possible. Although this may necessitate some changes to the system, any decisions will be taken only after full consultation with the judiciary and, where appropriate, the private legal profession.

I would like to make it clear that my remarks should not be seen as a criticism of the existing system. One of the most obvious indicators of the efficiency of the court system is the length of waiting times and I believe that our courts are the best in Australia in this regard. In the Magistrates Courts, the waiting time for criminal trials and civil cases is about 3 months. In the Supreme Court, the waiting time for the hearing of civil cases is between 4 and 6 months from the time they are ready to be set down. While waiting times for the hearing of criminal trials have increased, with cases now being listed for hearing next year, steps have been taken, including the introduction of dual criminal sittings next year, which will ensure that waiting times are no longer than would be reasonably required for the parties to be ready for trial. In contrast, I understand that in New South Wales it can be up to 7 years before civil matters come before the courts and as much as 2 years for criminal trials. Obviously, the Territory is well-served by its court system.

The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory is an organisation whose innovation, talent and dedication is widely recognised throughout Australia and overseas. The commission administers a wide range of functions, including the provision of the resource base for the Territory's tourism industry, through the management and development of parks and the management of Territory wildlife. These are becoming major attractions for an ever-increasing number of visitors to the Territory and are supported by a highly-successful information and public relations program. As an example of this, Conservation Commission rangers at the Territory Expo display, ably assisted by specimens of Territory wildlife such as snakes and crocodiles, have been extremely popular with the public, attracting capacity crowds which should ensure increased tourist numbers in the next few years and provide obvious economic benefits to the Territory.

The Conservation Commission's most publicly-visible work is in park management. As I said earlier, our parks and reserves provide one of our tourism industry's most important resources. They are also significant conservation areas for our wildlife, flora, scenery and history. As such, our system of parks and reserves is a good example of responsible conservation

management which provides for the present and future needs of our community. The capital works program in parks has been increased by more than \$3.5m this financial year. This program has been carefully determined through an innovative planning exercise involving both the Tourist Commission and the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission has identified areas of priority for development in addition to continuing maintenance and management of our existing resources. A 5-year development plan has been put in place to deal with priorities within that time frame.

A further \$1.2m will be spent during this financial year on the development of visitor facilities in Litchfield Park. This new park has the potential to become one of the Top End's major attractions. Covering an area of some 65 700 ha and being only 80 km from Darwin, the park is right on Darwin's doorstep. The funding will provide facilities at Tolmer, Florence, Sandy Creek and Wangi Falls, including a suspension bridge at Tolmer Falls which will not only provide spectacular views of the falls but will ease access problems and minimise the environmental impact of increased visitor numbers. It is expected that the government will spend a further \$4.4m developing Litchfield Park by 1991, when visitor numbers are expected to reach 126 000 per year.

The \$6.7m development of the Berry Springs Wildlife Park is well advanced with the final allocation of nearly \$2m to be spent this financial year. This park will display the Territory's unique wildlife in world-class surroundings. Even in the construction phase, it has attracted international interest as one of the most advanced zoo concepts in the world.

A high priority in the Katherine region is the establishment of the proposed Upper Roper River National Park which will cover some 13 800 ha along the Upper Roper River. The Territory government plans to spend \$700 000 over the next 2 years to develop 23 km of access road along the Upper Roper River, together with visitor facilities. Stage 1 will be completed this financial year, at a cost of \$400 000, and will include day-use and camping facilities along the river, including car parks, barbecues, toilets and so on.

Mr Speaker, as a long-time resident of central Australia, I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the government will spend a total of \$700 000 on the West MacDonnell Ranges region this financial year. Some \$600 000 will be spent on improved facilities in the parks along the West MacDonnell Ranges and the other \$100 000 will provide for a joint Conservation Commission CSIRO study into environmental values and management strategies for the West MacDonnell Ranges region. The need to improve and expand park facilities follows an increase of 50% in visitor numbers over the past 2 years. It is proposed to develop infrastructure for a caravan park and camping ground to be operated by private enterprise, as an eventual replacement for the overcrowded facilities at Ormiston Gorge. A water search will be undertaken at Ormiston Gorge and visitor facilities will be installed at Ellery Creek Big Hole National Park. There will be significant development of walking trails, including the construction of the West MacDonnell Ranges trail linking Simpsons Gap to Glen Helen. Honourable members will gain an appreciation of the dedication and high quality of the commission staff at Ormiston Gorge if I point out that the park received 2 of this year's Broilga Awards, one for the best tourist attraction and the other for the best heritage cultural tourism project.

This financial year will see the continued development of the new Gregory National Park west of Katherine. Two additional rangers will be stationed in the park and capital works to the value of \$345 000, including fencing work to



the value of \$270 000, will be carried out. This significant park will cover some 1.1 million hectares.

A sum of \$880 000 has been allocated for the development of Kings Canyon National Park. This will include the \$1m capital works program which began last financial year. This program will provide a network of high quality walking trails, bridges and stairways around Kings Canyon. The commission is installing information signs on the walking tracks which are written in 4 languages - English, German, Japanese and Luritja, the local Aboriginal language.

For the information of the member for Palmerston, the Marlow's Lagoon Park is in good hands. I have been privileged to plant a tree there myself.

A significant item in the commission's capital works budget this year is the allocation of \$1.5m towards the fencing of parks and reserves. This 3-stage program has been put in place in order for the Territory to comply with the BTEC objective of achieving 'impending free' status by 1992. The fencing will prevent the free movement of stock and feral animals into parks and reserves, prevent the spread of stock and animal-borne diseases, improve the natural environment and reduce environmental damage in parks and reserves. The program is planned for completion in 1991-92 at a total cost of \$3m.

I turn now to the Conservation Services area of the commission. The Bushfires Council will spend some \$60 000 this year on the establishment of a new fire control region to cover the rapidly expanding rural area around Katherine. This allocation will cover the appointment of a fire control officer to the area and a new regional committee will also be formed.

Honourable members will recall from the statement made by the previous Minister for Industries and Development that the spread of the noxious weed *Mimosa pigra* poses a major threat to the Top End wetlands environment. To address this problem, the Territory government has committed major funding to control programs in the Top End this financial year. The Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and Housing will spend more than \$300 000 on the land under their control.

The commission has been appointed the agency for the administration of the Territory government's commitments in respect of the Strehlow Collection. Before the end of this calendar year, the government will legislate to establish the Strehlow Research Centre which will be the body in which the care and control of this highly significant collection will be vested. In addition, an interim steering committee is preparing a program which, in time, will see the collection consolidated and housed in Alice Springs.

I turn now to my portfolio responsibilities for lands and housing. I see the issue of forward planning and provision of land for future development as perhaps the most crucial task of the Department of Lands and Housing in future years. This has been one of the success stories of the Territory government in the past 10 years. With a program of necessary and farsighted land reforms, the government has been able to program for and service the needs of the future. The challenge before the government in future years will be to ensure that enough serviced land is available as it is required for development while, at the same time, planning and programming a service system to make the most effective use of taxpayers' money. On the one hand, we cannot fail to have land available for prospective development but, on the other hand, we cannot afford to prepare large tracts of land which are not taken up within reasonable periods of time. The role of the department as the forward planner for land use will be vital in this regard.

In keeping with this aim, the department will spend \$5.035m on capital works projects this financial year with emphasis on providing headworks to new areas of industrial, commercial and residential land in Territory centres. This is a substantial increase on the \$3.8m spent on similar projects last financial year. A further \$3.9m will be spent on provision of serviced sites in Aboriginal communities this financial year.

The department will carry out certain specific projects this year. The department is to undertake a number of studies in 1988-89 which will pave the way for future development. There will be a design study into the development of waterfront industrial land on the East Arm peninsula which will prepare the groundwork needed for subsequent capital works and release of land for commercial waterside development. The government intends to open Gunn Point for residential, commercial and recreational development. Design work which will pave the way for this development is under way and will be completed this year. In addition, \$2.07m has been committed this financial year towards headworks at Gunn Point which will pave the way for some land to be released in 1989-90. This work is an important step towards realising the potential of this area for recreation, tourism, aquaculture and agriculture.

An important new program to be undertaken by the government this financial year will be welcomed by the rural community: a program for fire control on vacant Crown land. This financial year, \$100 000 will go towards this program. In addition to this program, the government will provide an allocation of \$210 000 for the basic maintenance of vacant Crown land, an increase in funding over recent and previous years.

The department's computerised land information system will be further developed this financial year. The established database will be extended to include land-use information which will be updated continually through the planning and building applications system. Another major project in this area, already under way, is the inclusion of detailed data on pastoral leases into the Mapnet database. The government will fund a further 2 important projects in regard to Mapnet. Firstly, a new software and graphic system will be installed so that, by mid-1989, all standard government computer terminals will be able to view Mapnet information. Secondly, equipment and software will be installed in the Alice Springs office of the department which will give Centralians access to the full range of land information and mapping services presently available in Darwin.

A significant program, which will be continued by my department this financial year at a cost of \$100 000, is the preparation of serviced land availability plans for Aboriginal communities. For honourable members who may be unfamiliar with this program, which is inevitably known as SLAP - Serviced Land Availability Plan - it aims to produce a database which will detail the location and condition of services such as roads, sewerage, water and power on Aboriginal communities. It also identifies land which is available or potentially available for development on each community. This program is designed to overcome the haphazard way in which many Aboriginal communities have grown over past years.

There are a number of areas where, through the Department of Lands and Housing, the government is actively promoting the development of the Territory. For example, we are negotiating with the Commonwealth for the transfer to the Territory of various Commonwealth-owned lands around Darwin to free them for development. In keeping with the government's drive to foster a sound rural industry base, the department is working to identify and release more horticultural land. The next releases are expected to be in the Lambells

Lagoon area and the Hopewell Road area, which is in the region of the Darwin River Dam.

A number of projects outside the major Territory centres reflect the strong commitment of the government towards supporting rural areas and developing smaller centres. Nearly \$1m will be spent on commercial development of Humpty Doo. \$630 000 will go towards provision of serviced land for heavy industrial purposes while \$350 000 will be spent on commercial areas for light industry. An amount of \$245 000 has been allocated for the provision of 12 serviced, residential lots at Adelaide River. The growth of Borroloola has seen an increase in demand for public and private housing and industrial sites, and the government has allocated \$290 000 to meet this need. The government is to spend \$350 000 on the relocation of the sporting shooters' complex at Winnellie to make way for the extension of Tiger Brennan Drive. The Archer Regional Sport and Recreational Facilities at Palmerston will be further developed at a cost of \$700 000. Some \$250 000 has also been programmed for stormwater drainage and associated works for insect control at Palmerston.

In relation to housing, the most important news is the fact that general housing rents will remain static for the full financial year, providing a benefit in real terms to more than 6000 tenants. I should point out that, in line with the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement, the tenants who are receiving Commonwealth benefits or pensions or who are on low incomes will continue to pay rent which is calculated as a percentage of their income. This means that, when the Commonwealth increases pensions and benefits or when their income rises, those tenants' rents will increase slightly. However, as I have stated, the normal rental on Housing Commission dwellings, as distinct from concessional rents, will not change this year, and I emphasise that the Territory's concessional scheme for pensioners and beneficiaries is the most generous in Australia. With regard to pensioners, for example, we charge only 16% of their income with a generous ceiling for additional income whereas most states charge between 18% and 20%, with harsher criteria relating to additional income.

As honourable members would be aware, housing construction in most urban areas has slowed considerably in recent years, mainly because the Territory government's strong building program since self-government has now provided sufficient stock to meet most areas of need. This year, the department will spend nearly \$30m on provision of housing and auxiliary services. This comprises \$12.66m for housing construction, \$5.03m for serviced land, \$11.3m for upgrading of older commission stock and nearly \$900 000 for minor new works. This program will provide 176 new dwellings.

The government has committed significant funding towards upgrading older commission dwellings throughout the Territory and, as mentioned earlier, nearly \$11.4m will be spent on the program: \$6m in Darwin, \$3.5m in Alice Springs, \$1.28m in Katherine and \$600 000 in Tennant Creek. In addition to this, a further \$9.7m has been allocated for normal maintenance work and, in keeping with the Territory government's commitment to the provision of affordable home loans, the budget provides \$8.63m for new loans this financial year.

In a joint effort with the Commonwealth, the Territory government will continue the high level of funding for the construction of Aboriginal housing which has been provided during the last 5 years. This financial year, expenditure on the Aboriginal housing program will total \$23.3m and, of this amount, some \$17.3m will be spent for housing in Aboriginal communities and

homeland centres. Included in this allocation is \$3.9m for the provision of serviced sites in Aboriginal communities. All up, this will provide funding to Aboriginal communities and organisations for the construction of 230 dwellings in communities throughout the Territory. The remaining \$6m will provide housing for Aboriginal people in urban areas under the department's general urban housing program which I have already outlined. A program which was very successful last financial year, and to which the government has allocated nearly \$160 000 this year, is the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service which provides assistance to Aboriginal people in urban accommodation in Darwin and Katherine.

I will conclude this address by mentioning briefly some important projects which will be undertaken by the Museums and Art Galleries Board this year. The government has added an amount of \$6.3m to the board's capital works program to allow for the construction of a number of significant projects. A maritime gallery will be built at the Bullocky Point museum at a cost of \$3.1m. This will house the museum's fine collection of maritime articles, including a number of vessels which either are in storage or are deteriorating because of exposure to the open air. There will also be extensions to workshops and the car park at the Bullocky Point complex at a cost of \$1.2m.

An aviation museum will be built in Darwin this financial year at a cost of \$1.4m. This funding will go towards the construction of a 1750 m<sup>2</sup> hangar, to be built at Winnellie, which will incorporate workshops, display areas and public facilities. It will house material owned by the museum and the Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory. That material is presently housed in inadequate premises and is not on display to the public. The director of the museum is to contact - indeed, I believe that he has done so already - the Canberra War Memorial to discuss the possibility of the loan of a number of aircraft to the Territory. A further \$400 000 will go towards providing another hangar for the Aviation Museum in Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my response to the budget. I believe the programs and projects that I have outlined augur well for the orderly and responsible development of our resources and will address the needs of Territorians, not only during this financial year, but in future years. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will not spend as much time as other speakers have in replying to the budget. In fact, I will try to confine my remarks to some questions that I intend to raise in the committee stage.

As does the Minister for Mines and Energy, I take heart at the development of the mining industry in the Northern Territory. The further development of mining, be it of hydrocarbons, uranium or metals, will add significantly to the future of the Northern Territory. As the minister indicated last week, the further processing of those products, be it in gas stripping or through some other processing or value-added activity attached to those products, will certainly enhance the Northern Territory's industrial base. In company with the Minister for Mines and Energy, I feel that the Northern Territory can look forward to an economic base in mining. I think its products can lead to the development of industry and I hope that occurs in the not-too-distant future.

However, I will flag to the minister a question I am certainly interested in finding the answer to. In the estimates of revenue raised in the mines and energy portfolio, there is an estimate of some 22% increase in the amount of royalties payable to the Northern Territory from mining activity. I will certainly be asking the minister in committee where he expects that extra 22%

to come from. I am afraid that I do not know what activities are under way or what mines may be coming on line that will generate revenue of that order, because 22% is a significant increase in revenue. Perhaps there is to be some significant development in the very near future in the Northern Territory. The only other conclusion to be drawn is that there is to be an increase in royalty rates. Since that was not flagged in the minister's response to the budget, I can assume that that is not what is to happen. However, I certainly would like to know where he expects this 22% increase in royalty rates to come from.

The other question I have for the minister, and once again it concerns income to the departments for which he is responsible, is in connection with the Power and Water Authority. The budget papers indicate that there is something in the order of a 5% increase in expected revenue from the sale of electricity. The Chief Minister and Treasurer indicated in the budget speech that there would be no increase in electricity tariffs, and I am sure that all consumers in the Northern Territory will be eternally grateful for that. However, if there is to be a 5% increase in the revenue collected by the Power and Water Authority for the sale of electricity, that also suggests that there will be a fairly dramatic increase in consumer demand. I will certainly be asking the minister where he expects that increase in consumer demand to come from. Once again, I do not have any personal knowledge of where that will come from and I can only assume that the minister will have the answers on that.

In relation to the housing portfolio, for which I have shadow portfolio responsibilities, the Minister for Lands and Housing, who spoke just before me, indicated that the Northern Territory government considers that there is an adequate stock of housing and, if it is not an adequate stock, it is certainly close to that stage. He said that, for that reason, the development of further Housing Commission accommodation has been somewhat curtailed. I am sure that each member in this Assembly can speak for his own constituents, and I intend to speak for mine. I must assure the Minister for Lands and Housing and the government that, despite their views on adequate housing stocks, in my electorate of Nhulunbuy no such fortunate circumstances exist. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Nhulunbuy and, unfortunately, there is no allocation in the budget, unless it comes under 'Other' - that wonderful allocation that falls under 'Other' - there is no allocation for the construction of housing or any form of accommodation by the Housing Commission in Nhulunbuy. I hope that the minister will be able to assure me in the committee stage that, amongst the items covered by 'Other', there is some allocation for my very hard-pressed constituents in Nhulunbuy.

Mr Speaker, with those fairly general comments about portfolio responsibilities, I would like to thank and, indeed, congratulate the government for taking the step of proposing to build a lock-up at Galiwinku. Galiwinku, along with a number of Aboriginal communities which enjoy the services of a police aide, has had a dire need for such a facility for a very long time. I hope the program will be continued throughout the Northern Territory. Whilst I am certainly reassured that it is to happen in my electorate, I can only try to impress on members of the House that, in all communities where there are police aides, these police aides work under the most extreme conditions experienced by any employee in the Northern Territory. For them to enjoy absolutely nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, in the way of infrastructural support makes their task impossible to fulfil.

I think I have told members of this House before that the present police aide at Galiwinku has to pursue and prosecute his business from the back of a

motorbike. If he apprehends any wrongdoer, he has nowhere to put him and no means of transporting him if he did have anywhere to put him. It is an absolutely pointless exercise. His task is impossible to achieve. I must assure you, Mr Speaker, that is not an unusual circumstance for police aides in the Northern Territory to work under these unusual conditions. I only hope that the government continues to support the development of infrastructure of that kind, particularly in the area of policing within Aboriginal communities. If Aboriginal people are to have a growing regard and respect for European laws which we deem reasonable to impose on them, then it is only fitting that the persons who are there to prosecute those laws are given at least the resources that they need to do their work.

There is little I want to add to those comments. I will be asking a number of questions in the committee stage. However, I would like to reiterate some of the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, in a general sense. The Northern Territory faces a challenge. We have had an opportunity, over the last 10 years, and that opportunity has not been completely utilised. There is still the opportunity to turn the Northern Territory into a model community but, by and large, the Northern Territory has expended huge amounts of money for what is perceived to be, and correctly I believe, very little achievement. We are continuing to force ourselves further and further into debt.

You and I may think that that is okay, Mr Speaker, and that future generations should be obliged to pay for the infrastructure which will be enjoyed today. That is one theory of economics. Another theory of economics is that you do not spend any more than you have. I am not a Luddite in these matters. I appreciate that governments generally operate on a certain level of debt and service that debt but, when you reach the situation where 12% of your budget is committed before you start in order to repay debt, then you are getting into very dire straits and you are in very touchy water. We are not simply doing this to ourselves. This is not just something that affects you and me; this will affect generations. It is a developing problem that the Northern Territory has. I spent some time last week trying to explain to the Chief Minister and Treasurer that, between elections, governments occasionally take a pull on the reins and slow down.

All right, everybody stokes the coffers in the run up to an election, but this continual bombardment, the continuation of the fantastic expectations which have been created in the Northern Territory, can mean only that we will continue to load future generations with massive debt. At the moment, that debt is running at 12% of our budget. It is all very well to say that that debt has been incurred with the full support of the federal Treasurer, Paul Keating. That may very well be the case, but he is not going to pay the bills. We will have to pay those bills. If we cannot pay those bills, self-government will become an absolute farce. It will not be worth a tinker's damn. We will still have to pay those bills, and it does not matter who has given us permission to run them up.

I do see in the budget that the government has the ability to draw on some \$95m in borrowings. I hope, for the sake of all of us, that it restricts that to the absolute minimum, that it does not flog it right up to the full \$95m because that will load us down with more and more crippling debt. Next year, instead of talking about 12% of our budget, we will be talking about 12.5% or 13% of our budget. We cannot continue to bear that. It is impossible. If we are trying to develop a society where persons can reasonably expect to be free of the eternal clutches of the tax man, we cannot continue to develop debt now and not expect to be encumbered by that.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak in support of the Treasurer's Appropriation Bill. There are a couple of points I would like to make. Most ministers have covered their areas of responsibility in speaking on the bill. My assumption, and I think it is a general assumption among Northern Territory people in regard to this budget, is that it is not a steady-as-you-go budget, but it is a budget that provides the foundation for economic growth in the Northern Territory. It is a non-inflationary budget because, as the Treasurer said, charges in most areas have been kept to the very minimum, with the exception of a very small increase in the cost of water.

People need to understand how water charges are to operate and what pressure we come under through the Grants Commission in ensuring that we try to recover a level of revenue from that particular source. Many years ago, the Northern Territory was probably around about 40% or 50% behind the 8-ball in its recovery of water and sewerage charges. In 1981 or 1982, the Grants Commission insisted that the Northern Territory government pay particular attention to its emphasis on raising that revenue otherwise it would simply have taken it from us in another fashion. I believe that most Territorians appreciate the fact that, in the last couple of years, things have been tough in the Northern Territory in terms of our budget and that the Northern Territory government has had to take a pretty hard line in trying to set a proper direction and create a proper foundation.

The first matter I would like to speak about tonight is the Trade Development Zone. Of course, it is pleasing to see that the Treasurer has made additional funds available for this financial year for the construction of an extra 3000 m<sup>2</sup> of warehouse space and some additional funds, about \$790 000 I think it was, to increase the area for subdivision to allow for additional factory space at a later stage. The reason why I say it is most pleasing is that, over the last 12 months, the Trade Development Zone has really come in for a great deal of ...

Mr Smith: And most of it is your fault, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: No, it is not. It is working well.

If I had realised that the Leader of the Opposition would be in the House this afternoon, I would have brought in a particular Hansard where, as the Leader of the Opposition, he referred to the Trade Development Zone. He said that the Trade Development Zone would take at least 5 years before we would see ...

Mr Smith: Yes, and then you went around saying it would all happen in 12 months, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is reported in Hansard as saying that the Trade Development Zone would take at least 5 years to get going. We all agreed that it would take some time.

Mr Ede: It was to be 12 months, according to you.

Mr Smith: For you, it was going to happen tomorrow.

Mr DONDAS: It did happen in 12 months. We did establish the zone in 12 months. When we were talking about the final benefits for the Northern Territory, we were talking about the long term. We did not expect to have thousands of people working there in 12 months as there are in the Penang

Trade Zone. However, in 12 months, we established it and it is running. There are funds provided in this budget to allow further expansion of the zone.

All Territorians hope that the Trade Development Zone will be an example of what foresight can do. I remind the Leader of the Opposition of what he said about contingent liabilities in respect of Yulara. We do not hear him talk about Yulara today because you cannot get a room at the Sheraton there or at the Four Seasons, the Holiday Camp or the Stockade Camp. We need more accommodation there, and eventually it will come. If the Leader of the Opposition or his colleagues are here in 5 years time, they will not be talking about the Trade Development Zone because it will be a success.

I am also very pleased to note that funds have been allocated for museums and art galleries. In the past, the Museums and Art Galleries Board has done a fairly good job. After the large expenditure on the museum at Bullocky Point, I do not believe it could have expected to receive any funding for expansion until now. It is pleasing to note that funds are being made available for a maritime museum. I believe that is a worthy decision on the part of Cabinet. There has been a perception within the Darwin region that there are very few tourist attractions in close proximity to Darwin. However, there is our wonderful museum at Bullocky Point and the new maritime museum will provide our visitors with an added attraction. The concept of an aviation museum has been on the drawing boards for several years but, because of the lack of finance for such trimmings, so to speak, it has not progressed. However, the aviation museum will certainly play its part in the development of tourism as will Mr Speaker's facility in Alice Springs - the Ghan Railway which will become one of Australia's most popular attractions.

We heard the Minister for Conservation talk about additional roads and facilities for Litchfield National Park. We took the decision about 4 years ago to develop this park as an alternative to Kakadu. Some visitors to Darwin do not have the time to travel to see the beauty of Kakadu yet, if they have only 3 or 4 hours available, they can see Litchfield National Park. As the minister said, it is expected that the park will attract some 125 000 visitors next year. I believe that the decision to provide an additional \$800 000 this year to strengthen the road network is the proper course to take. I remember that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, in whose electorate the park lies, was concerned earlier that the government's plans might have bypassed the Batchelor region. However, I believe that everybody is satisfied. There are new hotels and caravan parks in Batchelor which will provide visitors with a stepping stone to the park.

I applaud the additional funding for the Department of Health and Community Services. Some \$11m is provided for new initiatives. I know that the minister has worked hard to obtain extra funding for various programs that have been put on the back-burner for various reasons. He has come under considerable criticism from members opposite in respect of various services required throughout the Territory. I certainly hope that the \$11m will go a long way towards alleviating some of the problems that those members are experiencing.

The Department of Transport and Works has been allocated \$41m for roads. That is not a large sum for roads when one considers that, in outback areas, it costs \$300 000 to \$400 000 per kilometre to construct a new road. However, together with the Australian Bicentennial Roads Development program and our own capital works program, it is to be hoped that there will be some satisfaction for road construction companies. Those companies have



experienced a pretty lean time in the last 12 to 28 months. Hopefully, that will help to alleviate some of the problems in that industry.

One of the highlights of the budget is the level of funding that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has received. I believe the government has taken what is a very hard decision in these tight economic times. However, the level of funding for the commission will allow it to refurbish a couple of offices in the southern capitals and to open a couple of new offices as well. More importantly, it will open offices in New York and Canada which will strengthen our international office operations in London, Singapore and in Tokyo. If we are to make greater inroads into the American market, we must spend money in those areas to try to attract people from that region.

Honourable members may recall that I spoke in the adjournment debate last week about the proposal to speed up immigration procedures. The federal opposition spokesman was not happy that the federal government intended to implement procedures to allow the speedy processing of applications. I understand that some 4500 to 5000 inquiries a week are made in the United States, especially in the New York region, by people who want to come to Australia. If we are to capitalise on that interest, we should be opening those offices. I suggest to the Minister for Tourism that he could perhaps give some consideration to expanding to Hawaii. Many people from Asia, especially the Japanese, visit that region. If we can promote the Northern Territory not only to the Americans but to their visitors as well, I believe that our endeavours may bear fruit.

The primary industry portfolio is also of interest to me, especially fishing. Many members would be aware that I played a part in the decision to establish the small ships' facility. One of my opponents called it a white elephant. A couple of years later, it is not a white elephant; it is doing very well. Additional funding of \$6.2m for offshore and onshore facilities for the fishing fleets is certainly timely. It will help our expanding fishing industry. I wish the new minister all the very best in his endeavours in getting these facilities into place as quickly as possible because there is certainly a great of interest in the future of our fishing industry.

Mr Bell: What about a few more pearling licences, Nick?

Mr DONDAS: We are not worried about pearling licences; they can come later.

The increase in the payroll tax threshold will have a significant impact on small business. The small business community often states that the payroll tax paid by business can sometimes be the difference between breaking even and actually making a small profit. Lifting the threshold to \$400 000 will certainly go a long way towards helping small businesses to expand.

I would like to make a couple of other points, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not sure how the first of these will go down with the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. It relates to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. During the weekend, when I made some notes for my comments in this debate, I was unaware that the Deputy Chief Minister would speak about the authority and its impact on the mining industry. I place the matter in the context of what is presently occurring at the federal level. I understand that today the Commonwealth parliament passed a resolution put forward by the Prime Minister in relation to the Aboriginal question. I will read his motion to the House because it relates to some of my thoughts in relation to sacred sites.

The motion asks the parliament to acknowledge that: '(a) Australia was occupied by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who had settled for thousands of years before British settlement in Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788; (b) Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders suffered dispossession and dispersal upon acquisition of additional lands by the British Crown; and (c) Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were denied full citizenship rights of the Commonwealth of Australia prior to the 1967 referendum'. Of course, the motion was carried on party lines. It contained an affirmation of 'the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the entitlement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to self-management and self-determination'. A reference to 'all other Australian subjects, the Constitution and the Commonwealth of Australia' was amended.

I have been minister responsible for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and can remember when its annual budget was about \$400 000. At this stage, given the Commonwealth government's attitude to Aborigines and Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory, I would put a proposition to my colleagues that we repeal our Aboriginal sacred sites legislation or offer it to the Commonwealth. Let it take it over. Let it see the problems that are associated in dealing with that particularly vexed question. I say that today simply because I see that the authority's annual budget is now in the vicinity of \$1m, and there are many other areas where such an amount could perhaps be better spent.

Mr Ede: It raises money with the user-pays principle.

Mr DONDAS: I am not going to become involved with the interjection of the member for Stuart.

As a member of this House, I simply asked myself why we needed to maintain a level of expenditure in excess of \$1m per year for something that the Commonwealth should be doing. I am not saying that the job should not be done. All I am saying is that, now that the Commonwealth has taken an added interest in what is happening in Australia in this area ...

Mr Ede: It is a retreat from self-government.

Mr DONDAS: It is not a retreat from self-government and you know it. The point that I am trying to make is that there should be uniform legislation, not just legislation for the Northern Territory. That is the best form of self-government.

I have also given some consideration to the situation of 8 Top-FM. It does not have a commercial licence but it raises two-thirds of its operating funds. The station management does a fabulous job. I can remember giving the station a demountable building and \$20 000 in 1981 or 1982, when it first received its C-class licence. Now, when FM radio seems to be thriving in other capital cities and on the Gold Coast, and when FM licences are worth \$3m and \$4m, I wonder whether it might be appropriate for 8 Top-FM to broaden its charter and become a little more commercial so that we do not have to give it even \$40 000 or \$50 000 a year for 3 salaries. Let the station stand on its own 2 feet. I believe it has the capacity and should be allowed free rein to compete within the private arena. I believe it would do a good job in that situation. I am not saying that the \$40 000 or \$50 000 per year that the station receives is an exorbitant amount of money for the level of service that it provides in terms of education, ethnic community affairs, languages and country music. I think the station is a fantastic facility.

My point is that, whilst we talk about the money we are spending on new facilities and programs, additional roads and tourism infrastructure, we also have the capacity to look for opportunities to save a few dollars. My view is that we could save \$1m by giving the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority to the Commonwealth which is playing a greater role in Aboriginal affairs. It has a much greater interest in the area. We have no say. No minister has ever been able, on my understanding, to give any direction to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. Let the Commonwealth minister find out what it is all about and we will save \$1m at the same time. I also believe that 8 Top-FM has the capacity to become more commercial and to save the government \$40 000 or \$50 000 which could then be spent in another area.

My only real disappointment with the budget relates to a matter which probably is a selfish interest of mine, although I am happy to call it that. I refer to the Marrara Sporting Complex. I believe that members on both sides of the House do not have a proper understanding of the role of Marrara. We all know that the Marrara International Indoor Sports Stadium has the capacity to draw large crowds. We saw that with the Taekwondo championships in 1986. We saw similar crowds at the hockey test recently which was staged at Marrara between Australia and the Netherlands, and the Australian men's and women's hockey championships. National soccer championships have also been held in Darwin recently. People seem to have the fixed view that the outdoor stadium at Marrara will be purely for Australian Rules. Sure, it will become the headquarters for Australian Rules. We have to look ahead for 5 or 10 years, and it is already clear that Gardens Oval is too small for Australian Rules grand finals.

Mr Palmer: Rubbish!

Mr DONDAS: It is too small now in terms of proper facilities for the enjoyment of the game. The member for Karama is welcome to his own view but my view is that, especially if we look ahead for 5 years or so, it will be too small. If we were to proceed with an international outdoor stadium at Marrara for the Northern Territory Football League headquarters, it would become the showplace for any outdoor competitions in the Top End. A turf wicket could be installed in the centre of the oval and it might even be possible, with the advent of Sky Channel, to hold a test match in Darwin. Fees for television rights are now so high that large crowds are not required to stage such events.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr DONDAS: The member for Nightcliff is a cricketer and he appreciates what I am saying.

I believe that we should be taking a far more active interest in developing the outdoor stadium at Marrara. Construction has been on-again off-again, and that is very disheartening. During the last few years, we have expended funds on design and the cancellation of contracts. I believe it is time we made a stand and got on with the project. In the future, it will certainly become a valuable asset, not only for the people of Darwin but for the people of the Northern Territory because an outdoor facility of international standard will attract the international sports teams that pass through this area on their way to Melbourne and Sydney. I read an announcement today that Premier Cain of Victoria is putting in a very serious bid for the 1996 Olympics. The Cain government is committing itself to many hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditure. What for? To promote Victoria and to attract the international tourists who will spend their money

there. All I am saying is that we should try to find the \$4m or the \$5m that is required and finish off Marrara as soon as possible.

As I said in my opening remarks, I believe this is a non-inflationary budget. It is a good budget. It was pleasing to read in an article in today's NT News that an independent organisation in Western Australia has applauded the decision of our government in setting its budget, and the direction that the budget has taken. In fact, it even made some comment that other states could learn from the direction that we have taken, in contrast to what honourable members opposite have said in the last 72 hours about our budget. Of course, we cannot expect them to stand up and applaud good initiatives all the time but, occasionally, it would be nice if a little bouquet were offered to the effect: 'Yes, we think you are heading in the right direction' - although there is always a qualifying 'but'. However, I believe that the people of the Northern Territory see this as a good budget, a growth budget and one that will lead the Northern Territory through into the 1990s. I would certainly hope that the members opposite are able to see, in the concluding stages of this debate on the Appropriation Bill and in the committee stage, that it is a fair-dinkum budget which will give the people of the Northern Territory a direction that has been required for a long time.

Debate adjourned.

POWER AND WATER AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 119)  
ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 120)

Continued from 25 May 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we have before us 2 bills which seek to do something that is quite amazing. They propose that the Power and Water Authority - not even the minister, but the Power and Water Authority - be given carte blanche to negotiate power rates with consumers and potential consumers. At the outset, I must say that we do not object to that. We do not deny that there is a need to provide consumers of large quantities of power with special, negotiated rates because, in return, they can bring substantial investment to the Northern Territory. What we do object to very strongly is that these rates will be negotiated in secret. They will not be known to the people of the Northern Territory and they will be negotiated without the inclusion of any guidelines whatsoever in this legislation to protect the interests of the taxpayers and of existing businesses in the Northern Territory. That, in summary, is what we object to.

Further, we object to this particular legislation being made retrospective to 1 July 1987. This legislation is to be made retrospective by 13 months or is it 14 months? The legislation is to be made retrospective by 13½ months. I want to know, as do all my colleagues, what deals have been done illegally that, at this stage, the honourable minister opposite is seeking to legitimise? What deal has been made that the government is now seeking to legitimise?

In this particular legislation, the government is asking the taxpayers of the Northern Territory to buy a pig in a poke. This should be the last government that asks the taxpayers of the Northern Territory to trust that it will do the best thing on their behalf because there have been too many examples where existing businesses in the Northern Territory have been shattered by the actions of this government. Mr Speaker, if you want a good

example, ask the previous operators of the Beaufort what they think about promises and commitments given to them by prominent members of the Northern Territory government, including the present Chief Minister, that they would not suffer any competition from other 5-star hotels.

These bills contain no guidelines in respect of who might be eligible for electricity concessions. They leave it solely up to the discretion of the Power and Water Authority. This legislation offers no guarantee to business that competitors will not be given electricity concession advantages. It offers no guarantees that the price at which power will be sold will be higher than the marginal cost of producing the power. This legislation is retrospective. It seeks, as I have already said, to validate decisions that have already been made - and we want to know what those decisions are.

The legislation provides no limit on how long cheap electricity will be provided for. In other words, it provides no guidelines at all to the Power and Water Authority and, through the Power and Water Authority, the minister. It gives the Power and Water Authority carte blanche to negotiate concessions for potential users of our power, and it provides no guidelines at all. It does not even provide any offsets. It does not indicate that, in return for receiving concessions in relation to power costs, the particular consumer will be expected to x number of jobs or x amount of capital investment in the Northern Territory. It does not even indicate that one of the conditions ought to be that we do have a situation whereby the householders of the Northern Territory will subsidise large, commercial, power consumers.

Of course, that is exactly the situation that many Victorians thought they were in. Who can forget the fuss, the outrage indeed, that was caused when Alcoa moved into Portland? There was considerable disquiet. I do not think it was a Labor government at the time; I think the Labor government inherited it. Nevertheless, whichever party was in power, the Victorian government failed to provide its citizens with information on the power concession and, quite legitimately, the people felt that they might have been subsidising the power operations of that major consumer of electricity. This is the concern that we have on this side of the House.

Mr Coulter: You really don't understand, do you?

Mr SMITH: I do understand. You are the one who does not understand. You are prepared to put in place a situation where the householders of the Northern Territory could be subsidising the power costs of a major power consumer, and they will not even know about it because of the secrecy provisions that you are putting into place. Furthermore, an honest Injun working in the Power and Water Authority who might want to bring that to the attention of the public can be prosecuted under this particular piece of legislation. That is not good enough and opposition members are certainly not prepared to accept that sort of nonsense.

What the government could have done, and what we would urge it to do even at this late stage is put in place protections for the taxpayers of the Northern Territory and for existing businesses. It would not be all that difficult to provide such protections if the minister would only think about it for a moment or two.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr SMITH: You have finished, have you?

Mr Coulter: You have.

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

Mr SMITH: This bill will finish you, mate. I can tell you that.

Mr Coulter: Oh, leave me alone.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, those guidelines could have included. There could have been a limit on the power concessions to large consumers, an assurance that concessions would not be given to industries that might want to come to the Northern Territory and set up in competition with existing industries and a guarantee that the price that is offered to these large consumers does not increase the price to other consumers. That is all we are asking, Mr Speaker. The fact that the concession has been negotiated should then be notified in the NT Government Gazette - not the price, but the fact that a company has been given a concession. That is a matter of legitimate public importance and should be notified.

Mr Collins: Why not the price?

Mr SMITH: In reply to that interjection, the opposition accepts the argument of commercial confidentiality. I know that the issue is debatable but we accept the argument of commercial confidentiality. However, there is some obligation on companies and governments which accept the concept of commercial confidentiality to ensure that the taxpayers of the Northern Territory, the people who essentially are footing the bill, have some guarantees that these deals are aboveboard and are in their interest rather than in the interest of a government or a particular company. Those guarantees cannot exist if there are no protections or broad guidelines setting out the limits of power concessions to major companies.

Instead of necessary guidelines, we have before us a cloak-and-dagger operation. I thought the government might have learned from its mistakes in other areas. Cloak-and-dagger operations at government level breed suspicion and distrust. This legislation will increase the level of distrust and suspicion about the way that this government does business. It will be a further nail in the coffin of business confidence in the Northern Territory because, when a major industry comes to the Northern Territory, businesses will be forever asking the legitimate question: 'Did that major industry receive a power concession or not?' They will ask that question even more pointedly when that major industry attempts to compete in the business niche that they have carved out for themselves. Under this legislation, they will not be able to obtain an answer. If that is not a recipe for disaster and for a reduction in business confidence in the Northern Territory, I do not know what is.

This legislation is a further example of the government's failure to protect existing business in the Northern Territory. It is a continuation of this government's track record of going to any lengths to attract business to the Northern Territory even if it is at the expense of existing businesses in the Territory and even if it is at the expense of the taxpayers who foot the bill. This government wants to give itself carte blanche to do anything to attract companies to the Northern Territory, in terms of offering them power concessions, and it does not matter if that is done at the expense of existing businesses or if householders in the Northern Territory have to pay for it. That is an attitude of total laissez-faire.

Mr Coulter: Say something positive about it.

Mr SMITH: I have said something nice about it and I will say it again. We have no objection to the principle of the government entering into commercial negotiations with potentially large users of power to give them a different rate. However, that has to be done in such a way that existing businesses and the taxpayers of the Northern Territory are protected. Those protections, sadly, are not there.

As we have pointed out consistently, there are always 2 sides to any negotiations that the government enters into with big businesses which it wishes to attract to the Northern Territory. It is a case not only of what the Northern Territory can offer in order to attract them; it is a case also of what the businesses can offer in return for any benefits. There is no sign of that in this legislation. There is nothing about the trade-offs in terms of jobs or capital investment that we might ask for from a large company that wants to come to the Northern Territory and expects major power concessions. There is no formula for trade-off that we can use to judge benefits to householders when projects come on-stream. There is nothing to ensure that projects that take an enormous amount of our electricity at a cheaper rate actually lead to a reduction in electricity costs for the ordinary consumer.

Mr Coulter: Trust me.

Mr SMITH: The Minister for Mines and Energy asks us to trust him. That must go down as the joke of the bicentenary. As the member for Stuart says, the Minister for Mines and Energy is on distrust overload. Unfortunately, he is too thick to see that. Mr Speaker, that is a pity.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition's last 3 phrases were totally unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. Unfortunately, my vocabulary fails me for a more fitting remark.

I would have thought that it would have been within the wit of this government to put in place a series of trade-offs so that, in return for cheaper electricity, we could obtain job and capital works guarantees. I would also have thought that the government could offer a guarantee that householders would benefit when large consumers take our electricity at a lower price. The government has always argued that we need new, large, consumers of power to lower the price of electricity. However, it is possible that concessions to major power consumers could become so attractive that there would be no advantage to the householder of the Northern Territory. That is why we want some form of guarantee.

In his second-reading speech, the minister argued that we were following the example of the states. We have checked that claim. The situation is this. In South Australia, there is provision for the Electricity Trust to sell at unpublished tariffs. However, any such contracts are subject to economic justification and the intent and the offer is usually made only ...

Mr Finch: By whom?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport and Works has not spoken on this bill and will have adequate time to continue the debate. The opposition deserves to be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have read this legislation very thoroughly and it does not take very long to see that it contains no comment about power being offered only on terms which the Northern Territory government considers to be economic. There is no reference to that whatsoever. In fact, the theoretical possibility is that we could give the power away or even pay companies to take it. That is the sort of flexibility which exists in this legislation. We could ask Alcoa to come to the Northern Territory and pay it 2¢ per kilowatt hour to take the electricity from us. In stark contrast to the situation in South Australia, we have no guarantees whatsoever.

In Western Australia, the Energy Commission uses contracts extensively for the sale of gas and prices are set purely on the basis of the price of the users' alternative fuel. Again, legislation requires that the price be economically justifiable. That is a pretty basic commitment made in Western Australia and South Australia, but it is not contained in Northern Territory legislation.

Mr Coulter: Tell us about New South Wales and Victoria now.

Mr SMITH: The only enterprises that the New South Wales Electricity Commission is able to supply at a rate that varies from the gazetted rate are BHP and the smelters. Even in Victoria, there are legislated criteria for the unpublished tariffs. There are no such criteria in this legislation.

This legislation is another example of this government failing to take into consideration and failing to advance the interests of businesses in the Northern Territory and the taxpayers of the Northern Territory. In a situation where we are paying the highest electricity prices in Australia, people will not put up with it. There is no doubt about that. In that context, I am not sure why we are offering this easy solution to the government and members opposite.

Mr Coulter: I don't either, but I intend to look at it with a lot of suspicion.

Mr SMITH: Of course you will.

Mr Speaker, there is an alternative. The bill can be withdrawn today, as our recent amendment proposes, and be redrafted so that it contains the necessary guidelines that would give the people of the Northern Territory confidence that their interests will be protected in these deals. We are not interested in knowing the exact price negotiated in such deals. However, we are certainly interested in knowing that the deals are in the interest not only of the companies involved but of existing businesses and the taxpayers of the Northern Territory. Under the proposed legislation as it stands, we have no guarantee whatsoever that that will be the case. The only entities which will be satisfied will be the companies which sign deals and the government. There is no provision for anyone else to be given satisfaction in these deals. Perhaps more importantly, there is no provision for anyone else to know that a deal has been done. What sort of society are we operating in when, in a place which has the highest electricity costs in Australia, the government seriously proposes to sign deals without telling anybody? That is not on. It is intolerable. It is completely unacceptable to us on this side of the House and, for that basic reason, we will fight this legislation all the way.



Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill. I was fascinated by the words of the Leader of the Opposition. He has made a number of statements today which seem in some respects to be in conflict with statements he made last week in this House. I cannot recall whether he made the comment by way of interjection or in debate but, last week, he berated the government for releasing the names of companies with which we had commercial dealings and said that this was destroying business confidence. Now he is saying that we will destroy the community's confidence if we do not release the names of companies with which we have commercial dealings. That is a total contradiction. Certainly, a few days have elapsed between the Leader of the Opposition's statements and his memory span may not be that long but, surely, the basic issue should be very clear.

Today, he accepts the principle of commercial confidentiality, but he seems to put a limitation on the level of confidentiality. He is quite happy to have confidentiality as to the price negotiated but he does not want confidentiality to apply in respect of the name of the organisation with which an agreement is reached. Or does he? If he does want to know that, why? During the last 12 months, I can recall a number of debates relating to commercial arrangements involving the issue of confidentiality with respect to the Trade Development Zone Authority in which the Leader of the Opposition berated the government, claiming that all details should be revealed as a matter of public interest. Now, however, he accepts the principle of commercial confidentiality. He needs to show some consistency. He spoke about failure to protect existing businesses but gave no indication as to how existing businesses or existing consumers would be in any way threatened by this proposal. He gave nothing except a bald, emotive statement.

I ask honourable members to look at the bill and at the second-reading speech made by the minister and to consider a few basic facts. The point that the minister made in his second-reading speech was clear from his third paragraph. He said that, under the previous Electricity Commission Act, 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'. On the other hand, NTEC was able to determine charges for electricity supplied 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 cheap, private generation. However, it had the ability to do it, Mr Speaker, and without gazettal.

The Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that other authorities have the ability to make charges without gazettal or public declaration and indicated the qualification of commerciality. Of course, that is exactly the reason why this is being proposed. That is what I would like to deal with this afternoon.

The Northern Territory has the highest electricity charges in Australia. Nevertheless, despite valiant attempts by the opposition to convince the community otherwise, it is a fact that electricity tariffs have not increased since September 1986 whereas they have increased throughout Australia. However, they are too high. More importantly, the cost of producing electricity is being subsidised by in excess of \$50m per annum by the Commonwealth government by way of a special purpose payment to the Northern Territory. I presume that will still be in place in tonight's budget. I will be watching with great interest to ensure that it is there.

This is the last year of the agreement for the subsidy. It will be extremely important, given that we now have reasonable marginal costs of production of electricity, that we maximise electricity consumption, certainly at above marginal cost, to take advantage of economies of scale. This will enable us to eliminate the need to subsidise continually the cost of electricity generation in the Northern Territory. Once the break-even point has been achieved, economies of scale would have a significant effect and possibly would reduce the actual cost of electricity to Northern Territory consumers generally. That cannot be achieved unless we can obtain economies of scale through the use of gas or electricity by new consumers. To obtain the volume of usage required to achieve those aims, we will need to attract the large users of electricity who can and do shop around Australia and elsewhere.

As the minister mentioned, we lost a manganese-dioxide plant because of the price that New South Wales offered for its electricity. That is a fact. Together with the minister, I was involved in those discussions and it was quite clear we could not come anywhere near the electricity price that was being offered by the New South Wales government. It was offering 2¢ or 3¢ a kilowatt hour. That was below marginal cost for us.

Mr Ede: You still could not have got it.

Mr HATTON: That is the sort of bargaining that is occurring around Australia.

We do have some opportunities to expand our electricity consumption. The minister has taken a number of initiatives and has sought the distribution of power to the mines in the goldmining areas south of Darwin. Proposals have been announced in relation to the Darwin-to-Katherine line and for the line to Jabiru. These are aimed at increasing electricity generation from Channel Island Power Station, thereby obtaining those sorts of economies of scale. If we are to attract gas-related industries, we will need to be able to negotiate arrangements with different commercial businesses. It will be possible to negotiate different rates, not a common rate. If we start by declaring the rate that has been offered to a particular business, that will be the baseline from which the next business will start to negotiate. I am sure that the member for Barkly would be well aware of the necessity for the government to be in a position to be able to negotiate those rates on a commercial basis and to keep such commercial information confidential.

In respect of the guidelines, it is a fact that the Power and Water Authority is required to operate commercially. These are amendments to the legislation. They are not new acts. The Leader of the Opposition was talking about trade-offs in the form of jobs and capital works. What are we talking about if not that? What are we talking about in relation to gas stripping or further downstream processing of gas if it is not the attracting of capital works and jobs? There is no advantage to us at all in selling gas at or below marginal cost. There is no reason why the government would want to enter into such a contract.

Our objective is clear. The initiatives are aimed very clearly at taking advantage of the potential for economies of scale through larger consumption of electricity or gas to obtain prices above marginal costs and to spread the capital component of the cost of producing power - and this includes the cost of the pipeline which is built into the price of electricity, and that is where gas can play a significant part - both of which can contribute to the removal of the threat that the loss of the subsidy will pose and to the

provision of the opportunity to reduce the general electricity cost to both domestic and commercial consumers. In turn, that general reduction would provide a better environment and attract other industries, including small business industries.

Unless initiatives such as this are taken, either electricity prices will have to increase in the future or there will need to be a substantial and probably increasing budgetary allocation to subsidise electricity production out of general funding to the detriment of the provision of other services and facilities to the people of the Northern Territory. We can take this sort of initiative. We can give the government room to negotiate commercially and reduce energy costs and the threats to our budget that can flow from not being able to obtain economies of scale. We can do something about reducing electricity costs and creating jobs and capital works in the Northern Territory or, alternatively, we can sit on our hands and watch the cost of electricity and our budgets blowing out and provide no relief for the community.

Mr Speaker, for a responsible government, there is no choice other than to put into place the capacity to negotiate on this. I for one would not want to hamstring the ability of the government to negotiate, in the best interest of the people of the Northern Territory, by making this announcements for general public distribution as to who receives what or who is involved. Equally, I have no trust in the Leader of the Opposition and his record gives me good reason not to have trust in him. The moment the Leader of the Opposition finds out that somebody has a contract - and I can see it now - we will have week after week of it in question time and mythical leaks through the press. It would be Hungerford revisited.

That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is after. He is not interested in looking after the interests of the people of the Territory. He is interested in finding a vehicle to spread his poison through the community and destroy the community's confidence. He is not about good government, taking initiatives for growth and development in the Territory or taking a rational and logical step. This is something that is not even new in the Northern Territory. It is a correction following from a recent interpretation of the legislation. It is not even a new initiative yet, suddenly, we have him on his high horse, jumping around and carrying on. Here we have a chance to do something and the opposition feels it must find a way to undermine it before it gets off the ground.

I urge every member of this House to reject out of hand the proposals of the Leader of the Opposition and this motion that I guess we will hear about in a second. I urge all honourable members to support the bills as they stand.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, thank heaven that the member for Nightcliff's theatrics are a little more convincing than his logic.

Mr Speaker, there is 1 very compelling reason why all members should reject this legislation. Inevitably, it has given rise to considerable debate, and indeed there should be much debate about the substance of these bills. What I have found most repugnant about this legislation, as I always find with legislation of this type, is that it is validating legislation. It is designed to fix up what has been done wrongly. I can cop that from time to time and, indeed, where the minister has make adequate explanation in this House, I have copped it and he has had my full support. On some mining bills, he has had my full support for the passage of validating legislation and the question of some mining ...

Mr Coulter: It is not validating legislation.

Mr LEO: It is backdated legislation, and it is validating legislation as far as I am concerned.

I can cop that if an adequate explanation is given in this House but, if members care to read these bills, they will notice that, in clause 2 of each of them, the commencement date is 1 July 1987. That backdates them by more than 13 months, as the Leader of the Opposition said. There was not one word in reference to that in the minister's second-reading speech. Because there was no reference to it, I want to know why. Neither I nor any other member of this House can afford to pass this legislation as it stands unless we know why it is to be backdated to 1 July 1987. If it is to be backdated because the government has made deals, if it is to be backdated because some illegal activity has been undertaken, then I want to know to what extent that has been undertaken.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing order 62 refers to the use of offensive words. The honourable member is suggesting that some illegal business has been carried out. There has been no illegal business, and I believe that the honourable member should be asked to withdraw the inference.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, even though he is only a junior member of this House, I am sure that the Leader of Government Business is quite aware that validating legislation is all about making illegal activity legal.

Mr Coulter: That is assuming that there has been some activity.

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

Mr LEO: I have already spoken to the point of order.

Mr Coulter: I will take it out if it will make you happy. July 1987 was when the PAWA came into being.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I hear as an aside across the House that the minister is prepared to change the commencement date to 1 July 1988. Fine! Let him do that in the committee stage or ...

Mr Coulter: It would still be retrospective, I guess.

Mr LEO: Make it 23 August or whatever. I will cop that in the committee stage if the minister wants to move it but, until there is some explanation why this legislation has been backdated to 1 July 1987, I am not prepared in any way to accept its passage. I want to know why it has to be backdated because, as I said, the purpose of all validating legislation is to make legal what has been done illegally. That is the point of it and, if something has been done, I want to know to what extent and to what value.

Mr Coulter: The answer is no.

Mr LEO: All right, then I can expect at least an amendment to the commencement date in the committee stage.

As for the rest of the legislation, I understand the need for confidentiality. I can fully appreciate the very dire circumstances that the Northern Territory can find itself in over the next 12 months, but these 2 bills will give the Power and Water Authority the ability to make deals which are not even commercially available. Those are the facts of life. Read the bills. There is nothing in this legislation ...

Mr Finch: Why would they?

Mr Coulter: Read the act.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I can accept that it may very well be a matter of government policy, and I can accept that, in Victoria, electricity is sold to Portland at a cost that is lower than the cost of production. That is done with the full knowledge of the people of Victoria, and it is a fact of life. I have no difficulty with governments behaving in that way. I accept it as the right of government to set policy to do those things, but the people of the Northern Territory need to know when it is done and with whom such a deal is being made.

If that is not done, precisely the problem that the member for Nightcliff alluded to will occur. The government will leave itself open to speculation, and precisely what happened in respect of Hungerford Refrigeration and the Trade Development Zone will occur over and over again. There will be speculation which, inevitably, will breed rumour and rumour will lead to a crisis in confidence. If the minister does not accept that as a fact of life, let him reflect on what has happened at the TDZ and recall for an instant the difficulties that the government and the entire Northern Territory had over the developments at Yulara. Recall, if you will, the difficulties that the Northern Territory faced and the crisis of confidence over the development of the 2 Sheratons as a direct result of the secrecy provisions.

If companies want to do business with the Northern Territory government, and I hope to God they do for all of our futures, they must be prepared to work within guidelines that are understood by the public. If they are not prepared to do that, then no government that purports to represent the Northern Territory or any body of people can possibly do business with them. It is absolute insanity to do it. It would create repetitions of the Yulara situation, the Sheratons, the casino deal and the Hungerford deal. It would go on and on, Mr Speaker, simply because people who were paying through the nose for electricity already would speculate about the deals that were being done of which they knew absolutely nothing. If they knew about them, fine. At least, their fears could be calmed, optimistically, or the bottom line would be known.

If this government has not been convinced by the dilemmas which it has faced over the years as a result of undertaking secret deals, then I am afraid nothing can save it. I really do not understand why the minister is so insistent on pursuing these secrecy provisions to the extent that he is. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I understand the need for commercial confidentiality, but not to the extent that we do not even know the people whom we are doing deals with.

How can an operator of a hotel open up a pub here when he does not know what his competition will be? He would not know what his competition would be or what rate it had for electricity. How can the potential operator of a private school open a school, when he does not know what his competition will be? How can the operator of any commercial undertaking open in the Territory

when he does not know what deals his competitors may have done with the government? Because of the secrecy provisions, he would have no idea who has received favourable treatment from the government. I accept that the favourable treatment may be necessary but this would give no idea who was receiving that favourable treatment.

Until there is some protection built into the legislation which acknowledges that the public has the right to know at least whom the Power and Water Authority is dealing with, we will be facing a repeat of the crisis of confidence that we have had ad infinitum for the last 7 years. It will go on and on. That will not instil confidence in those persons who choose to invest here. In fact, it will prove to be a millstone around this government's neck.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I never ceased to be amazed by the blatant hypocrisy of the arguments put forward by members of the opposition. Almost every time that they stand on their feet, we hear the same old, cracked record. The subject may be different but the same sort of argument is heard over and over again. We heard from the member for Nhulunbuy about this crisis of confidence. He said that we had it with the Sheratons, with Yulara and with the Trade Development Zone. The reality is that the concern expressed in the community resulted from the misinformation spread about by those people opposite.

Nothing has changed and they are trying to do it again. History tells us that the lie has been put to their arguments over and over again. They have no credibility whatsoever in this community but they continue to try to stir up trouble and to create concerns among the people of the Northern Territory. It is an absolute disgrace.

He went on to say that people need to know what deals are done and with whom. Is this the Labor Party consensus policy all over again? If it works for Mr Hawke in Canberra, it has to work here. The people need to know; rule by the people. The reality is that commercial confidentiality is very important in these matters and we heard both speakers agree on that. Nevertheless, in the next breath, we hear that the people need to know all about these deals. How can you possibly maintain commercial confidentiality whilst, at the same time, informing everybody what you are doing? It is a nonsensical argument.

Let us have a look at what the Leader of the Opposition said. He said that the householders in the Northern Territory will have to subsidise major commercial consumers. That goes to show how little he knows about how such deals operate. For several years now, we have heard members opposite bleating about the high cost of electricity in the Northern Territory, and indeed it is high. The reason is that the subsidy that the Commonwealth paid to operate our power supply for about 6 or 8 years was partly removed and, at that time, the cost of electricity generation escalated dramatically. We all know that it rose 2.23% per quarter for 2 or 3 years. We heard last week that there has been no price increase for electricity since October 1986. It is flattening out gradually but that is why the cost escalated as dramatically as it did at that time. Their mates in Canberra ripped half of the subsidy off us and they did it again the next year. We heard the member for Nightcliff say that he hopes that what is left of the subsidy will be maintained in this current federal budget, and I share his concern.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say that these bills provide no guidelines for the Power and Water Authority in negotiating these deals. What that overlooks is that the Power and Water Authority has a very responsible

management team which has the confidence of this government and the ability to negotiate a reasonable and sensible deal with whomever the operator might be. It is common knowledge that, when you are negotiating such deals, the price depends on the volume. In commercial circles, that sort of deal is undertaken every day.

The domestic consumers will benefit greatly from this because, as the member for Nightcliff pointed out, the economies of scale are such that the greater the consumption, the lower the cost of generation per kilowatt. Those savings can be passed on to the domestic consumer. This was indicated last week when the Minister for Mines and Energy said that what we are trying to do is attract major electricity consumers. I think he may have mentioned Nabalco as one of the operators whom we have been very interested in negotiating with over the last couple of years. There are other operators such as Ranger and a number of other mines down the track.

Perhaps we can attract some major industry. I recall when Comalco established an aluminium smelting plant in Gladstone. The Queensland government went to the extent of erecting a power station right next door. It has been supplying the electricity to that major smelter for the past 25 years, no doubt at very competitive rates. We must be prepared to negotiate with these people. It may well be that we cannot attract some of them because the economies of scale are such that New South Wales, for example, can afford to offer prices like 2¢ or 3¢ per kilowatt hour. We will not be able to offer that in the foreseeable future but we can certainly be far more competitive than we are at the moment if we have Nabalco, Ranger and a number of other mines feeding from our electricity supply system. That is what we mean by economies of scale, and the people who will benefit will be the people in suburbia in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and the other centres throughout the Northern Territory. They are the people who will benefit. It does not work the other way around, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe. Householders will not be subsidising the big consumers. That is absolute nonsense and nobody would believe it except his 5 colleagues. They have probably been sucked in by that story but nobody with half a brain would be.

Mr Speaker, the bills seek to amend section 15(2)(c) of the Power and Water Authority Act and section 30 of the Electricity Act. I refer to the minister's second-reading speech of 25 May 1988, in which he said:

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. ... the electricity commission was able to determine charges for electricity supply for one-off contracts with commercial organisations.

I will repeat that last point, Mr Speaker, because it is very important.

... the electricity commission was able to determine charges for electricity supply for one-off contracts with commercial organisations.

The minister went on to say:

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.

That is very significant because it is exactly the point that we are debating here this evening. Quite obviously, the opposition did not even bother to read that. If they did, it did not seem to sink into their thick heads.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the offending remark, whatever it may have been.

It is very important that the Power and Water Authority should be able to negotiate competitive rates. It is absolutely crucial that we have the ability to attract large commercial operators. I am well aware that some operators, even in this city, were talking about special deals several years ago at a time when electricity tariffs were escalating dramatically. They were major users and they were hurting. Maybe they did manage to obtain a better price. I do not know. I do not expect to know nor should anybody else. That is a matter between the Power and Water Authority and that commercial user. It is very important that confidentiality be maintained. We have already heard 2 speakers from the opposition confirm that point. Such agreements should remain confidential. I do not expect members of the opposition to understand that and, indeed, I am on record as saying on a previous occasion that the limit of their commercial experience and expertise would be running the local primary school tuckshop.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr SETTER: Perhaps the member for Stuart can inform us later about the level of his commercial expertise. I would be delighted to hear about it.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that we are on the right track in amending the legislation in this way. I support the comments of the member for Nightcliff and I commend the bills.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to move an amendment to the motion that the bill be now read a second time. I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and in their stead inserted: 'the bills be withdrawn and redrafted to include provisions whereby the right of the public and the parliament to full information relating to the basis on which financial arrangements are entered into by the Power and Water Authority is recognised'.

Mr Speaker, the legislation put forward by the government provides no guidelines as to the parameters of negotiations, the conduct of negotiations or the benefits of negotiations. It provides no guidelines as to how benefits are to be distributed or accumulated or how they are to be used for the reduction of debt. If an agreement results in no increase in consumption, it is a transfer of benefits from the public to the commercial sector or a public-sector subsidy to the commercial sector. Members opposite say that it is a matter of increasing the volume of usage. If that is the reason for this legislation, why does it not contain a provision stating that deals can only be entered into where it has been established that they will result in a substantial increase in the volume of usage which will allow a transfer of benefits to the average consumer?



If our very reasonable amendment is accepted and if the bills are withdrawn and redrafted to include provisions whereby the right of the public and the parliament to full information relating to the basis on which financial arrangements are entered into, we will then be able to look at the parameters. We will be able to see what the benefits are. We need to do that because it is fundamentally important that the increased consumption is not supplied at below the marginal cost. There is nothing in this legislation which says that electricity cannot be provided at below the marginal cost. The act itself contains a simple ballpark statement about commerciality. It could be said that a particular agreement might not in itself be commercial but could result in a commercial gain elsewhere in the community. If that gain did not occur, however, the party to the agreement would be in compliance with the act whilst the people who were disadvantaged would be the average private consumers. They are the people who are at risk. One of the basic problems with this legislation is that there is no referee whatsoever of who will be the beneficiary.

The government has signified that it is willing to alter the legislation so that it comes into effect only from today. We will be happy to see that because, as the bills stand, nobody knows whether the legislation will apply only to businesses coming into the Territory in the future. As the Leader of the Opposition said, there is nothing to say that such businesses may be cutting out businesses which are already here. A local business may have been working desperately, in the context of current tariff levels, to build up its volume to become commercially viable. It may be just starting to break even and get its nose in front, only to see the government say to a competing business: 'If you come to the Territory, we will provide you with electricity at half price'. The established local business, which has gone through the hard times, may well go down the tube, putting people out of work, while somebody new will obtain the benefits. Is that good business practice in the eyes of the government? Of course it is not! But there is nothing whatsoever in this legislation to prevent that occurring.

Which businesses are eligible? Is it only for current businesses which are expanding? Is that the rule? We do not know. The bills provide no information about limitations. If it is for expanding business, that may be justified, and I have no problem with that. However, it may be that, under the cover of a 10% expansion in a particular business, this government will decide to give a 50% reduction in tariffs which results in no real benefit as far as providing an incentive for the expansion of business or to new business. Will agreements only be allowable for current businesses? These are the sorts of questions that will be asked by the people who are hurting when they receive their quarterly bills for \$350 or \$400. They are copping it in the neck and they want to know if the honourable minister is offering concessions to current businesses or to his mates in return for favours. As it stands, the legislation will not answer the question and that is just not good enough.

A member: How are you going to fix it?

Mr Ede: I will fix it by moving an amendment that it be withdrawn and redrafted to include some safeguards.

Is the backdating of the legislation a means of avoiding embarrassment to the government? Is it an attempt to cover up the situation with Burgundy Royale so that the minister does not have to answer questions like the one we asked about the Beaufort Hotel this morning and the money it owes to the government for electricity? Does he want to give Burgundy Royale an

exemption? Is he trying to get himself off the hook because Burgundy Royale cannot pay for the electricity it has used? Or is it perhaps related to Hungerford Refrigeration or one of the other embarrassing situations which the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority has been responsible for?

Mr Speaker, who built the electricity grid in the Northern Territory? It was Territorians. It belongs to the Territorians who built it with the assistance of the federal government. They built the new power station and got it going and they want to ensure that, if there are benefits, they get them. They do not want secret deals negotiated by a minister who will say nothing more than: 'Trust me. You are "gunna" be all right'. As I said earlier, this government and this minister are on distrust overload. He has used up all the trust that people ever had in him. People no longer believe in his dreams. They do not believe his front-page splurges when he talks about various industries which he is 'gunna' provide for us and that we find never come to fruition.

Mr Speaker, you know for yourself. A group of pensioners live in the houses directly opposite your office in Alice Springs. Try asking them what they think about this proposal. Ask them if it is all right if we give the government carte blanche and let it decide that it will give benefits to people, possibly through an agreement that will be backdated. Tell them that the benefits will not be specified and that they will not know who received those benefits. You could say to them: 'Are you happy with that because, at some time in the future, we hope that this will enable us to reduce what you pay for electricity'. Mr Speaker, they will not accept that because they distrust the government.

The pensioners distrust the government. They do not believe that this government is looking after their interests any longer. Those pensioners have it pretty hard. They are down there in the middle of winter now with rugs around their shoulders and over their arms because, as a result of the high cost of electricity in the Northern Territory, they cannot afford heating. They are having a pretty tough time yet all we have from the honourable minister is that people should trust him. I can tell him that they do not trust him any more nor do the unemployed who do not receive rebates, the people who are hoping against hope that 1 of the dreams will finally come to fruition and they may be able to obtain a job. They are hanging in there. They are paying the full rate and they are suffering. Let him speak to them and tell them that, at some future time, things will improve for them. He will not tell them with whom the deal will be made, for how much nor the extent of the benefit. All he says is that they will be all right.

Mr Speaker, let him attempt that in Alice Springs when we come to the Flynn by-election. Let him spend the next couple of weeks going down to The Gap, out to the rural area and around the flats in Bloomfield Street. Let him explain to the people there that they are 'gunna be all right', that they can trust him. That is all that there is in this legislation: they are supposed to trust him!

Mr Speaker, they do not trust him any longer and neither do we. We have run out of trust because we have seen too many deals done. We have seen too much and now we want him to put it out on the counter, to specify what the benefits are and we want him to tell us who will be receiving them. At the very least, the names of those who will benefit could be published in the NT Government Gazette. If that were done, the people could at least know what industry was involved and whether the deal was fair enough for the Territory.

They might be slightly satisfied. They would be satisfied that it was not Bill Bloggs down the road who kicked in for the last CLP campaign. They would be satisfied that he was not one of them because the level of distrust is such that people do not trust the government any longer. They do not trust it and they are worried that there are pay-offs for political favours.

That is one of the main reasons for our opposition to this legislation as it stands because, as the Leader of the Opposition said, this Territory and the business community need trust. What is required is an environment of trust and hope. Businesses in the Territory need such an environment if they are to survive the hard times and come out at the other end. But everything that the government does is designed to erode that trust and that confidence. It will not adopt simple methods of ensuring that it can start from the bottom and build up that trust again. Here is an opportunity that we are providing free and gratis. We are moving this amendment that the bills be withdrawn and redrafted so that the government can include provisions whereby the right of the public and the parliament to full information relating to the basis on which financial arrangements are entered into by the Power and Water Authority are recognised.

That is reasonable, Mr Speaker. It provides a way for the government to extricate itself from the hole into which it has dug itself. I would hope, for the sake of business, which is looking for trust and confidence, for the sake of the pensioners in your electorate and mine, Mr Speaker, for the sake of the average Territorian who is suffering as a result of the highest power bills in Australia that the honourable minister will support the amendment and that, with a bit of luck, we can get back to some rational and reasoned debate on new legislation which will include the provisions that we have outlined here tonight.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I am at a bit of a loss to know why, when the government has good news it would not want to shout it from the rooftops or why, in reverse, it would give its opposition a stick to belt it around the head with. I may be very naive in relation to commercial dealings and I can accept that, while a deal is being worked out between the government and some commercial enterprise, confidentiality should be kept tight because, if it is not, the deal may fall through. However, I cannot understand why, when negotiations are completed and the deal has been signed, it should not be laid on the table with the full details of what the deal is about. The government is dealing with public money in the first place and that makes it different from deals between private concerns. It is dealing with public money but, as well, if the government has not done a deal which is of advantage to the Territory, the deal should not have been done.

Mr Manzie: It would not be done.

Mr COLLINS: Why not say so? You are supporting my argument brilliantly. If the deal can be justified to the Territory people, then it should be laid on the table, and you should be proud to lay it on the table. To do otherwise just does not make any sense to me. If it were otherwise, what purpose could there be to having done the deal? It should be understood by the commercial enterprise that, when the deal is finally signed, the details will be made available and the government will take away suspicion by saying that the reason it made the deal was because it would increase the use of electricity - as in this example - by certain amounts and that would allow it to lower the cost of producing the electricity. It would explain that there would be an actual reduction in the cost of electricity for the general public or that it would be able to hold it at its present level for a longer time

than it would have predicted otherwise. As well, if the enterprise were new to the Territory, it would bring extra jobs and benefits to the Territory. It is all good news. It should be shouted from the rooftops.

By keeping it under wraps, in my book, all the government is doing is giving the opposition a stick to belt it around the head with, and there is no point in that. The government would say that it was doing deals in the interests of Territorians. I would like to believe that that is true. If it is true, why not say so for heaven's sake?

Mr Speaker, let us go back to the Public Accounts Committee. I have been here for 8 years and you will remember, no doubt, that time after time a Public Accounts Committee was proposed by the opposition and was rejected by the present Chief Minister when he was Treasurer at a former time. That happened time and time again. But, there came a day when, as a result of the opposition continually hacking away at it, people in the community and in the CLP branches said: 'Listen, we reckon it is about time we knew what was going on'. The pressure was then put on the government by CLP branch members. You will agree, Mr Speaker, that that is the truth of the matter. Today, we have confirmed that the Public Accounts Committee will be a permanent feature of this parliament.

I would suggest that not only in this case of electricity but with deals that the government may do with commercial enterprises which I think can be justified - and I am sure they can be, and we have heard some very good arguments - if they were laid on the table and they stood up to public scrutiny, we would never have needed a Public Accounts Committee at considerable cost to the people of the Territory. If the deal the government is doing is justifiable, then let it put its cards on the table and let the people be the judge. I am sure that the government would restore confidence in the community by taking such a course of action. Unless the deals that it is doing do have an advantage for the people of the Territory, as a result of the process of giving an advantage to a particular commercial enterprise, then they should not be undertaken. It is as simple as that.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the government would not want to give out all the good news and justify its actions by demonstrating that there will be new jobs, new industry, overall help in keeping power costs down because of greater usage and possibly even reducing the amount for the person in the street. That would allay fears created by the suspicion which the Leader of the Opposition warned about, that the normal household user of electricity was actually subsidising the private company. The truth should be different. At least it should result in holding the cost at a certain level and preventing it rising in the future. It is good news: tell it. Open up the whole show and I believe the government will gain the confidence of the people. As I said in relation to the Public Accounts Committee, as a result of the continual harping of the opposition, the media and even people who were strong supporters of the CLP came to the conclusion that it was about time they knew what was going on. Today, we have a Public Accounts Committee as a result of that. Mr Speaker, I think I have made my point pretty clearly. To me, it really should be laid on the table. It is good news and therefore there is no reason not to talk about it. Why give your opposition a stick to belt you around the head with? It just does not make sense.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak very briefly on the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and to address my comments to his debate. That will not create any great discussion because the honourable member seems to be suffering from what one might term

an illogical, nonsensical and over-emotional overload. All he said was absolutely non-interesting. What is interesting is that this amendment is all about the confidentiality complaint.

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition earlier that opposition members do accept the argument of commercial confidentiality. We heard from the member for Nhulunbuy who said that he accepts the argument of commercial confidentiality. What we see here is extremely interesting. We have another resurgence of energy from the member for Stuart who obviously is making another bid. We are seeing a split, in fact, within the opposition ranks over this question of confidentiality. I would suggest that we are probably in for some very interesting times in regard to the opposition and its leadership situation.

What we have before us really are 2 very simple bills. The legislation is all about more gas, bigger consumers and reducing the cost of electricity to Territorians. That is what the whole thing is about. Arguments have been put forward on 4 facets. They move around guarantees, confidentiality, the backdating provisions and, in some circles, what is considered to be unfair competition. In regard to guarantees, the guarantee to Territorians is that section 17 of the Power and Water Authority Act obliges the Power and Water Authority to act in a commercial manner and within its budget. 'Commercial' means not running at a loss and not giving away electricity at lower than marginal rates.

Under the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the authority is obliged to be accountable and I would suggest that therein lie the guarantees. Logic is the other guarantee. There is no logical reason for the Territory government, through the Power and Water Authority, to be selling electricity for less than it costs to produce. We are talking about big blocks of electricity, big blocks of gas which, by virtue of the economies of scale, will reduce the cost to Territorians across the board.

There seemed to be an agreement about confidentiality except from the member for Stuart and from the member for Sadadeen. I ask the member for Sadadeen to reflect on the realities of commercial life. If his freight transporters, who carry his grapes, were to hock their price to all and sundry, that would be a simple fact of business life. Businesses do cut costs and, when they cut costs for volume, that is a logical commercial decision. The member for Sadadeen argues that, in respect of the Power and Water Authority, we are talking about public money. What we are asking the Power and Water Authority to do is to act as a commercial enterprise. It has to be able to come to appropriate arrangements, with those safeguards that I mentioned, the safeguards in the legislation itself and the safeguards of the course of direction of government. Quite logically, there is a need for a balance between what arrangements are entered into for what size deal. Even as petrol companies do not tell each of their agents what the price is to competing service stations, it is all about volume and the competitiveness of free enterprise.

I am quite surprised that the member for Sadadeen wishes to put government departments, government authorities and the government generally out of a commercially-oriented mode. It ought to be made to function commercially in its operation. As for the backdating, the honourable minister has made some noises about what his attitude is to that, and we will leave it for him to deal with in the committee stage.

In his comments about unfair competition, quite illogically again, the member for Nhulunbuy raised questions about hotels which might want to establish themselves, but not knowing what their competitors' arrangements were. Simply, they know what their competitors' rates are and the only question from there is whether their own operation is viable and profitable in comparison with those published rates. Logically, that is what it is about. It is the same for schools. School fees are published. A new school that was coming into the private sector would know what its competition was in terms of fees. It would do its own sums and bargain with the government. We are not talking about schools here anyway; we are talking about smelters, BHP, those sorts of larger-scale operations where volume is what it is all about.

Mr Collins: It would help everybody. It would be good news and there is no reason not to tell everybody.

Mr FINCH: Clearly, it is good news and the consumer will see the results of those good deals through his reduced tariffs. That is what it is all about.

Mr Speaker, the amendment moved by the opposition - I am sorry, I should not say 'by the opposition' because it is moved only by the member for Stuart - obviously reflects this fracture in the opposition's forces. There is a line drawn there between the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nhulunbuy, with a totally opposite view to that held by the member for Stuart. I would say that probably we will be seeing another challenge within the next week or 2 over this very amendment.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would not have thought such a small amendment to an act could stimulate such an extensive debate. I would like to put on record my strong belief that it is very important for the government to enter into arrangements with major consumers to attract a greater utilisation of gas and power which will ultimately reflect savings for all of us as a result of economies of scale.

Mr Collins: That is good news.

Mr TUXWORTH: As the member for Sadadeen said, that is good news. If the honourable minister can sign up those deals, they are very important to attract.

I think it is also pretty important that the minister or the government, at some stage, is able to show the benefit that special contracts may have for the Territory otherwise people will become suspicious of the benefits, and there is no need for that. If they are good for us, why not let us know about them? I am not talking about the details of the contracts but about how a special deal might increase consumption, provide greater reliability by providing additional transmission services, create employment or enable the establishment of a new industry. Those are broad benefits that the government could very easily demonstrate in any deal that it does.

I think it is also pretty important to get above the suspicion level, to indicate publicly when the government does a deal and who the parties to the deal are. There are good reasons for that. One reason is to encourage other similar industries to become involved in a deal with the government and provide a little more incentive. For instance, if the government announces that it has done a major deal with a smelting company or a manufacturing company on the block usage of electricity, other people in the same business might say, 'That looks like the place to be. Let us go and have a look'.

It also has the benefit of letting existing operators in the game know where their competitors stand in the market and how they relate to their competitors. Much play has been made tonight of how one business might obtain a better deal than another. If you have an existing business in the Northern Territory, which you have struggled to establish, and find that a new business has arrived that has a special electricity arrangement, that makes it pretty tough, and it is not unreasonable that you should have the opportunity to go to the government yourself and seek similar treatment.

It is important too that the government issue broad guidelines, and that point has already been raised by other speakers. I think that broad guidelines are important for commercial confidence. The sort of guidelines that I would anticipate are that the minister can say that any business that draws down 50 MW or a certain amount of electricity in a specified area takes it at a certain rate. If it takes it at off-peak times, it will get it a 50% reduction. If it wants to have its business in the Pine Creek area, the government will pay for its transmission costs or, if it wants to have it at Jabiru, the government would share the transmission costs. I am talking about broad indicators of the conditions under which the government is prepared to see new businesses and existing expanding businesses enter into block usage of electricity.

It has been argued that this amendment will allow the Power and Water Authority to go out and sell electricity and gas. On the surface, it appears that the Power and Water Authority has sold the gas and now we need to do something to put the matter in order. The minister said that that is not true and he would be quite happy to delete the reference to the 1987 commencement date from the bill if that were necessary. I would encourage him to do that.

Mr Coulter: What is your argument?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if the minister will be patient for a moment, I will take him to where the argument leads me and he can work it out for himself. I will read into Hansard the existing section 30 in the Electricity Act:

- (1) The minister may, from time to time, by notice in the Gazette, fix or vary the charges that are payable to the commissioner or a licensee for, or in relation to, the supply of electricity and in the same or a subsequent notice may specify the method by which a charge shall be calculated in respect of a charge period during which the charges are fixed or varied;
- (2) a notice under subsection (1) may specify different charges for or in relation to the supply of electricity for different uses in different localities or in different circumstances;
- (3) a person to whom electricity is supplied for a service as provided by the commissioner or a licensee is liable to make payment to the commission or the licensee, as the case may be, in accordance with the notice under subsection (1).

We are adding to that the following words:

The foregoing provisions of this section apply to all charges payable to the authority or a licensee for or in relation to the supply of electricity except to the extent that a contract or agreement in writing, entered into by the authority in pursuance of its powers

under the Power and Water Authority Act, expressly otherwise provides.

There are only a couple of relevant words in that and they are these: 'The minister may, from time to time, by notice in the Gazette, fix and vary the charges ...'. Also, the last words of the proposed amendment, which are: '... except to the extent that a contract or agreement in writing, entered into by the authority in pursuance of its powers under the Power and Water Authority Act, expressly otherwise provides'. That would indicate that the government has or is about to sign an agreement for the block usage of electricity. Any person wishing to sign for block usage of electricity will not sign an agreement that allows the minister to vary the agreed price by a notice in the Gazette. What the minister is doing there is giving himself the power to sign the agreement at a fixed price and probably over a fixed period of time without the ability for the agreement to be changed by a notice in the Gazette. If that is the case, that is fine. I do not have any argument with that.

Mr Coulter: Once again, what is your point?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if the minister can be patient, we will get to the point.

Mr Coulter: It is very difficult.

Mr TUXWORTH: I know he finds it difficult, Mr Speaker. His capacity can be very limited when he wants it to be.

Mr Coulter: So far you have done nothing but praise it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if the minister expected me to get up and can it all, I am sorry that I have disappointed him. I rose to say that, if the minister has not signed an agreement already that dates back to 1987, there should be no reason why the commencement date of 1987 should exist. On the other hand, if he is about to sign an agreement for the block usage of power that does not allow for him to change the rates for that power during the course of the contract by a notice in the Gazette, let him stand up and say so. Let him also say, at the same time, whom we are doing the deal with, because I think that is important.

The member for Jingili argued that the commercial confidentiality of these agreements is absolutely paramount, that the rates struck between any proposed user and the PAWA is a matter for themselves, that the PAWA must remain competitive and that, on that basis, the rates have nothing to do with the general consumers in the Northern Territory. I would say to the member for Jingili that, whilst those sentiments are admirable, they are hogwash in today's climate. The reality is that people in the community are having extreme difficulty in paying their electricity bills. Mr Speaker, you may or may not be aware of it but there are many people who are settling those bills on time payment. They come through my door, as they probably come through other members' doors, asking for help to come to an agreement with the PAWA because of what is about to happen to them as a result of non-payment. I am not talking about a small number of people in the community. In particular, this affects many small businesses. Under those circumstances, it is naive for the government to say that it is prepared to do a special deal with some people for a certain rate but that it is not prepared to let anybody know the details and that all the poor people who cannot pay the rates that it has set for them will have to bite their lips and take it. I do not think people are prepared to do that any longer.



The member for Jingili also said that, because the Northern Territory needs to be competitive, the Power and Water Authority should be able to set its own rates in secrecy or confidence - however, one likes to term it - and that we cannot be compared with the states. There is a need to compare the Territory with the states because, in the states, many consumers have the option of whether they use coal, gas, oil, hydro or a range of generating systems. We do not have that option in the Territory. We are locked into a sole source and it has to benefit everybody. Also, it has to be seen to benefit everybody or very quickly it will become an albatross around the government's neck. I think it is impossible politically to tell existing consumers to mind their own business in relation to any deals that the government wants to do. If the government is foreshadowing that it intends to enter into some long-term contracts, it is not unreasonable that it should indicate how long those contracts would run.

That brings me to the comments of the member for Nightcliff who said that the Power and Water Authority should not reveal costs and details of special deals because it would lose its commercial advantage with any future users who might want to take power. That too is an admirable proposition, but it is almost impossible to maintain because you cannot keep those matters secret. I will just give an example of why they cannot be kept secret. Let me use the existing agreements that the government has with the people who are providing gas to the government's powerhouses. As many as 200 people were involved in the signing of some of those agreements. Collectively, with all the companies and the lawyers concerned, hundreds of people were involved. For the government to say that it can keep the details of a special agreement secret in order to maintain its commercial advantage is just not realistic.

Apart from that, any electrical engineer worth his salt can work out the possible rates that are being paid by going backwards down the scale. How much power are they consuming? How far is it being transmitted? What is the repayment time? How much capital infrastructure is involved? Those figures are generally available if anyone wants to go looking for them. A pretty close estimate of what is being paid for the power can be arrived at. I would venture to say that that was the case in Victoria with the aluminium smelter. A great deal of effort was made to keep the actual generating costs quiet because it would not have pleased the consuming public to find out how little the companies were paying for their power. The reality was that, if you sat down with a calculator, it would not take you long to work out exactly what the price was.

Under those circumstances, there is probably a great deal of value to be gained by the government - and I put this to the minister - by doing 2 things. It should put on the Table tonight, or at another time, a list of guidelines that the Power and Water Authority considers should be available to block users of power who come to the Northern Territory. That can be done town by town or right across the Territory or whatever. That might be a good incentive to encourage people to come here. They would know what was in store and that everybody had the same rules. Another thing which could be done is to give sufficient details of completed agreements to satisfy people that they are fair and equitable to all the consumers of the Northern Territory. That should be demonstrable if the agreements are any good.

The member for Stuart has put forward an amendment that in some ways reflects what I am saying. However, I do not think tonight is the night for that particular proposition to be considered and debated and it is one that ought to be ...

Mr Coulter: An amendment for the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr TUXWORTH: I cannot speak for the member for Nhulunbuy but I can say that, in terms of the bills we are debating tonight, I do not think it is reasonable to consider a proposition like that now. However, it is perfectly reasonable and absolutely necessary, at some future stage, for the minister to outline the proposed arrangements and parameters that block users of power are likely to encounter within the Northern Territory. It is naive for the government to assume that it can sign agreements without releasing the facts to the consumers of the Northern Territory because, one way or another, they will get them.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, it is interesting that the member for Nhulunbuy did not move the amendment. In fact, as Hansard will show tomorrow, he argued for the exact reverse of what this amendment contains. He argued strenuously for confidentiality. Likewise, the Leader of the Opposition did not speak to this amendment. He spoke about the confidentiality of commercial information. The member for Stuart then moved this amendment which contradicts the line taken by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr COULTER: It is quite clear and Hansard will show that tomorrow. The opposition has not got its act together and its members do not know what they are talking about. The story of this amendment is the story of division within the Labor Party. The member for Nhulunbuy could not put the amendment that he circulated. He did not have the courage to do so. In fact, his speech directly contradicted the terms of the amendment circulated in his name this evening. The Leader of the Opposition then said ...

Mr Smith: No, I spoke first.

Mr COULTER: I am not talking about the order in which you spoke. The Leader of the Opposition argued against this very amendment, but the member for Stuart said we had to pass it. The opposition is divided. That is the sorry fact fact that will appear in detail in the public record tomorrow. Members opposite do not know what they are talking about and the way in which they have put this amendment to the Assembly is a disgrace. It does not represent their views as put forward by the Leader of the Opposition prior to the member for Stuart moving the amendment. We are talking about highly-sensitive matters and we are talking about commercial interests. We are talking about development. Members opposite don't understand that, and they do not know what they are talking about. Mr Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment in any shape or form.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 15

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

Mr Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, now that the amendment has been disposed of, we will annihilate most of the other arguments that the opposition tried to put forward. I will be inviting defeat of the clauses relating to the commencement date of this amending legislation if honourable members would be more comfortable with that. I will address also some of the accusations that the Leader of the Opposition has made in recent days. The commencement date for these bills was simply the commencement date of the Power and Water Authority Act.

In response to the Leader of the Opposition's contention that the proposed amendments to the Power and Water Authority Act and the Electricity Act will disadvantage the general electricity consumer, I point out that not once did any member opposite make any suggestion as to how we might lower Australia's highest electricity cost. They did not give a single indication of how they would go about reducing electricity costs. The people of the Northern Territory are fast coming to grips with the fact that there are no dreamers on the opposition side of this Chamber. There is not a visionary among them. They fall over their own bootlaces. They cannot see even that far in front of themselves. The deals that are currently being negotiated will bring down the cost of electricity over time. The only way to reduce electricity costs for householders in the Northern Territory is to enter into deals of this nature. That is not difficult to understand.

The Leader of the Opposition made great play of the notion that we were trying to cover deals which had already been struck between the authority and certain consumers. The member for Nhulunbuy called this 'validating legislation'. It is not validating legislation! There have been no deals. Apparently, the Leader of the Opposition does not appreciate the fact that sale of power at marginal cost plus a premium, even if below the standard tariff rates, will enable the authority to accrue considerable benefits from sales which would not take place if the authority were restricted to sales only at standard tariff rates. Those sales would include not only potential new industries but would be directed also at established industries which are currently generating their own power at a cost below the Power and Water Authority gazetted tariffs.

The member for Stuart mentioned future sales, and asked about the current situation. 100 MW of electricity has been identified. Indeed, in the Appropriation Bill that the Treasurer brought down a week ago, we spoke about the potential to set up power stations at Tennant Creek and Cosmo Howley to service mines in that area. We are not talking only about the Renison Goldmine at Pine Creek. We are talking also about Moline. When we build that powerline, it will also enable us to enter into contracts in relation to Coronation Hill when it comes on-stream.

I have said in this Assembly on many occasions that it is my objective to replace fuel oils in the Northern Territory, wherever possible, with our indigenous fuel supply - our own gas supply. We have missed out on a large

number of deals because companies have been using fuel oil and the more conventional generators which utilise diesel power. It is that simple. It is not difficult to understand the reasons for constructing the powerline. It does not matter whether the service is supplied through a pipe or in a wire: the electricity is generated by gas. Transmission lines to Jabiru and Katherine will lead to greater utilisation of our resources and enable us to reduce the cost of electricity.

Not once in the course of this debate did members opposite rise to their feet to give us any indication how they would help the pensioners in Alice Springs. I know they are suffering and I am doing something about it. It pains me to get involved in a debate of this nature. Members of the opposition do not understand what they are talking about. They have nothing to offer, and it is very sad for the Northern Territory to have an opposition of the poor quality and calibre that we have on the other side of this House.

The particular cases in the mining sector where low fuel prices are coupled with favourable Commonwealth excise and Territory franchise rebates make it impossible for PAWA to compete for those markets at standard rates. The second point is that it would enable the authority to pass these accrued benefits on to the average consumer in the form of tariff rates being held relatively constant over time or perhaps reducing at some time in the future.

The third point is that such a power-pricing policy is an effective and positive means of assisting in the overall development of the Territory. Electricity tariffs are a means of attracting industries to the Territory which would otherwise go to those states which are prepared to be commercially competitive in their tariff structures. I forget the words that the Leader of the Opposition chose, but I suggest he made them up. He did not get them from any legislation from any state in Australia. I think that he used the expression 'economic efficiency' or something similar. We have examined all the relevant state acts and we know the contractual arrangements that are entered into by the states. I have some examples of these with me this evening. As the member for Leanyer said, section 17 of the Power and Water Authority Act describes it all. It directs that the authority shall take a general commercial approach: 'Subject to this act and within a budget approved by the minister, the authority shall act in a commercial manner'. That is what it is all about. There is nothing hard in this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 1-off sale contracts can have particular conditions attached that are not imposed on the normal domestic or general-purpose consumer. Other conditions may be attached as part of the contract, for example, the use may be required to maintain a standby generating plant, make a major capital contribution up front or be subject to interruptable supply, or take-or-pay provisions may be imposed which means that, even if the new customer does not use a certain level of power, he must pay as though he had used that power.

Point 5 is that it is neither appropriate nor desirable to publish the commercial aspects of any such 1-off contracts and to do so would require that all the conditions attached to the PAWA price would have to be made public otherwise people like the Leader of the Opposition might be inclined to go off half-cocked without having a full appreciation of the fine detail associated with contracts of this nature. On this side of the House, we have witnessed that time and time again. Do you think, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition would be satisfied with a few words or the name of the company? He would have his organisation harass that company until he received additional information and until he had put it through the political torture

that he inflicted on Hungerford Refrigeration. We have all seen the disastrous effects that even he can have on such an organisation.

More importantly, publishing the PAWA price and other commercial details agreed to with Company A would destroy any negotiating position PAWA might have with Company B. I am sure that even the Leader of the Opposition would appreciate the need for the PAWA to obtain the maximum benefit from each commercial contract so that the normal consumer would receive the greatest possible benefit in the future. Now that is not difficult. Take away all the rhetoric, take away all the doubletalk we have heard from that side of the Chamber this evening, and those are the basics. That is what it comes down to.

The sixth point is that putting these 1-off contracts in place will enable the PAWA to extend the area covered by the electricity supply network. For example, if the proposed Jabiru interconnector were to proceed, as a result of an electricity supply contract with Ranger Uranium Mine, the PAWA would be in a much better position to provide grid power to centres such as Coinda and Gunbalanya, and I am sure the member for Arnhem would like to see a grid eventually travel right across Arnhem Land. I am sure the people at Gunbalanya would. There is a big cost to government involved in storing a large amount of fuel at Gunbalanya. It is necessary to store hundreds and hundreds of tonnes of fuel there each year to run electricity for the people through the wet season when it is not possible to get a truck in. I am sure those people would appreciate it even if the member for Arnhem would not. What we are trying to do is run some power grids across this country so that people can tap into them, have reliable power and do away with generators. That is a real possibility with these power grids and the contracts that we are currently entering into.

The second point raised by the Leader of the Opposition was that the proposed legislation is to 'cover up' some past actions of the Power and Water Authority. I have already said that that is not the case. Backdating the effect of this legislation, as I said, was simply so that the commencement of these amendments would coincide with the commencement of the legislation which brought the PAWA into existence on 1 July 1987.

I heard the member for Nhulunbuy and the Leader of the Opposition say that we would never have got the manganese-dioxide plant. There are other factors involved which could have given us an advantage, such as the shipping costs from the Northern Territory to Newcastle as compared to having it here. I see the member for Nhulunbuy suggests we should weigh that up. Let him see how long it takes to unload a ship at Newcastle or Sydney at the moment. The member for Leanyer, with his responsibilities as Minister for Transport and Works, might be able to give me the latest figures but we know they are experiencing 10-week delays.

There would have been many benefits in having a manganese-dioxide plant in the Territory. I went to the boardroom of BHP and argued that. However, the BHP electronic manganese-dioxide plant went to New South Wales because the rates proposed by the Territory were nowhere near sufficiently low to compete with the rates offered by the New South Wales Electricity Authority. As a result, the Territory missed out on a project which would have brought the following benefits: capital construction at around \$100m; employment for over 300 people during the construction phase; 70 jobs either directly or indirectly ongoing in the operation phase; and over 140 probable jobs as flow-ons using a multiplier of only 2. Electricity costs of around 5¢ or 6¢ per unit were still not competitive apparently, as the plant went to Newcastle.

We heard one of the prices that was offered. As the member for Barkly said, these things do get out. We heard that the price was somewhere in the range of 3¢ a kilowatt hour. That comes from the economies of scale that they have. They have 400 MW coal-burning gensets which take the coal straight from the coal face. But, if we do not do anything, if we all sit here tonight and we do not approve the Territory entering into these negotiations, how are we to help the consumer in the Northern Territory? Not one bit of constructive advice was offered in this debate from members opposite. Simply, it is all too hard and it is all too high, and when the government does something, it is canned by the opposition. Let honourable members be in no doubt about what my intentions are. My intentions are to stabilise or to bring down electricity prices in the Northern Territory, and I can only do that if I negotiate contracts such as those I have mentioned tonight.

Continuing with the benefits that would have been available, around \$120 000 to \$200 000 per annum would have been available to the Northern Territory coffers by way of payroll tax - and that has been lost. Other consumers that the PAWA missed out on recently included several large mines because the tariffs were simply not competitive. We are in negotiations with a couple of others. One was the Cosmo Howley contract which has gone to another company. It involves a substantial powerhouse. Already they are talking 7 MW or 8 MW there, and it could be even bigger. The one at Pine Creek was talking about 10 MW to begin with. To bring that into perspective for honourable members, we are talking 120 MW to 130 MW at the Darwin power station. Add a few of these up and we start to see the effect it would have in reducing power costs. As I said, there are in excess of 100 MW available to us today if we negotiate some deals. That is about the volume that is being produced in the Darwin power station.

Other states are able to adopt a more competitive, commercial approach to the marketing of electricity. This enables them to attract industries to their particular areas. An example of such a project is the Portland Aluminium Smelter in respect of which the Victorian government was roundly criticised for the special rates and the deals struck to attract it. Those critics are now very thin on the ground as the project has been shown to be of large benefit to the Victorian economy. It was interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition bag the Labor government in Victoria for doing that.

Let us have a look what that has done for Victoria. It now employs around 850 full-time personnel. Over 1000 to 1200 were employed in the construction of the project. It had a capital cost of \$1000m. How many Territorians would like to see that type of development occurring in the Territory today? We heard people bag the Yulara Development Corporation. How would we like another Yulara in the Top End or in the centre of Australia right now? It was bagged too, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is interesting to note that 1 of the power stations that we are talking about converting to gas from fuel is the Yulara Powerhouse and we all know how difficult the Yulara Development Corporation is to negotiate with.

The Portland project had an estimated employment multiplier throughout the community of around 2 to 2.4 which represented 3800 to 5000 jobs. All other states have the ability to do exactly what we are trying to do in the Territory tonight. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the Power and Water Authority getting into this. One of the principal acts is the Electricity Act which indicates that it is the minister who answers the particular problem that the Leader of the Opposition had.

The member for Barkly suggested that, at some stage, the government might table a list of criteria indicating how we intend to do this and why. The people of the Northern Territory will know when we lower electricity tariffs. That is all they care about: bringing down the price of electricity which is the biggest burden in the Territory and the biggest disincentive to its development. That is how the pensioners in Alice Springs will be able to take the blankets off their shoulders. We are doing something about it.

Mr Ede: When?

Mr COULTER: We are doing something about it tonight. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition went against the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nhulunbuy by putting an amendment to the Assembly this evening. A gutsy effort, Mr Speaker! He put it up against the Leader of the Opposition and against the member for Nhulunbuy who had the courage to duck.

Mr Ede: Pretty weak.

Mr COULTER: Nevertheless, in came the member for Stuart where angels would fear to tread. He is a doer, Mr Speaker. He has done more than any member of this House to put this Northern Territory on its back foot and to keep it under the social welfare umbrella which he is trying to keep over the people in his electorate.

Mr Ede: Absolute rubbish!

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I think I have clarified the complexities of this legislation for honourable members. Even members opposite should be able to understand it. I commend the bills to honourable members. I thank those members who gave constructive criticism. The Leader of the Opposition has gone to the member for Barkly's table to get the notes that he lent him now that even he has deserted him. No doubt, he will have something to say in the committee stage. I thank honourable members who provided constructive criticism and support for these amendments. I commend the bills to honourable members this evening on behalf of all Territorians.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16

Noes 6

Mr Collins

Mr Bell

Mr Coulter

Mr Ede

Mr Dale

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Dondas

Mr Leo

Mr Finch

Mr Smith

Mr Firmin

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill (Serial 119):

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 negatived.

Clause 3:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, despite the comments of the Minister for Mines and Energy, the opposition will oppose clause 3 of this bill. I foreshadow that we will also oppose clause 3 of the Electricity Amendment Bill.

The opposition is not convinced that adequate safeguards are being provided. The minister demonstrated that the states have some capacity to sell electricity at negotiated rates. However, the investigations of the opposition indicate quite clearly that the safeguards and constraints put on the generating authorities within the states are much more rigorous than those that will apply in the Northern Territory. With the passage of this legislation, the PAWA will have the ability to sell power to unknown persons at unknown rates. I appreciate the commercial reasons for the passage of this legislation. However, the very real concern that I have is the one that I expressed in my second-reading speech. Inevitably, this will contribute to confusion, doubt and a lack of confidence in the Northern Territory.

The minister himself raised the matter of the Yulara project and said that all is well. I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee and I am satisfied with the investments that have been made there by the Northern Territory government and some of its agencies. Obviously, I was concerned, and I am still concerned, about the level of debt that we have incurred there, but there does seem to be some light at the end of the tunnel. However, nobody in this House can help but remember the confusion and the doubt that surrounded that entire project simply because none of the information involved in the deal was made public. As soon as it was made public, people's fears were allayed and the project was allowed to develop as it should have.

Deals will be struck and nobody doubts for a moment the necessity for that. However, because of the secrecy provisions attached to this bill, it is inevitable that people will speculate about the level and the value of those deals. The biggest danger to the Northern Territory's future is speculation on financial matters. As every member of this House is aware, we are living in a financially-precarious world in the Northern Territory. When people have any doubt about deals of any kind that are made by the government - in relation to electricity or anything else - and as soon as people begin to speculate simply because they have no knowledge or reassurance about what those deals contain, inevitably that will damage the Northern Territory quite seriously. I understand that the base load for electricity and for the sale of electricity by the PAWA must increase. The opposition certainly appreciates that. However, if we alarm the population of the Northern Territory in the process of striking deals, absolutely nothing will have been gained through the deals.

Mr Chairman, it is not beyond the capacity of this government to build safeguards into this legislation. I would ask it to reconsider clause 3 and to look at provisions which would convince the people of the Northern



Territory and allay their fears about the legislation as it stands. It is all very well to say that the Power and Water Authority is managed by a competent board. However, people out there in suburbia will speculate. They will ask: 'Has this deal been struck because of a legislative requirement or is it being struck for some political deal?' Even the minister must understand that that sort of speculation is very dangerous. We have been through it too often in the past in the Northern Territory. It has done us great damage and I cannot for the life of me understand why the government insists on clinging to a provision which would enable the Power and Water Authority to enter into virtually any agreement with any consumer, on whatever basis. The only thing it has to assure itself of is that the deal is 'commercially' acceptable. That phrase probably means something to everybody in this room, but I doubt whether any 2 views of its meaning would coincide.

Mr Chairman, the opposition will certainly vote against the passage of this clause. I ask the government to reconsider it and to insert some safeguards.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, members opposite were given a chance during the second-reading debate to get out of the hole that they have dug for themselves. They did not take advantage of that opportunity and, in proceeding with this legislation, they are blowing the last fuse on what is left of their credibility. They have decided to proceed with legislation which allows them to do secret deals in relation to electricity. I will oppose that and so will all members of this opposition.

Electricity is the most essential service of all. The government intends to make deals without informing us about whom it is dealing with, what the text of the deals is, what the parameters are and how broad they are. The government wants to give itself the legal right to undertake those deals. On this side of the House, we will oppose that and we will expose it at every opportunity because the people of the Northern Territory - the pensioners, the businessmen and the average householders who are bearing the brunt of the highest power charges in Australia - are the people who will judge this government. They will ask why it is necessary to be so secretive.

People will ask why they could not even know who the deals were made with. If a businessman has just got his nose above the table and is starting to make a go of it, and suddenly finds himself being undercut by a business which has just moved into the Territory, he will not know whether that has happened because of a power deal or some other deal. The credibility of this government has gone. People will learn of its refusal to legislate for the provision of reasonable safeguards. Once again, people's confidence will be eroded, causing further problems for the Northern Territory.

Once again, central Australia is the last cab off the CLP rank. People in central Australia will not know whether the deals being done north of the Berrimah line are causing them to pay more for their electricity. Small business operators, pensioners and average workers in Alice Springs will be asking this government about that during the next few months. They will want to know why they could not be told about the broad parameters and why they could not be told which businesses were involved in these deals. They might be prepared not to know the commercially-sensitive details of the actual cost per unit of electricity negotiated, but they should have the assurance that it is above the marginal cost of producing that electricity. They should also have the assurance of the details of cost-benefit analysis. People should know who the deals were done with, where the businesses were located and what some of the basic reasons were behind them. This government has decided to

deny that information to the people of Alice Springs, and those people will have the first opportunity to pass judgment on this government.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart will go blind if he does not stop. His paranoia is unbelievable.

Mr Ede: We have seen it. We have seen it.

Mr Leo: Stop waving your hands around, Steve. You will do a better job.

Mr HATTON: The member for Nhulunbuy has indicated that some of the wild allegations thrown around this Chamber in the past have had no foundation. He stood here tonight and said that he has looked at the issues as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and is quite happy that there is no problem. Having caused chaos in the community through rumourmongering and speculation over a lengthy period of time, the opposition finally discovers that what we were saying all the time was right. Tonight, however, the opposition is up to its old tricks again.

I want to bring members opposite back to the basis for this legislation. I remind them of the minister's second-reading speech in which he pointed out that the legislation has been brought forward as a consequence of a recent legal interpretation of existing legislation. That interpretation, if applied, would change current practice and require all arrangements to be gazetted by the minister. That has not been the practice, since the formation of the Northern Territory Electricity Commission, in a wide range of private arrangements that have been entered into with businesses right across the spectrum of the Northern Territory.

I refer honourable members to page 3354 of the Parliamentary Record, where the minister says:

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.

Let me give an example of what that entails in practice. A business may want to extend its premises. The Power and Water Authority may then discover that its substation needs to be upgraded to provide additional power for the extended premises. Negotiations may then occur to determine how much the business will contribute to the upgrading costs. Under existing legislation, any agreement between the 2 parties has to be approved personally by the minister and gazetted. There may be hundreds of such agreements every week. The Minister for Mines and Energy will not be out trying to get mines opened up and trying to negotiate arrangements to increase the sale of energy in the Territory; he will be sitting at his desk day and night, signing approvals for every little arrangement entered into by the Power and Water Authority. Forests will have to be chopped down to provide the paper to print the Gazettes. That is the extent of the detail which the opposition expects the government to publish.

The main concern of this debate is the objective of substantially increasing energy consumption in the Northern Territory. In large deals concerned with power consumption, there is clearly a need for commercial confidentiality. Even the Leader of the Opposition accepted that fact. It may be that, having looked at particular arrangements, the government may decide to release details. Unless the government's amendments proceed, however, existing legislation will require all details to be gazetted, whether the project be a large contract to set up a smelter or a gas-stripping plant or a modification to a substation for a takeaway shop or a bit of rural extension. Each of those arrangements would have to be personally approved by the minister for Mines and Energy and then published individually in the Gazette. The member for Arafura might appreciate that and it might help the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. He just might get his project up and going, and maybe the member for Arafura would be able to get those pine forests going because we might need some woodchip to make the paper to print those Gazettes. It is a nonsense. This does not say the information cannot be published. What it says is that it is not obligatory that it be published.

Mr Smith: Oh, good try!

Mr HATTON: It is a fact. The Leader of the Opposition must accept that that is a fact. Equally, it is not required that the multitude of small arrangements that have never been publicised in the Gazette and which are normal ongoing commercial discussions be published. It is a matter of bringing this act back to what was understood to be its interpretation originally.

Mr SMITH: That was a good try, I must say. The member for Nightcliff did raise 1 point that I think is worth clarifying. On this side of the House, we are not stating that, every time a minor substation is put in for a takeaway food outlet, we want that shown in the Gazette. We are happy to accept the point that charges for those sorts of services should not be published in the Gazette. But, if part of the deal with the takeaway chain is that it obtains a lower tariff, that is when we want to know and that is when the taxpayers of the Northern Territory want to know.

The people for whom I feel sorriest in this whole exercise are those people existing in business in the Northern Territory at present. If we follow through the logic of the argument of the member for Nightcliff, the takeaway shop owner does not know whether next week, next month or next year, some other takeaway shop owner will get an electricity tariff reduction for some reasons that we do not know of. He does not know that. The power, to coin a word, to give those sorts of unwarranted concessions lies in this legislation, and that is what we are trying to remove. We are trying to create - and I would have thought it was in the interests of the government to do so - confidence in the business sector that those sorts of unwarranted uses of this power will not occur.

If honourable members want an example of the concern felt in the business sector about this particular legislation, I refer them to Raphael Crowe, the Executive Director of the Confederation of Industry, and his conversation this morning on Territory Extra. I quote from the question that he was asked:

What of those industries that have established themselves without the benefit of lower or negotiated electricity charges? Are they likely to feel some resentment or want to be reimbursed in some way?

This is the answer of Mr Raphael Crowe:

Well, I think that is why I think it would be politic to release the details of giving out rebates to certain industries and saying to the community: 'Look, this is the reason why we have done it'. Of course, there are going to be others who are going to say, 'Well, we are equally in that situation, why don't we get it?', and they should be given an opportunity for sure. There may be industries that have already closed or are about to close that would say, 'Well look, if you can give us a rebate and take it back in time, we will keep our doors open and employ people'.

That is the problem that develops when the government is secretive about these sorts of deals. Suspicions will be generated in the business community that other business activities, in direct competition, are receiving these incentives. I would not have thought that the government would want to be in that position but, by proceeding with this particular legislation, that is exactly the position that it is putting itself in.

The answer is simple. It is to put in place protections in the form of guidelines so that everybody knows the ground rules on which the government is giving electricity tariff concessions. All we want are some ground rules that would determine how the government was intending to proceed and how it would regulate electricity tariff concessions. We do not have those ground rules. The only ground rule we have is that there are no ground rules. That is the problem and, until ground rules are put in place, there will be continuing problems with this legislation, mark my words.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I will weigh in and say again that I think there are 2 important things that need to be done, and eventually the minister will get around to doing them. It is just a matter of whether he volunteers to do them or whether he is beaten into it. There needs to be a set of ground rules, as the Leader of the Opposition outlined them, and that is consistent with what NTEC used to do.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I have given members considerable leeway. We are talking about the Power and Water Authority Act. However, clause 3 of the Electricity Amendment Bill is more relevant to this debate. For that reason, I allowed the Leader of the Opposition to canvas clause 3 of the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill. I presume that most members are speaking to clause 3 of both bills at the same time. Can I assume that?

Mr Smith: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right, then. I ask the honourable member to restrict his remarks to the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill and not to speak about the Electricity Amendment Bill. Those are the guidelines you want.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I thought I was doing that. What I had said then I thought was ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: You started talking about electricity charges.

Mr TUXWORTH: As it used to be.

Mr CHAIRMAN: No, we have the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill, and we are now talking about the powers of the authority as covered in clause 3 of serial 119.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, may I just say that I was referring to the publications issued by NTEC, as it used to be. I think they are particularly relevant because the former body, which is now the Power and Water Authority, published a whole range of little pamphlets outlining the rules for people. Perhaps members recall the one relating to rural electrification.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I made the point because most of the argument put forward by honourable members so far really relates to clause 3 of the Electricity Amendment Bill.

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are you dissenting?

Mr Smith: Not yet.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Chairman! Currently, we are debating clause 3 of the Power and Water Authority Amendment Bill which says:

Section 15(2)(c) of the Power and Water Authority Act is amended by omitting 'other than tariffs' and substituting '(subject, in the case of tariffs, fees and charges, to any act or instrument of a legislative or administrative character relating to them)'.

Quite clearly, the honourable member is addressing the question of tariffs which is contained in this legislation and he is addressing the question of legislative or administrative changes that have been made to both the Power and Water Authority Act and the Electricity Act. He is quite clearly within his province.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I understand what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. The Power and Water Authority has its own charges in relation to water.

Mr SMITH: It is the Power and Water Authority. That includes power!

Mr CHAIRMAN: The point is that we have been debating electricity charges. All I sought to clarify was whether the member for Barkly was speaking to clause 3 of each of the bills at the same time.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I would like to speak to the point of order. In this case, I concur with the views of the Leader of the Opposition because the clause does refer to charges of the Power and Water Authority. It refers to 'any act or instrument of a legislative or administrative character relating to them'. That could indirectly relate itself across the Electricity Act. I understand your dilemma, Mr Chairman, because it sounds as if the opposition is trying to filibuster and we will hear the arguments repeated, and I can understand your frustration with that process. However, I honestly believe that the member for Barkly is speaking within the ambit of this clause.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the point that I was moving towards was that it is not unreasonable for the Power and Water Authority to have a form of guidelines that are available to the public and the business sector generally for people to know what they can expect and what rules apply to everybody in the community. As I said a moment ago, the Power and Water Authority already publishes a range of these pamphlets and I raise again the matter of rural electrification. If you want power run to a rural area, you can obtain a

little pamphlet that tells you exactly what the rules are. Those rules apply to everybody. That is what is needed in relation to the purchase of block units of power from the Power and Water Authority.

I do not subscribe to the proposition put by the Leader of the Opposition and his team that that ought to be enshrined in legislation. It certainly ought to be in print, but it does not necessarily have to go into legislation. For the same reason, I do not believe it is essential for the final agreements that are arrived at with end users for block consumption of power to be enshrined in legislation or tabled in the House or whatever, because there is no way the government can keep that quiet. If it does not want to volunteer the information, it will be dragged out of it line by line. That is really a matter for the government.

I support the Leader of the Opposition again when I say we need a set of rules and, whether the minister wants to publish them tonight or at another time, or put them in legislation or whatever, is a matter for the government. Nevertheless, we need the rules. We also need an understanding from the minister that some formal statement will be made about any agreement. If he does not want to make it, it will be dragged out of him. If he wants to go through the political agony of having it dragged out of him, good luck to him, but that is exactly how it will work.

The committee divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 6

Mr Coulter

Mr Bell

Mr Dale

Mr Ede

Mr Dondas

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Finch

Mr Leo

Mr Firmin

Mr Smith

Mr Harris

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Tuxworth

Clause 3 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Electricity Amendment Bill (Serial 120):

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 negatived.

Clause 3 :

Mr LEO: The opposition opposes clause 3 of this bill for precisely the same reasons that we opposed clause 3 of the previous bill.

The member for Barkly outlined the problems that will arise from this legislation. He thinks that it will be a problem for the government and, on that matter, we differ. It will not be a problem only for the government that confidence will be eroded. It will not be a matter for the Northern Territory government only that speculation inevitably will arise concerning these different contracts and agreements that will be entered into. Inevitably, it will be a problem for the entire Northern Territory. It will be a problem for all members of this Assembly.

Nothing is guaranteed to erode confidence more rapidly - particularly business confidence - than speculation about deals. I appreciate that the cost of electricity has been the subject of constant debate because of the prices that consumers must pay in the Northern Territory. I appreciate that difficulty, and also that the minister is trying to increase the base load in order to lower those tariffs. I do not think any member in this House has any real difficulty about the deals being confidential.

However, the problem is that there is no requirement in this legislation for those deals to be struck within particular parameters. No consumer in the Northern Territory will be aware of the extent or the nature of any of those deals. If that does not lead to speculation and damage to the confidence of the business community in the Northern Territory, I do not know what will. There is absolutely nothing more certain to damage business confidence than the implementation by the Power and Water Authority of the measures that it will be empowered to implement as a consequence of the passage of this legislation. That will affect all of us. It is not simply the government's problem; it is our problem.

I ask the government to reconsider and to provide a set of guidelines under which deals can be struck. That would provide a measure of confidence in the marketing of electricity in the Northern Territory. These provisions can do nothing but damage credibility. As I said, it is not beyond the ken of men to frame such guidelines in a legislative form. If that is not done, I am afraid we will be exactly where we were 6 years ago. We will be on the same treadmill but on a different subject.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the honourable minister has yet to give 1 solid reason why he will not relent and say that he will gazette the names of the businesses that will benefit. Why can't he do that, Mr Chairman? It would at least be something. I will try to put it in basic and simple terms so that perhaps he will be able to understand it.

I will take as an example Alice Springs, where the people of Flynn are about to examine the performance of this government. Let us assume that there is a small takeaway business established on Gap Road which is doing reasonably well. The electricity charges are high, but the business is covering costs and is doing reasonably well. Say, for example, the Minister for Tourism's wife - and I know they have got out of this business - had relocated next door to this takeaway. The takeaway finds that the business next door is able to sell its hamburgers and chips substantially cheaper. It looks at its own cost structures and cannot work it out: how can the business next door undercut its prices to that extent? It is hurting; its business is going down the tube. What is it going to think, Mr Chairman?

If the government would agree to gazette and list parties to agreements, people would know that their competitors are not benefiting from some deal that they have done with the government. However, because of the government's refusal to do that, people will speculate. They will say things like: 'I

know there is a connection over there. I know the person is a member of the CLP who socialises with the minister. I know this or that'. Whether that is unfair or not, people will cling to it as the reason for their own difficulties. It will destroy their faith in themselves, their faith in business and their faith in the Territory. The solution is quite simple, and I cannot understand why the government will not adopt it. There is no need to release details of prices paid; all that is required is the names of parties to agreements. As a bare minimum, that is quite reasonable and I would like the minister to tell me why he will not do it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I understand the member for Stuart's frustration. I think he is being a bit sensitive because, the first time such an arrangement is struck with a fast-food shop and the electricity account is duly prepared for posting, you can bet your sweet little bippy that there will be 25 copies of it floating from one end of the Territory to the other. That is because the cost of power is such a sensitive issue and so important to everybody in the Territory that that sort of advantage just cannot be kept quiet.

The point I made earlier, which I will repeat now for the benefit of the member for Stuart, is that sooner or later the minister will table a form of words that outlines both the parameters for concessions and the advantages which apply. All we are talking about now is whether he does that voluntarily or has it beaten out of him. Tonight's indications are that it will be the latter but, Mr Chairman, you can bet your life that that will happen.

The committee divided:

Ayes 13

Noes 6

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr Manzie  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Tuxworth

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

Clause 3 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bills reported; report adopted.

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



The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 6

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Tuxworth

Mr Bell

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about a subject which I know is very dear to your heart - the restoration project being undertaken by the Ghan Preservation Society. In recent years, it has been impossible to go anywhere near Alice Springs without hearing something about the Old Ghan project. Indeed, it has not been too easy to avoid hearing about it in Darwin either. However, I wonder how many people are really aware of the scope of the work which has been, and is still being, undertaken by the Ghan Preservation Society.

On a number of occasions this year, I have been fortunate to have been able to visit the old MacDonnell Siding where the main infrastructure of the project is based. Recently, I had the honour of officiating at the formal handover of leases to the area to the Ghan Preservation Society.

Mr Dondas: Did you send a letter to your mum?

Mr MANZIE: Indeed, I did send a letter to my mum from the Ghan's post office.

I would be the first to admit that, when I first visited the old MacDonnell Siding, I was unprepared for the magnificent spectacle which greeted me. To say that the achievements of the Ghan Preservation Society are remarkable is to be guilty of making a considerable understatement. The Old Ghan project is anything but a joke. It is not some minor backyard project, nor is it a flash in the pan event which will disappear in a matter of months.

The MacDonnell Siding now contains, quite literally, a complete railway station. In fact, the station building has been built to the original plans of the station which was proposed for Alice Springs, then called Stuart, in 1930. It was deferred then because of the depression and it was deferred again in 1939-40 because of the war. Now, in 1988, finally it has been built by private enterprise. When this building is coupled with the original

railway shed, which used to be sited at Katherine, the siding is indeed an impressively authentic sight. To complement the actual building, the society has significantly improved the surrounding area, transforming it from sand and scrub to a pleasant spot planted with grass and trees and providing barbecues for use by visitors.

I must not omit to mention the trains themselves. The society has several engines at the siding, including 2 steam locomotives. The first of these is a C-17 narrow-gauge steam locomotive which was built in 1950 and which saw service in Queensland. It was later presented to the Rotary Club of Caloundra for display and that club generously donated it to the Ghan Preservation Society for restoration and inclusion in the Old Ghan project. This 84 t engine was transported some 4000 km from Queensland, through New South Wales, across to Port Augusta and up to Alice Springs to arrive at its new home. It should be pointed out that this locomotive is doubly significant for the Old Ghan project because it is of the same design that Commonwealth Railways used to haul the Ghan until 1954. This means the Preservation Society has been fortunate to obtain a locomotive which is not only of the same era but of the same type that was operated on the line many years ago.

The other locomotive is a W-class narrow-gauge engine weighing more than 102 t which was in service in Western Australia from 1951 to 1972. It was acquired by the Museum and Art Galleries Board of the Northern Territory in 1982 which, recognising the significance of the project, donated it to the Ghan Preservation Society in 1986.

The society has been able to acquire 4 NSU-class narrow-gauge locomotives, 2 of which will be used as static displays or will be restored for use on the line, and the other will be used to supply parts. There is also a wide range of rolling stock which itself illustrates a history of the Ghan. These engines and the rolling stock are, of course, in addition to the many curious and historical items relating to the Old Ghan which have been gathered by the society's members over the years and which will go into the museum display.

Mr Speaker, something which tends to be glossed over in all the enthusiasm about the project is the fact that it comprises not 1 but 2 significant projects running literally side by side. The other project I refer to is the restoration and reactivation of the Overland Telegraph Line between MacDonnell Siding and Ewaninga Siding. With generous assistance from Telecom, the preservation society has been able to preserve the original path of the overland telegraph route between the sidings and to establish contact along the line between these 2 points.

This is only a very sketchy approximation of what has been done at the old MacDonnell Siding. A great deal of work has been carried out on resleepering the narrow-gauge line to the sidings and the restoration of Ewaninga itself, including restoration of the original fettlers' cottage. I understand that, like MacDonnell, Ewaninga has undergone a remarkable transformation. If I go into detail, I will run out of time but I believe there should be a few comments on the record about how all this has been achieved.

I think it is fair to say that the achievements of the Ghan Preservation Society are clear and irrefutable evidence that the great Australian tradition has not died out. The tradition I am referring to is not community spirit nor is it a willingness to pitch in and help to get the job done, although both of those have obviously played a great part in this project. The tradition I refer to has been made famous internationally by Australians in 2 world wars and at home I suppose it has become part of our ethos. Of course, I am talking about scrounging.

Since the advent of the Ghan Preservation Society and the commencement of the project, the name of Roger Vale has become synonymous throughout Australia with successful scrounging. It may only be a scurrilous rumour, Mr Speaker, but I have heard that when Don Williams of Australian National Railways is told that Roger Vale is calling him, he reaches first for his heart pills and then for the telephone. Opening lines such as, 'Hello, how are you?' have no effect on Mr Williams. His first utterance is almost invariably: 'What do you want this time, Roger?'.

Mr Speaker, the achievements of the Ghan Preservation Society in this regard speak for themselves: 27 km of rail line, worth \$250 000 - cost to the society nil; freight on carriages, normally \$47 500 - cost to the society nil; freight on the railway shed from Katherine, normal cost \$60 000 - cost to the society nil; freight on sleepers from Tasmania, normal cost \$840 000 - cost to the society \$42 000; and earthworks on the line, roads and gardens at Ewaninga, total worth \$165 000 - cost to the society \$3000. Mr Speaker, as you are aware, these are only a few examples and there are many more. Indeed, the support from business houses in Alice Springs, Darwin and interstate now totals a staggering \$3.5m, while the real cost to the society has been less than a tenth of that.

Added to this was 100 000 hours of voluntary work by members of the society and their friends at working bees, CEP funding for resleepering the line to Ewaninga, 138 000 hours of work on the enterprise by prisoners under the supervision of Correctional Services officers, and a grant of \$800 000 from the Northern Territory Bicentennial Authority for the construction of the railway station museum and the reconstruction of the old Katherine railway sheds. Assistance has been given also by Alice Springs service clubs with the development of parks and gardens. Trees have come from the Conservation Commission and have been planted by children from all schools in Alice Springs, and advice and assistance has been given by many Territory government departments and by Australian National Railways.

When all of these facts are taken into account, the total project is costed as being worth nearly \$7m. With the arguable exception of the clean up after Cyclone Tracy, I am unable to think of a single, community project in the Territory or possibly even Australia which could surpass this record.

Most of all, I believe it is important to point out that, in no way, has this been a selfish project. I know that Mr Speaker himself has derived great personal delight from being involved, and I am sure fellow members of the society have enjoyed their involvement in the project equally. I know it has not been an easy road. It has not all been having a good time playing with trains. Basically, it has been very hard work which has often been frustrating and at no time more so, I suppose, than when sections of the resleepered line were washed out by floods earlier this year. Nevertheless, the society has persevered and, as a result, in future years, the Territory will reap the benefits of a project which is of great historic and intrinsic value. As such, I predict confidently that not only will it become a popular destination for Territorians and an important monument to our development, but it will become an extremely valuable asset to our tourism industry.

Mr Speaker, the Territory wins both ways in this scenario. It can only be said that the Ghan Preservation Society is presenting Territorians of today and tomorrow with a great and generous gift and I certainly would like to place on the record my admiration for the work that the Ghan Preservation Society members have done and are still doing, and to congratulate them all on their achievements. I would like to wish them every success in their future endeavours.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about an unfortunate matter which relates to the predicament of a Territorian who is really struggling. If the Minister for Health and Community Services is in the precincts, he might like to listen because this matter relates particularly to his portfolio. I rise to talk about the plight of a man called Graham Aked who is what I call a dinky-di Territorian battler. Mr Aked is different from the rest of us. He is pretty sick. He has a serious complaint that no one in this House would swap places with him for. It is one that does not give him a great deal of future, but a complaint that he takes pretty graciously. He is also different because he wants to live outside the welfare system. He does not want to be attached to the nipple of government, and he wants to maintain some dignity and independence. In doing that, he has done some quite remarkable things for a man with his disabilities.

His complaint is called alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. It is a complaint relating to the deterioration of the lungs and the capacity of the lungs to take oxygen out of the air and put it into the blood. Mr Aked lives in a house by himself. He has 1 room set up with little machines that look rather like dialysis machines, and he cannot move more than a few feet away from them because he has to stay close to them just to maintain life. He cannot go out of the house unless it is for good cause, and he is virtually tied to the place. He lives on one of the pensions paid by the Social Security Department for people who are really incapacitated and do not have the capacity to earn a living. He is trying to make the most of what he has and all he needs is a little help from the government.

To live some sort of reasonable life, what Mr Aked needs is accommodation that is air-conditioned because the air-conditioning takes humidity from the air. If Mr Aked can breathe dehumidified air, his lung condition is much improved. In fact, his breathing is easier, he needs less medication and drugs and he does not have to go to hospital as often. Of course, if he does not have the air-conditioning, because he cannot afford the electricity, then he finishes up in hospital and they go through a pretty severe process of draining from his lungs the fluid that he has breathed in because of the moisture in the air.

For some time, Mr Aked has been trying to obtain a concession from the government to help with his electricity bill. He has had a great deal of difficulty with that. In fact, his representations have been going on since February this year, and they came to a head this week when the Minister for Health and Community Services wrote a very nice letter and told him to make the most of his lot. I think it is important that I raise this matter so that the Minister for Health and Community Services can consider it again and give a little thought to some of the other facts that relate to Mr Aked.

This gentleman went out and bought his own vehicle so that he had the means to take himself to the hospital when he had to go in for emergency treatment in the middle of the night, because he did not want to be dragging St John Ambulance out, not because he had to pay for it although he knew it cost a lot of money, but he did not want to take the risk of St John not being able to find his house or not being able to get there when he needed it. As I said, he lives on a pension and he is as independent as he can be under the circumstances.

Now this gentleman has had trouble in paying his electricity bill. He has been threatened with disconnection notices from the PAWA and, in fact, told that, if he does not pay up, his power will be disconnected. You can imagine how a man living on a machine would feel when he is told that his power will

be disconnected because he did not have the money to pay the bill in the first place because he is living on a pension and trying to be independent of the system.

I went to the trouble of talking to Mr Aked's doctor and it was very illuminating. I suggest to the Minister for Health and Community Services that he pick up the phone and do the same thing himself. Mr Aked would welcome the inquiry. As far as I can see, Mr Aked would be quite able to present himself at the Royal Darwin Hospital and become a permanent patient of the hospital for the rest of his life, at a total cost to the taxpayers of the Northern Territory of \$300 to \$400 a day. But, that is not his choice. He does not want to do that. He wants to be independent and retain a little dignity, and he is not a quitter.

When I wrote to the Minister for Health and Community Services, he agreed that he should give some immediate assistance to Mr Aked for the account outstanding, and that happened. He also insisted that Mr Aked have another assessment. Mr Speaker, I can say to you that Mr Aked has had another assessment and I would like to read the minister's response to Mr Aked's last request:

Dear Mr Aked,

I refer to your continuing representations that you should receive a 50% concession rebate on your electricity account.

Mind you, Mr Speaker, he would be quite justified in claiming a 100% rebate on his electricity account because, if we do not help him with it, we will have to pay \$30 000 a year to keep him in hospital. However, that is by the bye. The minister went on to say:

The Adult Assessment and Coordination Team has again considered your case. Their report has been referred to the Chief Medical Officer who has now provided me with his professional opinion on the matter. On the advice available to me as Minister for Health and Community Services, I am not prepared to authorise any subsidy to you that is above the rate presently available to all other Territory pensioners, including those with disabilities.

I am sympathetic to your arguments relating to your use of air-conditioning and I understand that you may be more comfortable when in such an environment. However, I am not satisfied that air-conditioning is relevant in a medical sense to your condition. The information available to me suggests that air-conditioning would not, of itself, prevent any deterioration in your condition. Indeed, the reverse could be true over a long period of time.

I appreciate also the electricity charges can be a burden on people with low incomes. That is why the Territory government put into place concessions on electricity charges which, despite the 1986 changes to the scheme, are still more generous than elsewhere in Australia.

Over a period of time, to assist you with your difficulties, I have made available to you additional financial assistance totalling some several hundred dollars. Such assistance has not been available to other pensioners. As advised in my earlier letter to you, such assistance is for emergency situations only. It is not intended to

cater for long-term arrangements. You should by now have had sufficient time to make appropriate arrangements to match your costs more closely with your income. You will continue to be eligible as a pensioner for the normal concession which is 50% of your account up to \$1 a day.

Mr Speaker, in addition, I have received this letter from Mr Aked which I would like to read into the Hansard:

Dear Ian,

I enclose a letter forwarded by Don Dale today. You will note that, since I have not been using the air-conditioner, I have over the past couple of months been given hospitalisation for several weeks because of multi-chronic lung infections.

That would have cost us about \$4000. He goes on:

I also point out, Ian, that when I was supposedly assessed by this Adult Assessment Care Team, there was not 1 single heat-humidity lung function test performed on me. As a matter of fact, I did not even meet or was examined by the physician delegated to assess my claim. The only person to examine me from the entire health department was a physiotherapist who tested me for air volume, the amount of air in and out before and after medication. The whole thing was a sham. Let us hope that we can get Mr Dale to table the report.

I would ask you for the entire report from the various members of the AAC and not just the summation of the CMO. I was asked to pass that request on to you from the Ombudsman because he would like to see the report.

Mr Speaker, it is important for Mr Aked to receive that report because the minister, in his letter, said the reverse could be true over a long period of time in relation to Mr Aked having air-conditioning. If the minister has information from medical officials that would indicate that Mr Aked will suffer deleterious effects to his health as a result of the use of air-conditioning, it would be a pretty fair and reasonable thing to give him a copy of that report so that he can have his own doctor consider it. When Mr Aked asked for that report, he was told by officials of the health department that that was not possible. Furthermore, he was told that he could not obtain it under the Freedom of Information Act because the Department of Health and Community Services refused to be a signatory to it and that he could whistle.

Mr Speaker, I think enough is enough. I raise this matter tonight publicly because it is almost a disgrace. It is the sort of thing that is occurring that really destroys the morale of people. From what I know of Mr Aked, he accepts his disability pretty graciously. I am not sure that I would be as gracious as he is. He rarely moves away from his home and he is doing his very best to live on his pension. I might add that, when he was assessed by the Department of Health and Community Services for additional assistance with his electricity bill, he was told that, if he sold his little utility that he keeps to take himself to and from hospital, he would have enough money to pay for the electricity bill. No one gave any thought to the fact that, if he did that, sooner or later the money would run out and he would be calling St John Ambulance out at \$80 or \$90 a trip to take him backwards and forwards to hospital.

I would like the minister to do 2 things. I would like him to reopen this case and have it investigated thoroughly and fairly in respect of Mr Aked's disability. He is not simply a pensioner who is seeking more than other pensioners in the Northern Territory receive. He is a medical case, and he is seeking some assistance which will keep him out of the mainstream of hospital care. By what he is doing, he will save Territory taxpayers a fortune. We ought to be clapping our hands and thanking him for it. I also urge the minister to reconsider and make available to Mr Aked the AAC team's report on his condition and the impact that air-conditioning may have on him.

I will throw one other ball in for the minister to consider. When Mr Aked started to make inquiries as to why he could not obtain any further assistance, he was told by departmental people: 'Look, old fellow, if we pay you this, we will have to pay it to every quadriplegic and paraplegic in the Northern Territory. There are many people like you who have trouble with fluid in the lungs that has to be drained. If we give you this assistance, they will all be lining up for it'. For the benefit of his department, I would say to the minister that, if there are many people who have this complaint and they are prepared to stay out of the hospital system by having an air-conditioner in their home, we ought to be cheering them on too. Perhaps through spending a few thousand dollars to help people pay their electricity bills and keep themselves out of the mainstream of hospital care, which is very expensive, we could do ourselves a great service.

If people want to look at the file on this, they are welcome to it. It is absolutely unbelievable reading to note the reasonable approach that Mr Aked has been making to the government over a long period and the responses that he has been receiving from the minister and other departmental people which are just stunning. I would say to the minister that it is time for all this nonsense to stop and for decent people who need a go to get a go. When you consider that we have spent the last 3 hours talking about giving cheap electricity on a block basis to people who want to come into the Northern Territory yet we cannot do anything for battlers like these, then we ought to give it away.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, bearing in mind the very late hour, I would like to place on record very briefly this evening some information about schoolchildren in the Northern Territory who took part in the competition that was run in conjunction with the celebrations for the tenth anniversary of self-government. I had the opportunity in the last couple of days to present cheques to schools where several children had won sectional prizes in the competition. It was interesting to see some of the exhibits that these children produced for the competition. There were a large number of them. I presented a prize this morning to young Stephanie Giesbrecht at the Marrara Christian School. She had written a story about the Territory coat of arms in a question-and-answer format between a father and his young son. It was really quite a clear story in relation to the characters on the Northern Territory coat of arms.

Another young student from my electorate, Christie Pownell from Ludmilla Primary School, was a winner in the poster section of the competition with a very fine entry. All the children who participated submitted entries of a very high standard. There were 12 winners of the section prizes and those 12 will be travelling to Brisbane later next month and will be there for the Northern Territory Open Day at Expo on 2 October. They have won a 5-day, all-expenses-paid trip to Expo with their chaperones. They will visit Expo and see other sights in the Brisbane area as part of their prize. Each of the children who won a prize also won \$250 for their school. It was a very

well-run competition. An enormous number of children entered it and, as I said, the standard of the creative section was very high. I commend those children for entering and winning those prizes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, my remarks in this debate will be brief tonight, but I would like to comment on the negotiations that are proceeding in certain parts of the rural area between officers of the Power and Water Authority and owners of freehold land. Honourable members all know that a high-voltage line is to be constructed from Channel Island to Katherine. The course of that line passes over freehold land as well as Crown land. I have had representations made to me by landholders over whose land this line will go.

At the outset, I must commend officers of the Power and Water Authority for their approach to the public on this matter. Their public relations is good. They have come out to see me personally many times because the line passes over our land near Batchelor. They have also been to see the landowners in the rural area several times. One of the snags that I see in the situation is that the Power and Water Authority officers are acting as agents for the negotiation of easement rights. A private company will actually build the line. I would have thought that, as well as entering into arrangements with private landholders whose land was involved, the officers would also have notified the Litchfield Shire Council of the intention to put the line through the rural area. To date, however, this has not happened.

The line runs from north to south and, in one of the outermost parts of my electorate, it passes at right angles between 2 roads - the Old Bynoe Road and Leonino Road. It goes over Crown land for several miles, and that is not a problem. Elsewhere, however, it goes over freehold land. If right of access to that land is gained and if subsequent negotiations for an easement ensue, rights of entry on to the land will have to be negotiated and or a service road built either on the properties concerned or along the boundaries. It happens that in this area, between the Old Bynoe Road and Leonino Road, there is a gazetted road. At the moment it is just a track but, nevertheless, it is a gazetted road.

It has been put both to myself and the Power and Water Authority that the owners of the land are prepared to meet the government halfway in upgrading that gazetted road instead of taking the few hundred dollars which are offered for easement rights over the freehold property. The upgrading would make the track negotiable in the wet as well as the dry. This would mean that the Power and Water Authority would have to enter into negotiations which it did not anticipate in the beginning. It certainly makes sense because an all-weather road would be necessary for the servicing and inspection of the completed line. If the owners are prepared to fully or partially forgo financial compensation for the easement, in exchange for a decent all-weather gravel road, reason would seem to demand that the government enter into negotiations with them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there has been 1 small hiccup in this case. The company that is building the line, whose name I cannot remember at the moment, jumped the gun a little. It wrote to landholders intimating that it had rights of inspection of the site, rights of access, rights to put in the footings and rights to actually construct the line. The landholders who received these letters contacted the company and told it in no uncertain terms what it could do with its letter. At that time, the Power and Water Authority was unaware that this letter had been written. The authority also said that the company had jumped the gun in assuming that all negotiations had been concluded.



I hope that this matter can be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. There may also be possibilities for other gazetted roads to be upgraded in the course of the construction of the powerline between Channel Island and Katherine. In this case, it is certainly important that sensible negotiations continue and that satisfactory results are obtained for the landholders and the government. Not only will an upgraded road benefit the landholders over whose land the line runs, it will also benefit other people who live further out and presently have to travel an extra 20 km to reach the Stuart Highway. It will benefit many people in the rural area and will actively help several people in the area who are involved in horticultural developments on their properties. Instead of the government just saying that it is helping primary industry, it will help people in very definite ways.

The Litchfield Shire Council has to be involved in any negotiations because, although the road will be a sensible gravel road rather than a 4-lane bitumen highway, the council will be responsible for its maintenance. It is only sensible, therefore, that the council be involved in negotiations at an early stage. I hope that common sense can prevail and that everybody will be satisfied when negotiations are completed.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Chairman, whilst winging my way homeward last March, my eye happened to be caught by an article in Panorama, the in flight magazine provided by Ansett Airlines. The article was written by Penny Van Oosterzee, an environmental scientist and travel consultant who lives in Alice Springs. I am sure she will be known to you, Mr Deputy Chairman, if not personally, at least from some of her articles that have appeared in our local paper. That was one reason the article caught my eye. The other reason is that it referred to some of the splendid scenery in my electorate and some of the people who live there.

The article talked about Gosse Bluff and Fort Narula, and the Malbunka family who are living at the Ipolera homeland centre which has now become involved in a tourist enterprise. Ordinarily, I would not remark on that, except for the fact that the article contained the phrase 'the once infamous Lutheran Mission at Hermannsburg'. I was offended to read that for reasons I will explain later, if they are not already obvious to other honourable members.

I raised the matter with Ms Van Oosterzee when I happened to see her socially. She said, 'I am pleased that you drew my attention to that. I hope you will write to the editor because, in fact, that particular phrase is not mine. I will send you a copy of a letter that I have written to the editor myself'. She sent me that letter in due course. It was dated and addressed to Jane Rich, the editor of the Panorama magazine. She said in that letter: 'The article is attributed to me, yet I did not use those words, not even by implication'. She went on to talk about the difficulties she had had with people who had had this particular phrase drawn to their attention and had been offended, as I had been, by the reference. She said, and I am quoting again from the letter: 'I have had an informal query from a minister of the Northern Territory government, and a lengthy phone call from a Lutheran minister who worked at Hermannsburg for 26 years'. She went on to say: 'I expect many more complaints. I can only hope that they will be as polite as they have been to date'. As I will explain a little later, they have not been quite as polite as she had hoped. She went on to request that an apology be printed in a further edition of the magazine.

Having received the copy of that letter that she sent me, I duly wrote off myself to the editor of Panorama. I will read the letter I wrote:

Dear Ms Rich,

I am writing with respect to the article 'Sea of Stone' in the March edition of your magazine. I am a frequent traveller on Ansett and I read the article with interest because it pertains to people and places in my electorate. I was stunned to read the phrase 'the infamous Lutheran Mission'. The writer to whom the article is attributed, Penny Van Oosterzee, is well known to me and, upon making inquiries, Ms Van Oosterzee provided me with a copy of her letter to you of 10 March. I am writing to endorse her comments.

There is not sufficient space in this letter for me to fully express my views in this regard, but suffice it to say that the adjective 'infamous' is irresponsible. There are many Aboriginal people alive today who would not be alive had it not been for the activities of the Lutheran Mission at Hermannsburg. For this reason, I endorse Ms Van Oosterzee's request for a printed apology.

In due course, on 28 April, I received a reply from the editor, Jane Rich, and she pointed out that a printed apology would appear in the June issue of the magazine, and included a copy of the form of the apology, which I will not trouble honourable members with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it may come as some surprise to you that another pair of eyes had obviously lit on the same phrase and those were the eyes of the member for Braitling. I seek leave of the Assembly to table the article from Panorama, Ms Van Oosterzee's letter to the editor, my letter to the editor, the reply from the editor and the letter from the member for Braitling.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Braitling wrote in these terms which, as you will note, were rather different from mine. He said:

I write in reference to an article entitled 'Sea of Stone' by Penny Van Oosterzee which appears in the March 1988 edition of the Ansett in-flight magazine. I wish to lodge the strongest possible protest about an inaccurate statement contained in this article and I point out that, not only does the author make an inaccurate statement about the Lutheran Mission when she refers to the 'once infamous Lutheran Mission', but she does not attempt to say why the mission is 'infamous'.

This article does, I believe, damage the standing of your magazine and I feel that a retraction, and an apology to the many former and current residents of Hermannsburg should be printed in your next edition.

In a final paragraph the member for Braitling said:

I might add that this is not the first time Ms Van Oosterzee has written inaccurate articles about central Australia.

A number of issues arise from that. The first is that the member for Braitling should have taken the trouble to find out the facts of the matter, as I did, before he put pen to paper. That is the first issue. I think it is absolutely outrageous that a member of this Assembly, who has been in public life for 15 years, does not take the trouble to check his facts before he

leaps into print in that way. However, that by itself would not cause me to raise this matter. The second fact is that somebody in Ms Van Oosterzee's position, who writes articles in our local paper, who is involved in developing a particular area of tourism in the Centre that is involved with people who are prepared to pay dollars to experience the wonders of our arid environment and who are interested to explore the wonders of the Aboriginal associations of central Australia, may find her possibilities of earning a livelihood seriously compromised by sentences like such as: 'I might add that this is not the first time Van Oosterzee has written inaccurate articles about central Australia'.

The member for Braitling accused Ms Van Oosterzee of not attempting to say why the mission was 'infamous' and yet, at the end of his very own letter, he made this completely broad-brush, unsubstantiated, unsubstantial accusation about somebody in such a way as to seriously damage her reputation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wonder - and I put this question to the honourable member for Braitling - how widely that letter has been circulated. It has gone to the editor of Panorama magazine and, to a layman's eye, that smacks to me of defamation. I understand that Ms Van Oosterzee herself has sought legal advice and that the honourable member for Braitling is likely to hear more of her.

Neither of those 2 issues - the question of the defamatory nature of the letter or the fact that the honourable member for Braitling did not do his homework - would necessarily encourage me to raise these matters in this House. The final issue, and the reason that I believe this issue is of fundamental importance, not only to Ms Van Oosterzee but also to this Assembly, is that that letter was not written on the honourable member for Braitling's letterhead. That letter was written on the letterhead of the Office of the Speaker of this Assembly.

Throughout my explanation of these issues, I have studiously referred to the honourable member for Braitling. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be well aware of the importance of drawing the distinction between the activities of the honourable member for Braitling as an elected member of this Assembly and his other role. I might say in passing that the member for Braitling frequently does his job as a local member particularly well. In this particular case, however, he has his facts wrong. He has defamed somebody, and what really bothers me and what the opposition will be discussing before tomorrow's sittings is the extent to which this Assembly is involved because this letter has been written on the letterhead of the Office of the Speaker.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Wynn's Safari passed through Alice Springs during the weekend. I have not had much to do with the safari this time, unlike the last occasion it came through the Territory when I was involved from the early planning stages until the actual event because of my role in assisting with negotiations which enabled the competition to run from Tennant Creek straight through to Lajamanu. However, having been involved in the past, I took more than a passing interest in this year's event. One matter which concerned me arose as a result of a complaint which I received from a person who was very closely involved with the Wynn's Safari, to the extent of putting people up and becoming involved in the tourist trade. This person made a very strong complaint that the government had done very little to promote the safari.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you yourself may not be a 4-wheel-drive buff but many people are. The activities of Scotsman Cowan and people of that ilk are a

source of wonder and interest to many millions of people around the world. In fact, I was advised that, when last year's Wynn's Safari was televised, the world-wide audience was in the vicinity of 180 million people. That represents a phenomenal boost for the Territory. A very large press contingent follows the event, providing daily reports. Reports are broadcast not only in Japan but in other countries around the world.

In terms of that sort of coverage, I was rather disappointed to hear this person's remarks to the effect that people involved in the organisation of the safari were less than happy with the government's support for it. These people drew a very distinct line between the work that was done by the Alice Springs Town Council, for which they had nothing but praise, and the people of Alice Springs who had done their best to assist with bivouacking and so forth. Their criticisms were levelled particularly at the Tourist Commission. Given the amount of publicity involved in having 180 million people view the Territory landscape as vehicles proceeded along the Tanami track and up through the Top End, and the fact that such publicity would normally cost a fortune, they said that the actual assistance that they received from the Tourist Commission was minimal.

I believe that several thousand dollars were contributed by the Tourist Commission. However, people were certainly left with the impression that the government's role was very small. In fact, it was put to me that the organisers of the Wynn's Safari are considering whether they will return to the Territory next year. It is as serious as that. People felt that they were left out in the cold and that the involvement of the government was nowhere near what could be expected for an event of such significance. I would hope that the Minister for Tourism will be able to stand up tomorrow night or the night after, as he is not here tonight, and give us chapter and verse on what assistance was provided and so allay people's fears on this matter.

I hope that he will also take the matter up with the Wynn's Safari organisers and see whether the organisers themselves or the senior participants, the people who actually draw the TV audiences, the people in the A-grade division, have justifiable complaints that he can assure them that he will put right for next year so that the Wynn's Safari will continue in the Territory. I say that knowing full well that, unfortunately, with the rains that were occurring at that time, there is quite a possibility that, the next time that I go out on the Tanami track, it will be a 300-mile long bog after all those vehicles have charged over it. However, I rely on the good offices of the Minister for Transport and Works to put one of his 6-monthly grades through there or possibly even give us an extra grade in return for the some \$250 000 that I am told that safari injected into the local Alice Springs economy over the few days that it was there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 2 other issues, in which you would have some interest, that I would like to put on the record tonight. The Minister for Education asked me to mention it because he would like to reply to a number of issues on education in an adjournment speech during this week. The 2 issues that I wish to raise relate to Sadadeen Senior High School. They refer to the what would appear to have been a cessation of the programs that were running there to assist Aboriginal students in Years 11 and 12. I have written to the honourable minister to the effect that it is not for me to go in to bat for the individuals involved in the programs before but rather it is the programs themselves which I see as being particularly important. There was one for Aboriginal students and one for migrant students, the migrant assistance program.

Substantial numbers of people were involved in those programs. Both of those groups comprised people who have difficulty, because of language or cultural differences, with getting through those final 2 years of high school, and there is a very real need to continue and expand programs in that regard. I do not think anybody on the government side - certainly none of them is speaking up - would argue with me about the real need for those 2 programs, and the need for us to try to lift what has been a very poor record to date of getting Aboriginal students through Year 12. A couple of years ago, when I last examined the figures, there would have been something like only 1 or 2 Aboriginal students who would have actually gone through our education system and completed Year 12.

There is a very real need for programs of that nature in Sadadeen Senior High. The programs require somebody who is able to liaise with different levels of education, the various TAFE institutions, the College of Advanced Education, and with people in the employment sector to find jobs for people, as well as having somebody in that group who has an ability to assist people with problems that they have at home, with finances, with members of their family and with the problems of growing up in a community where low achievement levels in higher education are the norm rather than the exception.

I put that on record because I have written to the Minister for Education about it and he assured me that, if I were to raise it, he would collect his information together and reply to that and to a number of other issues that I have raised with him in this House during these sittings such as the matter of classes in French and German at that same senior high school.

Motion agreed; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS  
Regulation of Building Matters on Rural Land

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 302 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the easing of unnecessary regulation of building matters relating to improvements on rural freehold land. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth that the bureaucratic regulations placed on the use of freehold blocks of land in the electorate of Koolpinyah and the rural area part of the electorate of Palmerston are contrary to the expected, legitimate, unfettered use of such land. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly listen to our request for greater freedom in legitimate day-to-day matters effective on our blocks with reference to easing the unnecessary regulation of planning matters, building matters and generally on what cannot be done on our blocks.

Reinstatement of Doctor at Palmerston Health Clinic

Mr COULTER (Palmerston)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1328 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the reinstatement of a doctor at the Palmerston Health Clinic. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain residents of the Northern Territory, electors of the divisions of Palmerston and Koolpinyah, respectfully showeth that the services of a government doctor have been removed from the Palmerston Health Clinic thereby reducing the choice of medical practitioners available to residents of Palmerston and the adjacent rural area at a time when residents are seeking an upgrading of medical services to a 24-hour medical and pharmaceutical service. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that a doctor is reinstated at the Palmerston Health Clinic immediately, and that the government address the level and efficiency of health services being provided in Palmerston to adequately meet the demand of residents within Palmerston and the rural area, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

TABLED PAPER  
'Towards the 90s Volume 2'

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, for the information of honourable members, I table a paper entitled 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' together with a series of information papers. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement that I am about to make.

This document updates, re-examines and elaborates on the issues raised by the government last year in 'Towards the 90s'. 'Towards the 90s' was extremely successful in that it put forward a whole series of dramatic alternatives for the future of Northern Territory education. By 21 October last year, more than 120 submissions had been received from individuals and groups wanting to have their say on those issues. At that time, the Minister for Education announced plans for a second consultation document which would take the discussion one step further.

Mr Speaker, I have great pleasure in presenting this, the second consultation document, 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. Copies of this document have already been circulated to schools, school councils, interested groups and individuals and the general public throughout the Territory. 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' was released for discussion at the start of this school semester and public comment will be received over a period of 8 weeks until the end of September.

I urge everyone in the community to consider the ramifications of the important proposals contained in the document. They should think about how the issues will affect them and provide the feedback we are seeking. The first volume of 'Towards the 90s' aimed to give parents more say in the education of their children and to make the NT education system more accountable to the community in general. The most casual observer, the man or woman in the street, can see already the significant progress which the government and the Department of Education have made towards these important goals.

The government has been genuine in gathering feedback on 'Towards the 90s'. It listened to views put forward in all quarters and took steps to promote active discussion. Public meetings were held. The views expressed at these meetings were noted and those who attended will find that many of the points raised have been taken into account in volume 2. The Education Advisory Council was asked to investigate the issues. It was given access to all the letters and submissions we received and it went through each item in 'Towards the 90s' in great detail. The expert recommendations put forward by the EAC were given sway and incorporated into volume 2 and the more detailed discussion papers which accompany it. In fact, many of the issues and resulting proposals considered by the EAC were discussed directly with the principals and others in a wide-ranging working draft which helped determine the final form of volume 2. As all this work went on, the first copy of volume 2 was prepared for release early this year. I have made no secret of the fact that I was dissatisfied with the result at that time and I believe that the extra trouble we took in preparing this particular document has paid off.

Members of school councils throughout the Territory would be aware of the series of meetings I held with school council chairmen and school principals. The delay in the release of volume 2 has allowed me to incorporate the perspectives put forward at those meetings by parents, other school council members and principals. In addition, I have introduced topics not covered in 'Towards the 90s'. These issues, discipline and the compatibility of Australian education systems, are raised in my foreword to 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. They are new issues that need to be considered and I would welcome feedback on them.

I must say that I am extremely pleased with the positive response I have had to 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' so far. I would like to commend the Council of Government School Organisations for the responsible process it has

introduced to ensure that its reply to 'Towards the 90s' comes from the widest possible cross-section of school council members. I have no doubt that the maturity, good sense and practical application of good ideas which are the hallmark of 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' will find strong support in all sections of the school community and among the public in general. I am doubly blessed because I believe that the controversial history of this document will ensure that it is widely read and that there is a greater understanding of the proposals it contains.

It has been correctly reported that, in 'Towards the 90s Volume 2', the government acknowledges the need for flexibility in the process of devolution. The government fully endorses the process of devolution promoted in 'Towards the 90s'. It also believes that increased flexibility will protect councils and allow them to choose the way in which they operate to suit their school environment. It is true that, in many communities within the Territory, the personnel and resources available to councils can change quickly and dramatically. It is important that they be able to take on powers in order to have a greater say in education. It is important also that they are able easily to divest themselves of those powers if they wish.

Many other subtle yet important changes are contained in the recommendations put forward in 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. The proposal to introduce school improvement plans and the improved master teachers scheme are dealt with in detail and all issues except one are covered in the accompanying information papers. The single information paper still to come will relate to the matter of excellence. As members may be aware, that paper will come from consultation involving the Board of Studies and the Department of Education. That process is well in hand and I hope that the paper will be available shortly.

In Northern Territory education, the need to develop future strategy does not stop with 'Directions for the Eighties', 'Towards the 90s' or any other single discussion or policy document. The initiatives of 'Towards the 90s' are being pursued and the feedback which will flow from volume 2 will have an important part to play as our system continues to develop. The Northern Territory government will continue to look to the future in education. There will be more documents of this type. The government will continue to address all the issues and, in the process, accountability, excellence and flexibility will develop within the education system.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would firstly like to thank the minister for having the grace to table this document for debate before foisting it on the people of the Northern Territory. That is in sharp contrast to the attempts of his 2 predecessors who earned reputations for dreaming up schemes which they then announced without talking to this House, parents or anybody else.

Mr Manzie: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Smith: You ought to be ashamed of putting it out.

Mr EDE: He ought to be ashamed of putting his name to it. The Attorney-General, who was demoted from the education portfolio, is the one who ought to be ashamed of himself. At least the current minister has allowed adequate time for people to consider the documents. My major problem with the document, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that it is essentially boring. Basically, it says very little. It does not contain a dream. There is nothing there to excite a belief in the people of the Northern Territory that the government is finally coming to grips with the whole area of education.



If we are looking towards the 1990s, we should be taking account of the fact that society is changing. Jobs and the makeup of the areas where people will work are rapidly changing, and it is those societies that are able to come to grips with that fact in their education system and are able to translate that into a coherent policy by which to develop their skills which will be the societies that take advantage of the changes that will occur around the world.

Before I go on to a detailed analysis of the document, there are 2 skills that I believe must be part of the education process at all levels. The first is research skill. The body of knowledge, the body of information, which is available in the world today makes it an impossibility for us to say simply that we will provide a set of information which students must somehow be able to cram into their heads over those 12 years and then, when they have completed that 12 years of education, expect them to turn around and make use of that information for the next 40 years of their working life. If that was ever possible, it will become less and less possible as time goes on. The amount of information that is available around the world, and the way in which the whole process is changing so rapidly, requires that we assist our students to learn to learn. We must provide them with the ability to know where to find knowledge and the skill to change data into information. To process data, it is necessary to know how to access information and render it into a coherent form on the basis of which decisions can be taken. In the future, such research skill will rank with the traditional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. It will be one of those fundamental skills which we will begin teaching in early years of primary school and pursue through to Year 12 and into the post-secondary levels.

The other skill to be acquired is the ability of the individual to relate to other people and society generally. Our children will need to have acquired social skills by the time they move out into the wider society. They must be able to see society as an organisational structure, be able to recognise their place in it and understand their responsibilities to society and society's responsibilities to them. These skills are being called upon more and more often. It is no good saying that we will turn back the clock to the time of the semi-extended family when grandmother and auntie would be available as well as the parents to inculcate young Johnnie and Suzie with a set of values that would carry them through life. Society is changing. The number of families where both parents are working is increasing very substantially. The number of single-parent families is increasing very substantially. Increasingly, society is trying to determine how best it can cope with these changes without having those children slip to the other end of the social scale because of the difficulties they will face as a result of that.

That is a factor that is constantly raised by employers. They begin by saying that they want external examinations. However, when you delve further into their problems, you discover that their first difficulty is that their new employees do not know how to acquire knowledge. The new employee does nothing and the employer assumes that he knows nothing. Often, the problem is that the person does not have the social skills or the confidence in himself to be able to find out what he is expected to do in the job nor to be able to access the necessary information, which is available within the system, to be able to carry out the job. Those are 2 fundamentally important factors, not only in a person's relation to society when he first leaves school, but also in his relationship to the job.

As I said, there is nothing really enlightening or new in 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. It is an attempt to cushion the objections that surfaced in response to 'Towards the 90s'. It has been turned into a sort of blancmange: a soft and fuzzy document within which all things are possible, but nothing is actually targeted. I am sorry to say that it is a monumental collection of contradictions. There are internal inconsistencies within the document. I hope that, in his reply, the minister can explain why, in the budget that was brought down on Tuesday last, another \$3.5m was cut from the allocation for primary and secondary education, on top of the \$6.5m that was cut from the education budget in the previous year. That amounts to a cut of \$10m in 2 years. How can he stand up and, with a straight face - and I notice he does not have a straight face, but how can he knock off \$10m over those 2 years and then turn round and say that he will resource staff development, increase the monitoring programs and introduce the master-teacher philosophy? Those are areas that will be expensive.

Mr Harris: What is the matter with that?

Mr EDE: That is excellent. But you have cut \$3.5m. Where will the money come from? The honourable minister is asking for a commitment from the school councils, the teachers and from the parents, but those people cannot reassure themselves that the government has made a commitment also because there is no evidence of it. All they see from the government is cuts, cuts and more cuts. They find the government knocking its own education system and saying that it will assist the Darwin International Grammar School.

Mr Smith: What has happened to all the school councillors who used to be in high schools in Darwin? That is one example.

Mr Harris: That is up to the schools to decide.

Mr EDE: It is because you cut them back!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart will resume his seat. Honourable members, I have been quite tolerant of interjections during the last 15 or 20 minutes but what happened a moment ago is totally unacceptable to the Chair. I will no longer tolerate such levels of interjection from either side of the House.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' is an aimless document that has been designed in a philosophical vacuum. It proposes that schools develop goals and objectives, which is a laudable aim, but it does not lay out any goals and objectives for the Department of Education. It does not lay out any goals or objectives for the minister or any goals or objectives for this government. It has not recognised, let alone come to grips with, the federal move to devise a unified system across the states. It has not said: 'There is something positive happening at the federal level in terms of cooperation with the states. We will structure our system to ensure that our own goals are incorporated so that we will be able to reap the advantages of the unification proposals'. The document is totally silent in relation to the government's responsibilities. It would appear that the government is so intent on devolution that it fails to consider what it will do itself and how its resources will be allocated to achieve its aims.

To return to the concept of an overall vision, it is a shame that the member for Nightcliff and the minister demonstrated by their interjections that they do not understand that the first requirement is an analysis of how the Northern Territory will develop socially and economically over the next 10

to 15 years. We need to analyse and predict trends in relation to the future labour market and to prepare for it. We need to analyse what skills will be required so that our students will be able to compete in the employment arena. Having defined those areas and the skills required, we can then look at strategies for developing them. That is how a plan is put together, but this document shows no evidence of such an approach. It seems merely to return to outmoded formal education concepts which both experience and research have already discarded.

It would appear that the aim of 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' is the same as the aim of the first volume: to save the Department of Education considerable funds by transferring costs to the local community, hoping to exploit the very good work done by various volunteers and expecting parents to take on additional responsibility, changing the system from one of voluntary parental support to one of unpaid labour. The vision for the future appears to focus on reduced government responsibility in relation to education.

We have heard the minister talk about some issues which are not addressed in the document at all. He said, for example: 'There is also a need for greater discipline within the school system'. After reading that, I searched through the papers for some proposals in relation to discipline. There is nothing!

Mr Harris: I am seeking comment. What do you think?

Mr EDE: I thought you were issuing a paper. I thought you had examined the issue. You mention discipline but you propose nothing. I do not have time in the course of this debate to canvass the whole issue of discipline. If the minister wants to discuss discipline, let him open up the debate by making a statement even if it is only an airy-fairy one which is designed to initiate discussion. I am quite happy to talk about discipline and the problems of disinclined students. I am happy to talk about truants and the differentiation between the problems of truants and the problems of the disinclined. I am quite happy to discuss those matters but I have only 15 minutes left in this debate. I do not intend to spend the whole time talking about discipline when the minister has had months to introduce the subject in this document and has failed to give any idea of what he is talking about when he refers to discipline.

Assessment was a similar issue. The minister has talked about external assessment and issued press releases about it. This document, however, contains nothing in relation to external assessment. I expected it to be covered but it was not. The same applies in relation to resource allocation again. There is no information which gives even the slightest clue as to how the new proposals will be funded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it would appear that the \$3.5m which has been cut from primary schools and secondary schools ...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! All members have an obligation at least to be accurate and I think the honourable member is on the verge of misleading the House. I refer to Budget Paper No 5, page 159, where you will see that there has been an increase in every facet of the budget. It is totally inappropriate for the honourable member to state that there have been budget cuts.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is absolutely outrageous and the grin on the honourable member's face shows that he knows it. The fact is that there

is a reduction of close to \$3.5m in real terms on last year's allocations to primary and secondary education. My point is that the resource allocation referred to in 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' will be very difficult to carry out in the context of those cuts in real terms.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I would remind the honourable member that he should confine his comments to the document and associated papers which have been tabled.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I shall certainly continue to do that because funding and resource allocation is an essential component of any program which talks about excellence, accountability and devolution of education. Any plan requires an allocation or reallocation of resources. The government's track record on the allocation of resources for the Department of Education has been one of continual cuts over the last couple of years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have attempted to assist the government in obtaining funding for Batchelor College and the tertiary education system but it is very difficult because, every time I talk to the people in Canberra, they tell me to look at the track record of the Northern Territory government. They say: 'When we provide your government with more money for education, it reallocates it somewhere else'.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for Stuart is wandering off the topic and you have warned him once.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is obviously no point of order. The member for Nightcliff is simply trying to use up my time because he is obviously embarrassed at the government's record in this matter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, another area in which the government has provided very little substance is that of industrial relations. There are many matters which are yet to be negotiated and it is very improper to introduce some of them in a document such as this without first of all exploring them in an industrial context. I refer to matters such as the appeal processes, superannuation and so forth which have not been addressed. I hope that the minister will at least tell us that he intends to give those his immediate and personal attention so that we can get them out of the way. If we cannot work within a clear industrial relations framework, which is cooperative and understood by both parties, we will have real difficulties.

Mr Speaker, I will talk later about some of the concerns raised in the information papers. However, what of the papers that we do not have and which we should have had by now? I refer in particular to the Report of the Committee on Primary Education - the COPE Report. This report was initiated by principals who were very concerned at the way that primary education was going in 1986. They initiated an inquiry which involved a number of departmental heavyweights. The committee sought submissions and rumour has it that it produced a very good analysis of where primary education was at and that it contained some very good recommendations. However, these are rumours because nobody has seen it. I ask the minister to give an undertaking that he will table the COPE Report so that people will be able to examine what those experts had to say about problems relating to primary education.

I turn to school improvement plans. It is fair enough that all schools should have a school improvement plan but, on the face of it, this appears to

be vague and idealistic rhetoric. The idea has not been properly researched but I am prepared to leave that one. Hopefully, the minister will give us more information on that. Perhaps, when it moves a bit further along the line, we will begin to understand what he is talking about.

The concept of devolution still has the aroma of a reward-and-punishment system for schools. There is still the potential for stigma to be attached to schools which do not have a parent body with the skills to be able to take full advantage of it. It still assumes this willingness in the community to shoulder enormous responsibility. That is fair enough if schools are willing to take on that responsibility and if parent bodies have those skills and are willing to take it on. However, 2 things are essential. Firstly, those schools that do not have that ability among their parent group and do not have those resources must not be penalised because of that lack. Indeed, perhaps they should be given more resources to make up for that lack. Secondly, enthusiasm could exist for a period and then drop away. For example, the parent body of a school may be enthusiastic and include a number of skilled people for 4 or 5 years. I am told, for example, that Dripstone High makes quite an amount of money playing the money markets. Somebody there obviously has those skills and is able to do that. Heaven forbid if that school got itself into a situation where the funds that it required to continue to operate the school were tied up with continued success in the money market. What if the person skilled at playing the money market leaves and another person claims to be skilled at betting on the races? It could become rather ridiculous because, to my mind, from playing the money market to playing the horses is not a big step. There needs to be the ability for a school council to fall back on the government if it loses its ability to provide resources by virtue of the use of certain skills so that the operation of the school continues at the previous standard.

I am worried that the concepts of staff development appear to be targeted more towards large, urban schools. I cannot see that the minister has come to grips yet with the needs of teachers in isolated rural schools. Time and time again in this Legislative Assembly, I have spoken about the problems with the cutbacks that this government has engineered in respect of the conditions of service of public servants working in the bush. The government has always argued that it was not necessary for people to have those conditions of service in Darwin. However, it has not done anything about transferring any of those benefits to people out bush. It is becoming almost impossible to recruit the teachers, the sisters and the other public servants who are needed out bush. This has not been taken into account here. The problems that new teachers have when they experience the cultural gap have also not been given enough attention.

Questions spring to mind in relation to master teachers. There does not appear to be any increase in resources to enable this proposal to be funded. It appears to me that it could be extremely expensive if teachers take it up. Under the current master teachers system, the proposal has been taken up by only 0.7% of teachers. Some 15 teachers are currently in that master teacher category. That has been the success of the current program, but perhaps this one will work. However, it will be absolutely essential that considerable discussion occur in relation to it. At the moment, it appears there is the potential for nepotism in the system. There is no provision for appeal and that, in itself, is industrially unsound. Teacher remuneration is an industrial issue which needs to be explored properly within that industrial arena. I would point out also that the assessment of teachers will take a great deal of time and considerable resources which could be diverted from the actual teaching arena.

A review of this program was carried out in America. This government is always talking about America and the bloke from Tennessee whom it intended to bring over to teach us how to run our education system. The fact is that his education system is collapsing rapidly. In Florida, where they have had a master teacher program, the review that was carried out recently indicated that there is a need to consider carefully a number of the following points in relation to performance appraisal. There are difficulties about the appropriateness of the instrument for identifying master teachers. What are those factors to take into account? There is a big list of them here. Honourable members can have a look at them. How are those individual items weighed? How can they be compared across the total education system? Even if like schools are compared, there are difficulties because some are teaching in the general area and some are teaching in the PES area, and that is difficult enough to compare. If we are talking about somebody who is teaching in a remote, rural area and somebody who is teaching at Darwin High, there are real difficulties in actually applying those instruments, even if we decide that they are appropriate. The administration and the scoring will be extremely difficult and will take an enormous amount of time.

I am happy for the government to continue to explore that area, as long as there is constant consultation with the teachers and the Teachers Federation so that it is able to ensure that it does not get itself locked up a blind alley. The Curriculum Advisory Service maintains that moderation will be difficult and time-consuming to implement in remote areas. But I am in favour of external moderation as a means of determining how the various schools are operating, and I hope that those extra resources are provided.

Let us have a brief look at some of the areas that are neglected in the document. There is nothing about Aboriginal education and no acknowledgement of the problems that the government has in that regard. There is no reference to remote area education generally and the difficulties relating to it. There is nothing about non-gender-specific education. Problems have occurred in this regard, particularly in relation to young girls coming from the primary school system into the secondary school system and dropping studies such as science. There is nothing about the children who have learning difficulties, and how those will be coped with.

As I said, I hope that the honourable minister will discuss the matter of discipline because I will not have time to do so. I see that time is running out on me. We could conduct a full debate on problems that the education system has in coping with disinclined students and finding ways in which to handle that problem. Teacher burnout is another problem which has to be taken into account, certainly in relation to a master-teacher system. If we are to have a master-teacher system, we must look at teacher burnout. The status of the old, increment system must be examined. We have an increment system, on the one hand, for people who are progressing through the ordinary band levels and another system for people in the master-teacher category.

There is also the matter of restructuring and resource allocation within the department itself. Unfortunately, I will not have time to finish my speech. However, I hope that the honourable minister will speak about some of those other areas in education so that we can give them the time that they deserve.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Overview of the Commonwealth Budget

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, last night, the federal Treasurer brought down the 1988-89 budget and announced a surplus of \$5500m. There is no doubt that a \$5500m surplus is a good result for Australia. It will enable the public sector to reduce its drain on the financial markets and it will also lead to a reduction in the external debt. Nevertheless, regard must be had to the reason for the surplus and who in fact has contributed to it.

It is clear that a significant part of the surplus is a direct result of an increased tax burden. The fringe benefits tax, which was introduced 2 years ago, is now raising \$1000m, and hence \$1000m of the surplus can be attributed directly to this source. As people's incomes rise, they move into higher tax brackets and this tax-by-stealth has contributed nearly \$2000m to the budget surplus. It is also clear that over \$2000m of the surplus can be attributed directly to reductions in payments to the states and the Northern Territory. This is the combined effect of reductions made in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

All states and the Northern Territory have accepted the need for restraint readily, and therefore have been willing to accept these cuts in the national interest. However, it is disheartening to see that the Commonwealth does not apply the same restraint to its own outlays as it applies to the states and the Territory. In 1988-89, Commonwealth payments to the states are estimated to rise by 1.8%. However, Commonwealth outlays on its own purposes - that is, excluding what it pays to the states and the Territory - are projected to rise by 5.3%. In fact, this is very close to expected inflation and clearly indicates that there has not been significant restraint on Commonwealth public-sector outlays. Despite this, I still welcome the \$5500m surplus and congratulate Mr Keating on his ability to produce that result.

In terms of the national economic outlook, there are encouraging signs for the year ahead: gross domestic product is expected to be steady at a real growth rate of 3.5%; employment growth is expected to rise by 2.75%; investment is expected to rise by 12%; and inflation is projected to be down to around 4.5% by the end of the year. Average weekly earnings are expected to rise by a little under 6% while the current account deficit is expected to fall slightly.

It is to be expected that the benefits of the strengthening of the economy will be felt in the Northern Territory and all Territorians can look forward to a higher standard of living. Receipts are up by 8.3% or over 2% in real terms. This increase is a result of substantial increases in income tax of nearly 14%, offset by reductions in the crude oil excise, excise in beer and lower dividend payments from the Reserve Bank into the Consolidated Fund.

In regard to income tax, personal income tax collections are up by 13.8% as a result of the combined effects of a 2.5% increase in the numbers employed, a 5.75% increase in earnings and 5.3% as a result of people paying higher tax rates as their incomes rise. I have previously mentioned that this 'bracket creep' in tax collection is one of the main contributors to the budget surplus. It accounts for nearly \$2000m of the \$5500m surplus.

Company tax is up by nearly 16%, partly reflecting the strong growth in the economy. Only one significant change to company tax was announced in the budget. The upper limits for deductions that can be claimed under the Management and Investment Companies Program have been revised to a sliding

scale ranging from \$30m in 1988-89 to \$12m in 1989-90. Previously, there was a \$20m upper limit for all 3 years. Sales tax is up by 14%. Approximately 4% of this is attributable to the change in taxing arrangements for beer under which the excise on beer has been reduced. This is partly offset by the standard 20% imposition of sales tax. Even if the effects of the change in the method of taxing beer are disregarded, sales tax has increased significantly in real terms. The nominal increase is 10%.

Total excise is down by nearly \$1000m. Over half of this is attributed to the expected fall in fuel prices which are projected to be 24% below the 1987-88 average prices. No doubt, partly as a result of the expected fall in prices, crude oil production is also expected to decline by about 2%. The other major reason for the fall is the reduction in excise duty on beer. Low-alcohol beers will receive the largest benefit as part of a strategy to encourage consumption of these beers in preference to the stronger varieties. The price of a carton of low-alcohol beer is expected to fall by \$5.50 and full-strength beer by about \$2.20. This, of course, is good news for the Territory as a whole, given its high level of consumption. The only other item of note on the revenue side is an \$800m reduction in dividend payments by the Reserve Bank to governments. This is the result of an assessed need to make provision for losses as a result of exchange rate movements.

I turn now to the expenditures announced in the budget. Mr Speaker, total Commonwealth outlays are expected to rise by \$3002m, which is an increase of 4.1%. I will refer to some of the major items of note. In the defence area, a number of new capital projects are to commence in the Territory in 1988-89, including those at the Tindal RAAF base and HMAS Coonawarra and the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar. More than \$30m will be spent on these projects in 1988-89. As with Tindal stage 1, it is essential that the Territory derive the maximum economic benefit from these projects through the use of local contractors and suppliers.

The major initiatives in education relate to significant changes in the arrangements for the funding of higher education as foreshadowed in the White Paper. A Higher Education Contribution Scheme, HECS, is to commence as of 1 January 1989 at a rate of \$1800 for each year of full-time study, indexed annually. These funds are to be distributed to institutions by the Commonwealth government. No funds have been identified for the Northern Territory University although the present restructuring is to comply with the requirements of the unified national system. Additionally, the higher education funds for existing DIT courses have been reduced and it is unsure of how the HECS funds will be distributed. Additional information is being sought from DEET in Canberra. A decline of \$0.5m in AIC as a result of an assets test is likely to discriminate against people living in remote areas of the Territory.

In the areas of social security and welfare, a Jobs Training and Education Program, JET, has been introduced to assist and accelerate the transition of sole parents in paid employment. An increase in the Children's Services Program will provide additional child-care places on a joint funding basis with the states and the Territory. A New Start Program has been introduced to assist long-term unemployed people back into the work force.

There has been a decrease of 14.5% in the housing and community amenities function over the past 5 years, due mainly to a fall in payments to the states and assistance for home purchase assistance. Additional funds of \$22.8m are provided for a new priority communities development strategy, a large proportion of which will be spent in the Northern Territory. In relation to



protection of the environment, a new laboratory for the Office of the Supervising Scientist is to be built at Jabiru rather than the resources being provided to the Northern Territory University, which was what the Northern Territory had advocated.

In relation to transport and communication, the transfer of ownership of the Alice Springs Airport, and possibly the Tennant Creek Airport, to the Federal Airports Commission, and its assumption of responsibility for civil aviation facilities at Darwin has been confirmed. \$4m has been allocated for capital works on Alice Springs Airport, runways and terminal buildings. I am sure that honourable members will appreciate that \$4m will not go very far to alleviate the difficulties experienced at Alice Springs these days. Plans were announced on the expenditure of \$65m on Darwin Airport in the future, although no cash or commencement dates were outlined.

For culture and recreation, there is an increase of 4.5% to the ABC and the Special Broadcasting Service, but still no commitment to improve services or to extend SBS television to the Northern Territory. Honourable members will be aware that the federal government, I think 2 elections ago, promised the Northern Territory that SBS television would be extended to the Northern Territory and that promise has been deferred persistently.

Mr Smith: The Liberals are going to close it down.

Mr PERRON: From the Northern Territory's point of view, they may as well. We do not receive it.

In Commonwealth payments to the Northern Territory, there is a \$4.2m new program to meet housing and community infrastructure needs of selectively disadvantaged Aboriginal communities. The detail of the program is still to be resolved, but clearly Aboriginal people will benefit directly from the program. There are various adjustments to other specific-purpose payments which require more information before any firm conclusions can be reached. At this stage, it would appear that the Northern Territory could receive at least an additional \$4m. It will, of course, have to be included as a budget expenditure.

There is no specific provision for the university at this stage, as we are advised that the distribution of higher education funds will not occur until October. The Territory remains hopeful of receiving full funding for all higher education, which is the situation in the states.

General-purpose payments are slightly higher than projected in the Territory budget. The payroll tax exemption previously available to several major Commonwealth government business enterprises was withdrawn by the Commonwealth after 30 June 1988. By agreement at the last Premiers Conference, the Commonwealth intends to recover 90% of payroll tax collections and, accordingly, has reduced its estimated payments to the Territory by \$2.5m. This decrease is more than offset by an increase brought about by the higher than originally projected inflation.

The government welcomes the federal budget announcement that there will be a \$5500m surplus this year. While I have indicated that it is unfair for Treasurer Keating to claim all the credit, it does appear that Australia is heading in the right direction. This is good news for the Territory which is set to take advantage of a new resurgence in Australia's competitive position. It is unfortunate that the ordinary wage and salary earners, who have shown such restraint over the years, are not to be rewarded with tax cuts and that

many who are forced into higher marginal tax brackets this year will find this hard to understand. However, this cannot be described as a bad budget overall and it would be unfair to nitpick for purely political reasons. On the whole, I believe that most Australians will welcome it in the same way as Territorians welcomed the Territory's budget last week.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, after listening to the Chief Minister's response to the federal budget, my main question is: why did he bother? Any of us could have done what he did, which was simply to read out the content of the federal budget. There was very little analysis and very little comment ...

Mr Perron: Try the first half page.

Mr SMITH: That proves my point exactly. The document is 10 pages long and the Chief Minister tells us to look at the first half page.

The Chief Minister's response to the federal budget was fairly meaningless. He gave credit where credit was due, however, and that is where I would like to start. The federal budget is an extremely responsible budget that carries on the good work of the Hawke-Keating Labor team, work which began when the federal Labor government was elected in 1983. Although people such as the federal Leader of the Opposition are now saying that they would have taken the steps Labor has taken, we too often forget that they had many years in government during which none of these things were attempted. One example is the decision to deregulate the banking system, a decision taken by the federal Labor government soon after it was first elected. The Liberals had that as a policy for a number of years but never had the courage to implement it.

The federal budget surplus is \$5500m. The percentage of government spending share in the gross domestic product has been reduced from 30% to 25.5% during the last 4 years, a significant achievement indeed. A significant level of debt will be retired by the federal government and, because of its efforts in that area, the Australian public sector borrowing requirement for this year is nil. In other words, if you add the federal, state and Territory borrowing requirements and balance that amount against the retirement of the existing debts, there will not be any additional public-sector borrowing debt created. That is unprecedented in Australia's history and it can only be to the good of the economy in general. Not only does it show that the Commonwealth government is taking seriously the requirement to come to grips with its debt situation, but we also have a situation where the money that is around quite clearly will not be soaked up by government sources and will be available for private investment. That is something that we all support.

It was interesting to contrast the attitude of the Northern Territory government to the question of debt with the attitude of the federal Treasurer. Of course, we have just had a situation in the Northern Territory where we have finally come to a recognition that we do have a debt problem, although we might argue over the size of that debt problem. That is new for the Territory. Let me read out to you, Mr Speaker, what the federal Treasurer said about the national debt. It is on page 3 of his speech.

The national debt is not some kind of accounting abstraction. It is something which touches every Australian and, above all, our

children. Our policies are not only lifting the yoke of debt from our own necks, they will also lower the burden on the next generation.

That is the point about debt. It enables us to live beyond our means in the short term, but it leaves a burden for following generations. I am very pleased indeed to note that the federal Treasurer has recognised that position and, as one of his priorities, is clawing back the debt level federally.

As a result of this budget, interest rates will be lowered through further financial deregulation and, of course, that again is consistent with the trend of the federal Labor government. We have a situation where the regressive beer tax will be reduced and I am sure that, for many people, particularly people in the Northern Territory, the fact that beer will be cheaper is better news than anything else that was contained in the budget.

It is clear that the steps that the federal government has been able to take could not be done in isolation. They have depended on the cooperation of the union movement. It is clear that the accord and the consensus approach that has been adopted by the federal government towards the trade unions since it was elected has been working, and working successfully, and it has managed to allow the government to come to grips with the key question of wage increases and the related question of inflation rates.

Another factor that the success of the Keating budget depends on is continued high commodity prices overseas. I would hope, for all our sakes, that these prices will continue to remain high. One of the positive signs for us in that area is the extensive drought that is currently being suffered in the United States of America. I think it is their worse drought since the 'dustbowl' droughts of the 1930s. During my brief sojourn across the North American continent 2 or 3 months ago, it was interesting to note that, at that stage, the drought was dominating conversation. Every newspaper you read had something to say about the drought, generally in the context of the Greenhouse Effect or what would happen to commodity prices in the United States. From what I have been able to glean since, that problem has become worse. The United States' disadvantage, in respect of certain key products such as wheat, may be an advantage for Australia in the next few months.

I think the concentration of the Hawke-Keating government on getting the basics right in the economy has been obvious to all, and we are now starting to see the fruits of it. To thrust politics aside for a moment, it can only be hoped that the fruits of the economic plans put in place at the national level do flow through to the Northern Territory because there is no doubt that the Northern Territory has been slower in coming out of the downturn in the national economy than the states have been. It is to be hoped that, in the next 12 months, partly as a result of the plans put in place in the federal budget, we can move out of that trough.

If we look in terms of what is in the budget for the Northern Territory, we have cash for capital works totalling \$52m. That is some 7% of the Australian total which is not a bad effort for a population which is only 1% of the Australian total. We have continuing major defence spending at Tindal, Jindalee and HMAS Coorawarra. Funding for the Office of the Supervising Scientist is increased by 27% to \$1.16m. Funding for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which obviously will not all go to the Northern Territory, is increased by 13%.

In the education, employment and training areas, there are significant improvements. There is a funding increase of 23.2% for the Northern Territory. That concentrates on the provision of basic health services, water supplies and job training.

In relation to the Darwin Airport, the checks that I have been able to make over lunchtime with the Territory's representatives in the federal parliament reassure me that everything is going according to schedule there. I understand that a press release will be issued by our 2 federal members this afternoon reassuring the people of the Northern Territory, in light of the scare campaign being conducted by the Chief Minister, that the funding for the Darwin Airport terminal is on schedule and that we will see a start on that work in the very near future, as was clearly indicated at the press conference last week by the Territory's federal member and the federal Senator.

Mr Coulter: When is the near future?

Mr SMITH: Oh, you want to participate in this debate too, do you?

Mr Speaker, in terms of the decision taken by the federal government to charge entry fees at Kakadu National Park and to increase entry fees at Uluru National Park, I should congratulate the Minister for Tourism for the responsible approach that he adopted in this House to that matter this morning. There is no doubt that it is a fact of life that all governments are coming under increasing pressure to charge a fee for such services. I have no doubt that the Northern Territory government, at some time in the not-too-distant future, whatever political party is in power, will be imposing fees for entry into at least some of the more major parks under Territory control. It is inescapable that that sort of thing be done at a time when money is so tight and we have to get every dollar that we can for further development.

I have 2 concerns in relation to that matter. First, I think everybody thinks that \$10 is probably a little too high, although I know the Gurig National Park fee is \$10. I understand that, in the discussions that were held with the industry 3 or 4 months ago, a figure significantly lower than \$10 was being bandied around. The second concern that I have is one that the honourable minister highlighted and it relates to the speed with which these charges are being introduced. There is no doubt that many of the tours into Kakadu and Uluru are pre-sold package tours, and it will be a major problem for tourist operators who are operating on that basis to gouge out the additional money required. We all learnt a valuable lesson from the speed with which it was initially proposed to introduce the bed tax. There is nothing worse than, having paid for your holiday, to be met with additional and unexpected costs. That is a recipe for creating bad feelings. I have raised the matter with the federal minister and I do not have a response from him as yet. I know that my federal colleagues are also raising the question of the timing of those charges to see if there is some room to move. I say again, however, that I do not believe anyone can seriously oppose the principle of imposing charges for entry into major national parks. It is certainly common practice throughout the states of Australia.

Mr Speaker, the opposition has a number of important matters listed for debate today. I notice that the government is up to its normal trick of putting our general business items on as late as possible and therefore it looks like being a late night. Therefore, I will not prolong this debate. There is no doubt that the federal budget is a responsible one which sets the basis for the continued economic growth of Australia and let us hope the Northern Territory can be a part of that.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, in the context of this year's financial circumstances and the budgetary situation moving from 1987-88 into 1988-89, this federal budget can be described only as good and responsible. On many public occasions, including 3 successive Premiers Conferences, I have been supportive of a number of the economic initiatives being taken by the federal government. These have included moves towards balancing the federal budget, the deregulation of our currency, the deregulation of the banking and financial systems and a general freeing-up of the system which will encourage Australia to become more of an international trading nation and to address our serious current account deficit and our foreign debt problems. There is no doubt that this budget addresses those issues. To that extent, the general economic strategy being adopted by the Commonwealth government is correct. There are, however, a couple of points that can and should be made in respect of that.

Firstly, I find obnoxious in the extreme the extent to which the federal government claims all the credit for restraint whilst insulting and assaulting the states and the Northern Territory on their financial bases. The fact is that reductions in Commonwealth funding are from a total figure which includes reductions in payments it makes to the states and reductions in its own spending. Those are 2 fundamental elements and it is seriously worth investigating where the real restraint has been applied over the last 5 years.

The second matter I wish to address in this debate is the fact that, whilst the federal government has deregulated the financial markets, has deregulated the banking system and has taken a number of macro-economic initiatives, the fact still remains that it has not addressed the problem of overall government spending in its own purpose budget. That is the reason why Australians are crying continually that they are being overtaxed.

The Chief Minister indicated areas where savings have occurred that have led to the \$5500m surplus. He mentioned \$1000m in fringe benefits tax, and \$2000m reduction in payments to the states and the Northern Territory. I will deal with that in a moment. That is \$3000m of the \$5500m before we start. We have tax-bracket creep that is adding substantially to revenue. I ask members to note that the total receipts from the Commonwealth are up by 8.3% in dollar terms and that is a 2% increase in government receipts in real terms. That is substantially funded by a 14% increase in personal income tax collections because of bracket creep. That is taxation by stealth.

I note that the federal government has done nothing about the indexing of indirect taxes. It has reduced substantially a number of specific taxes. As the Leader of the Opposition and others have said, we can look at reductions in beer prices in the near future. Nonetheless, Australians will be paying 14% more in dollar terms as tax into the Commonwealth coffers in 1988-89.

Commonwealth expenditure will increase by only 4.1%, which is below the anticipated inflation rate. There is some restraint there but I would remind all honourable members of the reductions that were imposed again on the states and the Northern Territory in their spending patterns at the Premiers Conference this year where receipts from the Commonwealth were reduced in real terms right across the board. They were held at the same dollar value as for the previous year. There was no increase at all for inflation in the moneys allocated to the states and the Northern Territory by the Commonwealth. That is substantially funding that real cut in expenditure by the Commonwealth.

Whilst the federal Treasurer has regularly berated all states and the Northern Territory for their overspending, allow me to make 2 points. The

first is for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition who has been talking about our debt. Nobody has ever denied that this government has borrowed money either through capital grants and loans or through semi-government borrowings. Each year, the global levels of those borrowings have been shown in the budget. I must again remind all honourable members that, if they believe that we have been irresponsible in our borrowing or have borrowed excessively, they are saying also that the federal Treasurer has been irresponsible. The federal Treasurer is our representative on the Loans Council. He gives the Northern Territory global limits on new borrowings every year and approves what those moneys can be borrowed on. That is a fact of life whether the Leader of the Opposition likes it or not. The fact is that the federal government does not believe that we have excessive borrowings. It has approved every cent borrowed by the Northern Territory government and the allocation of those borrowings.

It is about time we stopped hearing about so-called debt problems although I suppose we will not because the Leader of the Opposition is scrambling around for something to sink his teeth into in order to destroy the increasing optimism and rising morale of the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: Is that a consequence of your leaving the top job?

Mr HATTON: It is not, Mr Speaker. The fact is that morale is improving. Every issue raised by the opposition has turned out to be a nonsense and it is trying to generate another one in order to create another crisis of confidence.

In respect of own-purpose spending since 1982-83, outlays by the Commonwealth have increased in real terms by 24.5% compared with 18.2% for the 6 states and 12.4% for the Northern Territory. Those are the real figures. It is the lower levels of increase in the Territory and the states, particularly in the costs that have occurred in the last couple of years, which have funded the reductions in the Commonwealth's total budget outlays. Every state recognises that the Commonwealth has not bitten the bullet. It has not addressed the issue of its own-purpose spending. Inroads in that area provide the best opportunity, not only to meet the other laudable economic achievements of the Commonwealth government, but also to reduce the tax burden on the Australian community. That tax burden is hurting the average Australian right now.

Tax reductions have been promised. The federal government usually repeats a promise for 2 or 3 years before it actually keeps it a few months before an election. When promises are fulfilled, it means we are on the eve of an election. Once the election is over, taxes start to rise again or reductions are absorbed by bracket creep.

Mr Ede: What happened to your top rate?

Mr HATTON: Mine has gone right through the floor.

Mr Ede: That wasn't just your tax rate.

Mr HATTON: That was the lot.

The fact is, Mr Speaker, that whilst the federal government has done a good job in its broad macro-economic approach - re-establishing international balances for Australia, reducing foreign debt, bringing in a budget surplus with a nil effect on public-sector borrowings - we should equally recognise

that savings have not been funded by the Commonwealth but by taxation on individual Australians. The federal government has not yet addressed the problems of its own-purpose spending, and that is a vitally important task. It is about time the Commonwealth started taking the hard political decisions to cut its own spending and to give some tax relief to citizens. We want tax relief, not promises. Until the Commonwealth addresses its own-purpose spending, we will not see any real tax reductions. That is the only area in which I believe this budget is deficient.

Yet again, the Commonwealth has failed to address effectively its own-purpose spending - in real or nominal terms - and, in doing so, has failed to deliver some form of tax relief to enable people to recover some of their lost standard of living and to reduce some of the pressures on the business community for wage increases. I hope that the Treasurer's carrot and stick on taxes is successful in holding the trade union movement at bay so that a trade-off can be effected next year and so that tax reductions can be given in lieu of wage increases, as he said, to improve the competitiveness of our businesses whilst giving real wage increases to the average working person in Australia. If he can achieve that, it will be some gain.

I sound one other note of warning, and the Leader of the Opposition has alluded to this. Let us not kid ourselves. We are achieving gains on our international circumstances also because of substantially improved commodity prices. These are cyclical, and it so happens that the US government is in a presidential election mode and it is unlikely to take any decision with respect to its own economy that will be negative in that circumstance. Voices have expressed concern from within the banking community today at the possibility of US economic policies tightening up after the presidential election, and the potential effects that may have on broader commodity prices thereby taking away the advantage we have now. It is a shame that the federal government has not offered further security against that by addressing its own-purpose spending to provide a buffer against that.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there were a few points in that last speech that I would like to comment on. First, the member for Nightcliff spoke about the federal government claiming the credit. Of course, the states and the Territory played their part in this effort, and that has been acknowledged on more than 1 occasion. It was this federal Labor government which had the guts to take on all levels of government and to say to them that the time had come for everyone to pull in his belt and reduce expenditure. In the face of the predictable screams and yells, it actually enforced that. Those states are all still there. We are still here. We are all still battling on to get out at the other end of the tunnel, but it is something which that government was able to do because of the broad support it had from the Australian people. It was able to tell everyone that the honeymoon was over. We had a situation where the terms of trade had collapsed and it was necessary to change the policy around, tighten our belts and get going again.

Having done that for a number of years, that government is in a situation now where it was able to budget for a \$5500m surplus. It could have gone soft. It could have reduced revenues or increased expenditure and have been a nice fellow to everybody. But, the government understood full well that it will be the government of Australia for many more years and it wanted to ensure it was actually getting the total economy into good shape so it is ready to withstand the cyclical buffets that will come again. I do not want to take up the matter of the global limits imposed by the federal Treasurer on our borrowing capacity because we will have a debate later today that specifically relates to debt and I will be replying to the point made by the member for Nightcliff. I do not want to shoot off my thunder now.

Personal tax was not decreased but excise duty was decreased. That was an acknowledgement of the need for other forms of benefit besides salary increases. That was part and parcel of the negotiations that have been occurring between the federal government and the union movement. It is another component of that total package which the federal labor government has been able to hold together over many years when everybody said it was impossible. It is still working today and, with goodwill on all sides and a continued commitment to the future of this country, that will continue to hold.

Mr Speaker, I think it was Ayn Rand who recounted the story of a couple of people talking about the national debt. One said: 'Wouldn't it be good if the government reduced the national debt as it said it would?' The other replied: 'You are obviously a liar and a thief because nobody would ever reduce the national debt. It is something that governments do not do. It is in that same ball park as talking about reducing the duty on beer'. This is one of those rare occasions. Somebody said that, in 1963, Japan reduced its national debt.

This will not be seen as a big point now. However, it must be remembered that this government inherited a horrendous deficit from the previous government. It has turned a deficit of \$7000m or \$9000m into a surplus of \$5500m during its period in office. That deserves a pat on the back for a good job done. Over the last 4 years, the government has reduced the government's share of gross domestic product from over 30% to just over 25%. I would think that the member for Sadadeen should get to his feet and applaud it for the restraint that it has shown in that area.

We all heard about the collapse of the terms of trade, the fall in commodity prices and the enormous debt. I do not think people have yet realised just how drastic that collapse was in the terms of trade. It was on a par actually with what happened during the great depression. I think that the federal government should be praised for not losing its head. It tightened its belt, appealed to the people of Australia and was able to convince them that, if we pulled together, we could get through this trough. As we now emerge from the other side of that terrible collapse, we are starting to see that the policies that were put in place during that period have a chance of actually taking us much further. We are a much leaner, harder and better community for it.

However, we cannot say that everything will be hunky-dory from now on. It is a fact that base metal prices seem to have peaked. Those have to be watched. Wool has certainly come off its peak, but what a peak it was! In real terms, I believe it was way above where it was in the Korean War days - those halcyon days of wool. Certainly, that has come back. On the other hand, there is meat. While the price of meat in the United States initially took a dive because people were selling off much of the stock that they would not be able to carry through the drought, there is no doubt that, once they have destocked to a certain extent, the price of meat will start to climb quite rapidly. That price will be assisted by the negotiations to open up the Japanese market.

There is a lesson there for the Territory, and I hope that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will take it on board. It shows once again how crucial it is that we change this continued erosion of our base here: our ability to slaughter locally. As I have said before, in 1982 we were slaughtering 142 000 beasts. Today, we are slaughtering half that number even though our total turnoff has increased, in cyclical ups and downs, from



around 270 000 to 300 000 up to some 360 000. The number of cattle that we are slaughtering locally and putting either interstate or overseas has been very substantially eroded over the period and that means that we are not in a good position to take advantage of the large increase that will occur in the price of beef internationally. That was a shame. It shows that this government once again failed to see where the economy was moving. What is needed in the Territory is increased capacity for local slaughtering and the establishment of value-added production facilities in respect of hides, bones, blood, hooves etc.

I would like to make a few comments in relation to tax cuts. Certainly, they were deferred and, I believe, for very good reasons. Mr Speaker, if you talk to any of the economic commentators, they will agree that consumer spending was increasing at a very rapid rate. It is pretty well agreed that, in some of the statistics, there has been a lag effect. The adjustments after each period have shown that this was the case, as did the very high figure for June. There was a very real danger that increased consumer spending would lead to overheating of the economy which, once again, would trigger off that horrendous round of inflation followed by wage increases, followed by increased inflation and so on that characterised the mid-1970s.

The idea has been floated that the prospect of tax cuts was simply a matter of currying favour for the budget. I fail to see why a government would be more popular if it gave tax cuts 3 months before an election than it would be if it gave them 15 months before an election. Obviously, that is not the reason for the deferral of income tax cuts. The reason is that it is essential for the government to keep a tight rein on the economy. We cannot afford to allow the economy to overheat. The government decided to make cuts in excise duty etc and will provide income tax cuts when the economy has been able to catch up and they will not cause another round of inflation.

My personal hope is that, when the tax cuts are implemented, they will be targeted at the low to lower-middle end of the spectrum. I do not wear this argument that you cannot have a top rate which is above the company tax rate. I accept that, if there is a large gap between the 2, some people will incorporate to avoid paying that top marginal rate. However, I do not believe the proposition that, because someone has stolen 1 biscuit, you should give away the whole biscuit jar. There are measures, such as a dividend withholding tax, that can be put in place with regard to those sorts of companies that will ensure that people do not find it in their interests simply to incorporate, accumulate funds and not declare them as income.

I believe that this federal government will have the courage to look at the people who are suffering most, the people at the very bottom end of the rate, the people who have done the most to tighten their belts by forgoing wage increases over these years. We should all salute the workers of Australia for what they have given up over these years in the interests of the the national economy. When we get around to some tax cuts, we should ensure that we give those tax cuts at the bottom and middle end of the range so that they can be the beneficiaries of the hard work that they have put into the system.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT  
Letter from Member for Port Darwin

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the member for Port Darwin, Mr Harris, requesting his discharge from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

MOTION  
Terms of Reference of Select Committee  
on Constitutional Development

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that:

(1) the resolution of 28 April 1987 establishing the Select Committee on Constitutional Development be varied as follows:

(a) omit from paragraph 3 the words 'the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition' and insert in their stead 'Mr Hatton and Mr Leo'; and

(b) omit paragraphs (4) and (5) and insert in their stead:

'(4) the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, although not members of the committee, may attend all meetings of the committee; may question witnesses; and may participate in the deliberations of the committee, but shall not vote'; and

(2) Mr Harris be discharged from further attendance on the committee and Mr Firmin be appointed in his stead.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this motion. Although, on the surface, it is simply changing members of a select committee, it is much more important than that. It signals a significant change of attitude on the part of the new Chief Minister, and presumably his colleagues, on the pace of constitutional development and statehood. It seems to me - and the Chief Minister can feel free to disagree with me later - that what he is saying is that he sees the quest for statehood as being a longer quest and a harder quest than the previous Chief Minister did. I must say that I welcome that touch of realism that the new Chief Minister has brought to the matter of attaining statehood. In fact, we are now going back to a more bipartisan approach to the whole question of statehood than we have had over the last 12 to 18 months.

It has been the attitude of the Labor Party for quite some time that statehood is obviously a desirable constitutional objective to work towards. Quite clearly, no one can argue about the need for the Northern Territory to end up on an equal constitutional basis with the states of Australia. The difference that we had with the previous administration - although it was not often publicly expressed - was about the speed of achieving that. It has always been our view that it will be a hard job. It will be a difficult task, firstly, to persuade the people of the Northern Territory and, secondly, to persuade the rest of Australia, that there are advantages in the Northern Territory becoming a state. It has always seemed to us that there are basic questions relating to the population size of the Northern Territory that have to be addressed first.

I am pleased that the Chief Minister seems to have adopted that basic attitude. It is important that we continue talking about the issues surrounding statehood. Quite clearly, one of the most important issues is the question of developing our own constitution. That is why we on this side of the House do support the ongoing work of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. The exercise that we have been through in the Select Committee on Constitutional Development indicates what a hard task that committee has in front of it.

As a recent member of the committee, I have been involved in hearings throughout the Northern Territory - not that I was at every one of them - and, apart from Darwin, where we received a large number of contributions of which some were very significant indeed, there has been limited interest in and limited understanding of what is involved in the development of a constitution for the Northern Territory. The feeling of people on this side of the House was that, before we could advance too much further down the track of constitutional development for the Northern Territory, there had to be an intensive and extensive education campaign for the public of the Northern Territory on the issues involved. That education campaign has to take place not only in Aboriginal communities but also in the urban communities of the Northern Territory because, at present, there is very little interest in and less understanding of the issues involved in constitutional development. I hope that the select committee will now see the removal of any pressure that was placed on it to move hastily and that it can make its own judgments about the appropriate pace for developing arguments and the seeking of the opinion of Territory people on the question of constitutional development.

In conclusion, let me say that I appreciate the priorities that the Chief Minister is setting for himself and for his fellow Cabinet ministers. There is no doubt that, in a very real sense, we need all hands on the wheel to attempt to get the economy of the Northern Territory moving again. Statehood would be much better addressed in the context of an economy that is moving along briskly and a government that is seen to be administering its affairs well in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, we have not had those 2 things happening in the last 12 to 18 months. I hope that, in the interest of the Territory, the decision that the Chief Minister has taken to take himself and the Minister for Education off the select committee will give them more time to devote themselves to what, for most people in the Territory, are the real issues at the moment: getting the economy moving, creating some more jobs and containing the cost of living.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, apart from the member for Arnhem, I am the only member who has been continuously on the committee since the beginning. There is no doubt that this committee has been downgraded substantially. We have moved from a situation where we had the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education on the committee to a situation where we are to have the member for Ludmilla and the member for Nightcliff. Mr Speaker, that is a downgrading, make no bones about it. When I first heard that that was to occur, I was disappointed and angry. I felt that it was a slur on a committee which I believe has a primary role to play in our advancement towards statehood. Statehood is not a subject which I scream about from the rooftops. I see it as a process that we need to approach by a series of steps. Fundamental to that is the development of a constitution which reflects the type of society that we wish to have in the Northern Territory.

However, I was able to step back and look at the situation. If you look at it realistically, the Northern Territory populace needs to undergo a period of learning in respect of this matter. People have to learn about the

concepts involved and what statehood means. They need to learn that it is not just a word, that it actually does have meaning in relation to institutions and that we can mould the institutions which we wish to have for the foreseeable future as a state. It is probably no bad thing that, having been downgraded, the committee will now look at concepts of political education, distinguish political education from party education and determine how it can inform people what our institutions are, where they came from, how they developed and how they intermesh with each other. It then needs to obtain feedback from the people. In the long term, the downgrading of the committee may prove to have been a good thing. I certainly hope so.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I had not intended speaking in this debate but I am concerned about the remarks that have just been made by the member for Stuart, particularly his reference to what he perceives as the downgrading of the the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. I do not see things in that light at all. As the shortest-serving member of the committee, I totally reject his comments in relation to the membership changes.

I have enjoyed working with members of my side of the House and the opposition on the vital issue of establishing a constitution for the Northern Territory. It has been a difficult task, as I am sure all members who have attended the hearings would be aware. I have found myself in a very awkward position in trying to put forward the case in a fair manner and, to some extent, I believe that it has compromised my position in respect of the portfolio that I hold. That is why I told the Chief Minister that, as Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Constitutional Development, I should not be acting in the role of Chairman of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. The change in committee membership had nothing to do with a so-called downgrading of the committee. It is very important that the committee be able to continue to work in the manner that it has. I am disappointed that the member for Stuart has seen the moves that we have put forward today as a downgrading of the committee. That is a nonsense.

On occasions during the course of committee hearings, I have put forward the view that we could have gone about the process in a different manner. Like the member for Stuart, I believe that it is necessary for us to promote the discussion of statehood in the community so that, when committee members arrive in communities for hearings, people are aware of what the issues are. We found in some of the communities that we visited that people did not have any idea of what we were on about. That was disappointing but I believe that the matter has been rectified.

Last week, the member for Barkly raised the issue of politics in education. The Department of Education is looking at the matter but it is difficult to present the statehood issue in a fair manner so that it is not picked up by a teacher who has a particular view for or against statehood. We have to develop a program which will allow students to discuss this very important issue in a fair manner. I have indicated that, as Minister for Education, I will be pursuing that exercise with a view to having programs introduced into the school system in the not-too-distant future.

Mr Speaker, I wish the committee well. I totally reject the suggestion by the member for Stuart that it is being downgraded. That is a slur on the committee and I totally reject it. The committee has a very important role to play and I believe that its members will be able to carry out their duties effectively and will obtain input from the community so that we are able to debate the issue again in this Assembly at a later stage.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I must say that it does not surprise me that the member for Stuart is a disappointed and angry man. Being Deputy Leader of the Opposition would in itself be enough to try anybody's patience. It does not surprise me at all. When he indicates that, in his opinion, the role of the committee has been downgraded, that does surprise me. Coming from a socialist, that displays a very elitist attitude. It was probably nice for the member for Stuart to sit on a committee that was chaired by the Chief Minister and, later, a minister. I can understand why he would want to be on that committee. However, the fact that we no longer have a minister on that committee in no way downgrades its role.

The reality is that the majority of the hard work done behind the scenes in preparation for our various committee meetings has been done by the excellent support staff that the committee has had over the past several years. They are the people who attend to the nitty-gritty. They do the research and produce the reports for consideration by our committee. Whether it is chaired by a minister or whether it is made up of members of the backbench of this government is not important. The fact is that the work is being done, and it will continue to be done regardless of who sits on that committee and regardless of who chairs it.

There is no doubt that the committee has a difficult role and that it will continue to be difficult for however many years it takes us to reach a satisfactory conclusion. I think we have all come to realise - and perhaps we did not realise it 3 years ago - that this is a very complex matter indeed. It is not something that we can rush into; it is something that we have to work through slowly. When we do it, we must do it correctly. We must get it right, and that is what the committee is about. If it does take us several more years, so be it. I think this present move is very wise because the committee requires a chairman who has the time to devote himself to it. The Chief Minister or a minister does not have the time to do that, but a person on the backbench does have the time to do justice to the job. I believe that is a move in the right direction. In fact, the committee will include the member for Nightcliff who, as the Chief Minister, chaired that committee in the past for 18 months or 2 years. He has a considerable knowledge of the subject. I am quite sure that the member for Nightcliff will do an excellent job in his future role on that committee.

Before I close, I would like to pay tribute to the Minister for Education who, in the short time that he chaired the committee, acquitted himself extremely well in the face of a fair amount of criticism, particularly from supporters of those opposite. We held a number of public hearings during that term which were not favourably reported in the media. Much of that criticism was totally unjustified because the media did not understand the task at hand in those public hearings. Nevertheless, I thought the honourable minister made a considerable contribution during his short stay on the committee and I would like to pay tribute to his efforts.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to express my extreme personal pleasure at having the opportunity to be able to continue as an active member of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

The issue of statehood has been a matter of serious personal concern and desire for me since 1974. It was an issue on which I came into politics. I cannot express more strongly my desire and determination to contribute what I can in order to see not only that the Northern Territory as a political entity

but, more importantly, that Territorians achieve their true and proper status as equal Australians. Part of that function is the work to be carried out by this parliamentary select committee. Obviously, the structure of what the Northern Territory will be when it becomes a state will depend on the basis, the format and the provisions that are embraced in the Northern Territory's own constitution.

The member for Stuart and other members are right in saying that the public at large does not understand the issues. It is a complex and confusing matter. In many respects, it frightens people. I do not think anybody in Australia knows the answers to all of the questions, and I have no doubt that, in our march towards finally achieving the goal of equality in Australia, we will find ourselves in the High Court of Australia having the Australian Constitution interpreted to clarify what can and cannot be done, and how certain things can be carried out.

In that process, I believe that this committee has an important role to play in assisting the people of the Northern Territory to understand the issues involved, particularly the constitutional issues that are involved, and to develop a draft constitution which will eventually be presented to a constitutional convention of Territorians and a referendum of the people of the Northern Territory. This is a unique opportunity in Australia's history - and one that is unlikely ever to occur again - for the people to take part in completing the task of federation. It is an opportunity that will occur only in the Northern Territory. It will not occur again in Australia unless some future generation decides to become expansionist and starts acquiring islands or offshore areas. I do not believe that is, in any sense, a possibility. This will be our chance to consider what sort of future society we want for ourselves and our children. Many of the issues have been and are being addressed and, without doubt, in the ongoing process of meetings, consultations and discussions around the Northern Territory communities, issues will be debated and there will flow from that a view as to what Territorians want their new state to be like.

Personally, I cannot think of a more valuable or vital role for a member of this Assembly to take part in. I have enjoyed working on the committee with members from both sides of the House and I certainly look forward to a continuing and productive role in what we all recognise to be a vitally important task for the long-term future of our Territory.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, if I were a sensitive person I might take offence at some of the remarks of members opposite. There are some 5-minute Territorians who would like to imply that I have a lesser commitment to statehood than any other person in this House. Mr Deputy Speaker, I have seen Commonwealth rule. I lived through it for a long time.

Mr Coulter: You don't mean Wes and Stan.

Mr PERRON: I certainly exclude the members for Arnhem and Arafura from my remarks about 5-minute Territorians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I lived here when the Commonwealth administered the Territory. I was very proud indeed to play a part in the achievement of self-government for the Northern Territory. Self-government cost my political party fairly dearly. I was not one of the losers in that exercise although colleagues of mine at the time were. That was unfortunate but it was the price that some people paid for the advancement that self-government brought to the Territory, and a very significant advancement it was.

I hold a vision of statehood for the Northern Territory. I know that, for the Northern Territory ever to achieve its potential to contribute significantly to this country, it must have statehood. The Territory deserves statehood and I become incensed when ignorant people say to me: 'How can you have statehood while you have a population or an economy like the Northern Territory's?' The population and the economy of the Northern Territory are irrelevant to our just cause for statehood. In the context of the enormous hurdles that we have to overcome on a broad range of issues, nobody has to tell me about the advantages of statehood. I would have it tomorrow. I would have had it last year or the year before. I have always eagerly sought statehood for the Northern Territory, and I feel the same today. I share the views of the member for Nightcliff in relation to statehood.

The changes to the membership of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development do not represent a diminution of the government's commitment to statehood. The government members newly appointed to the committee will be able to devote far more time and energy to the committee's deliberations than could myself or the Minister for Education. Attempting to match my itinerary with that of the committee would merely hamper its work.

The committee ought to develop a 12-month program setting out what it will do, where, why and how. In his former role, the member for Nightcliff certainly fitted in with the committee's program and indeed I think the committee's arrangements were largely made in conjunction with his availability. That is as it had to be. I am saying now, however, that I want government members on this committee to devote themselves full-time to the task rather than the committee trying to establish an itinerary that matches the availability of the Chief Minister.

I do not underestimate the hurdles that have to be faced on the way to statehood. I do not think any of us do. They are quite enormous. The issues will become very complex as we get further down the line. This committee has a very legitimate role. There are tasks which have to be addressed now and which require a committee that can devote its full attention to them. It is an opportunity for members of this House who are not amongst the government ministry to contribute very significantly to the constitutional development of the Northern Territory. If honourable members opposite give half the dedication to this task that the members for Nightcliff and Ludmilla give - or yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker - they will be contributing greatly to the purpose of this committee. I am sure that honourable members will find, as time goes by, that my decision in this regard has been a wise one.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT  
Future Development of Parks and Reserves  
in the Northern Territory

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement about the future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory. The Conservation Commission presently manages 95 parks, reserves and areas of special historical or cultural significance. In total, these cover more than 2.6 million hectares and embrace an extensive range of environmental habitats and special interest sites throughout the Territory.

The list ranges from major national parks like Katherine Gorge, Keep River and Simpsons Gap to smaller but equally valuable sites which stand as monuments to our diverse and colourful past. These include Victoria

Settlement, Arltunga and the Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Also included is spectacular Litchfield Park, which has the potential to become one of the Top End's greatest tourist attractions, and the giant Gregory National Park, a vital new link in opening up the Victoria River district to the tourist industry. Comprising 1.1 million hectares, in future years Gregory National Park will come to rival Kakadu National Park as one of the major national parks in the Northern Territory.

This government's commitment to environmentally-sensitive but sensible and tourist-oriented park development and management remains undisputed. The government recognises that our parks are irreplaceable natural assets and that, at the same time, they are the vital resource base for the Territory's growing tourism industry. These areas demand sensible development strategies which will ensure they are protected for the benefit of future generations. This government also recognises that increasing tourist numbers are putting great pressure on our existing park system. With this in mind, the government has committed millions of dollars to upgrade and develop existing parks and to open up new areas to cope with demand, and I will cover this aspect in more detail later.

There is no doubt that the Territory is still very much the flavour of the month for the domestic tourism industry. This is evidenced by the unprecedented upsurge in visitor numbers following the sealing of the south road. Particularly noticeable has been the increase in the number of small-budget, caravanning Australian families looking for new holiday horizons and a taste of that special Territory flavour. It will come as no surprise to honourable members to hear that some areas of the Territory experienced a staggering 200% increase in visitor numbers after the south road was sealed and, although Expo 88 is reported to have stolen the show this year and pegged back the visitor numbers to the Territory, my discussions with some tourist operators in the Centre indicate that this was not the case and that visitation to some centres has increased in line with their expectations for 1988. When Expo 88 is over, the Territory will continue to be one of the most popular holiday regions in Australia. Indeed, thanks to the hard work of our commission rangers at the Territory display at Expo, we can expect numbers to increase markedly.

The Territory has most of the major ingredients which people look for in an Australian holiday today: unique wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled wilderness and the opportunity for a genuine taste of the great outdoors. Current predictions are that the number of tourists expected to visit the Territory in the 1989 dry season will place enormous stress on physical and human resources. The Conservation Commission will have to be ready for this, and we must be prepared to allocate its resources in a manner which will ensure our visitors have a rewarding experience without detriment to our parks.

Looking further ahead, it is estimated that more than 3 million people will come to the Territory for holidays in 1990, and our forward planning must take this into account and ensure that we are adequately prepared. The government has allocated some \$7m to the capital works program for Territory parks this financial year. This is double last year's allocation. The priorities for spending in this program have been determined through an extensive forward development strategy put into place by the Conservation Commission in consultation with the Tourist Commission.

The development strategy draws on the findings of the draft, 'Towards 2000 Tourism Study' and the Northern Territory Road Strategy. The strategy



identifies the tourism pressure points in the Territory, in terms of future development needs, with major emphasis on dedicating the greatest resources to areas attracting the highest visitation. The strategy gives top priority to the environmentally-sensitive wetland parks east of Darwin, to Litchfield Park, to the proposed Upper Roper River and Gregory National Parks in the Katherine region, and to central Australian parks and reserves.

I would like to go through the funding which will be provided to develop these areas this financial year in some detail. A sum of \$200 000 was spent for Litchfield Park in 1987-88 to provide fencing, ablution blocks, and water supply and bores at Wangi, Sandy Creek and Florence Falls. It is proposed to spend \$1.2m on the park this financial year to develop visitor facilities at Tolmer, Florence, Sandy and Wangi Falls. These developments will include a suspension bridge at Tolmer Falls. Not only will this provide spectacular views of the falls, it will also ease access problems and minimise the environmental impact of increased visitor numbers. An additional \$150 000 will go towards providing a second ranger's house and services at Walker's Creek and, by the end of this financial year, the Department of Transport and Works will have spent a total of \$4.4m on a network of access roads in the park.

Work which has been undertaken so far in this park has already been rewarded with dramatically increased visitor numbers. In 1986-87, there were about 5000 visitors to the park. Last year, that number increased more than 5 times to 26 000, and already there have been more than 11 000 visitors to the park since the beginning of this financial year. It is proposed to spend a further \$4.4m developing infrastructure in Litchfield Park by 1991, when visitor numbers are expected to reach 126 000 a year.

The Territory government proposes to spend \$700 000, in 2 stages over the next 2 years, to develop 23 km of access road along the Upper Roper River, together with associated visitor facilities. Stage 1 will be undertaken this financial year at a cost of \$400 000. This will provide day-use and camping facilities along the river, including car parks, barbecues and ablution blocks. Access to the park will be from near the Mataranka thermal pool and, eventually, the road will continue through the park to connect with the Roper Bar Highway. It is expected that a significant number of visitors to the Mataranka thermal pool, who numbered no less than 160 000 last year, will be attracted to the new park development.

This financial year will see continued development of the new Gregory National Park west of Katherine. Two additional rangers will be stationed in the park to assist tourists and manage the park, while \$350 000 will be spent on capital works, \$270 000 of which will be on fencing. Planning for the development of this park which, with an area of 1 million hectares, will soon become one of the most significant in the Territory, is well under way and further development proposals are currently being prepared by commission officers.

The \$1m capital works program for Kings Canyon National Park, which began in 1987-88, will be concluded this financial year. The government will spend \$880 000 on high-quality walking trails, bridges and stairways around Kings Canyon, and this network will be complemented by the installation of information signs in 4 languages: English, German, Japanese and Luritja. Further ranger accommodation will be provided and the Department of Transport and Works will construct a road from Kings Canyon to the proposed wilderness resort this year.

Following an increase of 50% in visitor numbers over the past 2 years, the Territory government has allocated \$600 000 to provide visitor infrastructure and improved park facilities in the parks along the West MacDonnell Ranges in 1988-89. It is proposed to develop infrastructure for a caravan park and camping ground, to be operated by private enterprise, as an eventual replacement for the overcrowded facilities at Ormiston Gorge. A water search will be undertaken at Ormiston and visitor facilities will be developed at the Ellery Creek Big Hole Nature Park. In addition, there will be considerable development of the walking trails in the region including the planning and commencement of a West MacDonnells trail linking Simpsons Gap and Glen Helen. This work will be complemented by a joint Conservation Commission CSIRO study on environmental values and management strategies for the whole West MacDonnells region. The study will run for 3 years and will utilise satellite and computer technology. The Territory government has committed \$100 000 towards the study this financial year. Results of the study will be used to plan access to the region, control of visitor impact, and protection of sensitive areas within the region.

I should mention that these development programs will be carried out in conjunction with a major program to fence all Territory parks and reserves. This is a 3-stage program which will cost a total of \$3m during the next 3 years. \$1.5m has been allocated this financial year. This fencing program will assist the Territory to meet the RTEC objective of achieving 'impending free' status by 1992. It will prevent the free movement of feral animals and it will prevent the spread of stock and animal-borne diseases and reduce environmental damage to parks and reserves.

Another important program which gets under way this financial year is for the control of *Mimosa pigra*. As honourable members would be aware, and as has been brought to the attention of this House by the member of Koolpinyah, *Mimosa pigra* poses a significant threat to the Top End environment. By implication, it is also a major threat to our wildlife as well as to the tourism, hunting, boating and fishing industries. The commission will spend \$73 000 on *mimosa* control on lands under its control this financial year, but it is important to recognise that this expenditure will be complemented by funding from the Department of Lands and Housing and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries which will bring this year's total allocation to nearly \$1m. This program will continue over the next 5 years, while biological control methods are developed and tested.

The Conservation Commission's development strategy will ensure that other vital Territory tourist attractions are not overlooked and that upgrading and maintenance will continue at a steady rate in all parks and reserves. The strategy also gives high priority to making life more pleasant for the travelling public on the Territory's 3 major tourist routes - the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways. It is planned to give travellers the opportunity to break their long journey and experience outback Australia as comfortably as possible. Proposals include improvements to visitor facilities at places like the Devil's Marbles and more development within Gregory National Park.

As honourable members are aware, the \$6.7m program to create the Berry Springs Wildlife Park is well advanced. Nearly \$2m has been allocated to the park this financial year. Work is on schedule for the park to be opened to the public for a fortnight-long open period in late December to early January in the run up to the official public opening at the start of the next dry season. I urge ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: I hear a call from the Leader of the Opposition. I must break here because he alleged that, for some reason or another, we were attempting to do something shonky in relation to the bicentenary project and open the park early. I must point out that, in fact, what he was referring to was the development of the marine project with a walk-through area which is being funded under the bicentennial program and which has to be completed this financial year. The aquatic display was scheduled to be completed and opened in December this year and it will be completed and opened in December this year. I believe the attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to try to gain some cheap political points out of a magnificent development is detrimental to himself, to his party and to Territorians in general.

I urge the Leader of the Opposition to take time out from his busy schedule and, possibly on the way to one of his rare visits to Alice Springs, he might stop off at the Berry Springs park and have a look at what is occurring and find out what is programmed with respect to completion dates and how the aquatic display fits in with respect to the bicentennial funding. That would certainly enlighten him and stop him creating confusion in the minds of Territorians regarding what is occurring at the Berry Springs park.

I urge all members of the public to take the opportunity to visit the park during the open period to see the magnificent work which is being undertaken at Berry Springs. The park will display the Territory's unique wildlife in superb surroundings and will be a highly valuable asset to the Territory in future years. Before I move away from the Berry Springs park, I must mention that the bird aviary, which is some 6 storeys high, will be of world-class standard. It is an outstanding project. I would like to point out that we do not intend to stop developing Berry Springs Wildlife Park after it opens. Funds have been provided for a major consultancy to develop concepts and begin planning for further displays and facilities to be built at the park in future years.

Further down the list of priorities, the strategy identifies the need for new programs and facilities within comparatively undeveloped areas, including the Gulf region, the Barkly Tablelands, the East MacDonnell and Dulcie Ranges and the Tanami and Simpson Deserts. Visitors are becoming more and more adventurous and are looking for areas such as these. We have to be prepared for them. The ultimate objective is to protect the natural and cultural value of each area while, at the same time, providing the best possible opportunities for tourists to obtain maximum enjoyment and satisfaction from their visits. The commission is constantly working to increase the capacity of its park estate to handle the pressure of high visitor numbers, soil erosion, feral animals and weeds.

There must be major emphasis on improving our communication with the public by upgrading visitor information services. I would like to place on the record my appreciation for the hard work of our rangers who are effectively our frontline troops in dealing with the public. We can be justly proud of people like the rangers at Ormiston Gorge who, through their own initiative and in their own time, prepared submissions nominating Ormiston for the Brolga Awards. Honourable members would be aware that the Ormiston Gorge National Park was successful in winning 2 Brolga Awards. I am sure honourable members will agree with me that this was an outstanding effort which is indicative of the high degree of dedication of our rangers throughout the Territory.

However, although rangers in the field have a major influence on public behaviour in our parks, they cannot talk to everyone, especially as there are nearly 100 000 visitors each year to parks like Ormiston. No amount of paid resources can adequately protect our assets. We need cooperation and assistance from the public. Our rangers are one of the greatest assets in this regard and the commission will use this fact as the basis of an upgraded public relations campaign to deliver our message at grassroots level.

I would like also to acknowledge the efforts of the scientific researchers within the commission. Their work in the field on a multitude of problems is well known in the scientific community, both nationally and internationally. They have a vital role to play in land management and forward planning by addressing issues such as land degradation, caused by uncontrolled burning, soil erosion and feral animal intrusion, to allow the government to address these issues appropriately.

It is important to recognise that research work in the commission is not confined to preservation of our land resources; it also extends to preservation of our endangered wildlife. In Alice Springs, the Conservation Commission is having considerable success with programs to preserve and ultimately to reintroduce to the wild 2 of the rarest marsupials in Australia, the mala and the bilby. This success is due entirely to the dedication of the staff involved who are concerned not only with preserving our physical environment but also in preserving our native fauna so that our unique ecology as a whole is retained for future generations.

The commission must also plan for appropriate multiple land use in parks and reserves. I refer to issues such as commercial development and exploration and mining side by side with environmental protection. Much has been said about what some ill-informed people describe as the evils of mining activity within parks and reserves. People will express concern, but that concern should not take the guise of hysterical outbursts. Instead, we must analyse each situation carefully and decide whether it is appropriate that such activity proceed. I believe that, with modern techniques of containment and environmental regeneration, mining can be controlled effectively within a discrete site without harming the overall integrity of the area in which it is located. It is not as if this is a new concept. In fact, most countries in the western world - including Canada and the United States - allow mining and exploration in national parks under strict environmental conditions. I am not suggesting that all parks should be mined, nor am I suggesting that applications from mining companies should never be refused but I do believe we must be able to optimise the use of our resources for the benefit of future generations.

As the expansion of park areas continues, more pressure will be placed on the Conservation Commission to be seen as a constructive and responsible custodian of our most valuable asset - our land. In keeping with the policies of the Territory government, private enterprise involvement in the development and management of parks will increase over the next 4 years. Means of generating revenue from our parks is being investigated by the commission in order to offset at least some of the greatly increased costs of development and management. The Territory government will also be looking for Aboriginal people to become involved wherever possible. In fact, Aboriginal people are already having a major influence on the development of Northern Territory parks. For example, parks such as Kings Canyon and Cobourg are milestones for Aboriginal involvement in park management.

In conclusion, the education of our next generation of park users will play a major role in preserving our resources for the future. There are valuable gains to be made for all concerned from the direct involvement by schools in park projects. The decision to involve Darwin High School students in a recent holiday program which constructed walkways at Litchfield Park was a very successful exercise and perhaps we should be encouraging other user groups to lend a hand to help enhance park promotion.

The Conservation Commission is dedicated to controlling some of the greatest parks in this country and therefore the world. I believe the commission has an exceptional record in park management and I am confident that, with continued attention to forward planning, the Territory's parks and reserves will be in good shape to cope with future demands.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable minister for his statement and heartily concur with much of it. I think it is a most timely statement. Since many of the parks that the minister referred to in his statement are within my electorate, it is apposite for me to rise to make some comments about them.

I endorse specifically the minister's comments in respect of the Ormiston Gorge National Park. Mr Jack Coppinger has been well known to me for several years now. He has put a great deal of work and effort into the western MacDonnells. From a conversation that I had when we reopened the Glen Helen Lodge 12 months or so ago, my recollection is that the visitor numbers to Ormiston Gorge were the same as the number of people who were visiting Ayers Rock in 1981. I think the figure was some 100 000. Ayers Rock is now attracting 300 000 visitors, which represents a 300% increase over the last 7 or 8 years. At that stage, there were far fewer people visiting Ormiston. Quite obviously, there has been a great increase. My inquiries of people in the tourist industry and among friends and acquaintances employed in the Conservation Commission indicate to me that the increased expenditure that the honourable minister referred to in his statement is timely, if not overdue. I certainly endorse the congratulations he passed on to Mr Coppinger and extend mine as well.

The minister referred also to Kings Canyon National Park. I would say in passing that I would like to see the Kings Canyon National Park referred to by its Luritja name - Watarrka. I appreciate that the minister may not be able to roll his r's but I will insist that, at the least, he stress the first syllable. Watarrka, incidentally, is named after a particular grove of trees just past the entrance to the canyon. Anybody who has visited the area will recall that big stand of trees.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition, should I ever resign from the Legislative Assembly I may produce some tapes for the tourist industry. I might develop it as a sideline in competition with the member for Sadadeen's grape farm.

I corresponded recently with the Minister for Conservation in respect of flood damage, particularly at the Palm Valley Park, and I am certainly interested to take up his offer of a briefing in relation to repair of flood damage which was of great concern to rangers although the minister did not mention it in his statement. I have not had the opportunity to visit the

residences since the floods but the reports I have heard suggest that there was extensive damage.

Mr Manzie: The residences are being relocated.

Mr BELL: The minister advises me that the residences are in the process of being relocated. It was interesting to fly over the area month or so ago. It was very obvious from the air that the area where the houses were sited was quite low-lying.

I want to raise the issue of staffing levels in the Conservation Commission. The minister referred to increased expenditure to cope with the increased tourist numbers that I have already referred to. It is quite obvious that, if there are increased tourist numbers, there must be increased expenditure on facilities. Although the minister's statement is silent in this regard, I would be interested to know how staffing levels will be adjusted to meet that need. I have heard some expressions of concern that staffing levels are not what they should be and I would like to think that, in addition to actual physical facilities, staff resources will be beefed up. The situation at the Chambers Pillars exemplifies this need. It used to be a venue only for rugged 4-wheel drives, but has now become much more accessible because of road improvements. I know that, in areas where new parks are being established, there is concern that the staff resources are insufficient to maintain them properly. I hope that, when he replies to debate on this statement, the minister will make some comment in that regard.

I heartily endorse the development of a walking track between Simpsons Gap and Glen Helen. I think that is an excellent idea. The idea of a West MacDonnell Ranges national park has been kicking around for some time now. It is not particularly good country for pastoral use. It is spectacular country, but it is very difficult to muster cattle in such country. The country is very attractive indeed, as well as being rich in Aboriginal associations.

While I am on the subject of Aboriginal associations in the Ormiston Gorge and the Glen Helen area, it is worth emphasising the ubiquity of Aboriginal associations. Mr Speaker, you will recall the moonstone whose return the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority was able to arrange. I have not seen the moonstone but I have seen photographs of it. It was unwittingly removed by a tourist who thought it was just an interesting rock. The story had a happy ending because the concern expressed by traditional owners was picked up by the sacred sites authority. I remember discussing them at the time. A call was put out over the radio in a news broadcast, I believe, and the rock was returned. I believe that we were very fortunate in that regard.

I am not sure exactly how those sorts of problems should be dealt with. Obviously, Aboriginal associations were built up at a time when many fewer people were living in a particular area. I believe that, in the way it is done at Ayers Rock and, as the honourable minister flagged, the way it is done at places such as Kings Canyon, conservation interests, tourist interests and Aboriginal associations can work very much in harmony. The minister is to be congratulated in that regard.

Mr Coulter: Without exception, those gorges were created by erosion.

Mr BELL: I really am tempted to pick up that interjection by the Minister for Mines and Energy in relation to his pro-erosion policy. I could get off my bike over that, but I will resist the temptation.

Mr Coulter: Everyone of them was created by erosion. All these gorges - and you fellows knock it.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, of far more serious concern in the statement is the minister's endorsement of mining in national parks. I do not propose to get into any of the Kakadu arguments nor into a full-blown debate on that issue, but I flag my concern. Suffice it to say that I will not be making any hysterical outbursts, however historical my comments may prove to be.

The minister was very careful in his comments. He said: 'I am not suggesting that all parks should be mined'. I would be very interested to know which ones he thinks should be mined. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that the Northern Territory government, in its submission on the plan of management for the Ayers Rock National Park - the Uluru Katatjuta National Park as it is more correctly called - argued that mining should not be prohibited at Ayers Rock under the plan of management. I thought that was a pretty astounding position to adopt. If the minister believes, as he says here, that he is not suggesting that all parks should be mined, I would be interested to learn which ones he thinks should not be mined, and which ones should. If the government is prepared to say that Ayers Rock should be mined, which parks does it think should not be mined?

There are other interesting statements that I think bear further consideration. The minister made the following comment: 'In keeping with the policies of the Territory government, private enterprise involvement in the development and management of parks will increase over the next 4 years'. I cannot imagine what the honourable minister had in mind when he made that particular statement. He went on to refer to the discussion of means of generating revenue from Territory parks. Given the squealing we heard in question time this morning about the increases in entry fees at Kakadu and Uluru, there is something verging on hypocrisy in that regard. The theory is, and I believe it is very important, that this generation, as the honourable minister said in his statement, has a great obligation to future generations to integrate conservation purposes with economic purposes. I think it is particularly important that the costs of maintenance of national parks be built into factors such as visitation. It would be a matter of concern if we could not protect areas, without having to mine them, in order to maintain the resource of our natural heritage.

With those comments, by and large I endorse the comments of the honourable minister. In closing, I would like a clear statement of the number of additional staff who will be employed in order to deal with the increased tourist numbers that we discussed, because that was not mentioned in the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in discussing this statement, I too would like to pay tribute to the work of Jack Coppinger. I believe he picked up 2 of the Brolga Awards and that is an excellent effort. Honourable members may know that Mr Coppinger had some excellent training for his current work. Like myself, he was a patrol officer in Papua New Guinea and shows ...

Mr Dale: He didn't have much training either, eh?

Mr EDE: What was that?

Mr Dale: He didn't have much training either?

Mr EDE: Lots of training, Mr Speaker. They seem far more effective than some other institutions that were in Papua New Guinea at that time.

It was an excellent effort and I am sure that he will keep on with it.

Mr Speaker, I was surprised to see in the honourable minister's statement - and the Minister for Tourism did not make this announcement; it came from the Minister for Conservation and therefore, no doubt it is correct: 'Looking further ahead, it is estimated that more than 3 million people will come to the Territory for holidays in 1990'. I was not aware that plans had been readjusted for 3 million people per year in 1990. Obviously, the government has revised its projections and is now talking about 3 million tourists per year. Obviously, we will do our job and monitor the increases over 1989 and 1990 to ensure that the government lives up to this new commitment of 3 million tourists by 1990. I would take my hat off to it. If it achieves that 3 million per year, I myself will be the first to pat government members on the back. I am sure that they must have some secret plans that they are working up which will ensure that we reach that target of 3 million per year. Good luck to them, Mr Speaker, and rest assured that I will do everything in my power to assist them to achieve that. I would like to make a few suggestions that may help the government to achieve its new target.

Once again as he has done for many years now, the member for MacDonnell has raised the proposal of a West MacDonnell Ranges national park and I would like to back that up. I think that it is a wonderful concept. It is one that has been around for years and years. We have promoted it in successive campaigns and the government has tended to take it up and then drop it as soon as the election campaign is over. We do not do that; we will continue to press for the realisation of that concept. We believe that a park stretching right through beyond Glen Helen is not only economically viable but also environmentally necessary.

If we are to cater for these 3 million tourists in 1990, we have to move very rapidly towards setting up parks. We must accelerate the attention that is being given to the East MacDonnells. There are some beautiful areas there that really need to be examined in terms of management, access and numbers of people that can be catered for without damage to the environment, and what niche those areas could occupy in the tourist market. I have written to various Ministers for Conservation about the area around Lucy Creek and Jinka out on the Plenty Highway. That is a marvellous area as you yourself would know, Mr Speaker. It would be possible to convert all that northern area of Jinka into an excellent national park. It would be possible to do some work on the old Molly Hill mining camp to provide initial facilities in the area for tourists. When we talk about 3 million tourists per year, it is essential that we ensure that the density of tourist visitation in individual parks does not kill the goose that lays the golden egg. It is necessary to ensure that the density is spread out over time and area so that everybody can enjoy his or her stay without having to book or wait in line.

The honourable minister talked about the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways. I raised with the previous Minister for Conservation the subject of Napperby Lakes on the rapidly developing Tanami Highway. I would like discussions to be held with the proprietors of Napperby Station because that is an incredibly beautiful area whether there is water in it or whether there is not. There is abundant wildlife in the area and the big salt lakes look like a series of fjords, headlands and bays. It is an incredibly beautiful area. People could leave from Alice Springs in their caravans about midday



and stay there overnight to break their journey to the west and really appreciate something different: genuine central Australian salt lakes.

The honourable minister spoke of the work being done by the officers of the Conservation Commission and of the success they are having with the reintroduction of the mala and the bilby. He said that success is entirely due to the dedication of the staff involved. While I do not want to downgrade the work done by the staff, because they have shown incredible dedication and have worked really hard on what could be a very successful project, I do think we should give an accolade to the Walpiri people. These people worked with the commission staff in identifying the areas, in showing people the burning practices and indicating the best areas in which to re-establish the mala and the bilby. Because of the combination of a scientific approach with Aboriginal knowledge of that area, that program has had the success that it has had to date.

The honourable minister said that the Territory government will always be looking for Aboriginal people to become involved wherever possible. I raised with him and with his predecessor the request by the Walpiri for people to work with them in setting up a conservation area in the Tanami Desert. It is something that people have been talking to me about for years and I have spoken about with a succession of ministers. People see the need to set up areas which will ensure that there is a place where animals such as the mala and bilby are able to build up their numbers again and where they can manage the country according to the systems that they followed in age-old times.

I thank the honourable minister for his statement. It did have some weak parts around the edges but, overall, it indicated that he has an interest in the subject. I would caution him to put some steel in his spine when pursuing his championship of parks and conservation issues because he has to face the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority who was attempting to have himself renamed as Minister for Degradation and Erosion. That minister seems to believe that the export of our soil is something that we should put down as a positive rather than a negative benefit of the year.

Mr Coulter: Each one of those parks was created by erosion.

Mr EDE: If you wish to discuss that issue, I suggest that you bring it on and we will have a full blown debate on it because I am not going to allow your interjections to move me away from the solid and constructive course that I am taking.

It is true that the very essence of our tourism industry and of all the benefits that flow from it are our parks, our landscape and the values inherent in the maintenance of those parks. It is all very well saying that we will have casinos, snake farms and all the rest of it. Those are additional things which can add to people's enjoyment of their stay but what attracts them here are our great national parks, whether they are controlled by the Australian Parks and Wildlife Service or our own Conservation Commission. It is those land forms which people think about and which will form the basis of our developing tourist industry. We must safeguard them and extend them.

I commend the honourable minister for bringing forward this statement. I thank him for providing us with that new target of 3 million tourists per year. Obviously, he will now work to ensure that the parks are in place and the procedures are in place to handle those numbers without killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I want to relate a story about the experiences of some family members of mine in Kakadu National Park. They spent almost 8 weeks caravanning in the Territory. They travelled up to Darwin, went out to Kakadu and returned to Alice Springs. They loved Darwin - and I was a bit surprised at that - but that was good. They also enjoyed Kakadu National Park very much. However, they said that many people felt that Kakadu was a real disappointment. Apparently, that was a continual theme in discussions with people in caravan parks along the track.

In the debate about the extension of the park and the prevention of mining within its boundaries, people in the southern states have been fed the beautiful shots. There are some beautiful places there and there is no doubt about that. However, people have the impression that the whole area is escarpment country with lovely waterways and bird life everywhere. When they get to Kakadu National Park and find that such places comprise only a small percentage of the whole area, they leave disappointed. I welcome every visitor who comes to visit Kakadu National Park because I think their reports might put some sanity back into the thinking of Australians who have been misled by the TV media into thinking that all of Kakadu is totally picturesque. To my mind, 90% of it is very ordinary indeed. I hope that Australians will begin to realise that mining in some of those places is quite reasonable and sensible. My family members and friends have told me that many people were disappointed with what they saw in Kakadu National Park. That could well be the result of the misleading nature of the images of the area portrayed by the pro-conservation, anti-mining group. As people visit Kakadu and see it for themselves, they will understand the true picture.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members for their comments regarding our parks and the government's directions in managing them.

I would like to pick up a point that the member for Stuart brought to my attention. It is my claim that more than 3 million people will be coming to the Territory for holidays. The figure is actually 1 million for 1990.

Mr Ede: Of, come on! Are you backing off already? That was the shortest-lived promise ever.

Mr MANZIE: I think the member for Stuart knew that it was a mistake and it is a pity that he wasted some of his time in pointing it out.

Mr Ede: The statement says 3 million.

Mr Dale: It was a typographical error.

Mr Ede: So were all your election promises!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the issue at stake is the ability for the Territory government to provide planning for the future directions of our parks, to ensure that the assets which make the Territory a tourist destination are not only protected but enhanced. If we want to ensure that tourists visit the Territory, enjoy their stay without inflicting damage and tell their friends to come, we must enhance our facilities.

The government is also committed to ensuring that our policy of multiple land use is of maximum benefit to Territory residents and visitors alike, that our environment is protected to the fullest extent and that native species unique to our environment area are protected. We are committed to that

course, as the contents of my statement show. Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions.

In terms of staffing levels, we are aware of the need for increases in some areas. We are increasing the number of rangers throughout the Conservation Commission and we will be filling a number of positions this year.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION (INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS) BILL  
(Serial 133)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) passing all stages at these sittings.

The reason for the request for urgency would not be lost on any member of this House, least of all yourself, Mr Speaker. As the title indicates, the purpose of this bill is to provide interim arrangements for heritage protection. If there can be any doubt that there is a desperate need for such interim arrangements, I suggest that honourable members consult the issues of the Centralian Advocate that have addressed this subject at considerable length. They may even wish to consider the comments of Mr Ian Cook of the National Trust who has referred to the urgent need for the legislature to move in this regard.

Mr Speaker, for the purpose of this debate, I will obviously separate the question of the need for urgency and the need for the bill itself. I am sure that anybody who peruses the schedule attached to this bill will be satisfied that the places listed urgently require protection. A clear indication needs to be given as soon as possible to the various groups who are interested in heritage preservation. I do not mean simply people who take the trouble to become members of the National Trust but also people in the construction industry. The bill reflects the opposition's understanding of the needs of various interest groups to have some clear direction from this legislature as soon as possible.

I further point out that urgency is justified because this is sunset legislation. There is no specific clause setting a date for lapse of the legislation but a careful reading of the bill will show that it is envisaged that it would apply only for a period of a little over 6 months. The committee that the bill proposes is to be given a 6-month period in which to deliberate. Presumably, the legislation would then continue to apply only for the time that it took the committee to report and for the government to legislate.

There is an urgent need for this legislation. In the past 12 months, Turner House and Marron's newsagency have been demolished in Alice Springs. This legislature has a responsibility to ensure that this bill is passed during these sittings. I do not expect that this will be done today. I believe that we could adjourn debate overnight to allow for further reflection on this urgent legislation so that it can be passed at some time tomorrow. I have no problem with that at all. If the government is of a mind to support

the bill, as I believe the people of central Australia expect, it will be happy to accede to the request for urgency.

It is a simple, uncomplicated bill which aims at establishing a committee to make recommendations to this House about appropriate legislation and about providing a mechanism to ensure that buildings named on the schedule are not demolished in the interim. Within the context of the bill itself, that is an argument for its urgent passage. As I said, Mr Speaker, when I gave notice of motion for this particular bill, we were happy to provide an advance copy of this particular ...

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr Speaker: Order! The member for Palmerston will cease his interjections and the member for MacDonnell will be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, we provided a copy of this bill in advance to the government. I trust government members will feel it will be possible to accede to what I believe is a reasonable request on the part of the opposition to ensure the urgent passage of this bill in order to provide that interim protection for the heritage assets of the Northern Territory.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak against the motion by the member for MacDonnell in relation to urgency and must admit that I have lost a little faith in the integrity, I suppose, and the bona fides of the member for MacDonnell in relation to heritage matters.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would ask you to request that the honourable minister withdraw that reflection on my integrity and my bona fides too for that matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not believe that there is a point of order. I think the honourable minister said he had lost 'a little faith'. Perhaps he still has some left.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said, I have lost a little faith. I suppose it is indicative of the lack of ability of the member for MacDonnell to listen clearly and concisely at times when statements are being made.

This bill is a significant departure from previous opposition attempts that we are aware were made in 1986 and 1987 to introduce heritage legislation. Where the previous bills were long and rather complex documents, as the member for MacDonnell quite rightly pointed out, this is a very simple bill which consists of only 6 clauses. The reason that I am disappointed, and believe that the motives of the member for MacDonnell are entirely political and related to the by-election which is approaching for the seat of Flynn, is that the bill itself is unacceptable for urgent passage for a number of reasons. The first is that the government has had very little time to examine it and, on that basis alone, it would be ridiculous to suggest that it pass all stages today. Secondly, and this is the most ...

Mr Bell: Not today.

Mr MANZIE: Even during these sittings. It is ridiculous to expect us to be able to assess the implications of the bill in such a short period.

This is most important, Mr Speaker. Preliminary examinations of the bill reveal a number of serious flaws, including the fact that it would arbitrarily

restrict any development or adjustment of 273 sites on the list while heritage legislation is being drafted. Regardless of whether it will be drafted or not, there is a restriction. Clause 4 of the proposed bill says: 'Subject to section 6, no person shall destroy, deface or alter in any way a building or a place in the Territory listed in the schedule'. There are 273 sites listed on the schedule and 80% of those sites are privately owned. Let us have a look at some examples: Fred's Pass Road. What happens when a few potholes develop? Are we expected to leave them until heritage listing is in place? Then there is No 28 Westralia Street, Stuart Park, a Sidney Williams hut! What happens if a door falls off: \$20 000 to put a new one on! What else have we got. The Old Vic Hotel. What happens if someone breaks a window? Will the owners be allowed to fix it?

Previously, I had faith in the integrity and the bona fides of the member for MacDonnell with regard to heritage matters, but to support urgency on this bill would be a disaster. Half the places in the Territory could fall down, and nothing could be done about it. I ask the honourable member to be serious with regard to heritage matters, research the legislation he intends to put forward in this House and ensure that what he proposes will not cause problems for people in our community. It distresses me, Mr Speaker.

The other thing that I would like to point out is that, at my direction, the Conservation Commission is investigating the need for heritage legislation in the Territory. This will certainly include an examination of the way in which such legislation operates in the states, and what the weaknesses and the strengths of that legislation are. Once it investigates the need, its report will have to come to me and, accordingly, it may go to Cabinet. This is certainly not something that will be completed overnight, and it is something that has to be done with a great deal of care.

Again, there was the off-the-cuff comment from the Leader of the Opposition - and he is pretty good at this. Maybe he wants us to end up like South Australia. I read the South Australian Sunday Mail the other day and it contained a cartoon in which a skeleton was depicted lying on the ground against a wall and marked South Australia, and somebody says: 'Don't just stand there. Call a developer!' South Australia is dying because of lack of development. I turned over a couple of pages and there were letters to the editor containing all sorts of comments. They talked about bureaucratic interference in the development process and the inability of developers to be able to do things because of red tape and bureaucracy, acts and regulations, which constrict what can occur. According to the pundits and the political reports, South Australia is dying because the developers cannot get out and do things. Nevertheless, this bill would totally prevent any owners of any property listed in the schedule from carrying out even basic maintenance. The member for MacDonnell has been unable to demonstrate any ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! When I moved urgency for this bill, I was very scrupulous in distinguishing the merits or otherwise of the bill from the issue of urgency ...

Mr Firmin interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the member for MacDonnell. Will the member for Ludmilla cease his comments.

Mr BELL: I was scrupulous in distinguishing between the purposes of the bill and the need for urgency. We have been listening for some 5 minutes to particularly ill-informed criticism of the bill itself that is really not appropriate to the debate on urgency.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes. I ask the minister to relate his remarks to the motion for the suspension of standing orders.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, there has been no demonstration of why we need urgency. In fact, the contents of the bill are such that there is definitely a need for this to be examined in some detail. I think it is important that the bill should go through the same processes as the vast majority of legislation which comes before this House. It is equally important that the government is seen to be moving on the basis of considered decisions and not on the basis of Labor Party hysteria and by-election fever.

Mr Speaker, on the matter of urgency, standing order 179 is quite specific. It states: 'The Speaker may, on the application of the Chief Minister or a minister acting on his behalf, declare a bill to be an urgent bill'. It talks about hardship being caused, and a suspension of standing orders for the provision of urgency is supposed also to relate to hardship.

Mr Smith: I can recall an amendment to the Public Service Act. It did not relate to it then!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: He has failed to demonstrate that there would be any hardship. In fact, I think I have demonstrated that hardship would be caused to the owners of property because this bill has been drafted in a rather hasty manner. I think it is time that the members opposite came clean on the heritage issue. We have heard a lot of rhetoric. We have heard suggestions along the lines that, on this side of the House, we do not care for anything that is old and that nothing can be protected unless members opposite have control of the matter.

I can assure the member for MacDonnell that the Territory government is very concerned, and it has an excellent record for preserving our heritage property and for assisting groups to preserve heritage sites and items throughout the Territory. I can assure the honourable member that our efforts in that regard certainly will not be dropping off because the Flynn by-election is approaching, nor will they drop off if this particular bill does not receive urgency in these sittings.

The honourable member opposite is not thinking about what has been achieved. In Alice Springs alone ...

Mr Leo: I just thought about it. Marron's newsagency has been knocked down. That is what has been achieved!

Mr MANZIE: The Leader of the Opposition does not go to Alice Springs. He does not know what is there. The member for Nhulunbuy does not go to Alice Springs and he does not know what is there. They have to rely on the word of the member for MacDonnell.

I would like to let honourable members - including the Leader of the Opposition who never visits Alice Springs - know that there are some great examples of the efforts of this government to record, to restore and to ensure that certain areas and buildings in Alice Springs are restored and preserved for future generations. For example, there is the Old Residency and, Mr Speaker, you would be well aware of what a great job the museum does there. There is the original Alice Springs Police Station, south of the Gap, the old slab building which I believe dates back to 1905. There is the Hartley Street

School. Some of us were at the official opening of the restored project. There is also the Ghan project which, Mr Speaker, is very close to your heart, and the section of the Overland Telegraph line. I handed over the lease for Les Hansen House to the National Trust the other week. The first hospital in Alice Springs, Adelaide House ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister, as he well knows, is no longer discussing urgency. He is attempting to defend the government's woeful record in relation to heritage protection.

Mr SPEAKER: Does the minister wish to speak to the point of order?

Mr MANZIE: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am pointing out arguments that counteract the claims of the member for MacDonnell that, unless this particular piece of legislation receives urgency, all heritage items in Alice Springs will disappear. I am pointing out the record of this government to show that, not only are things not in danger if urgency is not granted but that, indeed, the contrary is evident from what has resulted already from the actions of this government.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but again I remind the minister that his remarks must be connected closely to the motion for suspension of standing orders.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I will continue with just a few other examples. The Telegraph Station is an example of the original village of Alice Springs. I have said in this House before that I cannot think of another place in Australia - and, possibly when the member for MacDonnell finishes giggling and treating this matter as a joke, he might be able to recall whether there is any other example in Australia of a village which has been restored and preserved in its original condition.

We can talk about the restoration project at Hermannsburg, we can talk about Arltunga - the examples go on and on. The amount of effort that is put towards preserving our historic buildings, our heritage, on a per capita basis in the Territory is greater than anywhere else in Australia. I have not gone through an exhaustive list, but I am sure that members of the opposition would gladly have the public believe that these buildings and projects do not exist. They certainly do exist and they exist because of the responsible policies of the Territory government. Mr Speaker, I can assure you those policies and actions will continue regardless of whether we provide urgency for the passage of this bill.

I must again make my position quite clear. In relation to the Marron's incident, I have asked the Department of Lands and Housing to look at measures that could be put in place that will ensure that planning processes involving applications for alterations to historically-significant buildings will be publicly advertised. At least, this would prevent the occurrence of an episode like that involving the Marron's newsagency without the community being aware of it. I have also asked the Conservation Commission to prepare a detailed report on the need for heritage legislation in the Territory, and it has to be done carefully. There has to be a very detailed investigation into what is occurring in the rest of Australia because this government does not intend to cause the sort of problems that we see occurring in the states. We have shown a responsible attitude. Buildings with heritage significance have been restored and thrive because of the ongoing policies of this government, and cheap attempts to obtain some sort of political advantage for a by-election are not worth while. That will be clear to people who take the

trouble to examine what has occurred here today. I am disappointed. It is ridiculous that urgency is being sought in relation to this. We owe it to the community to ensure that this urgency motion does not succeed.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this has eroded my little faith in the integrity of the Attorney-General because he has before this House a piece of legislation which ...

A member: Which is a load of nonsense!

Mr EDE: Yes, I agree. It is a load of nonsense. He has sought urgency for, and is trying to ram through this Assembly under urgency, legislation which amends numerous acts, and I refer of course to the Interpretation Bill.

Having done that, he now turns around and criticises us for seeking urgency on a bill which is aimed at preserving the heritage of the people of the Northern Territory. Time and time again, we have established that it is under threat. The need was established in 1979. It was accepted by the government at that stage. It brought in a consultant to draft legislation, but nothing was done. Then, Turner House was bulldozed. Members on this side of the House pointed out then that there was an urgent need for heritage legislation to stop the bulldozing of our heritage. The government agreed that there was a need but it did not like our proposed legislation. It said that it had established an interdepartmental committee. Mr Ray Hanrahan, the former member for Flynn, who at that stage was responsible, spoke about the involvement of the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and a whole range of people who were supposedly working flat out to develop some heritage legislation. We were given to understand that the government saw this as a matter of urgency.

What happened, Mr Speaker? Marron's newsagency was bulldozed. If anything demonstrates the need for urgency, it is the fact that Marron's newsagency was bulldozed despite the fact that the government said that it was urgently developing legislation along the lines of that put forward by the opposition in 1986 and 1987. At one stage, the government supposedly had draft legislation. Later, it had an interdepartmental committee. The minister does not speak about those things now. All we have is somebody in the Department of Lands and Housing who is looking for something. That is the only commitment the minister has given. We are moving in reverse at 100 miles an hour and that in itself shows the definite need for urgency.

This House has a responsibility not only to look forwards but to look back at our heritage and its role in preserving the soul of the Territory for this and future generations. In that context, it is the duty of every member to vote for urgency.

The minister complained that previous opposition legislation was too long and complicated. He complains that this bill is too short, although he does not seem to be able to look at the 6 clauses that it contains. A copy of the bill was delivered to him yesterday. He had all of yesterday to study it and we are prepared for the debate to be adjourned as long as we can get an undertaking that it will be completed tomorrow. If the government, with all its resources, cannot examine 6 clauses in that time, it does not say much for the honourable minister.

Mr Speaker, the minister made a number of totally incorrect assertions about the contents of the bill. I will not address those now because I believe that we should first agree to urgency, after which we should allow the



member for MacDonnell to explain the bill to this House. We should then debate it on its merits, having received his explanation of how it will operate. I can understand the bill. It only took me a couple of hours to go through it and understand how it would operate. The minister has said that he is having problems in understanding it. If he listens to the member for MacDonnell, he will have his chance to come to grips with the bill's provisions. Unfortunately, the minister has already signalled that we might end up with some legislation in 3 or 4 years time. That is not good enough for me because everybody in Alice Springs is telling me that it is not good enough for them.

The minister continues to speak of the protection of heritage as though it is anti-development. He has no understanding of the concept of heritage. Heritage means jobs in Alice Springs and in the Northern Territory generally. It is related to the protection of the soul of Alice Springs, the thing which attracts visitors there. Visitors believe that the old Alice Springs still exists. They say time and time again: 'We did not think it would be like this'. They talk about their disappointment to such an extent that somebody even had the idea of recreating the old Alice Springs at a site 30 km north of town. While I believe that is a fairly ridiculous scheme, it shows how frustrated people have become with this government's failure to protect the identity of old Alice Springs.

This legislation is needed urgently to protect the heritage of Alice Springs. Heritage sites are in danger now. The Walk-in Theatre was only saved by the skin of our teeth. It was about to be bulldozed outright and, at the very last hour, an interim arrangement was made to preserve it. Telecom is trying to save the old postmaster's residence but, if people believe this House has no will to protect the heritage of the Territory, those who think only in terms of a quick dollar will be encouraged to destroy more of our heritage.

This House should have the courage of its convictions. The member for Braitling made some remarks about this issue, and my colleagues on this side of the House have frequently drawn attention to the terrible things that have been done to Alice Springs. The fact that there is no commercial property left with any heritage value in Alice Springs and the fact that all the other sites listed on the schedule to this bill are under threat is sufficient reason in itself for urgency. If that is not enough reason for us to act with real haste in the next couple of days, I do not know what is.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart says that it should not be very difficult to examine 6 clauses and to understand them. Let me say that it is certainly not hard to do that. Those 6 clauses are very frightening. What the opposition wishes us to do today, without a great deal of forethought, is to put in place some of the most draconian legislation imaginable.

We have a very large number of listed sites, both buildings and natural heritage, which are not under threat. Many of them are well and truly protected under present conservation legislation and other legislation. Who would do any damage to Berry Springs? It is well and truly covered by the Conservation Commission Act. Kakadu National Park is well and truly covered by the ANPWS and its legislation. Litchfield Park, the Blythe Homestead and Bamboo Creek are all well and truly protected under conservation legislation. If the opposition had its way, we would have another piece of legislation which would not allow, without an order from the Supreme Court, any action to change, repair or protect ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! We have been through this before. The minister is debating the substance of the bill when he should be debating urgency. If the government will grant urgency, the minister can have his turn to debate the content of the bill. He is making allegations about the content of the bill, allegations which we dispute, and I believe that that should not be allowed and that you should direct him to keep to the substance of the urgency motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was merely pointing out that many of the sites listed in the schedule to the bill are already very well protected. Many of them have been funded, repaired, maintained and developed by the Northern Territory government.

Let me just talk for a minute about 1 example - the Tennant Creek Catholic Church. It is a very mobile piece of heritage. It was moved all the way from Pine Creek to Tennant Creek, and the Northern Territory government contributed a large amount of money to repair it so that it could be protected. If that does not show commitment on the part of this government to ensuring that that particular building remains intact and available for future generations, I do not know what does.

I guess it can be said that it is a shame that we have lost 2 buildings in Alice Springs in the last 3 years. I was familiar with 1 of them but not so familiar with the other. However, if they were worth protecting, there is some cause for concern that they may have been removed without enough forethought. However, that is unlikely to continue to any great extent. Right throughout the country, buildings have been removed over the years because they were no longer of real value and no longer economic. There is no need to preserve every piece of heritage that exists. It is certainly worth while protecting individual pieces of heritage if they are worthy of it. However, there certainly is no need to protect 6 Sidney Williams' huts around the Territory, 1 of which is still in use on a cattle station and 1 of which is a derelict shed in a city street. About 20 years ago, my brother bought a Sidney Williams' hut at Rapid Creek which had been another piece of mobile heritage. It had been moved from the present post office site - it was an old bakery - out to Rapid Creek.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The honourable minister is no longer discussing the question of urgency.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the minister to debate the question of urgency.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I understand that we are debating whether this matter should be one of urgency and I believe that that is what I am doing.

The heritage of the Northern Territory is as well protected as any other heritage in the country. There is certainly no need for urgency in this case. We have 2 months to the next sittings if honourable members want to carry this through. Let us follow the normal procedure. We have members opposite jumping up and down every time we bring in really urgent pieces of legislation. They say that we are trying to hide something because we want to pass it immediately. We should all be very wary of what the members opposite want to do. Your house could be next, Mr Deputy Speaker, on a heritage list and you would not be able to re-hang a door. I am very much afraid of the draconian legislation that is proposed here. It is absolutely crazy.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to reflect on the need for urgency as seen by the member for MacDonnell and say to the government that, whatever personal reservations I might have about heritage legislation and the impact that it has on development, there is no doubt that there is a widespread feeling in the community that something ought to be done to set out some rules for the preservation of some of our older buildings. I can understand that the member for MacDonnell has become excited about this and has been forced, through frustration, into introducing legislation and seeking urgency in relation to it. Nevertheless, it does not detract from the fact that there is a need for something to be done in the community in relation to our heritage and its preservation. What we are talking about is how and when.

I am looking at this from the point of view of people who would like to see things preserved and people who happen to own the property involved and do not particularly want it preserved. They are confronted with being made to preserve the building at great expense to themselves and no responsibility is taken by the rest of the community. In the list that the member for MacDonnell has attached to his legislation, there are some prime examples of why we need this legislation - not tomorrow or the next day but pretty quickly - because there are many people who have an involvement in maintaining our heritage and who are wondering where the responsibility lies and where the money will come from.

I would like to start with a couple in my electorate.

Mr Bell: Are you in favour of urgency?

Mr TUXWORTH: Just be patient.

I refer first to the Powell Creek Telegraph Station. This happens to be on a property in my electorate where the owner is probably one of the few blokes around who has a bob in his pocket and could well afford to restore it himself and would take great pride in it. However, there are very few rules for him to follow in preserving and reinstating that Powell Creek facility to its original condition. Whose responsibility does it become after he has spent a lot of money restoring it himself? Does the property transfer to some other body? Does it remain his? Does the maintenance responsibility remain his? While all these important matters remain unanswered, properties are falling apart.

The next one on the list is the Mallapunyah Station Homestead which many members would have seen. It was built in 1922 by the station owner out of local granite rocks and locally burnt lime. By any standard, that is an important part of our heritage. It would be totally unreasonable to tell the owners of the station that we would not let them pull it down or insist that they restore and maintain it because the cost of the job would be rather like the rebuilding of the old naval headquarters after the cyclone - a major job and a very special one for people who knew what they were doing. The owners of the station quite rightly say: 'We do not know what to do. We do not know what our responsibilities are. We do not know what will happen if we rebuild it. Will we be made to lock it up and keep it empty or can we use it as a station house if we want to?' Those are not unreasonable questions but they are the sort of things that need to be addressed by some form of legislation to give us a little breathing room.

The honourable members opposite did not refer to the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station, but that property has now been in the possession of the Conservation Commission for 2 years.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for Barkly is not really speaking to the question of urgency.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would say that the member for Barkly has already expressed support for the urgency requested by the member for MacDonnell and I think we should hear his arguments.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I see on the list the Telegraph Station in Tennant Creek which has been in the hands of the Conservation Commission for about 2 years. It would be pretty reasonable to say that absolutely nothing has been done to that property in that time by the Conservation Commission. In fact, it is being maintained by the local body of the National Trust which has somebody living there on a caretaker basis to see that it is not vandalised.

Also on the list are a number of properties that really bring the listing of heritage into disrepute. That is another reason why we need legislation pretty quickly: to provide people with some guidelines. Anybody who has been out there would appreciate that the Northern Star Mine and Battery has no machinery or anything else of engineering interest on it at all now because it has all been taken away. Preserving the site would mean nothing for the simple reason that there is nothing there.

The Shamrock Mine, which was one of the first developed in the early days of gouging around Tennant Creek, is another site that has on it only an army trig point which was put there 20 years ago.

Mr Coulter: What about McArthur River Homestead?

Mr TUXWORTH: That is another one we will get to. In respect of Fazel Deen's Battery, if we had made a move 25 years ago, we would have had a tremendous opportunity to preserve some of our heritage, but we did not do it. The other example on the list is the Police Lock-up Cell, Tennant Creek. The Police Lock-up Cell in Tennant Creek is a little gem, and it should be preserved.

Mr Coulter: Yes, and used.

Mr TUXWORTH: No.

For the benefit of honourable members, it would be about the size of one of those cubicles where staff of the Assembly are working. It had 6-inch concrete walls set between corrugated tin. There was no window in the door other than a vent at the bottom which was about 6 inches by 6 inches. In the early days, if you were locked up, you were put in the cell with the door open. If you chose to leave, you were then brought back and put in the cell with the door shut. When we were schoolchildren, we used to wave to all the prisoners and greet them as we went past the police station gate, but there was no way they would step outside the cell door. This building has been removed. It is the private property of a fellow who uses it as a toolshed. Who would pay for its removal, upgrading and maintenance? There are no rules for circumstances such as this, and there needs to be some.

The member for MacDonnell asked earlier whether I was supporting urgency on his bill. I am not particularly supporting his bill. What he is doing is reflecting a feeling that many of us have: that something has to be done. If the government could give an indication of what it proposes to do if it will not accept the honourable member's proposal, that would be great. The

Minister for Conservation did not address the issue. He managed to tip a few buckets on the member for MacDonnell, but there still is no answer as to what is to happen. It is true that the Flynn by-election is coming up. As a consequence, this will be a hot issue for 2 or 3 weeks but, at the end of the day, this will still be a matter of concern to people all over the Territory.

I indicate to the member for MacDonnell that I support the urgent need for something to happen or to be seen to be happening. I do not support his call for urgency in relation to a proposition such as this, but I certainly support the spirit of what he is trying to do. I believe that it is appropriate for the government, through another speaker if it can, to indicate what it is prepared to do, either in the short term or the long term, to allay the fears of many people in community who would like to see something happen.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, that was a surprising performance from the government. I want to pick up a few points raised by the 2 government speakers who had a great deal of difficulty in understanding the distinction between the bill itself and the need for urgency. I have no doubt that the people of Alice Springs, in particular, as the member for Barkly said, expect something to be done. The fact that the government is not prepared to do something about it at these sittings is outrageous.

For the benefit of the member for Victoria River, I will point out that what this bill proposes are interim provisions. It is interim - a wonderful borrowing from Latin - while the government or this Assembly or the committee determines an appropriate method of dealing with the matter. It is intended that this legislation operate for a restricted period.

As far as I am concerned, I become sick and tired on general business days of these blokes, over a long lunch, deciding what sort of specious arguments they will use ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing order 62 states that honourable members shall not make insinuations and imputations against other members of this House. I ask that you direct the member for MacDonnell to withdraw any suggestion that I or any of my colleagues had long lunches which affected our performance as members in this House. It was an abominable reflection.

Mr BELL: In speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I point out to the honourable minister that, at no stage, did I reflect on what the honourable minister or anybody else may of may not imbibe during those long lunches. I was merely reflecting on what they might talk about.

Mr SPEAKER: I think the inference was there, and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly any imputation concerning long lunches. However, let me say that, at the either short or medium-length lunches that the honourable government members have on general business days, it is fairly clear to me ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Any reference to meals taken by any members of this House having any influence on what they might or might not do is again drawing an imputation that, somehow or other, members of this House, as a result of lunching, do not perform their job satisfactorily. Again, I would ask for you to rule accordingly.

Mr LEO: May I speak to the point of order, Mr Speaker? Quite frankly, I think the Attorney-General is becoming over-sensitive. I listened to the member for MacDonnell's words with a great deal of interest because I knew he would have to respond in some way to the minister's previous point of order. However, there is no way known that the member for MacDonnell was in any way reflecting on the habits of members during their lunchbreaks, which we all take between 12 pm and 2 pm. If the minister has some difficulty with how he spends those 2 hours, that is fine. I do not have any difficulty with that. But, I do not think ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have reached a decision. I think the honourable member is reflecting by imputation on honourable members, and I ask him to withdraw the reference.

Mr BELL: I withdraw the reference, Mr Speaker. Let me try again.

Sometimes, on general business day, before members opposite rise to speak, they deal frivolously with these motions. Whether or not that is associated with their luncheon habits or lack of them, I know not. It was a hypothesis, purely and simply, Mr Speaker. That may be a contributing factor. Any suggestion or any offence that may have been taken by the honourable minister or, indeed, by yourself, I withdraw unreservedly.

The fact is that the reasons put forward do not wash with me and, more importantly, the reasons given for not proceeding with this bill urgently will not wash with the people of Alice Springs. I am surprised, Mr Speaker, that the only 2 government members who are prepared to speak on this are the member for Sanderson and the member for Victoria River.

Mr Dale: How many do you want?

Mr Ede: I would have thought the member for Araluen would have been interested in heritage matters.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the member for Wanguri, what I expect is somebody like the Minister for Tourism to speak to this urgency motion. I would have thought that the Minister for Tourism would have the greatest interest in seeing that this particular bill passes through this Assembly as quickly as possible. I think that the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association would be less than impressed with the minister's insouciance, his lack of care, lack of interest and lack of application to this matter, all of which borders on dereliction. Let me say exactly why, Mr Speaker. When nobody wants to come to Alice Springs any more because it has become 'shiny town' with green, red and blue hearts everywhere and because the materials used to build houses in the town make people roll over and die, the Minister for Tourism's lack of interest in this bill will be remarked on. People will say: 'Remember that CLP government that we had between 1978 and 1990? It is responsible for the way this town looks. It is responsible for the fact that there is not a building here which is more than 20 years old. It is responsible for the fact that every tourist who was here more than 10 years ago and who has returned now remarks that he no longer likes the feel of the town'.

I am not arguing that things must never change or that every building in the Territory has to be left as it is now. I do not agree that there should be no development, no building and no growth, as other speakers have suggested. That is absolute nonsense and it is a cynical misrepresentation of the views that I have put forward and the hard work that I have done on this

issue, together with other opposition members. The ill-informed nonsense put forward in this debate by the Minister for Lands and Housing and the member for Victoria River does the government no credit. I suggest to the member for Araluen, the member for Braitling and the Country Liberal Party candidate in the coming by-election that the government's position on this issue will be tested.

Mr Finch: That is what it is all about!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will not interject again.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will pick up that interjection from the Minister for Transport and Works. The Minister for Lands and Housing also suggested we are interested in this issue only because of the Flynn by-election. I think he used the phrase 'political interests of the opposition'.

Mr Speaker, let me just point out our track record on this issue. In the last 18 months, the opposition presented a heritage bill to this Assembly and raised a matter of public importance discussion following the destruction of Turner House. We have demonstrated a continuing concern about the inaction of this government.

I point out also that I am concerned about the remarks of the member for Barkly. We let him get away with a 10-minute travelogue.

Mr Dale: What do you think you are doing now?

Mr BELL: The Minister for Health and Community Services should be capable of showing a little more interest in this issue. He is quite happy to interject but he is not happy to contribute to the debate. The fact is that not one of the members who has spoken, apart from the member for Stuart, has shown any long-term interest in this issue. I would suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that the people of the Territory have been very well served by the opposition in this regard, not only by the current members ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! It is quite clear the member for MacDonnell is not addressing the matter of urgency. He is using this debate to make cheap political mockery of the role of this Chamber. If he would like to get on to the subject of urgency, maybe we will listen to him.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I point out that the member for MacDonnell quite clearly is demonstrating the need for urgency. The government has had ample opportunity over an extended period to introduce such legislation as it feels is necessary to protect heritage in the Northern Territory, and it has failed to do so. Clearly, the member for MacDonnell is pointing to that simple, historical fact and is demonstrating to this Assembly the need for urgency.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the accusation was made against myself and the opposition that our seeking urgency for this bill was bred of cynicism and short-term concern. I am demonstrating that our concern has been a long-term one and if the Minister for Transport and Works would bear with me, I will demonstrate that.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable member is speaking in reply, closing the debate on the motion. In fact, he is allowed to pick up comments made by honourable members.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, quite obviously, the Minister for Transport and Works does not have enough to do with his time, and that is surprising. He can find time to interject but not to contribute to the debate.

I was saying that the opposition's interest in this issue has been long term. I recall 2 previous members of the opposition who made considerable contributions on such matters. I refer to the previous member for Sanderson, June D'Rozario, who frequently commented on heritage issues and was an active member of the National Trust. A former member for Fannie Bay, Mrs Pam O'Neill, did exactly the same thing.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! You have given a direction on this particular line of debate being taken by the honourable member. I do not recall any other speaker referring, for example, to former members for Sanderson or Fannie Bay. Obviously, the honourable member is straying from the points he ought to be debating in reply.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: I have made my point, Mr Speaker. I have amply demonstrated that the opposition has a long-term concern, not a short-term concern. This is no expression of interest simply because there is a by-election in the air. We have a deep concern about this issue because people in the community expect something to be done.

The Minister for Lands and Housing argued that there was no need for urgency because we need to give careful consideration to what is being done in the states. I point out to the minister that that is precisely what this bill is designed to do. This bill is designed to set up a committee, comprised of 2 government members, an opposition member, a National Trust member and a representative of the construction industry, in order to assess the best approach. It is obvious from a number of other comments he made that the minister does not understand what the bill is designed to do. He referred to some items on the schedule to the bill, saying that he was opposing urgency because the bill would not work. If he had taken the trouble to read clause 6(1), he would have read the following words: 'A person who wishes to deface or alter a building or place listed in the schedule may apply to the Supreme Court for approval to do so'. That obviously does not extend to replacing windows or fixing potholes. That was an absolute furphy which does the minister no credit whatsoever.

As for the suggestion by the member for Victoria River that this legislation is somehow frightening or draconian, I point out to him that it is emergency legislation which is designed to operate for a short period only. It may contain some errors but it establishes the principle that certain buildings which are important to the whole community should be protected and that penalties should apply if people unreasonably deface them. There is legislation to that effect in many states of the Commonwealth, as I will indicate when I introduce the bill. Quite clearly, the member for Victoria River was speaking from an unresearched vacuum. He does not know what is going on. Obviously, he is not aware of practice elsewhere.

To pick up the member for Barkly's complaints about the listing of particular items, these can easily be overcome. He raised the need for rules and I believe that this bill presents that framework. There is a perceived need in this Assembly for this Assembly to legislate in exactly this way.



The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

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

Noes 16

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

Motion negatived.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

There can be no doubt that the case for heritage legislation in the Northern Territory is overwhelming. There is an overwhelming demand and an overwhelming expectation in the community that this Assembly legislate to protect the heritage resources of the Territory. I will commence by talking briefly about the purpose of such heritage legislation. It is frequently the case that those people who are happy to spend large amounts of time preserving heritage resources are characterised as Luddites. They are characterised as people who want to stop the wheels of development, who want to preserve for the sake of preserving in a mindless sort of fashion.

One of the central points that needs to be borne in mind with heritage legislation is that, as well as being an aesthetic issue, it is also a practical, economic issue. Mr Speaker, there can be little doubt that our own town of Alice Springs evinces very clearly the need for a sensible approach to heritage preservation. Presently, we do not have a sensible approach to heritage preservation. Twice in the last 18 months, we have seen demonstrated an outrageous disregard for the appropriate ways of preserving the heritage of the Territory. Perhaps the destruction of neither of those buildings, in itself, constituted an outrage. However, judging from the comments in the local paper in relation to both Turner House and Marron's newsagency, it obviously was a matter of great feeling for the people who live in central Australia.

The central issue, from that practical economic point of view that I was talking about, is that once you allow the repetition of that sort of destruction, you destroy one of the important tourist resources and one of the important economic resources of the Northern Territory. As everybody in this House knows, the Northern Territory has a narrow economic base and tourism, as government members tell us time after time, is a much larger part of the economic base of the Northern Territory than it is in the economy of any of the states. That provides us with an even more powerful reason for legislating in exactly this way.

I said at the outset that the case for heritage legislation was overwhelming. When Turner House went under the hammer, the opposition made a very big case for such legislation. Who can forget items like 'A Piece of Old Alice Crunched' when Turner House went under the bulldozer on 25 May 1986? More recently, we had the experience of Marron's newsagency going under the bulldozer. What did the editorial writer of the Centralian Advocate have to say? His headline was: 'Old Alice Dealt Another Blow'. In that editorial, the writer made this comment: 'It is vital that the town's remaining few old buildings be protected, not by word but by law'. Obviously, there is strong feeling in the community that there is a need for legislation of this sort to provide interim protection, and that it must be done quickly.

At a National Trust heritage seminar, which was attended by the member for Koolpinyah, Roger Linklater, who is a well-known member of the architectural fraternity, discussed the question of regulation. His paper was 'Regulation and Development in an Urban Environment'. I commend his paper which was reprinted in the May 1987 edition of 'Northern Territory Construction', the Master Builders Association journal. A number of very interesting comments were made by Mr Linklater. He said: 'Our building contractors and developers are a responsible group who are constrained by the basic requirement of operating within a profit situation. They have a record of respecting and operating within the rules'. There are, of course, a couple of exceptions there. He pointed out that they will operate within the rules. Capital will always minimise its costs. If the government refuses to follow the lead of other states, that is precisely what will happen. We will be left with cities and towns in the Territory that are most unattractive for people to live in and most unattractive for people to visit.

The member for Barkly has already referred to the question of costs for the owners of heritage assets. Most owners of heritage assets glory in them. However, there are problems if they should become a burden. Mr Linklater went on to say that the question of compensation needed to be taken into account: 'Compensation, incidentally, includes builders working on standard contracts who, for instance, may discover a burial site'. He went on to say that this happened in the Smith Street Mall and he referred also to the example on the casino site. He said: 'There is an immediate freeze applied while everybody sits down and scratches their heads as to what is going to happen. The builder's costs very often involve expensive plant and equipment that is lying idle and he has a right to look for compensation for those costs'. That is important in this context, and the opposition is fully cognisant of the difficulties. Where heritage issues arise like this, there may be a cost to builders. The community, through its elected government, has to take that into consideration.

Mr Linklater referred to the difficulties that may be occasioned by building regulations. In particular cases, there may be a need to ensure that building regulations reflect heritage needs and the need to retain heritage resources, and so on. I commend that particular article to honourable members. It is a very balanced argument in favour of heritage legislation. For those people who know Mr Linklater, his business is not protecting old buildings: his business is development. As he says in that article, most architects, particularly consultant architects, find themselves working for developers for much of their time.

Returning for a moment to the buildings in question, it is an absolute tragedy that the buildings that we have lost recently continue to be listed in the August issue of 'This Month in Alice'. Marron's newsagency was recommended as part of a heritage walk. 'This Month in Alice' reflects the

origins of the building. 'It was built for Jim Rice in the early 1930s, and it was the first glass-fronted shop in Alice Springs'. I am quoting again: 'It is one of the few buildings left with an overhang verandah supported by timber posts on the pavement. Ted Marron bought the building in 1939 and has retained its old character'. In question time last week, the Minister for Lands and Housing was pretty dismissive of that particular aspect of the building. I really think that did him no credit and did this legislature no credit either.

The National Trust has published a wonderful brochure that includes Marron's newsagency. It includes various other heritage resources. For example, Mr Speaker, you will have heard recent reports about the Old Court House that I understand has been commented on by Dr Ian Cook of the National Trust. We do not know when we will wake up and find that that has been bulldozed.

I point out to honourable members that there are only 15 buildings or structures or whatever that form part of the heritage walk. We have lost 2 of them. The only other one of them that is commercially-owned is Tunk's Store on the corner of Hartley Street and Stott Terrace. It is a very sad commentary on 10 years of self-government that this legislature has not yet seen fit to legislate in such a way. It is high time that was done, and that is why the opposition is bringing forward this bill in order that sensible guidelines can be developed for people who are involved in the construction industry.

Originally, the opposition introduced, as a private member's bill, a draft bill that was a part of the James Report. Mr Peter James, who is now the Director of the National Trust in New South Wales, was retained by the Northern Territory government, the best part of 10 years ago, to produce a report and draft legislation. It even reached the stage of being the Northern Territory Heritage Bill 1979. It did not attain a serial number. That is a dreadful shame. Since that was tabled and since the Northern Territory government obtained advice on that, the wisdom in relation to heritage legislation has moved on a bit. I think Mr James himself would agree that his draft legislation would require amendment.

I have a copy of the South Australian Heritage Act of 1978. South Australia was doing something about this 10 years ago. The provisions of that act have received the acclamation of people, and not only from the National Trust and people like Mr James. In his article, Mr Linklater referred to the virtues of the South Australian legislation. That particular act has a couple of advantages over the New South Wales legislation. One of those is that the South Australian act clearly states that the minister shall not enter or remove a place from the register unless he informs the committee set up under the act of his intention to do so. There are those sort of in-built safeguards that are not available in the New South Wales legislation.

The other aspect of the South Australian legislation is the development of a heritage fund. I think that honourable members who spoke in the urgency debate will be interested in this issue because the heritage fund is a major incentive to owners of sites entered on the register. The heritage fund can receive funds from the Commonwealth and state government, as well as generating income itself. It is empowered to make grants and low interest loans for works on places included on the register. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be aware that some similar work is done through the National Trust with some buildings, but I believe that this approach to heritage legislation would be more appropriate.

The Western Australian Legislative Assembly has before it the Heritage Places (Western Australia) Bill of 1987. At this stage, I am unclear whether that has passed through the Western Australian Assembly. It may well have done so. It received a second reading in November last year. I have a copy of the bill and I would seek the leave of the Assembly to table the Western Australian bill, the South Australian act and the draft Northern Territory legislation.

Leave granted.

Mr Manzie: What about the Russian ones?

Mr BELL: I will pick up that idiot interjection from the Minister for Lands and Housing.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The point of order relates to the inappropriate adjective used by the honourable member.

Mr BELL: Speaking to the point order, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was referring to the comment, not to the minister himself.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr Manzie: That was even worse.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: With reference to the idiot comment by the Minister for Lands and Housing, it is indicative of the jejune attitude that the government displays towards legislation of this sort that interjections of that kind are made ...

Mr Finch: Get it together.

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection by the Minister for Transport and Works, I trust that he appreciates that I am making ...

Mr Finch: Why don't you put a couple of words together so we can understand what you are saying? That is my problem.

Mr BELL: I trust that the Minister for Transport and Works appreciates the fact that I am making a discursive second-reading speech, as opposed to a read second-reading speech. I might say parenthetically that it is about time we introduced into this Assembly the practice of the House of Commons which is that second-reading speeches are not read word-for-word by ministers, but that ministers are sufficiently across the legislation that they introduce ...

Mr DONDAS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is clearly not speaking to the contents of his bill. He is talking about second-reading speeches that are made in the House of Commons. That is completely irrelevant to his own second-reading speech.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member will confine his remarks to the bill.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will confine my remarks to the bill. I would point out to the member for Casuarina that I was provoked by an interjection from his colleague.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think I have ably demonstrated that there is an overwhelming case for heritage legislation. I trust that this particular private member's bill will not suffer the same fate as have other private member's bills, and that the government will treat seriously the issues that we have raised.

I will turn now to the bill itself. It sets up a committee of inquiry comprised of 5 members - 2 government members, 1 opposition member, a National Trust member and a member from the construction industry. In respect of the latter, the bill says that the Administrator should appoint from a panel of 3 persons nominated by the Master Builders Association. The Master Builders Association would be free to nominate an architect. Quite obviously, somebody of Mr Linklater's experience, competence and understanding of the construction industry would be the sort of person whom we would be thinking of.

The time periods have been inserted to reflect the urgency which we believe this issue merits. The bill stipulates that, within 30 days after the commencement of the legislation, the committee will be set up and it must report after 6 months. It also points out that the powers, privileges and protections for the committee are those as set out under the Inquiries Act.

The essential aspects of the bill are set out in clauses 4 and 6. Clause 4 provides interim protection for those buildings listed in the schedule. There is a hefty penalty of \$20 000. In addition, there is a provision that, if a court is satisfied that a person has deliberately flouted the provisions of the bill, the court has the ability to impose a discretionary penalty in such cases. It is able to impose an additional penalty. Where a multi-million dollar project was involved, it would be quite possible to regard a \$20 000 fine as one of the costs and ignore it entirely. Quite obviously, we need a provision that will make somebody in that sort of position think twice about entirely ignoring the legislation. That is the reason why that provision is there.

Clause 6 relates to offences by a body corporate and provides liabilities for officers who are aware of the offence and involved with it in any way. Honourable members opposite have referred to the problem of getting approval for work to be done on buildings that were subject to this sort of interim protection. I believe that clause 6 answers their concerns in that regard. It provides a mechanism for an owner of a listed building to carry out essential work. I do not believe that this particular clause would refer to simple repairs like replacing a broken window that the Minister for Lands and Housing referred to or the application of a coat of paint or whatever.

In a nutshell, that is the bill. It is a very simple bill. There are no complicated proposals and I believe it reflects the approach to the protection of heritage resources around the country. It is urgently needed. There have been some references to particular items that have either been included or excluded from the schedule. I remind members that the opposition is quite happy to take on board additions or deletions from that particular schedule. I foreshadow that we would be seeking to include the walk-in picture theatre at lot 104 in Alice Springs in a schedule of amendments.

The member for Braitling has made reference to the old railway building at Finke, to the carriages and locomotives at the MacDonnell siding and to the Katherine railway sheds that have been moved down to the MacDonnell siding. The member for Braitling also drew to my attention Ryan Well.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the member for Palmerston may not know where Ryan Well is because he does not often venture far south of Palmerston.

We are quite happy to consider inclusions. I would point out that the schedule has been developed in consultation with the National Trust. I indicated that, in addition to the site and location of each of those places, the heritage status has been drawn in consultation with officers of the National Trust. Members will note that all those buildings have been listed by the National Trust and have been considered by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the National Trust.

In conclusion, I reiterate that there is an overwhelming case for this legislation. There is an overwhelming demand in the community for this legislation. This bill is not complicated. I do not believe that it is draconian or frightening. I believe it is in step with the responsible protection of the Territory's heritage resources. If this legislation is not passed, we will be the odd ones out. The losers will be, not only the people who are interested in the aesthetic aspects of these buildings, but also people involved in enterprises around the Territory for whom these buildings play an important role. I sincerely trust that the government can see its way clear to support this worthwhile legislation.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my presenting the Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138).

The need for this bill to be reintroduced cannot be in any doubt. This amendment has been the subject of frequent debates by the Assembly. On so many occasions, the members for Nhulunbuy and Stuart have had to confront constituents who have been seriously disadvantaged by the government's failure to act in this regard. It is high time not only that this legislation be reintroduced into this Assembly, but that it be passed by this Assembly. The equivocation and the refusal to act on the part of this government in respect of this particular aspect of the Liquor Act has been nothing short of - I hesitate to use the word 'criminal' - it has been absolutely outrageous.

The government has refused to amend an unjust law that has been criticised by the judiciary. Judges in the Northern Territory Supreme Court have said that these particular aspects of the Liquor Act, introduced as they were by a CLP government, provide the capacity for 'monstrous injustice'. That phrase, 'monstrous injustice', is not mine. It was uttered by a member of the judiciary. Mr Speaker, as you would know, members of the judiciary are not given to using language like that except in extreme circumstances. As members of the opposition have pointed out in this Assembly time after time, there is a desperate need for this bill to be put back on the Notice Paper and to be debated forthwith.

When I glanced at a previous debate on this issue, I noted that the new minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, the member for Araluen, spoke to this amendment on 22 October last year. He was desperately fishing around for reasons why the government was not prepared to accept an opposition bill which had been presented before. He said on that occasion:

In fact, in the majority of dry areas, particularly in central Australia, it is fairly apparent to anybody who reads the various reports available and discusses the issues involved with the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Aboriginal communities that there are conflicting views in both the white and Aboriginal communities.

He went on to say:

The member for MacDonnell is well aware of the fact that the d'Abbs Report will be presented in the near future. It is a review of the NT restricted areas legislation.

Indeed, it is. But what, Mr Deputy Speaker, do we find when the same member for Araluen is elevated to the frontbench? Instead of taking any notice of the d'Abbs Report, he feels the need to conduct a review himself.

These perpetual reviews are simply a means of procrastination, a means for this government to do absolutely nothing while people in my electorate and in the electorates of other opposition members and, dare I say, government members also, continue to suffer injustice. I would be very interested to hear the views of the member for Victoria River on this. I do not believe he commented in that regard but I am sure that communities in his electorate have suffered as a result of existing anomalies. I would be surprised if the member for Katherine had not seen these sorts of difficulties occur also. But what do we get as a result of that? All we get from the government is continued procrastination.

At this stage, there is little more that I need say in terms of the need to suspend standing orders to allow this bill to proceed. There is ample evidence of the need for this legislation. I foreshadow that, following the suspension of standing orders, I will move that the Liquor Amendment Bill be placed on the Notice Paper. Following the passage of that motion, it is certain that my second-reading speech will again convince people in the community that the opposition bill is responsible legislation. I am not going to filibuster, however tempting it might be in view of the fact that I am about to be cut off. It is high time that the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission did something about this problem instead of making the occasional pious public comment. He has had ample opportunity to advise the opposition that he intends to legislate on this matter and he has not done so.

I point out that the legislation proposed by the opposition does not set out to change the substance of the restricted areas provisions. It will simply return the law to the situation that applied between 1979 and 1981 when the courts had discretion to return forfeited motor vehicles. I am absolutely staggered that the government has allowed what has been described by the courts as an unjust provision to continue in force for 7 long years.

I sincerely trust that the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commissioner will explain to this Assembly his position in respect of this suspension of standing orders. I am sure that he has absolutely no intention of supporting it. The extraordinary arrogance of the newly-elevated minister amazes me. I dare say that it will be suitably reported tomorrow morning that, when the legislature decides to debate provisions which are described by the courts as unjust, the responsible minister refuses to rise to his feet. If the government continues to treat the legislation of the Territory with contempt, as it is doing by allowing these injustices to

persist, it is to be abhorred. I certainly trust that the minister will get to his feet.

With those comments, I commend to the Assembly this motion for the suspension of standing orders to allow the Liquor Amendment Bill to be reintroduced.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, we do not support the motion for a suspension of standing orders. The member for MacDonnell knows exactly why. He has had to move the suspension of standing orders because this bill is substantially unchanged from the bill he presented in 1987. It was debated on 2 March this year and it was rejected by the Assembly. It would be a reflection on this House under standing order 134 if we debated the bill today. As recently as 2 sittings ago, the legislation was thrown out.

The opposition knows full well that legislative changes will be introduced by the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. He has given an indication that changes will be introduced in the next sittings. It is not the government's intention to debate and rehash a 1987 bill that has had more reviews and been in and out of this Assembly more times than Ben Hur, as the member for Ludmilla suggests. I will not move that the motion be put now as I understand that the member for Nhulunbuy would like to contribute to this debate. Perhaps he will be able to provide some information and ideas for legislative draftsmen to incorporate in the revised legislation which will be put before the House in October. Provided that other members of the opposition do not rise and waste the House's time on General Business Day by filibustering, my tolerance is such that I am prepared to listen to the member for Nhulunbuy for a short time. I will allow him to contribute his argument as to why we should suspend standing orders.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for his indulgence. The need for the acceptance of this motion has been demonstrated in my electorate during the last few months. I spoke to this amendment bill last November. I told the House at the time that, if the bill were not passed, innocent persons, persons who had never been charged let alone convicted of any offence in the Northern Territory, would be wrongfully - illegally, in my opinion, although unfortunately not illegally in the opinion of the government - deprived of their property. Mr Speaker, that has come to pass.

Mrs Liyapidiny Marika, an extremely hard-working, full-blood Aboriginal woman in Yirrkala, who knows better than any member of this House what the curse of alcohol has wrought on Aboriginal society, a person who has striven all her life, has been deprived of her vehicle - a vehicle that she is still paying off. That has resulted from what is not only unjust legislation but stupid legislation. That is why this bill must proceed, despite the requirements of standing orders. Indeed, this motion very much recognises the requirements of standing orders. The opposition knows that the bill was introduced again in March and that the Assembly rejected it. That is why we are moving for a suspension of standing orders. The legislation needs to be debated again because the plight of my innocent constituents is dire.

I am not talking about some fantasy. This woman has busted her guts all her life. She is not a young woman, not a child. She is not a stupid, frivolous teenager. This woman, who has busted her guts for a lifetime, has had her \$11 000 motor car taken away from her. There can be no justice in that. How can I go home and tell my constituents that there is justice in our



laws? How can I do that and try to keep a straight face? There is no justice in this law. She is entirely innocent! She has never even been charged with any crime or offence, and she has incurred a penalty of \$11 000. There is no justice in that! The role of this legislature is to make laws which are just, which recognise and protect the innocent. There is no protection for the innocent in this law, none whatsoever. That is why it is imperative that we suspend standing orders now. It is imperative that we do that so we can right an injustice because the law, as it exists at the moment, is unjust. It is persecuting innocent people.

Mr Speaker, no legislature, no collection of individuals, no person can possibly accept that situation. If we condone that, and that is what we will be doing if we disallow the motion for the suspension of standing orders, then we will be condoning injustice. I defy any member on the government benches to tell me that he is prepared to continue to condone an unjust law. This law is not just an ass, as I described it last time, it is unjust. We will be correctly seen in my electorate, at Yirrkala, as being fools, knaves and asses for not having done anything about this unjust law.

Do not ask me to carry home that burden, Mr Speaker. I will do a great deal for this Assembly, but I do not want you to tell me that I have to carry that message home to my electorate. I defy any member on the government benches, any member of this House, to tell me that I have to go home and tell my constituents that we are about persecuting innocent people. Get up and tell me that and I will do it. And I will tell my constituents which members told me to do that. That is exactly what I will be obliged to do unless this suspension of standing orders is allowed. There is no alternative left to me. I will have to return home and tell my constituents that this House does not recognise their rights as citizens. That is what I will be obliged to do. I urge all members of this House to support the suspension of standing orders and the passage of this amendment in the interests, not of their own, individual, petty ideas of morality or right or wrong, but in the interests of justice for my constituents.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise in an attempt to give the Leader of Government Business the opportunity to consult with his colleagues and put it to them once more that they should allow this legislation to come before this House, be debated and be accepted. It has been before this parliament before. I can recall some 4 occasions on which I have contributed to debate on this subject, and that debate began before I was elected to this House. The problem was acknowledged from the word go, from the very time that the legislation was put in place. The member for Barkly, who had carriage of the legislation, stated in his second-reading speech that it did not do what the courts have interpreted it as doing. The courts have bent over backwards to try to find any interpretation except that which necessitates a most cruel and unjust forfeiture of the property of innocent people. The courts have bent over backwards, but the judiciary has said that its hands are tied.

I believe it was Justice Nader who stated that the judiciary would attempt, by every means at its disposal, to put a construction on the law which did not result in a gross, unusual and heinous punishment - a legal injustice, if you like, Mr Speaker. He indicated that it was something which was against all natural law and which offended against every principle of law. Those were not his exact words, but he used words to the effect he would do everything in his power to avoid this injustice. The person who introduced the legislation said that the law did not do what it was interpreted as doing. The only construction you can put on that is that the law was a mistake when it was enacted. We have legislation that does far more than it was intended

to do and it is responsible for a most cruel and unusual punishment of innocent persons. The injustice of the legislation is there for all to see. The other night, an ABC program demonstrated just how cruel, unusual and unjust the legislation is. I believe that we are now in a situation where the integrity of this House is at stake. We have to suspend standing orders to allow us to introduce this bill to amend the act so that at least it can be said that this legislature moved with appropriate diligence to restore justice in the law.

Mr Speaker, I am in the same situation as the member for Nhulunbuy in that I have constituents who, through no fault of their own, have been penalised by this legislation. He spoke about a lady at Yirrkala. I could talk at length about Mrs Jeanie Egan, a woman who is so well thought of that she is the only Territorian who is on the national Board of Education, Employment and Training. She is the only Territorian who was honoured by the federal government in being placed in that position. In fact, she is on the schools section of that board. She was a Band 2 teacher for many years. Her son borrowed the car to go into town and, on the way back, he told the passengers to get out of the car so that he could search it to ensure that none of them was hiding alcohol. He finished his search and then drove into the community. It turned out that one of the passengers had hidden a small bottle of alcohol and, when he saw flashing blue lights, he threw it out of the window. Nobody saw it. The police did not see it. Later on, the police saw the person looking for something and he admitted that he was searching for a small bottle that he had thrown out of the car window. That person was never prosecuted and neither was the son nor Mrs Egan, who had done no wrong. Nevertheless, as a result of that incident, Mrs Egan had her vehicle forfeited.

Honourable ministers opposite say that we should go into Aboriginal communities and convince them of the benefits of sending their children to school, following basic principles of hygiene and many other things. We are urged to do that, and we do it. However, when the actions of this government bring its own body of law into disrepute ...

Mr Coulter: Who wanted it in the first place? Who insisted that it be that way?

Mr EDE: ... we find it very difficult.

Mr Coulter: Who insisted that it be that way? The traditional owners.

Mr EDE: That is absolute nonsense, Mr Speaker. I have brought to this House petitions from communities asking for steps to be taken to allow the return of those motor vehicles.

At stake here is the credibility of the whole body of law of the Northern Territory. People are losing faith in that law because of this particular provision which impacts directly on them. There is a whole body of law which never comes close to people living in Aboriginal communities. They do not know about it and it never affects them. However, there are some laws, such as this one, which have a direct and daily impact on people's lives. When people do not have any faith in that law, it destroys their faith in the entire body of law. For that reason, it is essential that we move immediately to suspend standing orders, bring on this legislation and clean up our own backyard. When we have a body of law which is manifestly just, we will find it much easier to say to people: 'We have done our bit. We have just laws. Obey them'.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, it certainly is 'Brideshead Revisited'. I would like to join the debate this afternoon because, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, I was the one who introduced the legislation. It is draconian, was draconian and it set out to be draconian in the beginning. It was to be an absolute deterrent to those people who would take alcohol into Aboriginal communities. It not only applies to cars, but to boats and planes and other forms of transport. Over the years, I think it is fair to say that a former Leader of the Opposition, Jon Isaacs, and later Neville Perkins, Bob Collins and others have introduced amendments to the act to enable people who lost their vehicles unwittingly to get them back. That was always steadfastly resisted simply to try to give assistance to the Aboriginal communities which were trying to do the right thing.

Mr Speaker, recently, I had a discussion with a member of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission in Alice Springs. The minister might like to confirm or deny that this is the case. I was told that there are about 30 vehicles which have been impounded by the Commission and are awaiting disposal. Some of them have been in the yard for many months and some are in the category raised by the member for Nhulunbuy this afternoon. Whatever we set out to do in the beginning in terms of being tough and setting an example, I think there comes a point where we have to say that we must have a look at this in order to be fair to responsible, honest people.

The reason why I rose is that I heard the Leader of Government Business taking a very firm stance on the matter this afternoon in his interjections. Only a week ago, the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission was interviewed on radio in relation to this very problem. I was driving down McMinns Street and heard the minister say, as I recall, that there was the possibility for ministerial discretion on the recommendation of the commission to take hardship into account. I thought to myself that it would be interesting when it was raised again in the Assembly. However, when the member for Nhulunbuy raised the matter, the minister very quickly did a 180° turn right on the spot.

In his interview, the minister expressed a feeling of concern that there was an injustice and he also expressed a willingness to try to rectify the matter. If that willingness is still there, perhaps we could get some indication of what the government proposes to do about it.

Mr Coulter: We are talking about a suspension of standing orders.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government Business has taken a line this evening that would lead me to believe that the government does not intend to do anything about it.

Mr Coulter: Wait until October. Will you be here?

Mr TUXWORTH: I will be here. The honourable member can bet on that.

Mr Speaker, what are we going to do in October? I do not think that is an unreasonable question given the charter of the minister to try to improve some of the provisions of the Liquor Act. Is this matter to be resolved in October? If it is, can somebody make an absolute determination about that? If it is not going to be, what is wrong with giving consideration to the member for Nhulunbuy's proposition that this particular lady be given back her car.

Mr Coulter: That's the way we are doing business, is it?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy has put a proposition to the House that has not been refuted by the Leader of Government Business. The person to whom he referred has suffered, in her terms and probably in other people's eyes, a grave injustice. She will continue to suffer that grave injustice because nothing is being done about it. Does the Leader of Government Business intend to give an indication of what will happen or are we just going to go on like this?

Mr Coulter: Do you ever read Hansard?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, we all read Hansard.

Mr Coulter: Well, you will know what the minister has proposed.

Mr TUXWORTH: We are not talking about reading Hansard. We are talking about trying to correct some of the provisions that would appear to have got a little out of hand. Could the honourable minister indicate across the Chamber ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I have been patient. We are here to address the substance of a bill which is substantially the same as a bill that was previously before this Assembly. The member for Barkly is not addressing the question which is that we suspend standing orders to allow the introduction of this bill.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the motion to suspend standing orders recognises that the bill has been introduced before. Indeed, that is the point of seeking a suspension of standing orders. The substance of the bill is well known to all members of this House. Indeed, the matters contained in the bill and the reasons for the motion have been well aired this afternoon. The member for Barkly is pursuing the reason why the motion needs to succeed: to enable the bill to be introduced under a suspension of standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member for Barkly to relate his remarks more closely to the motion for the suspension of standing orders.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, what is important is that we are seen to be trying to change the legislation, if that is the wish of the parliament, in a way that people understand. The minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission says that we will have change but we do not know to what and we do not know when. The member for Nhulunbuy is arguing for a change now on certain grounds, and the Leader of Government Business is telling us to wait until October. I would be happy to wait till October if the minister would get up and say that will bring what we want.

Mr Leo: Get up and say it so that it is in the Hansard.

Mr Poole: It is in the Hansard.

Mr TUXWORTH: Let us have a statement in relation to the commitment from the minister that he will introduce legislative change to the Liquor Act in the October sittings that will enable people caught in the situation that the member for Nhulunbuy's constituent is in ...

Mr Coulter: It has to go through Cabinet.

Mr TUXWORTH: He just gave a commitment. Is there a commitment?

Mr Coulter: He said that it was in Hansard. Do not go reading into Hansard what is not in Hansard.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, you can hardly blame anyone for being confused.

Mr Coulter: Read Hansard and you will not be.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the minister has just given a commitment that there will be a change. His colleague interjects and says he has not got it through Cabinet. What are we to believe?

Mr Coulter: He did not say what change.

Mr TUXWORTH: He did say what change, Mr Speaker. He said that there would be a change in relation to this provision that would enable the constituent of the honourable member for Nhulunbuy to satisfy her problem. All the member for Nhulunbuy is looking for is some satisfaction. If the government gives an indication of what it is committed to do, so that the honourable member can reasonably tell his constituent that something will happen, that is fair enough. If we are expected to walk out of here without any sort of indication at all, that is unreasonable.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I do not think that there is all that much to respond to from the Leader of Government Business. Basically, the only argument he has been able to put forward is that this bill is not new and therefore a suspension of standing orders is not justified. I will admit quite happily that this bill is not new. Because the bill is not new does not mean that there is not an urgent need for it. Both my colleagues have amply demonstrated the urgent need. They have brought to the House's attention 2 particularly heart-rending and deserving cases where compulsory forfeiture is unreasonable.

I expected to hear either from the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission or from the Leader of Government Business exactly what the government intended to do. I am quite happy to withdraw this bill if we have a clear indication from the government that it will do something, yet it has not given that indication. It has had an hour in which to tell us exactly which way it intends to go. All we had from the Leader of Government Business were a few half-smart comments about the fact that this bill has been around before. We heard absolutely nothing from the Minister for Tourism, the minister responsible. That is outrageous behaviour. The government is prepared to sustain what have been described by the courts as unjust provisions, and to make no comment on a serious motion to suspend standing orders. Members opposite wonder why this legislature is a laughing stock. They do its reputation no good whatsoever when they respond in this way to serious propositions put forward by the opposition. I have better things to do with my time than move frivolous motions.

Mr Coulter: We haven't noticed.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Leader of Government Business. If he has not noticed from the contributions ...

Mr Coulter: From you?

Mr BELL: ... of the member for Nhulunbuy and the member for Stuart that there is a real need to amend the legislation, I am totally surprised.

Mr Speaker, I point out that the government insists on debating a few bills during these sittings where there is not even an expressed need for the legislation in the community. There are no material examples of people making representations to the government because their activities are sequestered by a legislative framework. If we are prepared to legislate on that basis, when there is no expressed need in the community, surely we should be prepared to legislate where there is a crying need.

There are many examples of gross injustice in relation to this issue. In effect, people have been fined \$60 000 for carrying a can of beer in a motor car. I expect that there will be a few government members at Hermannsburg for the Governor-General's opening of the refurbished buildings there. They might like to talk to Gus Williams and find out ...

Mr Poole: I did that yesterday.

Mr BELL: I wish that the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission would be prepared to get up and say that in the context of this debate instead of responding by way of interjection. It is a serious derogation of the government's responsibility when its only contribution to debate on this motion has been some half-smart drivel from the Leader of Government Business. This government stands condemned for its refusal to respond to the real needs of people in the Territory community. We are not here to score points. There are no votes for me in this matter and I doubt whether there are any votes in it for the members for Nhulunbuy and Stuart. That does not bother us at all. There was some political mileage in the heritage bill ...

Mr Coulter: That is a confession. Now we know.

Mr BELL: Obviously, the Leader of Government Business was not listening when I spoke, because I confessed exactly that in the course of the debate. He has a very short memory as well as not having many brains. There is no politicking in respect of this motion. It is simply a matter of human need. It is about time that the cynical members of the CLP club worked out that the opposition is responding to that human need. They have been in their club for so long that they do not know how to respond to such matters. We moved this motion as a result of substantial issues raised by the member for Nhulunbuy and the member for Stuart, and the best that members of the government can do is respond by way of interjection. The Minister for Health and Community Services, who should be in charge of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission ...

Mr Dale: I agree.

Mr BELL: He agrees. That is terrific. I would like to get a transcript of the next Cabinet debate on the subject. It is outrageous that we have the Minister for Tourism ...

Mr Dale: Would you be able to handle that? You are not having much success now.

Mr Coulter: Only if Wes becomes the opposition spokesman.

Mr Dale: You can't even handle your job now.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, he is shouting too loudly for me to pick up his interjections.

Mr Dale: I will say it again. You are not working hard enough now. You would not work in an iron lung.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I love to hear these interjections from the Minister for Health and Community Services. They will look terrific in Hansard when the people in the community who are genuinely interested in this issue see that he was prepared to make half-smart interjections but could not get his wits together well enough to make a sensible contribution on the grave issues that confront people affected by this legislation, which he freely admits, by way of an interjection, that he believes should be his responsibility. He would want to do better in Cabinet than he is doing here if he wants that to be the case.

I might say, in passing, that the Minister for Tourism was not doing a particularly good job when he had to prod the Commissioner for Racing, Gaming and Liquor. I quite agree with the member for Nhulunbuy that the performance of the government in this debate has been one of its more cynical displays and I believe members opposite stand condemned, not only by this House but by the Territory population as a whole.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 14

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

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

Motion negatived.

#### MOTION

Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move:

that this Assembly, pursuant to section 4A of the Inquiries Act, resolves that a board of inquiry of 3 members be appointed to inquire into and report to the Administrator on or before 7 November 1988 on the Northern Territory financial accounts and, in particular, to:

- (a) prepare Northern Territory financial accounts to determine the true deficit of the total public sector; such data to be prepared for 1987-88 with historical data over the last 5 years;
- (b) determine the full extent of public sector actual and contingent liabilities;

- (c) prepare a balance sheet for the Territory as at 30 June 1988;
- (d) reconcile the reconstructed accounts with the Australian Statistician's estimates of the position in the publication 'Government Financial Estimates Australia 1987-88'; and
- (e) advise on the impact of, and procedures involved in, applying full accrual accounting to all public sector bodies.

Mr Speaker, in the last 2 weeks, we have come a long way in terms of determining the true financial position of the Northern Territory. Two weeks ago, anyone on this side would have had an argument with anyone on the other side of the House about the actual existence of the Northern Territory debt. Even last week, in his budget speech, the Chief Minister was still proclaiming that the Northern Territory was operating a balanced budget. I doubt whether we will see that canard put forward again because, quite clearly, we are not operating a balanced budget. We have never had a balanced budget. We have always operated on a deficit.

Of course, there is not necessarily anything wrong with operating on a deficit. It is a situation under which most state governments have operated. It is a situation which the federal government has also operated under until the last couple of years. Let us get that straight for a start: there is nothing wrong with operating under a deficit although some people - and I suspect that the member for Sadadeen might be one of them - would argue that point. We are certainly not arguing that a deficit per se is wrong. What we are saying is that there comes a point, once you have accepted that you are running a deficit, when you need to know how large that deficit is. The point of this particular exercise is that we do not believe that anyone in the Northern Territory accurately knows the extent of the Territory's deficit. As a result, we do not know whether we have a problem or not.

It is interesting that, in the Sunday Territorian, the Chief Minister attempted to assert that my argument was rubbish by using the example of a householder with a \$120 000 house and a \$40 000 mortgage, stating that such a householder did not have a debt but an asset worth \$80 000. That very example indicated the Chief Minister's inability to relate to the average person in the Northern Territory because obviously he does not know that most people in the Northern Territory do not have \$120 000 houses. They are more likely to have \$70 000 to \$80 000 houses if they are lucky. On those \$70 000 to \$80 000 houses, they do not have \$40 000 mortgages. They have \$50 000 to \$60 000 mortgages. The fact that the Chief Minister cannot relate to the average Territorian is one of his weaknesses.

Mr Perron: Where was my principle wrong?

Mr SMITH: Your principle was wrong because, no matter what the value of the asset, there is still a debt. That is the first point.

To illustrate the second point, I will make the comparison more apt in terms of the position of the Northern Territory government. To use the Chief Minister's example, we would add to the mortgage of \$40 000 on the house, a mortgage on a car, a mortgage on a boat and a mortgage on a television set. They are all assets. According to the Chief Minister, if you keep on purchasing assets, you have no problems because your assets will always be more valuable than your debts. The average householder knows that, at some stage, he has to have a close look at what he owes on his house, his car, his boat and his other assets and determine whether he has enough money to pay for



them. If he does have enough to make all the mortgage payments, he must determine whether he has sufficient money left to live on. In other words, he has to work out whether he has enough left over to feed and clothe himself and his family. That is the point of this exercise. The Northern Territory government has purchased so many assets that, depending on the real extent of its debt - which, we accept, is unknown to us - it might have a problem meeting its ongoing operating costs. We know that we have reached the situation in the Northern Territory where most, if not all, loans taken out each year are used to pay the interest on the loans that have been taken out previously. That is a position about which I certainly have some severe reservations.

We have moved this motion because we want to know the facts. We want to know the facts about the extent of our debts and liabilities. Other people have realised that to be in a position such as this is serious, and I refer the House to statements made by the federal Treasurer last night:

If we are to avoid the mistakes of the past, we must abandon the myopic view that the world owes us a living and will go on bankrolling us whatever we do. Hard experience should have taught us that such illusions will not sustain us and that we need a better way to secure the future. Right now, the better way is to pay off the debt forced upon us by the bad times. The national debt is not some kind of accounting abstraction. It is something which touches every Australian and, above all, our children. Our policies are not only lifting the yoke of debt from our own necks; they will also lower the burden on the next generation.

Mr Speaker, the federal Treasurer understands the problem and is doing something to address it. We are not even asking the government of the Northern Territory to address the problem. We are simply asking members opposite to come to grips with the fact that we have a debt and to put in place an independent inquiry, similar to the one that was conducted in New South Wales, to establish the extent of that debt. Once we know the extent of the debt, we will then be in a position to determine whether we have a problem or not. That is the bottom line of this resolution.

As I said, we have come quite some way in the past few months in terms of obtaining extra information in respect of debts and liabilities. We have had the PAC report on The Actual and Contingent Liabilities of the Northern Territory Government and we have had improved budget paper information. The next step is to establish, independently and objectively, the extent of all debts and liabilities in terms that are clearly understood by all taxpayers and to determine the current and projected cost of managing the debt and all other liabilities. Of course, the definition of 'liability' is a key question in this debate. We are happy to accept the definition that was provided by Mr Otto Alder, the Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development, to the PAC. He said that actual liabilities are amounts which are recognised as having to be paid to parties under contractual arrangements.

That brings me to one of the cuter remarks in the Deputy Chief Minister's response last week to our claim that Yulara and the Sheratons are in fact liabilities on which we owe money up to 1996. He claimed that they are assets. Mr Speaker, in the long term, they may well turn out to be assets but, according to the definition supplied by Mr Otto Alder, quite clearly they are liabilities because they involve moneys we have to pay out under contractual arrangements. Interestingly enough, the government recognised that point in its 1986-87 budget papers where, before it changed the format,

under the Treasury sub-heading of 'Debt Management', it had an allocation for Yulara and the 2 Sheratons of about \$15m, if my memory serves me correctly. We have the Deputy Chief Minister telling us one thing and we have the Treasury telling us another in its own papers.

The PAC report was a partial release of selected information. The information that was made available to the PAC now requires an independent audit in order that all those liabilities can be expressed in a consistent format. If the government wishes, we can have an argument before that independent body on whether the liabilities which the PAC considers to be liabilities are in fact liabilities or not. We are quite happy to have that put to the independent inquiry and we are quite happy to put our reasoning and reckoning to the independent inquiry as well.

It is unfortunate that, following the return to 'Perronomics', it is now not possible to elicit individual debt management appropriations for servicing liabilities due in respect of the Sheratons and Yulara. Previously, these were available separately but they are now lumped together. As part of the exercise, the amount appropriated to each should be disclosed and the amount likely to be due under each of these arrangements should be independently calculated and disclosed.

We have argued that the total debt and liabilities of the Northern Territory total \$2300m, after accepting that our figure of \$2500m was incorrect. The government accepts that there is a debt of \$1300m in borrowings which, on our calculations, will be blown out this year by \$141m less the airports adjustment, which I think is about \$96m. On top of that, the Treasurer admitted to \$203m in unfunded superannuation liabilities and \$10m in recreation leave fares. The differences that we have, which amount to \$900m or thereabouts, are in the following areas: the value of lease commitments, the value of the commitments to the Sheratons, the value of the commitment to Yulara, the value of all furlough accrued, the value of all recreation leave accrued, the value of unfunded superannuation and the value of take or pay gas commitments. In our view, those are all liabilities, whether we are receiving some income from them or not, because we have contracts to pay them off. We are quite happy to argue that out before an independent inquiry and I think it is important non-politically to do that so that we know what our commitments are.

There are some things that we have left out that may well need to be included as liabilities. For example, the Commission of Audit in New South Wales included as an unfunded liability workers' compensation - in New South Wales' case, \$587m. An amount was set aside for long service leave and an amount for sick leave. Again, these were liabilities that, at some future stage, the government of New South Wales would have to meet. Motor accidents compensation was another area that was included as a liability by the New South Wales Commission of Audit.

We think that all those areas need to be examined to see whether in fact they are liabilities. There are ongoing commitments that need to be met by this government. Of course, the importance of determining the extent of our liabilities is twofold: firstly, we would know precisely how much money must be set aside in future budgets to cover those liabilities and, secondly, the disposable income can be determined for use in other areas.

Mr Perron: We do it every year.

Mr SMITH: You are doing it every year in the budget. What you are not doing is looking 5 years ahead to see what will happen to the level of unfunded liabilities over those 5 years. You are not looking at what will happen to your loan repayment requirements over a 5-year period either.

Mr Manzie: The sky's going to fall in.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that is the point. The sky will fall in if you are not careful.

As I said publicly the other day, we still have a fair way to go in relation to the education of members opposite about the true extent of the problems of debt. You cannot continue to borrow and not expect to pay a price at the end. That always amazes me about conservative political parties. The very strong message that they put out to the public is that people must live within their means. However, when it comes to government, they are quite happy to live beyond their means and not expect that there will be a day of reckoning. We are not saying that, at this stage, the day of reckoning is around the corner but we would like to be sure that it is not. We do not have sufficient information to make a judgment on that. The only response we have from the honourable minister opposite is: 'Don't you worry about that'. People in the community are starting to worry about it and that is why we have moved this resolution.

Let us have a look at debt servicing. The extent to which Territory outlays go to servicing debt and liability has been subject to considerable obfuscation by the government. An analysis of the budget papers - and you have to look very hard to find it all - reveals that \$113.5m was allocated to debt servicing on borrowings and another \$19.2m was allocated to tourism infrastructure financial obligations. That total is \$132.7m. There may well be more that is tied up in annual repayments. That means that very close to 10% of our annual income is tied up in annual repayments.

The financial condition of the Territory is of vital importance, not only to us but, as the federal Treasurer pointed out, to our children. It affects all sectors and all citizens, both now and into the future. Citizens are entitled to expect the government of the day to tell it as it is and to describe fully and simply the true condition of the Territory's finances. The problem is that the members opposite do not understand and, because of that, the citizens in the Northern Territory are prevented from obtaining a full statement of the Territory's financial position, particularly its debt position.

In relation to the question of who should be on the board of the independent inquiry, we do not intend to suggest names at this stage. We do not believe it is appropriate for us to suggest names. What we are saying is that they should be independent people. They should be people who are expert in the commercial world, who know about debts, who know about liabilities and who know how to put them in a full financial context. All we are asking for is an independent assessment of the financial affairs of the Northern Territory government.

The last term of reference asks the inquiry to advise on the impact of and procedures involved in applying full accrual accounting to all public sector bodies. Accrual accounting is essential - and this is not the first time we have said this - to enable the government in the Northern Territory to make decisions based on proper financial information. I hope that, this year, we will not have a repeat of the situation where the Auditor-General said that

the government of the Northern Territory was not keeping its financial accounts in a manner that provided it with sufficient information to make decisions that were properly based. Forget the interest of the public, Mr Speaker. The Auditor-General was saying that the government did not have sufficient information kept in a proper form to provide it with the information that it needed.

In order to be useful in decision making, financial information should possess the following characteristics: it should be understandable, it should be reliable, it should be relevant, it should be timely, it should be consistent and it should be comparable. Those, unfortunately, are not traits that are recognised as being part of the Northern Territory's financial process at present. Until we have a financial system with those traits, we will not have a system that provides either the government or the people of the Northern Territory with meaningful information.

Accrual accounting is a recognition of items as they are earned or incurred and not as moneys received or paid and included in the financial statements in the year to which they relate. Accrual accounting procedures are used routinely in the private sector by commercial organisations. It is also currently adopted by most statutory authorities in Australia. The Commission of Audit in New South Wales considered that 'accrual accounting is the best method of preparing financial reports'. It says that reports prepared on an accrual basis are more likely to have the characteristics that I indicated earlier as being useful for decision-making. I am sure that, sooner or later, we will have an accrual-based accounting system or something very similar. The challenge that we all have is to make it sooner rather than later. Everyone in government will be surprised at the value that such a system will have because it will enable the government to keep a much closer eye on where its money is. It will enable it to keep a much closer eye not only on the point where it goes into a department or statutory authority but on the point where it comes out. At the same time, it would be able to assess the effectiveness of the money in achieving the stated objectives within that particular organisation or statutory authority.

To put this into some sort of broad context, we believe that there has been a significant improvement in the level of understanding of the position of the Northern Territory in relation to debt and liabilities as a result of the debates that have taken place over the last couple of weeks. There have been quite heated arguments over the exact size of that debt and liability position. In a nutshell, that is why we have asked for an independent inquiry. Once you remove the politics, it is too important to be continuing with the situation where people keep arguing about the size of the debt and liability when it can be determined by bringing in outside experts. We are asking for an independent assessment of the state of the debts and liabilities in the Northern Territory. That will provide us with a starting point for all future discussions on the economic health of the Northern Territory and on the state of the Territory's finances. By having that base determined by outside experts, we will be in a much better position to work through those thorny issues that will confront the Northern Territory over the next few years.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the motion of the Leader of the Opposition, I do not intend to debate it point by point, but I do wish to examine its intention.

This motion has nothing to do with providing the parliament, and therefore the people of the Northern Territory, with better and more useful information in relation to the government accounts. It has nothing to do with providing a

base upon which decisions affecting the Northern Territory economy can be made. In fact, it has nothing to do at all with improved government of the Northern Territory. What it is is a continuation of the opposition's campaign to inflict permanent damage on investor confidence in the Northern Territory and, hopefully, to encourage its mates in Canberra to further plunder the Northern Territory's allocation, all for the base and despicable political motive of perpetuating a depressed economy for its own nefarious political purposes.

The Leader of the Opposition proposes to set up a committee of inquiry into the Northern Territory's financial accounts with particular emphasis on government debt and the application of full accrual accounting. As I said, this motion has nothing to do with the better government of the Northern Territory. In looking at the reasoning behind it, I think it is best to look at the meaning of the word 'reason' itself. It has 2 meanings, one being 'logic' and the other being 'motive'. I intend to prove that there is no logic to this motion and that leaves no meaning to the word other than 'motive'.

Less than a year ago, the Public Accounts Committee presented to this House its Report on the Actual and Contingent Liabilities of the Northern Territory Government. In fact, that report was tabled in this House on 24 November last year and was current as of 30 June last year. That report laid out comprehensively the level of government borrowings and debt emerging as a result of the government's commitments to infrastructural development and those emerging as a result of its commitment to such things as long service leave and superannuation.

During the debate on that report, the opposition spokesmen - and there were 4 of them - made no mention of the Territory's borrowings and, barring a mention of the emerging costs of the superannuation scheme by the member for Stuart, the opposition members chose to limit their comments to further decrying the Territory's involvement in the Yulara and Sheraton projects. Why this sudden interest now in the other areas of Territory debt? Why this call now for an inquiry into the level of Territory debt? If the report of the Public Accounts Committee was incomplete, why did they not say so at the time? If, in their view, the Public Accounts Committee was not competent to carry out investigation in accordance with its terms of reference, why didn't they raise the issue then? If the opposition has no confidence in the report of the committee, why doesn't it move a motion saying so? In his debate tonight, I believe that the Leader of the Opposition intimated either that the Treasury has misled the Public Accounts Committee or that the Public Accounts Committee has deliberately misled this House, and I will be looking to take that issue further.

None of those things would suit the purpose of members of the opposition. The level of Territory debt and what it relates to has been enunciated clearly both in the report of the Public Accounts Committee and in the Budget Papers presented to this House last week. However, what does not suit the opposition's purposes is a summary in Budget Paper No 3 of the assets to which our outlays and borrowings relate. For a debt of \$1300m, the Territory has acquired quantifiable assets in excess of \$4000m. The contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory are exactly that - they are contingent. They are contingent on some improbable future event that would cause an immediate call by creditors upon the Northern Territory government to honour its indemnities and guarantees in relation to the Yulara and Sheraton projects or in relation to the gas pipeline.

In relation to those contingent liabilities, the Public Accounts Committee said: 'The committee is confident that the Territory debt in respect of those projects considered by the committee is not such, at this stage, that it could impact seriously on a future government's ability to service adequately the needs of the Northern Territory'. When the member for Stuart speaks to this motion, I will be interested to hear whether he still agrees with that or not.

The worst position the Territory could find itself in as a result of those projects is that, on the collapse of the current arrangements, a full commercial return of money may not be achieved. That lack of full return must be balanced by the other inputs those projects will have into the overall revenue base and on the relevant fact that the Territory government does not pay tax on any profits received.

The opposition apparently does not dispute the findings of the Public Accounts Committee nor apparently does it dispute the amount of \$1307m as being the total public sector borrowings outstanding. The Public Accounts Committee did identify other areas of known future liability, and I will address those areas in an attempt to put them into some logical perspective.

The Territory has a known liability in relation to recreation leave. That liability has a cutoff point and would reach the unlikely ultimate level of liability only if each and every one of our public servants accrued the maximum amount of leave allowable and then they all decided to go on leave at the same time. The other side of the balance sheet is of course the free labour we enjoy whilst our public servants are busily engaged accruing their leave. Recreation leave air fares can be seen in the same light as recreation leave itself with the limit being imposed on the liability by the regulations governing the accrual of those air fares. The ultimate liability is also limited by the inability of all our public servants to claim all their air fares at once and all to take off at the same time.

Mr Smith: Oh, that is nonsense. Don't talk about things you do not understand.

Mr PALMER: Oh, Terry!

Furlough is another red herring. With the numerically static or contracting public sector work force, the annual expenditure on furlough, as a percentage of the budget, will remain relatively static and therefore easily predictable.

The committee also considered the matter of property leases. By their very nature, and in order to secure the best possible lease conditions available, it is necessary to take them out for such periods of time that they may impact on 1 or more budgets. The leasing by a government of office and other space is not an emerging liability. It is an annual expense, to be met out of each year's appropriation.

Mr Smith: No, you do not understand.

Mr PALMER: All right, I do not understand.

To draw an analogy, you could say that, in 1988 dollar terms, a family with both a husband and wife in the 25 to 29 years age group, which applies statistically to the greatest number of people in the Northern Territory, could rent a Housing Commission house and, given an average life expectancy of somewhere around 73 years, have a liability of \$260 000. Mr Speaker, that is

arrant nonsense. To use the Leader of the Opposition's argument, that family would be obliged to declare, to any potential creditor, a liability of \$260 000. A family rightly regards the weekly or fortnightly rent as a weekly or fortnightly expense, not an emerging liability. Recreation leave, air fares, furlough and property leasing charges are annually quantifiable expenses, with none of them impacting on the following year's budget other than in respect of their being a usual expense of government which is known and easily budgeted for.

To take the opposition's argument on emerging liability to its illogical and absurd conclusion, the only proper way of ascertaining the true level of Territory debt is, firstly, somehow to identify when the world or the universe will end. Then, in 1988 dollar terms, we can estimate what our annual budget will be till that time. The level of Territory debt is known and published. This motion is shallow, and is nothing short of political grandstanding, and the opposition's schoolgirl-like copycat of the New South Wales Commission of Audit.

The opposition also proposes an immediate move to full accrual accounting. More schoolgirl stuff!

Mr Smith: You cannot even read, let alone understand economics.

Mr PALMER: No.

For a number of years, the accounting industry has been talking up the concept of accrual accounting in government. They would have us believe that accrual accounting can provide us with the panacea to our budgetary woes. Mr Speaker, plenty of private enterprise institutions, which employ accrual accounting principles, have gone to the wall. The industry would have us believe that, through accrual accounting, we will somehow be relieved of the problems of emerging liabilities and ageing assets. What the industry fails to point out - and this is how the opposition has been duped by the carpetbaggers of the accountancy trade - is that the substantial cost of the introduction of full-blown accrual accounting, when weighed against what it might achieve, by no measure of effectiveness presents the government with a cost benefit.

Not only is there no cost benefit, it is also highly unlikely that, in the foreseeable future, there will be sufficient numbers of suitably-qualified staff to implement a system of accrual accounting. Graduates in the area of accounting are coming out at the rate of about 5% a year against the total number of qualified accountants, with the demand currently running at 7.5%. Mr Speaker, you can ask our own internal audit people about the trouble they have attracting qualified staff.

There is no doubt that accrual accounting can provide useful information, but useful to whom? For information to be useful, it must also be understood. It is like pure maths or theoretical physics. I am sure the research effort in both those disciplines turns out some very useful information and facts, but useful to whom? One of the basic tenets of public accountability is that the public must be able to understand the information provided. Accrual accounting will serve only further to confuse and cloud the issue of government financial statements and will in no way better inform the public, to whom we are all accountable.

Another point is the timeliness with which government accounts could be presented. We are now able to receive in this House audited, annual accounts

within 3 months of the end of the financial year. There is no way in which our departments could provide full, accrual accounting sets of accounts in sufficient time for them to be of any use at all in this House. Even as a tool to measure efficiency, accrual accounting in government has limited application. Many departments and instrumentalities do not generate income and, therefore, performance cannot be measured on an income-and-expenditure basis. It may give some semblance of private accounting, but will not provide direct comparability with the private sector and therefore cannot be used as a measure of government efficiency versus private efficiency.

Another much-used argument is the failure of governments to fund future liabilities, such as furlough or superannuation, on an emerging basis. The natures of private enterprise and government differ in a radical respect. Government is here forever; private enterprises come and go. Private enterprises are liable to mergers and takeovers or may even become insolvent. Private enterprises, therefore, have an obligation, before declaring a profit, to fund a liability incurred in any particular year. Government does not declare profits. Government does not disburse profits to its shareholders and, from time to time, can take decisions which can limit the extent to which any liability is emerging. That can be evidenced by the removal of common law rights associated with motor accident or workers' compensation schemes. The Victorian government amended the lump-sum payout provision of its superannuation scheme to control its emerging liability.

Private enterprise does not have recourse to the arbitrary powers of government. I am not for a moment suggesting that cynical recourse to legislative or executive powers is a proper or moral method of discharging obligations accepted in good faith by the beneficiaries of those obligations. What I am saying is that the application of accrual accounting, appropriate as it may be in private enterprise, has no beneficial, net effect in making allowance for the liabilities of government.

In relation to government liabilities, another major advantage government has over private enterprise is that, in a very direct sense, the government controls the amount of revenue available in any particular year and, therefore, is unlikely to become insolvent. Out of office, maybe, Mr Speaker, but insolvent, no. Then there is the ultimate dilemma facing a government: that the likely reward for any government's frugality will be witnessing a future government squandering, for short-term political gain, those very cash reserves put aside to meet future liabilities. We had only to witness what Whitlam did: Australia's substantial cash in foreign currency reserves was squandered. That government destroyed 23 years of tight, fiscal management and this country may never recover from that. That experience alone should stand as a sufficient caveat to any government which moves to adopt full, accrual accounting.

Asset management is another banner that the accrualists hold aloft. The proper management of government assets is not dependent on the system of accounting. It is totally dependent on the government of the day providing sufficient funds out of its annual appropriation to maintain its assets and promptly plan for asset replacement. Imagine the mess we would be in if it was left to the accountants to tell us when, where or how we should maintain or manage our assets. The proper source of advice to government on the management of its assets is the people who, on a day-to-day basis, either use or operate those assets or are charged with their ongoing maintenance.

If members of the opposition have taken even the most cursory of looks at the myriad government information journals forwarded to each member of this



Assembly, they might have seen an article on the back page of the July edition of the Department of Transport and Works' publication simply known as 'The Journal'. I will quote that in full:

The Department of Transport and Works has been given the task of asset management for the Northern Territory. Asset management, in government terms, means the maintenance of public infrastructure in the Northern Territory over the long term, and managing funding for that maintenance as well as for reconstruction or renewal as necessary. 10 years of construction since self-government and the inheritance of many assets constructed during the 1960s and 1970s has resulted in the need to maintain billions of dollars worth of new and ageing infrastructure.

The NT government is looking at how to set up a public asset management system. Transport and Works was nominated to lead a new government working party which is to establish systems which will not only keep a register of what is owned, but will also provide the sort of information that allows better use of existing infrastructure. Most importantly, it will provide government with advance information on long-term funding requirements to manage and replace our assets.

Our Deputy Secretary, Works, Bill Steel, is the inaugural chairman. Our Director, Projects Branch, Barry Chambers, is providing executive office support to this working party. One of the first tasks being tackled by all the departments and authorities which are members to the party is the definition of a public asset in terms of items and their value. The asset register will need to identify the items which make up public assets such as roads, bridges, water supplies and sewerage systems, airport and barge landings, and buildings such as schools, police stations, community health centres, hospitals and government offices.

Mr Speaker, it is clear the government is taking action to identify its assets and to keep itself informed on the state of those assets. It is clear that the government will have at its disposal such information as would be required to plan for the timely maintenance or replacement of those assets. All this is being done without accrual accounting or, for that matter, an accountant. We have a group of humble engineers, mechanics and carpenters going about their jobs without even an inkling that they may be irreparably damaging the role of the accrual accountant in repairs and maintenance.

A final and perhaps a very relevant point in our position is that, in the federal system, it is essential that accounts are readily and easily compared with the accounts of other states. Any distortion of our position relative to the states could seriously impact on our allocations from the Commonwealth and we could be left to slowly accrue ourselves away.

Mr Speaker, I believe I have addressed the issues raised. There is no hidden debt and there is no sustainable argument in favour of accrual accounting. In fact, this motion contains no logical argument and no logical reasoning. It does carry, however, a base motive with no better intent than to damage the reputation of the government and to damage investor confidence in the Northern Territory, all for the perceived political gain of the Leader of the Opposition. Fortunately, his little ruse will not work. Fortunately, the people of the Northern Territory will see through this sham. Fortunately, he will soon be leaving the Northern Territory for southern climes, relieving this Assembly of the burden of his presence.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, if it were not for the colourful rhetoric of the member for Karama, I am afraid his speech would not have been worth listening to. He said that this motion has nothing to do with improving government in the Northern Territory and that it has more to do with short-term political gain. There is one easy way for the Chief Minister and for the government to prove that there is no political gain to be made, simply by having an inquiry. I suspect that the cost of holding such an inquiry would be less than the average minister in the Northern Territory would blow annually on overseas trips. If there are no political gains to be made, the government should go ahead with an inquiry. An independent auditor will simply say that the Territory has nothing to fear. It is as simple as that. That is all that has to be done. The only reason for not holding an inquiry is that such an inquiry would create embarrassment for the government. That is why no inquiry will be held.

As Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the member for Karama made numerous references to the work of the PAC. I will not go through the contents of its various reports. I will simply tell the House that New South Wales has many committees which examine the finances of that state. That is because it understands that a committee of the parliament is limited in its expertise. Although we on the PAC can send for expertise, we have limited expertise ourselves. It is impossible to pull all the threads together. Although the Public Accounts Committee of the Northern Territory certainly has examined the contingent and actual liabilities of the Northern Territory, it would be an absolutely impossible task for that committee, with any reasonable degree of expediency, to examine all the debt of the Northern Territory. That is a simple fact of life.

The Northern Territory will continue to face an extremely hostile economic environment within Australia. There is no question of that. Every state and every government in Australia will continue to face that extremely hostile economic environment. The Northern Territory has numerous disadvantages. Our biggest single disadvantage is our lack of political clout. It really does not matter who is the MHR for the Northern Territory or who our Senators are. We have just 1 MHR and it does not matter whether he is a government member or an opposition member. We have 2 Senators and it really does not matter whether they are on the government benches or the opposition. The fact of life is that they are very small bickies in Canberra. We cannot afford to delude ourselves. In this very harsh economic environment, the political realities mean that we will end up at the pointy end of the stick. There is no way to avoid that.

If we are to tackle this very harsh economic environment without even knowing how much we are in the red, we are way behind the 8-ball. We are just so far out of touch that we may as well throw in the towel now. The Chief Minister can talk about debts and assets in terms of somebody paying off a \$40 000 mortgage on a \$120 000 home. However, if that mortgage is not paid, he will be kicked out of the house. The debt has to be serviced. The size of the asset does not matter. The person still has to pay off the loan or he is kicked out. It does not matter whether our assets are worth many billions of dollars; we still have to service our debt and, if we cannot do that, we will be booted out and self-government will be a myth.

Can you imagine Paul Keating? He would be laughing himself sick if we had to go down there and say: 'Paul, we are broke. Give us some more money because we cannot pay the bills'. He would laugh himself silly, as would any federal Treasurer. He would say: 'What a bunch of nincompoops. They cannot even manage a cookie jar'. That is where we will end up unless we know the

size of our debt. If we can service it, that is great. There is no political advantage to be gained through this motion - none whatsoever. I cannot see how any member on the government benches can possibly see any political advantage to be gained through this. Either we have a debt that we can service or we do not, but we might as well be aware of it.

I urge the Chief Minister, as Treasurer, to support this motion for an inquiry. I urge him to ignore the colourful rhetoric of the member for Karama and to try to engage in a little cerebral debate on a very pressing matter. We are talking about our own future. I sometimes despair at the utterances of members opposite. There seems to be a sense of creeping paranoia in the government ranks. Every time the opposition moves a motion or raises an issue, they behave as if we are going to monster them. The benches of this House are littered with government members, but they believe that the 6 of us are going to monster them. The government's party meetings must be extremely interesting, with everyone watching the knives flying in all directions. The one way that the government can show that our utterances are trite is by supporting this motion to hold an inquiry.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, it must be getting hard to fill in the agenda of a General Business Day. After last week's effort to destroy his own credibility in terms of financial matters, the Leader of the Opposition has now proposed that a board of inquiry be appointed to inquire into the Northern Territory's financial accounts. Why? Because the Leader of the Opposition cannot add up. Having proved to the people of the Territory that he cannot add up, he wants the people of the Northern Territory to fund a board of inquiry to add up for him. I confess that I find this turn of events quite remarkable. I do not know who is advising the Leader of the Opposition but that person is compounding last week's error in a most public fashion. Perhaps he is obtaining his advice from the member for MacDonnell because I guess it is in that member's interests to make the Leader of the Opposition look pretty foolish.

My initial reaction was to dismiss this motion out of hand. The government knows the Territory's financial situation perfectly well and I believe that this whole matter could have been covered adequately by buying the Leader of the Opposition new batteries and an instruction book for his calculator. While that may have done justice to the Leader of the Opposition, it would not have done justice to the people of the Northern Territory who have rightly been concerned about wild allegations that somehow they all owe \$15 000 to the Territory government. I have never heard such nonsense but the fact is that, because it came from the mouth of a senior member of parliament, it may be given some undeserved credibility.

By seeking to imply, for purely political reasons, that there is something troubling, incorrect, dangerous or incomplete about the Territory's accounts, the Leader of the Opposition is in danger of misleading commentators, bankers and investors outside the Northern Territory. Those people may be unaware of the depth to which the opposition will sink in its efforts to denigrate the Territory and to mislead its people. They may assume that there must be something wrong with the Territory's financial position or management and they may take this ludicrous request seriously. That is the reason why I shall give a considered response to this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is nothing wrong with the Territory's financial accounts. More importantly, there is nothing wrong with the Territory's finances, which are the key to investor attitudes in the Northern Territory. The opposition's motion demonstrates how little it knows and how little it has

learnt recently about the Northern Territory's accounting processes. The officials who have prepared these accounts, and who are continually refining and improving presentations for the government in this Assembly, must despair at ever having the results of their efforts read, let alone understood. I will take each of the terms of reference in turn.

First, the board of inquiry is to prepare Northern Territory financial accounts to determine the true deficit of the total public sector. The Leader of the Opposition does not tell us what he means by 'true deficit', possibly because he does not understand, but the inference is that there is a false presentation in the financial statement of the total public sector. Careful and intelligent reading of all budget papers, including the latest ones, show this allegation to be nonsensical. The Territory budget is balanced in a truly, fundamental way. The government has assured capacity to meet its obligations. This has been the case every year since self-government. The Northern Territory never spends more than it can afford. If the federal government cuts grants to the Northern Territory, the Territory government spends less. If tax revenues grow, the government is able to expand its programs. The budget, including debt servicing, has always been, and is, within our financial capacity to pay.

The Leader of the Opposition mocked at an example of a householder, and he should not really have done so because I thought it was the type of example that he might understand. That example was of a family which lives within its income and that has the normal debts relating to perhaps a house, a car and half-a-dozen other items being acquired on hire purchase or whatever. That family, which lives within its means, does not spend more in a year than it earns. It makes its repayments, fulfils its responsibilities to feed and clothe its members and basically runs what the government terms 'a balanced budget'. For some reason, the Leader of the Opposition implies that that cannot possibly be right. The family is being totally irresponsible in spending any money whilst it has a debt. The very proposition he puts forward is absurd.

The second term of reference is that the board of inquiry is to determine the full extent of public sector actual and contingent liabilities. With some exasperation, I can only say that once again the Leader of the Opposition should read or have explained to him the Treasurer's annual financial statements, particularly schedules 5 and 6 which answer the question with total accuracy, and have done so for many years. He should also read again the second report from the Public Accounts Committee, from which he so liberally misquoted last week. Together, this report and those schedules clearly answer this part of the proposed terms of reference, and I would be happy to provide additional copies to replace those which the Leader of the Opposition appears to have lost. The Leader of the Opposition made a futile and thoroughly discredited attempt to suggest last week that full disclosure was not made in the government's budget and financial statements. But not only did we make a disclosure of the government's accounts, we also made a full disclosure of the depth of the Leader of the Opposition's ignorance about these things.

The third term of reference is that the board of inquiry is to prepare a balance sheet for the Territory as at 30 June 1988. I spoke a day or 2 ago on my view of people who think that governments should prepare total balance sheets. There is absolutely no merit or sense in this suggestion. All it would do is create an unnecessary and substantial expense as a meaningless task to be pursued by the army of accountants and public servants that would be needed to complete it. The plain and simple fact is that many items in a

balance sheet in the formal commercial sense have no role to play in public sector accounting whatsoever, as the Leader of the Opposition should well know.

What valuation, for example, should be placed on a school building in a remote location, a bridge over the Mary River or 50 km of bitumen road halfway between Tennant Creek and Alice Springs? What value would we put on the vast mineral resources of the Northern Territory, the oil and gas reserves, some as yet undiscovered? What value would we place on such assets of the Northern Territory which, by means of his twisted mathematics, the Leader of the Opposition will probably regard as some sort of liability? These things are certain to be exploited in due course with the development of the Northern Territory and they must be regarded as assets. But how does one place a value on such things? Or are we to have a balance sheet that does not include all the assets, just an odd one here and there?

These questions have only to be asked to illustrate the absurdity of attempting to value all Territory assets in a useful way and to assemble a so-called balance sheet which would serve only to please the players of Trivial Pursuit sitting opposite. They are irrelevant to sensible, financial management and the future of the Northern Territory. The stupidity of the Leader of the Opposition's quest is demonstrated by the fact that, were a balance sheet compiled, it would totally destroy his argument. I can illustrate the fallacy of the Leader of the Opposition's argument with a simple example. The government has a liability in its outstanding debts of \$44m. That represents the Commonwealth housing taken over at self-government. That is one side of the balance sheet: \$44m that we owe. What the Leader of the Opposition has ignored is that the other side of the balance sheet contains 2153 houses, represented by the liability of \$44m. At a conservative estimate, those 2153 houses are worth \$130m. The Territory's assets, cost adjusted for inflation, amount to \$4000m. For every \$1 of liabilities, the Territory has at least \$3 in assets. To use the Leader of the Opposition's argument against him, we have assets of over \$25 000 for every Territorian, and that is without placing a value on the minerals, the oil and gas or on those assets that Territorians own through the Crown.

The next term of reference for this board of inquiry is to reconcile the reconstructed accounts with the Australian Statistician's estimates. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition said very much about this reference. We should not waste our time or, for that matter, the Australian Statistician's time in reconstructing or reconciling. I am advised that the Northern Territory Treasury and the Australian Statistician have been working closely for months on a presentation of the Treasury's budget statistics in a format consistent with the practice of that bureau. There have been extensive discussions and an interchange of staff resources in carrying out this task. Indeed, Table 2 in Budget Paper No 3, presented with this year's budget, is the first provisional result of those processes. We are actively assisting the Australian Bureau of Statistics to improve its work.

The next term of reference the board of inquiry is asked to advise on is the impact of, and procedures involved in, applying full accrual accounting to all public sector bodies. Mr Deputy Speaker, let us save everyone the effort. I can advise right now that the impact of such a futile misapplication of resources would be to generate a considerable number of unproductive public service jobs, and a very good level of fees for the accounting firms engaged to complete such a task. There is a vigorous, and as yet far from conclusive, debate under way about accrual accounting for public sector bodies, and I intend to refer to this in my tabling statement accompanying the Treasurer's annual financial statements in October.

In the meantime, let us have no more of this nonsense which serves only to demonstrate the ignorance that exists among those who seriously believe that government processes and objectives differ very little from private sector, commercial processes and objectives. In reality, those objectives and processes are very different, and the accounting processes must reflect that fact. Where it is appropriate, as it is in relation to the Power and Water Authority, the government follows commercial accounting procedures. Where it would not be appropriate, as with the Department of Education, we do not. I hope the Leader of the Opposition is not seriously suggesting that we should.

I repeat that the attempts by the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that the Territory is in some sort of financial jeopardy, that its accounts are not to be trusted and that investors and bankers should steer clear of this place, deserve the wholesale condemnation of this House. Let there be no misunderstanding on this: every time the Leader of the Opposition peddles these fallacies, he undermines the future of the Territory and of all Territorians. The government will not support this exercise simply to prop up the Leader of the Opposition's failing - or perhaps non-existent - credibility in relation to financial matters. We are continually improving the form and content of the budget and the Treasury accounting processes, and that effort will not slacken. I will proceed at a pace dictated by the usefulness of the results obtained, and the principal test of that is whether it enables us to do things better for Territorians in the future, and that means looking forward and planning rather than looking backwards for cheap political points, which is clearly the objective of the opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 2 expressions were used by the opposition in this debate. One was that we 'might have a problem in making ends meet' and the other was that we 'might be living beyond our means'. It was not saying that there is a problem but that we are not in a position to judge whether there is or not. The fact is that we are in a position to judge. The Territory is living within its means. The Territory can and does service its debts. It is in good financial shape and in good financial hands. The government totally rejects this motion.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. I wish to cover only one aspect that has been raised by a couple of members. I think the last one to raise it was the member for Nightcliff. He stated that our criticism of the level to which debt was building up was somehow a reflection on the federal Treasurer because he had agreed to a certain level of debt. If honourable members opposite wish to draw a correlation between the actual level of advances made by the federal government to the Northern Territory, the loan buildup in each individual year, and say that that reflects the federal government's confidence in this government, they will have to wear the corollary. In 1988-89 dollars, the actual amount from 1986, which was \$138m, reduced in 1986-87 to \$98.6m, in 1987-88 to \$61.1m and in 1988-89 down to \$44.1m.

Mr Speaker, I would like to table this chart because it shows very graphically that, if the correlation which the honourable member for Nightcliff said existed between the confidence of the federal government in this government and the level of debt that it allows is true, then it also has to wear the corollary. Over the last 5 years, the federal government has been putting on the squeeze. We must ask ourselves the question which I had hoped would be answered. If the government had accepted the motion by the Leader of the Opposition, it would have accepted that we may have had an answer as to whether the fact that that level is decreasing so rapidly year by year is an indication that the federal government has lost confidence in the Northern

Territory government and is putting the squeeze on it in the loan area because it has decided that the actual buildup in debt is too great.

Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to table this paper.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I wish to refute absolutely the allegation that I drew any correlation between the level of approvals for debts and the Commonwealth government's confidence in our government. What I said was that any criticism of the level of debt in the Northern Territory was a criticism of the federal Treasurer because he approves it.

In those years of high levels of borrowings, I might remind honourable members that we were building the power stations in the Northern Territory and also the gas pipeline which required a high level of borrowings. I might say that, in that particular process, through a pea-and-thimble trick, the Commonwealth government ripped the Territory off for about \$80m-worth of grants. By the initiative of the Northern Territory converting from a coal-fired to gas-fired power station and making reductions in the capital works program, it had a windfall profit of some \$80m because it would not take into account the pipeline as part of that 40% capital grant towards power production. It took that \$80m grant as being 1 of the elements which added to the debt load on the electricity system in the Northern Territory. The member for Stuart cannot seem to get anything right at these sittings. He has done it again.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister has a reputation in this House as being a slow learner. Who can forget the spirited defence he put up against the introduction of the Public Accounts Committee? Who can forget the spirited defence he put up against the introduction of TAB and who can forget the spirited defence he put up against the introduction of the TIO? Tonight, we have the Chief Minister putting up the same spirited defence against an idea whose time has come.

I have no doubt that, given time, the Chief Minister, who does have a capacity to learn even if somewhat slowly, will see the benefit of having an independent inquiry to determine the real position of the public sector debt. I noted that he made some comment about the true deficit of the total public sector and implied that I was accusing public servants of not providing the full truth. Of course, that is not the position. One of the reasons why we call for this inquiry is that the true level of debt is not easily obtainable from any of the government's financial records at present because it is not a question that is asked and answered. It is not asked by the government. It has not been asked by the Public Accounts Committee. It has not been asked by anybody. That is why we do not have a true level of the deficit in the Northern Territory because the question has never been asked and the figures have never been assembled.

It is like flying a plane blindfold. You do not know where you are going or where you are going to end up. You can do it for so long, but you cannot do it forever. The point of this exercise is to recognise that and to have an independent inquiry. We are quite happy to put our figures up and to justify our case. I am surprised that the government is not prepared to put its figures up. The only reason that I can think of for that is the same reason that the member for Nhulunbuy spoke of and that is that the government has something to hide.

Mr Finch: We want to save you embarrassment.

Mr SMITH: I have never known of any political party wanting to save the other political party embarrassment.

Mr Finch: Well, we are just coy.

Mr SMITH: If you thought that there would be embarrassment in it for us, I have no doubt that you would support the inquiry. I take it as a vote of confidence in our figures and our reasoning that the government is not prepared to take them to an independent inquiry. If we have erred, it is on the conservative side. One of the reasons that it may be on the conservative side is that we have left things out of it that the New South Wales Commission of Audit, quite independently of us, determined should be in it.

Mr Speaker, I do not think there is much point in talking much longer. Obviously, we will have to continue this discussion in other forums, and on other occasions in this House. But, there is no doubt that, at some time in the not-too-distant future, the question of debt and liability in the Northern Territory will have to be faced fairly and squarely. The first step in facing it fairly and squarely is to determine what the level of debt and liabilities is. Unfortunately, we will not reach first base tonight but it will not be long before we do.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 14

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

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

Motion negatived.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 131)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Honourable members would share with me and other members of the community the great concern being felt because juvenile offenders who steal or damage the property of another person appear to evade making suitable restitution for their offences because the law as it is presently written does not encourage the courts to order restitution from the juvenile by way of monetary compensation or performance of service because of his or her inability to pay.



Existing provisions for restitution relate only to the child. Where it can be established that the offender was not being reasonably controlled by the parents, the court, in considering a criminal action against a juvenile, does not have the power to order the parents to make restitution or compensation, where that would be appropriate. What I am proposing in this amendment is that, in some cases, the offender's parents should be made responsible for restitution or compensation where a child has damaged another person's property and where it can be shown that the parents have not reasonably maintained proper control over their child, and where the court believes that lack of control played a major part in the commission of the offence.

The bill itself proposes the inclusion of only 1 new section in the Juvenile Justice Act. The effect of that provision compounds with existing provisions, which should be examined in conjunction with it. Existing section 53 of the act sets out in detail the penalty and other options available to the court where a criminal charge against a juvenile is proven. These are very wide, ranging from monetary penalties to custodial and supervisory orders.

Section 55 deals with restitution by way of monetary compensation or performance of service, and certain limits are imposed. The idea of proposed section 55A is to give the court a further option of shifting a penalty or compensation or service onto the parents in appropriate circumstances or onto them jointly with the juvenile. Given that the degree of severity of penalty that can be shifted is rather mild and is limited to those that could be imposed under the act on the juvenile himself, honourable members might think I am being too kind. Whilst there are some occasions when I am quite sure that the parents' lack of concern about the activities of their children would justify the fullest wrath of the law being visited on them, the intention of this bill is somewhat novel and I do not want rational debate on the real issues to be sidetracked into an argument on whether or not the penalties are draconian.

The introduction of this amendment into our legislation may be novel but it is not the first time it has been used. A provision embracing the basic concept has been on the legislation books in Western Australia since 1957. I understand from officers who are involved in the administration of justice for juveniles in Western Australia that the section is not used often although it does seem to have the effect of encouraging parents to take notice of their children's whereabouts and what they are doing. In fact, I have used the Western Australian wording in proposed section 55A. The words 'has conduced to the commission of an offence' are included for the purpose of attracting Western Australian legal precedent.

Honourable members will see that the proposed section also allows the court to order a parent to give security for the good behaviour of the juvenile in addition to any other order it might make. Honourable members will see that I have proposed a fairly expansive definition of 'parent' but I have excluded from this those people whose duty it is to care for difficult or disadvantaged children under the Community Welfare Act, or who voluntarily take on this onerous responsibility.

Mr Speaker, I commend this bill to the House and look forward to hearing the views, not only of honourable members in debate, but also of those interested persons in the wider community to whom I will circulate the bill.

Debate adjourned.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 140)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the key purpose of this bill is spelled out very carefully and clearly in the long title. It removes the monopoly right of legal practitioners to charge for conveyancing. As the law stands, a person who is not a legal practitioner can legally do conveyancing for himself or for another person, provided that he does not charge for the service. Charging for conveyancing is a privileged right of a legal practitioner.

In Alice Springs, the Housing Division of the Department of Lands and Housing carries out conveyancing for its home buyers without fuss or bother and with considerable efficiency. In order to remain legal, it does not charge for the service. I sound a warning here. If this bill is successful, and people who purchase from the Department of Lands and Housing start getting charged for conveyancing, that will result from a conscious decision of the government. I hope it will not take that decision because free conveyancing is a small encouragement to people who indicate their commitment to the Territory by purchasing a home. I was somewhat disturbed this morning when I spoke to a gentleman from Darwin who said that the Housing Division of the Department of Lands and Housing is actually putting its conveyancing work out to solicitors now. I would presume that that is being paid for. Alice Springs has a better system and I would like the government to look at it.

I make it very clear from the outset that this bill does not attempt to stop legal practitioners from carrying out conveyancing. Far from it. They will remain an option and no doubt many consumers will use their services. The intention is to deregulate conveyancing and thus increase competition, giving the consumer a far greater choice in selecting an agent to do his conveyancing work. With greater freedom comes greater responsibility, and the consumer must take reasoned steps to safeguard his own interests.

I visualise that, in the future, various individuals and groups, especially legal practitioners, will advertise their services. I use the word 'advertise' deliberately because I think that the legal profession's refusal to advertise is a real anachronism. The various services will advertise, pointing out the advantage of doing business their way and highlighting weaknesses in competitors. Such competition, which now applies to banks and other financial institutions, will inform the consumer. He will be able to weigh up the pros and cons and decide whom to employ to carry out his conveyancing work.

I subscribe to the Adam Smith philosophy that, when there is plenty of competition, prices or charges will fall to the lowest possible level which will sustain the most efficient businesses. The quality of service will rise. In the case of conveyancing, the speed at which documents are dealt with will greatly increase. In Adam Smith's words, the consumer, the person who pays for the service, will become king. I have had personal experience of slack service from solicitors in relation to conveyancing matters. More important by far have been the number of times over the years, both in Alice Springs and Darwin, that real estate agents have said to me that, if I could get the solicitors to give quick service, I would do the Territory a great favour. I claim this bill will achieve that objective.

The Housing Division, at least in Alice Springs, is fast and efficient in conveyancing matters. The legal practitioners will also become very efficient when they are opened up to the refreshing and exhilarating winds of deregulation and the competition it will bring. Territory business will be enhanced by the time saved. Time is money, Mr Speaker, and the spin-offs will benefit the whole community.

What groups of people are likely to set up business for conveyancing in the Territory when this bill is passed? I believe land brokers from South Australia would show an interest. I know settlement agencies from Western Australia would be very keen to set up shop. Too, I see a real opportunity for the staff of legal practitioners to go into business on their own, complete with their word processors. And why shouldn't they, Mr Speaker? After all, they do the bulk of conveyancing work for the legal practitioners and they are in a great position to offer efficient, experienced service at a cheaper rate to consumers, whilst increasing their own incomes. That is incentive.

Land agents might be tempted to become involved with conveyancing. I have heard stories of conflict of interest in this situation. My considered solution is not to ban land agents but to suggest that they adopt and advertise work practices that will guarantee the interests of their clients. One suggestion I have is that deposits not be held in land agents' trust funds but be held in a joint account at a bank or a financial institution. Access to the account would require the signature of all parties or their nominated agents. That would offer great protection. An agreed time limit on the account, which could be extended by mutual agreement, would be imposed. If settlement has not occurred by the agreed date, the deposit and interest, less charges, would be divided up by the financial institution according to an agreed formula. I would envisage the depositor - that is, the would-be buyer - would receive the major share, but a seller who has suffered some detriment because of the lost sale should also receive some compensation, and perhaps the land agent should receive a fee. These are matters to be agreed on before contracts are signed. I am not attempting to determine such matters; that would be done by the mutual agreement of the people involved. Such a practice would eliminate the temptation for a person to abscond with deposit funds and could reduce the high insurance premiums of land agents which, I understand, are fast becoming a nightmare for that industry. I believe the idea has wider application than merely land agents.

Turning to the bill in detail, clause 2 proposes the repeal of section 274 of the Real Property Act. This removes the monopoly right of only legal practitioners being able to charge for conveyancing services. Clause 3 seeks to repeal section 6 of the Real Property Act 1955 which has not been incorporated into the main act and appears on page 98 of the act that I have. This provision gave the federal Attorney-General powers to set fees for solicitors in conveyancing-type matters. This power has been transferred to the Territory Attorney-General. Under my proposed scheme for deregulation, market forces will set the fees far more effectively than any person could - Adam Smith's invisible hand at work. Hence I propose the repeal of this section.

Clause 4 relates to a consequential amendment to section 132 of the Legal Practitioners Act. The reason for the deletion of the phrase 'to real and personal property' is consequential and logical and I am sure members will have no problem in understanding that when they study it.

A further amendment is an insertion in section 132: 'Nothing in subsection (1) shall disentitle any person from suing for or receiving fees, costs or charges for work done in reference to applications, transfers, or other dealings relating to land (within the meaning of the Real Property Act), nor to any right to set-off in respect of the fees, costs or charges, nor to any lien or right to retain a deed, paper, or writing which shall have come into the person's possession in the course of such work'. This spells out clearly the intention of the bill in a very fulsome way.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the consumer, the person paying for the service, should be king, not the producer of the service. Deregulation will bring competition and competition will bring market forces to bear on prices or fees and ensure efficiency of service. Those who best serve the community will survive and thrive.

I believe regulations are put into law generally as a result of pressure from the industry with the argument that the public, the unorganised consumers, must be protected from their own stupidity. The net result, however, is that a select group obtains a government-granted monopoly and sets scheduled fees way out of proportion to the value of the service, and the members of that select group become king. The poor consumer, the person paying, is hit for big dollars and has to stand in line and often wait for weeks for a service which, in most cases, should not take more than 24 hours. It is time we stopped mollycoddling the public and gave people some credit for being intelligent and the chance to reap the rewards of lower charges and a better service. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 139)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The history behind this bill dates back to when a constituent of mine informed me that she wanted to obtain some land on the southern side of Alice Springs. She applied to the Department of Lands and Housing and was told that her application would have to be seen by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. She thought she would help things along. She knows the Aboriginal people pretty well and she knew people who claimed to be the traditional owners in the area. She saw them and was told there were no sacred sites on the land that she was interested in. She informed the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority that she had been told that the site was free of sacred sites. She was told: 'We were out there a few days ago with the traditional owners and they pointed out sacred sites everywhere'.

The lady was somewhat taken back and she contacted the gentleman who claimed to be a key traditional owner. Apparently, he was fairly upset. He said that there was 1 person above him in the hierarchy. They went to speak to him and some other people joined them, including Mr Bob Liddle and I am sure he would not mind being mentioned. They went to the land and again it was declared to be free of sacred sites. She rang the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and requested a meeting with the traditional owners. She was told that they were out of town and it would be months before they returned. She said: 'They are all here with me, and Mr Liddle has stated

that he has never been approached by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority in relation to any matter concerning sacred sites in Alice Springs.

I wrote about this in the press and suggested some possible remedies. Some correspondence passed between the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority officer in Alice Springs and myself. I had a phone call from a gentleman in Queensland who claimed to be the traditional owner of the area. He said that he was having considerable problems in trying to get himself recognised. He claimed that the group that the lady in question had approached was a group of traditional owners put in by the Central Land Council. I asked him why he had phoned me and how he knew about all this. He said the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority people had phoned him. We discussed my suggestions for remedies. He said: 'I have been trying to get Aboriginal Legal Aid to take it up as a court case and they claim that they do not have the money. I would love to have some means by which we might be able to resolve this dispute'. I spoke to the lady in question and she reported that the other group would also be very happy to have a mechanism by which they could bring all the conflicting parties together and sort it out.

This brings me to the first of 3 key points in this bill: the proposition that an Aboriginal person can approach the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and ask for information which it has in its register. Under the existing legislation, the authority has the prerogative to reject such a request. My proposal in clause 5 is that, if the authority refuses access to an Aboriginal applicant, it 'shall prepare and show to the applicant a map indicating an area that contains a sacred site and append to the map the details of custodianship recorded under subsection (2)(b)'.

The plan needs to be explained clearly to members. It is along the lines of the pipeline corridor. When the pipeline was built from the Amadeus Basin to Darwin, the way the problem of identification of sacred sites was overcome was that a corridor was designated and the traditional people in the various sections indicated where the pipeline could go. They did not point out where the sacred sites were but simply indicated where the pipeline could go. My proposal is that, if the authority, in its wisdom, does not want to pinpoint a sacred site, it can simply draw a much larger map and say: 'Within that boundary, the traditional owners and custodians are the following people'. If this were available in the first instance to Aboriginal people, it would allow them access to the names of traditional owners and custodians in that particular area, according to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. If there is a dispute, I believe that the Aboriginal people themselves would bring the various parties together and sort the matter out before going to the authority to clarify any error in its register.

I believe that this bill provides a mechanism to let Aboriginal people know who is on the register. That gives them a clear guideline to thrash out any problems and disputes as to the identities of traditional owners. In the case that I mentioned, I have no idea who the legitimate traditional owners are. I am not aiming to make a judgment in that regard. All I want to do is to give Aboriginal people the right to know who is on the list, to dispute it, to sort it out and get it straight. If it is not clear or if the register is wrong according to the Aboriginal people - and they should be the final judges - how can the non-Aboriginal community have any faith in this aspect of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority's work? I hope the authority will accept this in the spirit in which it is intended. It is a means of improving its work and, hopefully on most occasions, of justifying its work and methods.

I also propose that specified employees of the Department of Lands and Housing across the Territory, preferably people who already have close contact with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, should be appointed by the minister and authorised to have access to particular information held by the authority. That authorisation would apply in the event of the authority refusing them access to the details of a sacred site, as the present act allows. These authorised officers should apply and be shown not the actual site but an area surrounding the site that is considerably larger than the site. In this way, the site's actual location will remain secret. They should also be permitted access to the names of the custodians and traditional owners.

The purpose is pretty straightforward. These specified employees would have a role in respect of guaranteeing that the information from the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority tallies. They could see the traditional owners and custodians and check the stories with them. They could come back to the would-be developer and, without releasing the names of the custodians or traditional owners, offer the reassurance that the sacred site involved was legitimate. The procedure would offer an assurance to members of the non-Aboriginal community who wish to develop certain land. It is a way of doing that but, at the same time, maintaining the secrecy of a sacred site's exact location. Officers of the Department of Lands and Housing would be able to protect the identity of the Aboriginal traditional owners and custodians so that undue pressure or even bribery could not be used in an attempt to influence traditional owners and custodians.

The bill has a good degree of protection built into it but there is also an assurance for the would-be developer that someone has checked. Again, I would like to think that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority would be pleased about this prospect. As you well know, Mr Speaker, there is a great deal of cynicism in the community in relation to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. Its officers claim that they are totally professional in their work. Here is a chance not only to prove that they are totally professional, but that they are willing to be seen to be totally professional. I must confess that people have said to me that they have found the staff of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority to be very professional in their attitude. I think that is good and I am happy to acknowledge it. Here is a chance for them not only to be professional but to be seen to be professional.

My third point relates to the procedure involved in moving from registration to declaration. In spite of the availability of the procedure under the act, there has been no attempt to go to the declaration stage, which carries the full weight of the law. A declared site can be signposted. People are warned about it. Whatever protections His Honour the Administrator may think are necessary can be put in place. At the moment, a custodian may request the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority to seek declaration. However, the act says that the authority can then decide whether it wants to proceed with the declaration or not. It has the final option. I propose that that option be removed from the authority and that an Aboriginal person, particularly a custodian of a site, be permitted to apply to His Honour the Administrator to have the checking and declaration of a site undertaken if he is unable to obtain satisfaction through the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority.

I propose also that the specified employee, as defined under clause 3 of the bill, should be able to do the same thing. I see the relevance of that in the extreme case of a developer who has not been able to be satisfied by the

employee of the Department of Lands and Housing that everything is aboveboard. Such a person may come across information suggesting that things may not be right. That person would first apply to the minister and, if the minister were satisfied, could further apply to the Administrator to ascertain whether a site registered as a sacred site was indeed properly registered. The bill also allows the Administrator to have the site struck from the register if, on the information put before him, he is satisfied that the site has been incorrectly registered. This would mean that the declaration made by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority would come under scrutiny. If a site were proven to be a site of significance, it would receive the intended protection of the law. On the other hand, if it had not been correctly registered, it would be classified as unfit for declaration and, therefore, struck off the record.

Mr Speaker, I will quickly reiterate the 3 main thrusts of the bill. Firstly, it provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people to check out the identity of custodians and, if there is a dispute, to straighten the matter out. Secondly, specified employees of the Department of Lands and Housing would be empowered by clause 5(5) to meet the custodians, check the details and try to reassure the would-be developer or person with an interest in the land that everything was aboveboard. Finally, there would be an opportunity for Aboriginal people, particularly custodians, to bypass the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority if it refused to put the declaration process into place. If a person with an interest in the land were still not satisfied that everything was aboveboard, a specified employee could approach the Administrator with the minister's permission and ask that the whole matter be checked thoroughly in terms of whether the site satisfied the declaration requirements. If it did not, the Administrator could require that it be struck from the record.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Noting Third and Fourth Reports of Public Accounts Committee

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Ministerial Statement on Draft Poisons  
and Dangerous Drugs Bill

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Motion agreed to.

DISASTERS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 121)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the bill is to make the Commissioner of Police, or a person appointed temporarily to act as the Commissioner, the Territory Controller under the Disasters Act 1982. The Disasters Act implies that the Territory Controller should be someone other than the Commissioner of Police. However, since the Disasters Act was enacted on 21 December 1982, it has been the practice of the minister to appoint the Commissioner of Police as Territory Controller. Indeed, even prior to 1982, except during Cyclone Tracy in 1974, the Commissioner of Police has been and has acted as Territory Controller.

For several years now, the Commissioner of Police has administered the Northern Territory Emergency Service constituted under the Disasters Act. The Northern Territory Fire Service is also under his control. With the police, fire service and emergency service resources to hand, it is contended that the Commissioner of Police is the most appropriate person to be Territory Controller. In all the circumstances, it does not seem efficient to have any other person appointed to the position. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 125)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the bill is to introduce amendments to the Taxation (Administration) Act to effect the measures that I announced earlier in these sittings. I will deal with the proposed amendments in 3 categories: definitions, anti-avoidance and administration.

In respect of definitions, it is proposed that the meaning of 'mortgage' and 'debenture' be amended and a definition of 'unencumbered value' be introduced to overcome deficiencies in definition highlighted by some recent court decisions. These amendments will ensure that commercial principles and practices are taken into account in assessing duty under this head. The bill also provides for the exemption of caravan parks from Tourism Marketing Duty from 1 September 1988, except where on-site accommodation is provided. This will mean that duty will not have to be paid for accommodation provided by travellers after that date.

The second category of amendments is directed at overcoming certain avoidance practices which have caused a growing loss of revenue. By eliminating these practices, the government can maintain at least current levels of revenue without having to increase the burden on those people who meet their commitments under the legislation. Similar provisions to those now proposed have been introduced in most states. In particular, the amendments will introduce measures to counter the avoidance of conveyance duty where a company or unit trust is set up temporarily to hold land which is, in effect, then sold by transferring the relevant shares or units. At present, such a transfer can attract a significantly lower level of marketable security duty based on the number of units transferred, rather than the conveyance duty assessed on the value of the land. In many cases, such purchases are commercially artificial and are carried out to avoid stamp duty.



Under the arrangements to be introduced, a person who acquires shares in such a landholding company which, in a period of less than 12 months, entitles that person to a greater than 50% interest in the equivalent property if the company were to be wound up, will be required to lodge a statement with the Commissioner of Taxes declaring the acquisition. Similar requirements will exist for persons purchasing a majority of units in a relevant unit trust. The duty to be paid on these statements of acquisition will be at the conveyance rate, and the amount to be paid, in most instances, will be in proportion to the interest required. It will be an offence to fail to lodge an appropriate statement.

The new arrangements will not apply to companies whose shares are dealt with on the Stock Exchange and they will only apply to companies or unit trusts where the unencumbered value of the real property owned exceeds \$1m. To come within the ambit of the legislation, the company's assets must be comprised of 80% or more real property. Provisions are included to ensure that this proportion is not artificially diluted or that the ownership is not split between other associated entities. While artificial arrangements will be countered or ignored, legitimate financing arrangements - for example, where the transfer of interests occurs at arms length solely to secure commercial finance - will be recognised. It is proposed that the amendments outlined will only affect post 1 September 1988 acquisitions.

A further avoidance practice has developed whereby certain transactions traditionally evidenced by documents are now being carried out without executing the relevant documents. This can occur, for example, where a person purchases real property which is then passed on by a sub-sale or a series of sub-sales before the final sale is evidenced and registered. If these sub-sales are carried out without executing written contracts or transfers, then the duty is avoided on each such conveyance. The sub-sales are conveyances and liable to duty. The amendment, therefore, aims to ensure that duty is paid on all relevant conveyances.

Another area addressed in the bill is that of the valuation of real property for assessment purposes. It has become a practice in certain transactions to attribute an unrealistic value to the benefit of a specific locality, sometimes called 'local goodwill', in an attempt to reduce the assessable value of land. The amendment will ensure that this element, being part of the real property, is included in the assessable value of land.

I turn to the third category of amendment. These are largely consequential on the other measures. To assist with administration, the bill introduces a discretionary power, to be exercised by the commissioner, to enable approved persons to pay duty by way of a return rather than having to lodge individual documents for assessment. The amendment is directed at minimising processing time of documents, and a system will be available where a person regularly has a high volume of usually non-contentious instruments to be stamped. An approved person will be able to assess the relevant documents without having to lodge them but will be required, of course, to retain certain records and provide details for audit purposes if so required. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 134) and Summary

Offences Amendment Bill (Serial 135) (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage, and the third readings of the bills together, and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to;

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 134)  
SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 135)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

The purpose of the liquor Amendment Bill is to make 2 amendments to the Liquor Act. The first concerns persons under the age of 18 years entering licensed premises and the second concerns the supply of liquor to a person under the age of 18 years whilst on licensed premises. It is recognised throughout Australia that there is a growing problem with young people and their access to liquor. Continually, the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission has received oral and written complaints from parents and concerned community groups highlighting situations where young people have been exposed to the opportunity to consume liquor. Licensees have been made aware of the problems and, on their own initiative, have introduced security procedures in an attempt to discourage persons under the age of 18 years attending the night-time disco entertainment areas. It is precisely in these drinking areas that the government must look towards imposing a form of restriction.

Licensees are fully aware of the conditions of their licence when it comes to serving liquor to persons under the age of 18 years but, apart from employing doormen to screen every person wishing to enter the premises, they have limited powers. There has been mention in the press of the hoteliers getting together and producing a 'pub card' complete with a photo and the applicant's date of birth. This is to enable those who are not in possession of a driver's licence to obtain a 'pub card' as proof of age. The government is assisting the Australian Hotels Association in this matter by making facilities at the Motor Vehicle Registry Office available for production of the card, and my information is that the card should be available in the very near future. In fact, I understand that it was actually launched today. This legislation adds support to the Australian Hotels Association's initiative and will go a long way towards providing peace of mind to the parents of young people who have reached that age where, with their new-found freedom, they become inquisitive and attempt to visit licensed premises.

Section 106 of the Liquor Act, as it now stands, makes it an offence for a licensee or any employee of a licensee to sell or supply liquor to a person under the age of 18 years unless that person is in the company of his or her parents, guardians or spouse and the liquor is sold or supplied in conjunction with or ancillary to a meal provided by the licensee. Licensees are constantly on the alert to ensure that breaches of this particular section do not occur.

Unfortunately, current legislation does not make it an offence for anyone apart from the licensee or his employee to purchase the liquor and then supply

it to a young person under the age of 18 years, and therein lies the problem. Under the current act, it is not an offence for a person to be on licensed premises, even though under the age of 18 years. It is proposed to repeal this section and substitute a new section 106A which will make it an offence for any person, who is not the other person's parent, guardian or spouse who has attained the age of 18 years, to sell or supply liquor to a person on licensed premises who is under the age of 18 years. The exception will be where it is provided in conjunction with, or ancillary to, a meal provided by the licensee in a designated dining area. Young people will still be able to dine with their parents or guardians and enjoy an alcoholic beverage if their parents or guardians so approve, but designated dining areas will be the only venue available for this purpose.

It is further proposed, through the introduction of a new section 106, to make it an offence for a person under the age of 18 years to enter or remain on licensed premises that are not a licensed restaurant, a licensed club, a roadhouse, a residential or a dining area of a hotel, the dining area of a tavern or such other areas as are defined, from time to time, by the commission. It will be essential for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to have the flexibility to declare parts of licensed premises under this section. Cases will arise in the future where, for example, a bar in an outback licensed premises serves as a family environmental area and a special exemption is necessary.

The aim of this legislation is to stop young people from entering bars or licensed premises that are principally drinking areas. The government does not intend to alter the healthy family entertainment areas within licensed premises and does not wish to restrict young people in the enjoyment of their leisure time. But, we have to convince them somehow that the consumption of liquor is not a prerequisite to having a good time.

The new section 106A(2) is a tightening up of the definition of 'parent' and 'guardian'. Although the current definition has not been challenged, with the amendments in this particular piece of legislation, it is considered opportune to include a more precise definition. Proposed section 106A(3) flows on from the previous amendment and transfers the onus from the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission inspectors, and indeed the police, to the individual charged in breach of proposed section 106A(1), to prove at point of prosecution that he had the care and control as a parent and or guardian.

So far, I have addressed only the issues of persons buying and supplying liquor to minors. It is also necessary to consider amendments to section 118 which covers the purchase of liquor by a minor in exceptional circumstances. To accomplish this is only a matter of carrying over the amendments which relate to the precise definition of a 'parent' and 'guardian', as well as the onus of providing proof that the care and control of the minor has been given.

In order to further the government's commitment to reduce the problem of underage drinking in the Territory, the consumption of liquor by minors in public places needs to be addressed. This is the purpose of the Summary Offences Amendment Bill. The bill provides that it is an offence for persons under the age of 18 years to consume liquor in a public place unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian who is over the age of 18 years. The bill also provides that it is an offence for persons over 18 years of age, who are not the minor's parent or guardian, to supply liquor to a minor who is not accompanied by his parent or guardian.

A number of definitions are included in this bill, as is the case in the Liquor Amendment Bill, which apply to these offences. The terms 'parent' and 'guardian' include people to whom the care and control of a minor has been entrusted for a temporary period of time. The burden of proving that a person was, at the relevant time, such a parent or guardian rests on the accused in both offences. The term 'public place' excludes licensed premises as defined under the Liquor Act. Mr Speaker, I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 136)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):  
Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks to amend the Local Government Grants Commission Act which was passed in June 1986 and which established the Northern Territory Grants Commission. After 3 years of operation and recommending the allocation of approximately \$17m of Commonwealth and Northern Territory financial assistance each year to local governing bodies, some finetuning is desirable now that the commission's fourth year of operation is soon to commence. It is proposed to amend section 5 of the act to achieve 2 objectives.

Firstly, it reduces the membership of the Grants Commission from 7 to 4. At present, there are not less than 2 members capable, in the opinion of the minister, of representing the interests of municipal councils and, similarly, 2 for community government councils. The bill proposes to reduce these 4 members to 2. Both associations have been consulted on the proposed changes. The Local Government Association is supportive. The Community Government Association would prefer to retain 2 members appointed in respect of the northern and southern regions of the Territory because of the number, diversity and location of the 50 non-municipal local governing bodies. The government has carefully considered this view, but does not propose to incorporate it in the amendment.

The number of public servant members is also to be halved to 1. When the Grants Commission was created, both the then Department of Community Development and the Treasury held responsibility for the relevant areas of local government. The Department of Community Development was responsible for the Local Government Act and all other local government matters except local government financing which was a matter for Treasury. As this duality has since been removed from the government's administrative arrangements, it is appropriate for there to be only 1 public service member. This reduction parallels the other reductions and is similar to most other states in size and in having only 1 department represented on the Grants Commission. The bill is specific in providing that the Director of the Office of Local Government is to be a member. This displays the government's intention to minimise change in any future administrative arrangements as well as confirming our commitment to local government.

Secondly, the method of selection is clarified. The minister must request 3 nominations from each of the 2 peak associations incorporated under the Local Government Act - namely, the Northern Territory Local Government Association and the Northern Territory Community Government Association. The minister may impose a time limit on the nomination process. Consequently, the

present membership will require some reduction. At present, there is only 1 member in respect of municipal councils and, therefore, that does not call for change. However, there are 2 members in respect of community government councils, both ministerially selected after consultation with communities but before the Community Government Association came into existence.

This membership will be clarified, in consultation with the Community Government Association, before the 1989 activities of the Grants Commission get under way. The reduced membership will save approximately \$15 000 per annum in operating costs. In the current financial climate, I guess every little reduction helps. The reduced size of the commission is similar to that in the states and still retains balance and equity for the wide range of local governing bodies in the Northern Territory. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 137)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):  
Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill comprises the final stage of the Northern Territory government's provision of the most flexible and innovative local government legislation in Australia. Some 5 years ago, the government put in place a review of the Local Government Act which, like so much other legislation applying in the Northern Territory after self-government, was an inheritance from the Commonwealth or, in some cases, from South Australian predecessors.

The Territory legislation which flowed from that comprehensive review was, when it was introduced in 1985, probably the largest piece of legislation to come before this Assembly. Only the Criminal Code may have been a bigger piece of legislation. One of the principal changes made by the Local Government Act 1985 was to provide general competence powers for local government. It did this by providing broad powers for the peace, order and good government of a local government area. It moved away from the previous situation, which still continues in all states, of specific powers legislation. That type of legislation exhaustively lists all the things a council can do. A council in the states may not lawfully carry out any functions which are not listed in its specific powers legislation.

The government decided that the Local Government Act 1985 would be kept under review over its first year of operation so that any necessary amendments could be brought before this Assembly for introduction. This type of review is sound practice with any major piece of legislation to improve on it once it has operated for a short period. As expected, a number of improvements and amendments have come to light.

Mr Speaker, before I deal in more detail with the amendments that are now before the Assembly, I would like to recount the close consultation which has taken place with local governments in the Northern Territory in this review process. Some of the amendments have arisen from specific difficulties or requests identified by individual councils. Others have been the result of experience within the Office of Local Government. Whatever their original source, the amendments now before this Assembly have been the subject of

agreement, most in toto, by the combined working party made up of representatives of both the Community Government Association and the Local Government Association, as well as from the Office of Local Government. I wish to record my appreciation of the positive contribution made by both associations in this process. I intend to continue such consultation with local government on relevant matters in the future.

I think it is a tribute to those who originally researched and prepared the Local Government Act as it now stands in the Northern Territory, that it has operated for some 2 years since its introduction without the need for urgent legislative amendment. This clearly indicates the carefully considered nature of its proposals and the cooperation of all those at both Territory government and local government levels who assisted in its formulation and preparation. I am sure that the amendments now before the House will prove, over time, to be of an equivalent quality.

I have already mentioned that the Northern Territory leads all Australian states in having 'general competence' local government legislation. It is a fact that all 6 states are reviewing their local government legislation and all of them are giving consideration to the Northern Territory principles and practice. Naturally, I am pleased to be able to offer them assistance wherever possible. On the other hand, the experience of local governments interstate has not been ignored in drawing up the amendments before us for consideration. Without listing them exhaustively, regard has been paid to current rating practice in both New South Wales and Victoria, to the proposed South Australian practice regarding pecuniary interests of elected members and officers, and to current Tasmanian and Western Australian legislation and proposed amendments on several points. We have gained some benefit from the experience of the states.

I now turn to the principal amendments proposed. The first attempts to avoid the unnecessary confusion and expense caused by municipal by-elections when elected mayors or aldermen nominate unsuccessfully for election to the Legislative Assembly. Honourable members will recall the by-elections in April 1987 in most municipal councils. These flowed from resignations required under section 21 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. The by-elections last year cost some \$80 000 of public money and the government intends to avoid that unnecessary expense in future. I gave notice in this Assembly on 2 March 1988 that this amendment would be introduced.

As the government indicated at the time, the amendment will enable an elected local government member to resign from that office for this purpose without triggering the need for a by-election until the poll has been declared. Some people have referred to this as a 'Clayton's resignation'. The name is unimportant. If the effect is a simplification and a saving to Northern Territory taxpayers, it is well worth it. If unsuccessful, the former elected member will have 7 days in which to notify the Council Clerk in writing that he is resuming his former office. No retrospective remuneration or expenses are payable for the period of vacated office.

As I indicated in March, the government's proposal does not enable a person to hold elected office at both local government and Legislative Assembly levels, irrespective of whether remuneration is received at the local government level or not. The government made it clear in the March debate that it did not support the practice of a person holding office at both levels simultaneously because of the risk of conflict of interest. As an extension of the same principle, the government is insistent that a local government elected representative nominating for the Legislative Assembly must

specifically resign, vacate and cease to perform that office on nominating for election to the Legislative Assembly. The government is not prepared to accept that the unpaid performance of such council office is adequate separation of the potential conflict of interests. The amendment is so drafted as to be adequate to apply also to community government councillors and not simply to elected members of municipal councils. In these respects, this bill differs from and is an improvement on the opposition's proposal debated in March.

There are consequential amendments to the provisions regarding the number of members of a council, and staying the requirement to commence by-election proceedings. Amendments to the provisions relating to the appointment of a deputy mayor and the quorum of a council or committee are not needed because of the existing drafting.

As I have mentioned, the amendment requires an unsuccessful candidate for election to the Legislative Assembly to resume his position within 7 days. Specifically, this does not extend his privilege of reversible resignation to cover the time scale likely to be involved in a disputed return matter. Whilst this could have the potential to disadvantage a person who found himself in this unlikely combination of circumstances, the government believes that to extend this new right of reversible resignation for such a further period would be an undue inconvenience to the operation of the council, and so would not be in the overall public interest.

The second significant amendment is the restoration of the so-called 'flat rate' or 'flat rate per parcel' rating option. This is a system whereby each ratable assessment pays the same dollar value, irrespective of its valuation. Again, I indicated to this Assembly in March that I would bring forward this legislative amendment. The restoration of this option to local government will maintain the flexibility originally intended by the 1985 Local Government Act. The intention was to have a wide variety of rating approaches available to a council. Particularly, the combined effect of the provisions in the legislation for differential rating and minimal rating gave substantial flexibility. However, a decision of the New South Wales Supreme Court in *Sutton v The Blue Mountains City Council* has indicated that a minimum rate cannot be set at such a high level as to break down the ad valorem principle of rating where that is the principle rating concept provided by the legislation. It is necessary, therefore, to amend the Local Government Act to provide a flat rate per parcel rating as a method in itself distinct from ad valorem rating.

I advise honourable members that I have responded to the request of councils, especially those of the Litchfield Shire and Palmerston, in bringing forward this amendment. The Katherine Town Council is also using a flat rate per parcel rating system this year in the recently extended part of its municipality. The cumbersome method which the Katherine Town Council had to use, offsetting 85 different rates for some 340 ratable assessments in the rural part of the municipality, shows the administrative difficulty which is required to achieve flat rate per parcel rating under the present legislation. It illustrates better than anything the need for the amendment now before this Assembly.

The third substantive amendment is to clarify the committee structure of a municipal council. Under the present legislation, some uncertainty has been expressed as to whether the mayor, an ex-officio member of committees, is to be counted in the number for a quorum. The amendment now before this Assembly is specific that the mayor is to count towards the quorum of the committee.

Additionally, the period of operation has shown that the present constraints on what a council may delegate to its committees are unrealistically rigid. In any case, they are more limited than matters which may be delegated to the Town Clerk. It is proposed to provide some greater freedom in the way a council, at its discretion, may provide delegations to its various committees.

A further amendment provides a fast-track method for an established community government council to seek amendments to its scheme, without the full range of consultation processes involved in the establishment of a new community government council. As honourable members are no doubt aware, the public consultation procedure is extensive when a community government scheme is being prepared. The minimum is 2 public explanatory meetings, an exhibited draft scheme and a period for representation on that exhibited scheme. In actual practice, to date the experience has been that 6 to 10 public meetings is the norm. The number of draft schemes averages about 6 and has gone to 9 in at least one instance. The average time for active consultation is close to 2 years, and this does not take into consideration communities which initially express an interest, make some progress and then lose interest in the community government concept for the time being.

Once an elected council is established, however, it is in a position to be responsive and sensitive to the needs of its electorate. Therefore, if minor amendments or streamlinings are needed to a community government scheme, a simpler process is appropriate to permit changes to be introduced, still with adequate public consultation but without unnecessarily wasting the time of the client group in the community.

There are a number of other amendments to minimise or remove, where possible, discrepancies between the municipal and community government parts of the act for the sake of simplicity and consistency. These areas include the reversible resignation, the suspension and dismissal of members of councils, interests of members, committees, allowances, by-law penalties, use of the common seal and fines and monetary penalties outside the Local Government Act.

Two other amendments restore powers to municipal councils which they held under the previous Local Government Act but which flow primarily from other pieces of legislation. One is to restore powers to councils to renew or grant new licences to places of public entertainment under the Places of Public Entertainment Act. The other is to restore to councils the same powers as those held by a board of trustees of a cemetery under the Cemeteries Act. If, at some time in the future, either of these other pieces of legislation is reviewed, there may be consequential amendments. However, for the time being, it is appropriate that councils continue to exercise these functions.

Other amendments of some significance include the clarification of the pecuniary interest sections. There is a possibility that, under the present legislation, a member may be held both to have an interest as defined and, at the same time, specifically not to have an interest. This possible overlap is removed in the proposed amendments. The amendments also propose increases from \$100 to \$10 000 for offences which may frustrate evidence being provided to an inquiry into the suspension of a council or otherwise under part II, division 6 of the act. In a significant inquiry, the present penalties would be unrealistically low and would not provide for levels of penalty consistent with those already in section 81 of the act.

One of the amendments clarifies that the urban farm rate, although comparatively rarely used, is a concessional reduction of the general rate.



At present, the legislation provides that as an additional rate. A further amendment clarifies the provision of the rate levy on a 2-monthly basis rather than the present provision for a levy on a quarterly basis, but collection on a 2-monthly basis. This will clarify the basis of the present practice in the same local government areas.

Another important amendment is to require that the qualifications for nominating as a mayor or alderman are to have an on-going effect. One of these important qualifications is residence within the municipality. A court decision affecting a former Tennant Creek alderman made it clear that, under the present legislation, the essential qualifications are to apply only at the point of nomination; that is, only once every 4 years. That is not this government's intention. The government believes that the residential and other qualifications for tenure of office as a mayor or alderman should be continuous throughout the period of performance in that office. The amendment puts this matter beyond doubt.

In several instances, the bill will enable councils to determine matters by resolution, by removing from the legislation the present requirement that matters be set by regulation. Examples include determining cases of personal hardship regarding payment of rates, the amount of discount for prompt payment of rates, and other matters where further regulation is not warranted, and where the elected council is in the best position to determine the matter on the basis of local experience and judgment. Although some of these instances are not particularly major, they truly encapsulate this government's deregulatory approach and its conviction that local government should determine matters affecting local affairs wherever possible.

Some of these amendments pick up the provisions of older local government regulations which still exist in the Northern Territory. I indicate to honourable members that the government will be able to repeal 2 long-standing local regulations once this bill has passed into law. While I am dealing with regulations, I advise honourable members that the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations are under review. Voting for the recent municipal elections on 28 May 1988 was said to be confusing for some voters due to the large fields of candidates, especially in Lyons Ward of the Darwin municipality where there were 11 candidates, and in the enlarged Alice Springs municipality where there were 24. As honourable members would be aware, there was also some concern at the time taken to conduct the Alice Springs count and recount, each of which took 2 weeks. Honourable members will be aware that the full preferential and multi-member constituency is a time-consuming and elaborate system, but it is one devised to return the fairest result.

Some of the options now under consideration in this review are the retention of the full, preferential system, with the use of electronic information processing to speed up the count. It may be possible to reduce the 2-week period taken in the Alice Springs incident to as little as 3 days. If this reduction in time is realistic, then the full, preferential system may still be appropriate. Other methods of voting and vote counting are also under consideration. I have asked all municipal councils and the Local Government Association to provide me with their views, which will be given the fullest consideration in reviewing these electoral provisions.

In summary, this Local Government Amendment Bill is the final stage in the process of reviewing and refining the most progressive piece of local government legislation in Australia. The whole process has taken 5 years but has been well worth while in giving local governments extensive powers to manage their own local affairs in the way the community determines. That is

not to say that there will be no further changes to this legislation in the future. This government stands ready to introduce amendments should a need be drawn to its attention. The government will continue to keep this legislation under review and up-to-date to best assist local self-management by Territory communities. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

WORK HEALTH AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 128)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):  
Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

One of the key elements of the Work Health Compensation Scheme is the elimination of common law actions by injured workers arising out of incidents in the work place. At the time of the introduction of the draft Work Health Bill in March 1986, and again in the second-reading speech in November of that same year, the government outlined its reasons for its commitment to that course of action. The commitment was maintained against strident opposition from some interest groups in the community.

The Territory led the way in Australia with this particular concept. It is interesting to note that, in the states and the Commonwealth, where major reviews of workers' compensation systems have been conducted, one of the main, original policy considerations was the elimination of common law actions. These other governments knew what had to be done but, in the end, they caved in to pressure, compromised with those opposition groups and retained some elements of common law.

The Northern Territory government is not afraid to do what has to be done, and it remains committed to the abolition of common law action in these circumstances. The reasons remain the same. Among them are: common law is a disincentive to rehabilitation in that people with common law actions in train have no reason to return to work; common law actions do not deter negligent behaviour by employers because they are rarely required to pay damages directly; common law discourages a cooperative approach to safety in the work place in that it promotes an adversarial attitude that the Work Health Authority has worked very hard to cut down under the new scheme; and the common law negligence action is an inefficient, inaccurate and outmoded way of delivering incapacity benefits.

Section 52 of the Work Health Act was designed to give effect to the government's commitment to eliminate common law actions. However, a recent legal opinion has been brought to the government's notice which indicates that there may be a loophole. An action has been commenced by an injured worker against 2 fellow workers, and it is thought possible that, by utilising the provisions of section 22A of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, the defendants, if damages are awarded against them, could claim an indemnity for those damages from their employer. If the use of this device were successful, it would defeat the clear intention of the government to eliminate common law actions from the workers' compensation system. Accordingly, the government is introducing amending legislation which will make it clear that any such actions cannot be pursued.

The restriction on all common law actions will apply as from the date the legislation receives the Administrator's assent. The bill also contains a provision designed to ensure that the restrictions it places on common law actions between fellow workers do not apply to causes of actions in tort between such persons where no right to an indemnity from the employer exists. An example of this might be where 1 worker maliciously injures another in the course of an assault resulting from a private argument. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 122)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to have my second-reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The purpose of this bill is to streamline the procedures for the collection of fines for various minor offences, and thereby to reduce the need for courts of summary jurisdiction to become involved in the enforcement of these infringements. The bill has been prepared in consultation with Darwin City Council, the police and certain government departments which will be the prime users of the scheme. The bill introduces a scheme for the self-enforcement of various fines for minor offences. Initially, the scheme will apply only to parking and traffic infringements, but the amendments will allow for the use of the scheme by various government agencies who may wish to take advantage of it in the future.

The new scheme is similar to equivalents in NSW and Victoria which have operated very successfully. Under the new scheme, the failure to pay fines within the required time will not land the offender in court. Late payment will be accepted during a courtesy period, together with added costs. However, if a person fails to use the courtesy period and still does not pay up, an infringement order is automatically issued without the need for a magistrate to hear the matter and record a conviction. The order is equivalent to a magistrate's order and can be enforced in the same way - that is, by a warrant of execution.

The scheme preserves a person's right at any stage to defend the matter before a court. However, at present, non-payment results in the offender being summonsed as, in most cases, late payment is due to laziness and not the offender's desire to contest the matter. Thus, many cases reach the courts by default, even though there is no real dispute. This wastes the time of the courts and of police officers attending to give evidence. The new scheme will prevent that unnecessary situation. Non-payment will simply trigger off an administrative enforcement procedure.

It is anticipated from the experience of the equivalent NSW and Victorian schemes that these changes will considerably free up our magistrates courts for more important cases, and that police, government and semi-government bodies will recover fines more quickly. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL  
(Serial 130)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time, and I seek leave to have my second-reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Honourable members who have been in this House any length of time will be familiar with Statute Law Revision Bills. This is another such. Although most matters in the bill are of the usual minor kind, a couple are of more interest. For instance, there is the amendment proposed to the Criminal Code. Section 22 of the code provides that the criminal responsibility part of the code (part II) does not apply to regulatory offences except for, amongst others, paragraphs 26(1)(c) and (d). However, when section 26 is examined, it is soon realised that the exception is pointless unless sections 23 and 24 are also saved to the necessary extent as those later sections give meaning to the terminology used in paragraphs 26(1)(c) and (d).

Clause 3 relates to the Coal Act. That act is almost ancient, having its roots in the Mineral Oil and Coal Ordinance of 1922. Consequently, it has in it some archaisms, including a reference to the reservation of land by proclamation by the minister. A proclamation by the minister is almost a contradiction in terms. An individual minister does not have control of the Great Seal nor the usual function of exercising the Crown prerogative by proclamation. If there is to be a proclamation at all, it should be by the Administrator on behalf of the Crown. The suggested amendment replaces the proclamation with a gazetted notice.

The amendment suggested to the Public Service Act is to enable the Administrator to appoint a standing 'first reserve' for a departmental head or other chief executive officer to take over the function whenever there is a vacancy or an inability to act. At present, it is necessary for a vacancy actually to occur or for the substantive appointee about to be away or unable to act before an acting appointment can be made. Great administrative inconvenience can ensue where administrative continuity is essential. The appointment of 'springing' acting departmental head is consistent with more recent trends in creating statutory offices. For instance, the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act itself was amended several years ago to establish a 'springing' pecking order of acting administrators and the Law Officers Act was also amended along similar lines. It will be noted that the suggested amendment to the Public Service Act provides that the action yields to later contrary action.

The other amendments proposed in the bill are fairly straightforward, ranging from the repeal of an act which no longer has any effect to the correction of cross-references, catching up with several references which require amendment following recent administrative changes, the recognition that appeals from the Supreme Court now lie to the court of appeal since the creation of that court, and the inclusion of a word where it was inadvertently omitted in the schedule to the Deaths in Custody Act.

I again invite members who have queries about any aspect of the bill to let me know, and I will make appropriate arrangements for officers to brief them on the matter. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

TRUSTEE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 123)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time, and I seek leave to have my second-reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The purpose of this bill is to amend existing provisions of the Trustee Act to extend the range of investments available to an authorised trustee. A trustee is a person who holds an interest in property under an obligation, annexed to that property, which requires him to deal with it for the benefit of another person or for a particular object permitted by law. A wide range of persons and specialised companies are trustees and their skill and capacity vary considerably. Some trusts are created as a result of legal advice and are usually in the form of a written document conferring specific powers on a trustee. In other cases, the trust may be created by law without a written instrument. The powers of investment of a trustee are set out in the Trustee Act, although other powers may be conferred in particular instances by the trustee instrument, if there is one, by other legislation relating to the authority of trustees, or in some instances by the Supreme Court under the Trustee Act.

As a result of submissions that investments authorised by the existing Trustee Act were inconsistent with and not as wide-ranging as authorised investments in the states, were inadequate to preserve the capital of trust funds in inflationary circumstances and did not allow trustees to take advantage of new forms of investment, the list of authorised trustee investments in the Northern Territory has been extended.

The issue of authorised trustee investments was also considered by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. That body agreed that each jurisdiction should adopt a provision on the equitable duties of an investor of trust moneys. The standing committee also agreed that, rather than seek uniform legislation, each state or territory would adopt legislation which would give trustees a wider-ranging investment power and ensure that trustees had adequate investment opportunities under present conditions.

The most appropriate method of accommodating the extended powers of investment was to amend the existing Trustee Act. The bill to amend that act preserves the existing structure of the Trustee Act in having a statutory list of authorised investments. To assist trustees who have not had specialist advice and who do not themselves possess relevant expertise, the bill, in clause 4, refers to the general equitable duties of a trustee to which he must have regard whenever he makes a decision to invest. These include obtaining and considering proper advice and a duty to consider and evaluate investments in the trust and to act impartially.

The major amendments proposed to the existing powers of investment are as follows: wider powers to lend on mortgage of a property, provided the loan is insured and was made in accordance with the advice of a licensed valuer experienced in property valuations in that area; trustees will be authorised to invest in property provided proper advice is obtained as to the appropriateness of the purchase of the property and subject to conditions on the report of a licensed independent valuer; acquisition of bank certificates of deposit will be expressly authorised as will investment in interest-bearing deposits in any Australian bank; debentures, stock and shares must be quoted on a stock exchange and must be required by the terms of issue to be fully paid up within 9 months of issue; there are new restrictions on the ability of a trustee to lend to a company or to purchase a company debenture or note from a third party; the debentures of wholly-owned Australian subsidiaries of banks will be authorised investments; provided proper advice is obtained, the trustee will be able to purchase the rights to shares and convertible notes wherever the trustee is authorised to purchase the shares or notes themselves; subject to conditions as to the acceptance of the bills and permissible time of maturity, bank-accepted and bank bills of exchange will be authorised trustee investment; trustees will be able to invest in deposits or shares of any approved building society operating in the Territory; and a trustee will now be able to expend some of the capital or income of the trust in repairing any dwelling purchased under this legislation.

Some concern has been expressed that investment in securities of other countries exposed trustees needlessly to exchange and funds transfer risks. The bill provides wide scope for investment in Australia and, accordingly, it deletes the open provision that currently allows for investment in securities of other countries.

The width of the existing provisions of the Trustee Act in relation to investment in unit trusts caused some concern. Having regard to the similarities between a share and a prescribed interest in a unit trust, it was considered appropriate to apply similar criteria to unit trusts as are applied to shares. Those criteria include a minimum amount of unit holders equity and a return in the nature of income from a scheme being received by unit holders in the 5 preceding years.

The bill also allows the minister to authorise, by notice in the gazette, for trustee investments to be made in a building society registered in the Territory, subject to certain conditions. This allows the minister to make the appropriate regulations for control of building society investments. In addition to these major alterations to the list of authorised trustee investments, the bill

also clarifies existing provisions and removes some now considered to be obsolete. The amendments proposed by this bill will ensure that trustees have available to them an adequate and modern range of investments compatible with their fiduciary duties. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SMALL CLAIMS AMENDMENT  
(Serial 108)

Continued from 25 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is to be a historic day. This Small Claims Amendment Bill does a number of things. The bill seeks to increase the maximum amount claimable as a small claim from \$2000 to \$3000. After due deliberation, the opposition has come to the conclusion that it ought to be increased to \$5000, and has duly circulated an amendment schedule to that effect. Secret intelligence has indicated that, in fact, that may be acceptable to the government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you may find it fairly extraordinary that anything I might say might be acceptable to the government. I suspect there were some other things that I had to say about the bill, but I do not think I will press my luck too hard. I will say very briefly that there is a possibility that there will be some problems with magistrates being vested with the power of a Small Claims Tribunal because of the workload that the magistrates carry already. I flag that as a possible concern. The question of magistrates having a discretion to award costs in small claims hearings is contrary to the spirit of small claims hearings, on the one hand, but there is some evidence that people are seeking representation and not getting it because costs are not able to be awarded.

A further problem that is ancillary to this but consequent on the increase in the small claims amounts is the maximum amount of \$10 000 in the local courts. My soundings in the legal fraternity indicate that this is too low and people, particularly small business people, who are involved in civil actions for relatively small amounts but greater than small claims, are not able to face the prohibitive costs of a Supreme Court action and they are being denied justice. With those comments, I am delighted to say that we support the amendment.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I wish to comment briefly on the amendment before us tonight. It may be a small piece of legislation but it is a very important change in the small claims areas. Before I refer to specific areas in the legislation, I assure the member for MacDonnell that the government will support the expansion of the \$3000 upper limit to \$5000. I would add also that, when he says that he sees a problem in respect of the magistrates' workload in relation to pre-conference hearings, I might advise him that, in 1987, I attended a conference of magistrates in Darwin. I spoke to magistrates at some length about many of the changes contained in this bill and they told me that pre-hearing conferences, whether before a clerk of the court or a magistrate, would relieve the workload substantially.

With a very large number of the small claims that come before the court at the moment, proceedings tend to be preoccupied with ironing out difficulties in the actual presentation of the case because, in small claims actions, people often appear without legal representation. Quite often, the people

appearing before a small claims magistrate should not even be before the court in the first place. Under the present system, a considerable amount of time is spent sorting such things out. Pre-hearing conferences will allow the opportunity for this to occur either before a clerk or a magistrate, depending on who is available at the time. That is a wonderful move.

Another problem which was clogging up the courts was the quantification section of the act - section 30A which is headed 'Order of Court'. In the past, there was no way a claim could be quantified if it required rectification of an existing problem, particularly in the case of something built into a house or a piece of machinery or in respect of motor vehicle repairs. It was very difficult to obtain quantifying evidence to support a claim for damages. That matter has now been taken care of under proposed new section 30A. The court will be able to order that the repairs be rectified.

Mr Speaker, with those few comments, I welcome this change to the existing act and commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I thank members for their comments. I am quite happy to support the very sensible amendment proposed by the member for MacDonnell. I also remind him that we are reviewing the local court limit and that, obviously, will solve another problem which he has identified.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment to clause 5 agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 114)

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, after long and careful deliberation, I am pleased to report to the Assembly that the opposition is quite happy to support the provisions of the Real Property Amendment Bill which are designed to speed up the procedures for the registration of land title documents.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 32.1.

This amendment clarifies the position regarding transfers that have been signed by a person other than the owner of the land. The amendment also gives administrative discretion to waive the necessity for execution by the purchaser in cases such as a purchase by the government where execution serves no evidentiary value.

Amendment agreed to.



Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as whole and agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

OATHS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 101)

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the chief amendment proposed is an expansion of the class of persons entitled to witness declarations. As the Attorney-General explained in his second-reading speech, the class of persons entitled to witness declarations is restricted at present. Because virtually anyone will now be able to witness declarations, there will no longer be an independent role for a commissioner for affidavits, and this title is to be abolished. Other procedural changes were outlined by the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech and the opposition is prepared to accept those.

Our only reservation relates to the requirement to attach one's name, address or phone number when one signs an instrument as a commissioner for oaths. There is a question in evidentiary terms as to what extent a declaration might be vitiated if a phone number or an address is left off. There is also the question of why a phone number is necessary.

The bill provides for Justices of the Peace and members of parliament automatically to become commissioners for oaths. That, of course, is acceptable. However, since Justices of the Peace and parliamentarians are dealt with together, I thought I would mention in passing the anomaly in relation to members of the Legislative Assembly who are also Justices of the Peace. I see the member for Ludmilla indicating that he is a Justice of the Peace and I believe the member for Port Darwin is also. If it were not so late in the evening, I might be capable of waxing a little more irritated about this, having been knocked back on an application to become a Justice of the Peace. The then Attorney-General, Jim Robertson said - and I happen to agree with him - that there is an incompatibility between the role of legislator and the potential judicial role that Justices of the Peace have. That role is rarely used these days but it is still possible. I happen to agree with that and I think that there ought to be appropriate administrative changes whereby, if a Justice of the Peace is elected to the Legislative Assembly, he is removed from the role of Justice of the Peace.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I noticed that the member for Ludmilla was about to get up to speak and therefore I thought that I would get up first. It is my revenge.

Mr Harris: Were you knocked back too?

Mr EDE: No, I was not knocked back. I took this matter up with the then Attorney-General, Mr Jim Robertson. I have said before in this House that it is completely inappropriate for people to maintain their warrants as Justices of the Peace when they come into this House as legislators. We would not allow a magistrate or a Supreme Court judge to sit in this House and still retain his warrant. We do not even allow people to remain members of town councils when they become members of this Assembly, because we are concerned about problems of conflict of interest.

It is quite nefarious for a person to sit in this House when he not only has the power to make laws but the power to act judicially in respect of those laws. I know that the member for Koolpinyah is a Justice of the Peace as are the members for Darwin and Ludmilla and perhaps the member for Barkly. I believe that it should be incumbent on them to resign as Justices of the Peace if this government does not have the courage to take those powers from them. Using an example which you know well, Mr Speaker, it would be quite possible for one of those members to be invited to a social function at the Yuendumu Sports and to actually convene a court there.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is absolute rubbish.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, Justices of the Peace currently sit with magistrates on court cases at Yuendumu. Mr Harry Nelson has done it a number of times and I believe that it is not proper for judicial functions to be in any way linked with the legislative function of members of this Assembly.

Mr Harris: Why are they allowed in the federal parliament?

Mr EDE: They should not be.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I beg to differ from the member for Stuart. I think that, if members of this House had some experience in the actual practice of the law, we would increase our understanding of the way in which we make our laws.

Mr Ede: I was a magistrate for 8 years and it never did me any good.

Mr COLLINS: Who am I disagree with the honourable member, Mr Speaker?

Mr Justice Nader has been gracious enough to step down from the bench, in a sense, in order to give us some of his ideas about the problems of the judiciary in relation to the Criminal Code. I often think that we would be far better off if we had some real experience in the administration of the law as well as in creating it.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart is talking arrant nonsense. There are 784 members in the British House of Commons. When I visited Westminster, I noted that more than 100 names in the register were followed by the initials JP. Most of these members came up through local councils and were magistrates of one kind or another before entering parliament, and they remain as Justices of the Peace.

The member for Stuart suggests that a Justice of the Peace could convene a court at Yuendumu. He is totally wrong. There is no way a JP can convene a court. He can only be called to act on behalf of the court. He cannot convene a court. He must be requested to do so by the Master or the clerk.

Mr Ede: It is only words.

Mr FIRMIN: Only words! It is only legislation. I suppose that does not really mean anything to the member for Stuart.

There is no way a Justice of the Peace could sit at Yuendumu or anywhere else without the express wishes of the court. Only 2 JPs in company could sit and then only in relation to very minor matters. I have never been called to sit. However, provided that no conflict of interest were involved, I would do so. A Justice of the Peace swears an oath to the Chief Justice that he will

administer the laws of the land appropriately, and I believe that is what I would do.

Mr Ede: You should not be a JP. You do not understand.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I cannot let the comments of the member for Stuart go unchallenged because he is really talking rubbish tonight. The reality is that most members who are JPs have not sat on the bench for a long time, if ever. There is no conflict unless one is actually called to sit on the bench.

In the early 1970s, the role of a JP in Tennant Creek was very important one. He had to hold court at 8 am every Monday morning to let the municipal gang out of jail so that they could start the normal clean-up of the town after the weekend. That was about the limit of the duties which the Justices of the Peace were called upon to perform. As the member for Ludmilla has said, the more important functions of hearing drink-driving charges and so forth were generally held over for the magistrate, and the JPs preferred that.

I believe that there is an argument for all members of this House to be JPs from the point of view of providing a service to those people in the community who require documents to be signed. The Attorney-General would be able to vouch for this. I am in contact with him regularly about the appointment of JPs in my own electorate because it is so far-flung and remote that people who require documents to be signed have a great deal of difficulty getting in touch with a JP. Quite often, they rely on their local member and other dignitaries to be JPs and to sign documents.

In the Territory, we have changed many of the signatory provisions in relation to documents. They can be signed by certain persons other than a JP. We have commissioners for oaths. In some states, however, some documents are acceptable only if they are signed by a JP. That is a fact of life. If the people in the community do not have access to a JP, doing business and transacting land titles can be very difficult. Therefore, I say to the member for Stuart that his proposition that there is a conflict of interest in terms of the roles of JP and member of parliament is utter nonsense. I would like to advance the proposition that all members of the Assembly be made JPs so that they can provide a service which is often very desperately needed.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I express some surprise that, after not being seen for some hours, the member for Stuart has come back into the House and has made some absolutely ridiculous comments.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is reflecting on my attendance in this House.

Mr Poole: He said he has not seen you for some hours.

Mr EDE: That may be because he was not here. Mr Speaker, I have been here.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the minister to withdraw his remark.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

The member for Stuart made an absolutely ridiculous accusation against a number of members in this House. He has no understanding whatsoever of the

role of JPs and the role and operation of courts in the Northern Territory. This morning, the member for Stuart expressed some concern about what he saw as a lack of application by our education system in respect of teaching people how to research and how to learn. I ask the honourable member to take note of some of his own comments and research matters before he makes accusations and comments which bear no resemblance to the truth. It would be quite easy for him to obtain information. Indeed, I would be quite happy to provide information to him regarding the role of a JP and how the accusations he directed at some members of this House are unfounded.

Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments regarding this legislation and I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, last night in the adjournment debate, the member for Barkly delivered what I suppose could be described as a lovely, emotional speech. Unfortunately, there were not a great number of truths in that speech. I have no doubt that the honourable member believes the person who provided the sad story of a heartless bureaucracy and, I suppose, a heartless minister. The matter has been put on the public record by Mr Aked and, although it gives me no joy at all to do so, it is necessary for me to correct the record.

Mr Aked is a 41-year-old invalid pensioner who has a chronic lung condition. In the opinion of the Chief Medical Officer of my department, formed after consideration of the report of the Adult Assessment and Care Team and taking into account the assertions of Mr Aked's doctor to the contrary, continuous air-conditioning is irrelevant to Mr Aked's prognosis. In most cases of emphysema, treatment actually includes humidification of the atmosphere, amongst other things such as avoidance of smoke in any form, atmospheric dust and becoming overweight.

As a pensioner, Mr Aked receives an electricity concession equal to 50% of his account up to \$90 per quarter. He has an air-conditioner which he upgraded to a 2½ horsepower unit this year. Such an air-conditioner could handle a large house or a small office building. It cost about \$4000 and is significantly expensive to run. Every assistance has been given to Mr Aked. As a pensioner, he receives the same concession as every other pensioner but he asserts that he is not just a pensioner and that his illness requires special consideration. The pensioner concession for all pensioners was scrapped in October 1986. From that time on, Mr Aked has lobbied for its return to him alone. Since that time, he has received over \$800-worth of special assistance above that that all other pensioners receive.

In view of Mr Aked's submission, it was suggested that, if the Adult Assessment and Care Team carried out an assessment and recommended that an air-conditioned environment was necessary to maintain his life or prevent deterioration, then assistance would have been provided. Mr Aked rejected this suggestion before the assessment was completed alleging that the members

of the team lacked competence. I insisted that, before I would allow Mr Aked to receive assistance which no other pensioner - disabled or not - received, I needed to have before me an assessment from the professional body established for that purpose.

Mr Aked has now submitted to the assessment. The report of the team was provided to the Chief Medical Officer. The Chief Medical Officer received the team's findings and provided quite specific advice. The assessment team, by the way, is comprised of a highly-respected community physician, a physiotherapist, a speech therapist, social workers and such other professionals as may be required to allow an effective assessment to be carried out. It should also be pointed out - as it has been to Mr Aked constantly - that, if he has severe financial difficulty, he may apply for emergency financial assistance. Of course, he may not qualify, but he would be assessed on precisely the same basis as every other applicant.

I am sympathetic to Mr Aked. I am also sympathetic to every other person who presents to me in great difficulties. I do my level best to help those people and specifically to help those people in greatest need. It is the assessment of those who are paid and qualified to do the job that Mr Aked's condition will not deteriorate any more quickly than it will in any case, whether or not he has an air-conditioner. Mr Aked is very skilful at putting his case however. He ensures that those facts which he provides are only those which assist his case.

For instance, last night, the member for Barkly said that Mr Aked lives by himself. Mr Aked, in fact, has a live-in companion and this man pays about \$10 per week in rent. 'He cannot go out of the house', said the member for Barkly, 'except to drag himself to hospital'. Those are very emotive words. He has been running discos at Jessies and the Berrimah Hotel for some years, although I understand that he has now sold his business. I stress that: he has sold his business. 'He bought his own vehicle so he could get himself to hospital', said the honourable member for Barkly. This was 'a little ute', to quote the honourable member. I am advised that the vehicle is a rather large 4-wheel-drive, Toyota Hilux 1985 model, which is supposedly being paid off at the rate of \$100 per week.

The member for Barkly said that Mr Aked would become a permanent patient of the hospital for the rest of his life. I am advised that this is highly unlikely. It is likely that he could undergo rehabilitation should he allow this to occur. This would allow him to be re-employed. In fact, the adult assessment team is concerned that such a young man is not on a rehabilitation course for employment. The member for Barkly surely appreciates that the Freedom of Information Act does not apply to the Northern Territory. Mr Aked, however, has been informed of the report of the Chief Medical Officer.

The most important point made by the member for Barkly is that there may be many people who are in a similar predicament and that, if we provide assistance to Mr Aked, we would have to provide it to many others. Our policy is designed to provide assistance to those in need. If the advice which I receive from those experts who are employed to do the job is that a person's condition requires special assistance, then I will do my best to have that provided. If our policy ever changes and we decide to provide assistance to those who have conditions which would be made easier to put up with if they had air-conditioning, there may be many deserving cases. The adult assessment team can give me more than 50 names, right now, of people who would be put higher on the list than Mr Aked. I will not make a special case because one person can be noisier and more persistent than others. I will make a special

case if there are special circumstances. I do not wish to go into other matters which would illustrate, even more clearly than those I have mentioned already, that Mr Aked does not need the assistance.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to do 3 things. First, I seek leave to table a report of my recent overseas trip to examine the nuclear fuel industry. I do not propose to speak to it because of the lateness of the hour but, if any member would like a copy, I will be happy to provide one.

Secondly, I want to register my disgust at a cartoon in tonight's newspaper. I am not sure how many people have seen tonight's cartoon by Wicking. I think most of us have had some admiration for Wicking and we have been looking forward to his contribution to the NT News. However, tonight's cartoon disgusts me. It is a very racist cartoon indeed which stereotypes the Aboriginal community of the Northern Territory and certainly it does nothing for Wicking or, indeed, for the NT News for allowing such rubbish to be printed. I would hope that the NT News and Wicking will not continue in that racist vein. It certainly does no good for the community of the Northern Territory - which prides itself on its cosmopolitan nature and the ability of its members to get on with one another - to have such racist comments as that expressed in cartoon form in the NT News.

We all know that cartoons are one of the most widely read - if that is the correct word - items in any newspaper and that cartoonists, more than most writers, have a special place in a newspaper's life. That puts on them a special onus to act responsibly, and Mr Wicking and the NT News have failed that test miserably today. I hope that other members of the House will express similar concern so that Wicking, in his new career as the chief cartoonist on the staff of the NT News, gets the message very quickly and strongly that people in this House are concerned when rubbishy cartoons are published in the newspaper.

The third matter that I want to talk about relates to the problems that a small businessman and woman have been having with the Northern Territory government. I refer to the people who run the Silvers Secondhand Shop which is currently in recess as a result of government attitudes. Silvers Secondhand Shop is run by the Gilberts who are classic battlers who have made good. In fact, the Gilberts are the kind of people the government talks about helping, but too often, as in this case, it ends up kicking them in the guts. Bob Gilbert was unemployed for some time before buying fridges at an auction. He painted the fridges and sold them at a profit. From this small businessman vision of a potential market, he developed a secondhand business that has really grown. Instead of being unemployed himself, Bob started to employ others. That was the start of a great success story but, unfortunately, trouble was on the horizon.

Bob and his wife, Jeanette, displayed the independence and initiative that marks many people in the Darwin rural area and set up their business on Gulnare Road. However, it showed a little too much independence for the Town Planning Authority. The Gilberts, through a lack of knowledge, had not applied to have their zoning changed at Gulnare Road. They assumed, as do many people in the rural area, that it was their block and they could do with it what they wished.

Mr Perron: Why would they assume that?

Mr SMITH: Hang on!

However, when they were told what was necessary, they applied to the authority for rezoning, and then the trouble began. Despite the Gilbert's receiving widespread support and collecting many signatures in the rural area and despite the fact that many blocks in the area are used for commercial purposes, the Town Planning Authority saw fit to reject the rezoning application. Some, especially many of those in the rural area, might see this as an inflexible approach, given the degree of local support.

Mr Perron: Their local member is on the Rural Planning Authority.

Mr SMITH: Do you want to have a go at this later?

Mr Perron: I am having a go on it now.

Mr SMITH: Just shut up, will you? It was the authority's right.

The Gilberts did not take this lying down and, as was their right, they took the matter to court, and they won. Until then, everything had been fairly clean and aboveboard. In winning the rezoning case, the Gilberts had a number of conditions imposed, which they accepted. However, they realised that, because of the money it would cost to upgrade and because of the money it had cost to take the matter to court, it would take some time.

First, they thought that possibly the minister would see his way clear to repay their costs, seeing that they resulted from the decisions of a government body. But, in an off-handed way, the minister rejected that request. Members may think that it is a little unfair that, to protect your future, you have to mortgage it, but it seems that this was to be the case. However, that was only the start of the saga.

The Gilberts did not give up. They decided that, over a few years, they would upgrade their site in Guinare Road and generate the necessary cash flow by moving their business to rented accommodation. With their past experience in mind, they had their prospective landlord ring the Town Planning Authority to determine if the zoning on the Stuart Highway opposite Coolalinga was okay for a second-hand business. The answer was that, given the existing uses of adjacent blocks, the person in the Town Planning Authority could see no reason why an application would not be approved. On the basis of this verbal advice, they moved everything.

Some of my wiser colleagues might say that that was a bit silly. In hindsight, it certainly was, but their situation must be understood. They are people who want to get on with the job. They wanted to earn a living on this land while they upgraded their Guinare Road block for permanent use. They do not want government subsidies or favoured treatment; they just want to earn an honest living and provide a popular service to the local area. In fact, I understand that even the Deputy Chief Minister has availed himself of the services that they had to offer, probably illegally. What happened next? You guessed! The Town Planning Authority rejected the application and gave them 28 days to get out. They have appealed and have been rejected.

I understand that the Ombudsman has tried to get them a deferral for 12 months so they can stay in business and upgrade the Guinare Road site more quickly, but this also has failed. Mr Speaker, you can understand that they are now beginning to feel rather paranoid and are wondering whether or not they are being persecuted for winning the court case. Any lay person who visited the site opposite Coolalinga, while the business was in operation there, would have found it hard to work out how a second-hand store was

unacceptable because adjacent to it are a car repair business, a stockfeed business, and a wood workshop which apparently are acceptable. Hopefully, if not tonight then tomorrow night, the Minister for Lands and Housing can explain the logic behind that because I certainly cannot see it and neither can anyone else to whom I have spoken about this matter.

It is difficult to see why the Town Planning Authority insists on zoning that site 'agricultural', which is the zoning for that area, when no one seems to want to grow anything there or, apart from the stockfeed business, use it for any purpose that has any relationship to agriculture.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, this happens too often. We are talking about a hard-working couple who made a go of their business at Gulnare Road and who won their rezoning for Gulnare Road after taking the matter to court. It cost them a great deal of money to do that. They then had conditions imposed on them that they could not meet because they did not have the money at the time. They wanted to move out temporarily to gain a cash flow so that they could comply with those conditions and could move back to their block. Yet they are still being persecuted by the Town Planning Authority. For the life of me, I cannot understand that. I cannot understand why the Town Planning Authority is displaying such a vindictive attitude towards these people.

I know that it is not the minister's direct responsibility but, where an apparent injustice has been done, the minister certainly has a responsibility to examine that apparent injustice. Mr Speaker, it is a very apparent injustice indeed. I ask the honourable minister who has responsibility for this area to look at this matter and report to this Assembly tomorrow night if there is an explanation. For the life of me, I cannot see that there could be an explanation which might justify the decisions that have been taken. If there is no logical explanation, perhaps the minister might consider ways of curing this problem and letting 2 honest, hard-working people get on with earning a living in the Northern Territory whilst creating some employment opportunities for others, and offering a service in the rural area which is obviously appreciated by many.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, last night in the adjournment debate, the member for Stuart raised 2 matters relating to the education portfolio. Both concerned the Sadadeen Secondary College in Alice Springs. The first matter concerned the so-called removal of 2 programs from the school.

The first program that was supposed to have been wiped out without warning or consultation was the Aboriginal student support program. The second program which was said to have been annihilated was the migrant student support program. I use those terms because those were the ones used in correspondence on this matter. It should be noted that these allegations coincided with the identification of a Band-1 teacher who was in excess both to entitlement and to requirements at Sadadeen Secondary College, and his subsequent redesignation as a full-time relief teacher based at the Alice Springs Education Office.

I will deal first with the alleged withdrawal of support for Aboriginal students. During 1988, there has not been an Aboriginal student support program at Sadadeen Secondary College, nor has there been a formal arrangement that could be perceived as such. Prior to 1988, there was a resource teacher positioned at Sadadeen Secondary College. Honourable members would know that the basis for staffing secondary education units was adjusted for 1988 and, as a consequence, the resource teacher position was absorbed into Sadadeen's formula-based entitlement.



Early in the year, it was acknowledged by members of the staff at Yirara College, Alice Springs High School, Sadadeen Secondary College and the Alice Springs Education Office that a special provision for the support of Aboriginal students at Sadadeen would be required within the foreseeable future, probably from 1989 onwards, as the Aboriginal element of college enrolment increased. This was discussed at some length during the first semester by the personnel involved and it was agreed in principle that a support service, similar to that already established at Alice Springs High School, would be appropriate. It was also agreed that such a development should be formalised early in the second semester.

On 11 August 1988, a meeting between appropriate senior members of staff of Sadadeen Secondary College and Yirara College was convened. This meeting had been postponed from 4 August. The meeting resolved to formulate a submission for an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to be appointed to the Sadadeen Secondary College staff in 1989. Given the success of the Alice Springs High School support model, which depends on an Aboriginal person, it was agreed that, in order that the job might be done properly, it would be essential to have it performed by an Aboriginal person in whom were combined: first, the ability and background to provide scholastic and social support, including home liaison; secondly, a background that would enable the person to liaise effectively with industry, especially in relation to work experience for students' entry to the work force and to their formal training, and to counsel students appropriately; and thirdly, the personal qualities that ensure the provision of a very good role model. This submission is now being compiled.

The principal point is that the need for this support was foreseen long before the issue of alleged withdrawal of a service, albeit that support has not existed this year and appropriate action, via the correct channels, is already well under way. It is also pertinent that neither the Band-1 teacher nor the people who claim disadvantage have expressed concern in this context either to the principal and or to the council of Sadadeen Secondary College or to any of the appropriate officers based in the Alice Springs Education Office. Further, there has been no attempt to clarify the situation as it appears to have been perceived. It is relevant to note that the objection was voiced at this stage rather than at the beginning of the year when this Band-1 teacher's formal student support role was initially curtailed.

The honourable member also referred to the alleged withdrawal of support for migrant education students. A Band-1 teacher provides intensive instruction in relation to migrant education at both Alice Springs High School and the Sadadeen Secondary College. This has been provided since the beginning of the 1988 school year and there have been no changes in that regard.

In summary, in relation to those 2 programs, the Band-1 teacher was appointed initially as resource teacher at Sadadeen Secondary College. The position of resource teacher was absorbed subsequently into formula entitlement. It was necessary to modify his role and, more recently, to redeploy him. It now appears that this redeployment is being misconstrued or misrepresented as a withdrawal of services from students. In the course of the first 6 months of 1988, I made it very clear that there was no service named the Aboriginal student support program at Sadadeen Secondary College and there was no service named the migrant student support program at Sadadeen Secondary College. There are other comments that could be made in relation to that but I think I will leave the matter there.

The second issue that was raised by the member for Stuart in an adjournment debate related to 2 language programs that were being provided at Sadadeen Secondary College - German and French. In relation to German, Mr Speaker, could I say simply that the rearrangement of the German classes was made necessary by the unexpected resignation of a teacher of German at the college. There are 4 Year 11 students and 1 Year 12 student studying German. The lessons take place for the students combined from 3 pm to 4 pm on Tuesdays and 3 pm to 5 pm on Thursdays and, where appropriate, 3 pm to 4 pm on Fridays. The Year 12 student has additional, individual tuition from 4 pm to 5 pm on Tuesdays and, without exception, 3 pm to 4 pm on Fridays. The teacher performs these teaching duties as a part-time instructor and the times have been negotiated both to suit the students and to ensure that there is no impingement on the teacher's regular duties at Alice Springs High School. These lessons are all conducted in daylight hours. This teacher has offered to be available to take evening classes as well. However, the arrangement outlined above has been preferred by the students.

There are 2 Year 11 students who were studying French and the Band-1 teacher to whom I referred earlier was their teacher. Lessons are timetabled in the routine college day. This particular teacher, formerly a resource teacher, has been redeployed to relief teaching. As far as possible, his timetable commitment to his students is respected. Where relief requirements are such that he cannot take these lessons as they are scheduled, there is provision for them to be taken by him between the hours of 3 pm to 4 pm as a part-time instructor. The students have been consulted and are agreeable to this arrangement.

Under these circumstances, the students of German and French at Sadadeen Secondary College are catered for very well. Where adjustments have been necessary in order to maintain service and to honour commitments, the people concerned are to be commended for making the necessary changes. There has been a group set up to examine languages other than English. It was established in the first semester of 1988, primarily to determine priorities in second-language teaching in Alice Springs and to address the difficulties posed. Possible models for enhanced delivery of this service are under consideration and consultation with appropriate people has been instigated. Logistically, we cannot justify the provision of full-time, single-subject, specialist teachers for subjects for which there is so little demand.

I make those comments for the member for Stuart's benefit. If he wishes me to pursue that matter further, I will take up any comment that he has to make.

In the time remaining to me, I would like to touch on the subject of discipline in schools. I want the member for Stuart to comment on this issue. He has continually tried to dodge the issue and has asked me what our particular views are. There is ample opportunity in the Legislative Assembly for the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, to give his views in relation to these very serious matters that are of concern to the government. Discipline in schools is an important issue and the honourable member should comment on it. I give him the opportunity, during the adjournment debate tonight, to talk about this issue which is of vital concern not only to the parents but also to the teachers in the school system. I want to hear his comments and the Northern Territory government wants to hear his comments. We are receiving comments from the community generally and he has a very important role to play in this exercise. I call on the member for Stuart, as the opposition spokesman on education, to address that issue either tonight or tomorrow night.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate to give a report as the representative of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in Canberra last Monday at the first sitting of the Senate and the House of Representatives in the new Parliament House. I was accompanied by the Deputy Clerk, Mr McNeill. I would like to give members a very short report on our involvement with those proceedings.

At the outset, I must say that I was very proud to represent the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, and I am quite sure that our Speaker was very disappointed that he could not attend. It really was a fantastic day and the new Parliament House is something of which all Australians can be proud. We undertook an inspection and it was obvious that most of the materials in the Parliament House were of Australian origin - the Huon pine from Tasmania, the various marbles, the other timbers etc. I think that our New Parliament House Committee should take the opportunity in the next 3 or 4 months to visit Canberra and examine the building. We will not be spending \$100m in the Northern Territory, but there is no reason why, on a smaller scale, we cannot finish up with something of which all Northern Territorians can be proud.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to say it was an Australian affair is an incorrect statement because it was really an international occasion. The guest list for the inauguration of both the House of Representatives and the Senate consisted of Speakers and Presiding Officers from Belgium, Canada, China, France, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway. The United Kingdom was represented by Rt Hon Lord McKay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, and also the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Bernard Weatherall. The United States of America was represented by the Speaker of the Senate, and every Australian state was represented. It certainly was an international affair for the opening of Australia's new Parliament House. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate thanked all the building contractors and congratulated the architect. It would have been a very proud day for all those people involved.

More importantly, I should give a report on the obligations that the Northern Territory undertook on the day. Before doing so, I would call on Mr Speaker to write a letter to both the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. As most members would be aware, the Northern Territory government, through the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, provided a gift for the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra. I understand that the gift was a raintree table. The raintree was knocked over by Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and the timber was used some 12 or 13 years later to make a table. On the table top, there is an inscription indicating that the table was presented on behalf of the Northern Territory people.

However, the odd part about it is that that table has finished up in Hon Kim Beazley's office, and I understand that he is using it as a dining table. The dining table in his suite is used for odd meetings and some entertaining. He has the top of the table covered with a tablecloth. Obviously, anybody going into his suite would not notice that this particular gift was from the people of the Northern Territory. I believe that all gifts that the Commonwealth government has received for the opening of the Parliament House should be on display in some prominent position to allow members of the Australian community at least to see what particular gifts have been given to the federal parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that Mr Speaker Vale write to both the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives asking them to

ensure that the Northern Territory gift, as are gifts from other Australian parliaments, is put in a prominent position. In fact, the Northern Territory was not mentioned in the list of donors of gifts because the gifts mentioned were those that went into the Chambers themselves - gifts from Tasmania and Victoria. The poor old Northern Territory dipped out in that regard but I am quite sure that some of the other states did also. I believe that the gift from the Northern Territory should be put on display. I do not have any objection to Mr Beazley using that table, but my fear is that that gift will be lost in the suites of members whereas it should be placed in a more prominent position.

I turn now to an outline of the proceedings for Monday 22 August. First of all, as a group, we called on the leader of the National Party, Mr Ian Sinclair. He addressed the group and gave a brief description of how the Commonwealth parliament works. We left there and moved on to the Governor-General's residence where we had morning tea with His Excellency, Sir Ninian Stephen and Lady Stephen. We returned to Parliament House for an informal lunch hosted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Joan Child and the President of the Senate, Hon Kerry Sibraa. At 2 pm, the delegation attended the inauguration address by His Excellency, Sir Ninian Stephen. After that particular function, which finished at 2.30 pm, we gathered in the magnificent Great Hall for afternoon tea. Some of the delegation, including ourselves, moved off to the Senate. Other delegates went to the House of Representatives for its first sitting.

In the afternoon, we had a short inspection of the new Parliament House and then departed for our hotels. We left the hotels later in the evening and called on the Prime Minister at 6.50 pm. He met the delegation and the usual photographs were taken. We moved off to an official parliamentary dinner at Parliament House, hosted by both the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. It was a very nice day.

I have the menu here. I do not intend to read it out. I am quite sure that honourable members would have really enjoyed the fare that was offered by the Commonwealth for all its official guests. As most of you know, I am a very plain eater - a steak-and-eggs or steak-and-3-vegies man. There was none of that that night. It was all fairly fancy food so I bypassed the entree and the main course and got stuck into the sweets.

It was a very nice day and I am quite sure that all Australians can be proud of our new Parliament House. It is a pity that many Australians will never have the opportunity to visit the Parliament House in Canberra. I certainly hope that many members of our parliament, on both sides of the House, have the opportunity to visit that most prestigious building. Talking about the building itself, in contrast to their previous accommodation which could only be described as inadequate, members have been provided with much finer accommodation. The old Parliament House lasted for almost 70 years and it is believed that the new Parliament House that has been built for the Australian community will last 200 years. None of us will be around to see it but, because of the way it has been constructed, that building will probably last for more than 200 years. As the Australian population increases and there are more members of parliament, the new Parliament House will become the old one. I congratulate everybody who was involved in its construction. There was considerable criticism about the cost of the Parliament House but I believe that most people who have the opportunity to inspect it will probably beat their hands on their chests and say: 'Well done! This is ours and it will serve Australia for the next 200 years'.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight in response to the comments made by the Minister for Health and Community Services relating to Mr Aked. I would say that the minister's response tonight probably demands that the whole case be reopened and given some further consideration because, undoubtedly, there is some discrepancy in the information that has been provided by Mr Aked and that provided by the assessment team to the minister. Either Mr Aked is lying or the assessment team is lying or the minister is being snowed or perhaps a little of everything. In any event, there are some aspects that need to be sorted out. If Mr Aked is working the system, as the minister suggested, I am quite happy for that to be demonstrated. However, I believe that there might be a bit more to come out.

The minister suggested that Mr Aked had been running discos. Until February this year, that was quite true. That was how he helped keep himself going. The reason that he gave up running discos was because he could not go away from the machine. That is the advice I have received. To infer that Mr Aked was running discos on the side and was putting the dough in his pocket and was in a pretty healthy condition does not seem to ring true.

In relation to the minister's comments about a person living with Mr Aked, I understand that that is a temporary arrangement in the sense that the person comes and goes. He has interests outside Darwin and he comes and goes. Mr Aked is pleased to have somebody stay with him because, if he gets into strife, he is not by himself. He has some help.

I move on to the minister's comments relating to the AAC report. They are most disturbing. The minister was emphatic tonight that Mr Aked had been assessed by the team. There was no equivocation about that. Mr Aked says that he was assessed by a physiotherapist. Either he was assessed by the team or he was not assessed by the team. If he was assessed by a physiotherapist, he was not assessed by the team. Somebody is lying and that matter needs to be sorted out pretty quickly.

Mr Speaker, I ask the minister to table the report provided by the assessment team because, in his letter to Mr Aked, he said: 'The information available to me suggests that air-conditioning would not of itself prevent any deterioration in your condition. Indeed, the reverse could be true over a long period of time'. If that is the case and the minister is in possession of medical information that would indicate that Mr Aked is doing himself an injury, the least he could do is provide the report to Mr Aked's doctor or to Mr Aked. That would seem like a perfectly normal and reasonable thing to do.

I rang Mr Aked's doctor to discuss his situation. I asked him about the air-conditioning and he said: 'There is no medical evidence to say that air-conditioning will or will not help patients with this condition. It is like asthma. Some people get asthma in the dry arid areas and others get it by the coast. Some people get asthma from pollen, others get it from allergies to things like horsehair. In Mr Aked's case, it would appear that air-conditioning helps his general condition and keeps him out of hospital'.

Mr Aked said in his letter that, during the past couple of months, he has not been able to afford air-conditioning and has been hospitalised for several weeks because of multiple chronic lung infections. If he spent a couple of weeks in hospital that were probably unnecessary, he did not bear the cost of that. The cost, in the vicinity of \$4000, would have been borne by the taxpayer. It would seem to me that a contribution of several hundred dollars to an air-conditioning bill would be a pretty fair offset against 2 weeks in hospital at \$300 or \$400 a day.

Mr Speaker, I ask the minister to have this matter considered again. I ask him to make the AAC report on Mr Aked's condition available to Mr Aked or to his doctor. If Mr Aked was assessed by a team, obviously he has misled me and other people. If he was not assessed by a team, the minister has been misled by his departmental officers. That needs to be clarified very quickly.

Mr Aked's letter went on to say: 'When I was supposedly assessed by this adult assessment care team, there was not one single heat-humidity lung function test on me. As a matter of fact, I did not even meet or was examined by the physicians delegated to assess my claim'. That is quite contrary to what the minister was saying a few moments ago and I believe it needs to be clarified. In his letter, Mr Aked said: 'The only person to examine me from the entire Health Department was a physiotherapist who tested me for air volume, the amount of air in and out before and after medication. The whole thing is a sham'.

The minister accused me of portraying Mr Aked's situation as a sad, sad story. I would say, however, that the minister's response tonight has been cursory in the extreme and probably unfair to Mr Aked in some respects. I believe that there are good reasons for opening up the whole case and examining all the details carefully. I repeat tonight what I said to the minister this morning. I invited the minister to inspect Mr Aked's situation and form his own opinion as to whether Mr Aked is working the system or is a malingerer. I do not believe that this is the end of the matter. I think it will continue.

I may as well take this opportunity to respond to the report of the Privileges Committee that was brought down last week. The report related to comments I made on the 7.30 Report on 25 February 1988. I would like to place on record that I never purported in the course of my televised remarks to be aware of the inner workings of the committee. In fact, I was giving a political overview of the events which I believed had occurred. You would be aware, Mr Speaker, that I am not a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. Accordingly, I had no knowledge as to how the proceedings of that committee were conducted and could not have had any information without a member of the committee contravening standing orders.

Mr FIRMIN: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I believe that the member for Barkly is speaking about an item which is still on the Notice Paper, the tabled report of the Privileges Committee.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the member for Ludmilla is technically correct and, if it would please the House, I would be happy to seek leave to make these remarks now and have the item deleted from the paper. I spoke to the Leader of Government Business yesterday about doing that at a convenient moment and he seemed to think it would be all right.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the member for Barkly to seek leave.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to respond to the report tabled by the Privileges Committee in relation to myself.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am sorry to have caused that dislocation in proceedings, Mr Speaker.

Whilst being interviewed on the 7.30 Report, I never purported to be aware of the inner workings of the committee. In fact, I was giving a political overview of the events which I believe had taken place. You would be aware, Mr Speaker, that I am not a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and, accordingly, I had no knowledge as to how the proceedings of that committee were conducted. I could not have had any such information without a member of the committee contravening standing orders which, I am sure you would agree, Mr Speaker, is an unthinkable proposition. Mr Speaker, you would also be aware, as would other members of the House, that the events which I related on the 7.30 Report were a matter of open discussion in the corridors of this building and had been current for several hours before I said anything.

Once the matter was raised with you, Mr Speaker, you properly referred it to the Privileges Committee. I felt sure it would be dealt with as a parliamentary issue, devoid of political point-scoring and, in fact, this has happened. I welcome the committee's finding that the matter not be further proceeded with. I would like to point out that, in the 14 years that I have sat in this House, I do not recall ever having had a dispute with the Speaker and I have never been in conflict with a committee of the House or the procedures it follows. In fact, I hold the Westminster tradition in the highest regard.

I would like to quote from the committee's report to bring its exact words to the attention of honourable members:

At the meeting on 23 February, a quorum of 3 members was present comprising 1 government and 2 opposition members. At that meeting, the committee passed 2 motions. These were: (a) that this committee report to the Assembly that it is of the opinion that the amendments of the Education (School Councils) Regulations contained in Regulations 1988 No 4, made under the Education Act, ought to be disallowed as they conflict with paragraph 2 of standing order No 21; and (b) that the chairman move in the Assembly on 24 February the following motion: that the amendment to the Education (School Councils) Regulations as contained in Regulations 1988 No 4 and made pursuant to sections 71 and 75 of the Education Act be disallowed.

At a meeting on 24 February, at which all government members were present, the motions passed the previous day were rescinded. No motion was passed to accept or 'pass' the amendments to the Education (School Councils) Regulation. However, a motion was passed instructing the chairman to write to the Minister for Education seeking further explanations of the regulations.

Mr Speaker, whilst the committee has found that my statements on the ABC did not technically agree with the above wording from the report, and I accept the committee's ruling unreservedly, the overview I presented to the community, in layman's terms, told the story.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on 3 matters this evening. First, I would like to join the Leader of the Opposition in condemning the cartoon in the NT News this evening. Some of my Aboriginal constituents would be very offended by the cartoon, especially as quite a number in my electorate are contributors to the work force and they do not stand in line for handouts. They certainly could not be depicted as was suggested by the cartoonist. It does not truly represent my view, particularly as there are a large number of Territorians whom I know and

respect within the Aboriginal community. I think the cartoonist stands condemned for that.

The second matter relates to one of the schools in my electorate, the Ludmilla Primary School which is celebrating its 21st birthday this Friday. It is one of the oldest primary schools in the Northern Territory school system that is still in existence today. It was opened on 26 August 1967 by Hon Roger Dean who was the Administrator at the time. There will be quite a bicentenary birthday celebration at Ludmilla on Friday night and, if anybody wishes to come along and join in at 6 o'clock on Friday night at the school, he is welcome to do so. There will be several activities, including a short play and some dancing by the kids. Several interesting events will be taking place that evening, finishing with a fireworks display at 9.30 pm or 10 pm. Food will be supplied during the evening. Everyone is welcome to join the celebrations.

The third matter I want to raise this evening is a little more serious than those 2 matters. It concerns the air traffic control operations that are being brought into place by the Federal Aviation Commission. I would like to read a couple of passages from a speech that was delivered on 18 August by the Chief Executive Officer of the Federal Aviation Commission, Mr Colin Freeland. He outlined potential developments in the aviation field for the next 10 years and indicated the sorts of new equipment and electronic controls that he believes will be available in the future. This morning, the minister spoke about one aspect of this in relation to search and rescue operations and the maritime use of EPIRBs. He referred to the potential for such equipment to be used by persons travelling into remote areas. That side of it is most interesting. However, I would like to pick up a couple of points in Mr Freeland's speech that worry me a little. I have made a few investigations in relation to them and, the the more I find out, the more worried I become. Mr Freeland said:

Let me pass on now to some CAA activities of particular interest to engineers. One of these is the changing technology that will allow us, in future, to monitor our technical facilities at a central location. All electronically-based facilities and systems, radar, navigation aids, control tower and air traffic services and communications equipment will be software-based. It will be self-diagnostic, able to pinpoint its own faults and provide that information to a centralised maintenance controller who will then decide on appropriate action. It is an important development to be taken into account during design and specifications.

He went on to talk about problems with providing specialists to work in that field and the difficulties in finding people to service all the equipment. He spoke also about operations for the next generation of aircraft and the laser technology relating to satellites. It all sounds very nice, but members should note the talk about a 'centralised location'. Mr Freeland, after talking about new forms of search and rescue operations and direct satellite-to-aircraft communications systems, spoke about methods by which the CAA will attempt to cut costs. When we talk about cost reduction, we are talking about reduction in manpower and the implementation of cost-effective systems. That is very good in some ways, but I am coming now to the nub of what causes me some concern. Mr Freeland said:

We are confronted with increasing demands for air traffic services and facilities, and need to restructure the technical framework to deal with the problems of older facilities and technological change



while containing costs. The strategy being developed is: to consolidate air traffic services and staff into fewer, larger centres; to work towards integration of air traffic control and flight services staff and functions into a single air traffic services organisation; and to modernise airways facilities by the application of advanced technologies.

On the surface, that appears to be all very nice. However, as I discussed with a colleague in South Australia the other day, underlying all this is a plan to remove most of these services. Until a week ago, the proposal was that there should be 3 centres - at Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne - but I understand that, as recently as last week, there was a proposal to centralise all those services in Perth and Melbourne only. That would mean that the Northern Territory, the north of South Australia, the outback areas of Western Australia and places such as Port Hedland, Kalgoorlie, Leigh Creek, Ceduna etc would no longer have flight service centres. We would not have the ability to set up search and rescue operations immediately. I understand that the 10-year plan is to centralise all such operations in Melbourne.

The effect of that will be to reduce the work force by a considerable number. The South Australians have done some rough estimates and it appears that between 630 and 750 jobs would be lost in the aviation industry in South Australia alone. I do not know how many jobs would be affected in the Northern Territory but the South Australians suggest that staff would be lost from management services, airways operation, flight standards, engineering services, radio technology, training, stores, workshops and field positions. Some 136 air traffic controllers throughout the South Australian region would move to Melbourne in the initial stages anyway. There are some 85 flight service operators, rescue and fire fighting, radio, radar, electronics and ground staff and some Bureau of Meteorology people. If that is the effect in South Australia, as I am led to believe by my colleague, I should imagine that a similar effect will be felt in the Northern Territory.

Mr Freeland went on to say, in justifying some of these things, that search and rescue operations would be coordinated through the electronic system at the major centres and, with the latest technology, the pilot being briefed on ordinary air traffic control movement could receive a printout containing precise and relevant information. He could receive it at home if he has the equipment. All relevant detail will be dispersed automatically and it will become a paperless operation using visual display units.

I wonder what on earth some of our mission pilots, for example, those who fly in and out of Gove will do. How will pilots who stay for a couple of days at places such as Maningrida, Docker River and Yuendumu obtain electronic printouts for their inflight service requirements? The system sounds fine for the next century when perhaps the technology will be available in the field. At the moment, we have difficulties because we have never received the fully-integrated satellite communications service that we told the federal government was so necessary for the Northern Territory. We now have a mix-and-match of services throughout the Northern Territory by microwave and digital radio concentrator services. Some areas, of course, are still on the radio telephone. We have problems with atmospherics and, in the wet season, we often have trouble communicating - especially via electronic data-communications with these areas because of the glitches that occur in the transmissions. I cannot imagine most of our pilots being able to receive a service of this type.

Of particular concern is the matter of search and rescue operations. It might be all right for the current crop of controllers who will be moved to the central location because they have an intimate knowledge of the areas that we are talking about. However, what will happen when the people who have this bush experience leave the service in a few years time? We will have a new crop of people from one centre in Melbourne who probably do not even know how to spell Yuendumu or Argadargada, let find them on a map. If a pilot radios that he is experiencing an emergency because of a dust storm or a problem with his aircraft and wants to know where he can land, these people will not even know where the heck he is. Sometimes it is difficult enough for people in the Territory to find these places. I really despair about what will happen if it is centrally located in Melbourne.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this morning, I presented a petition from people in the rural area, both in my electorate and in the rural area part of the electorate of Palmerston, regarding the people who live on freehold blocks wanting more legal freedom to do what they want on their blocks. I suppose you could call them the freehold freedom fighters.

What the Leader of the Opposition raised in the adjournment this evening in relation to Silvers Secondhand Shop and the trials and tribulations of that family was only a brief resume of the subject. I would like to elaborate a little and say that that case probably prompted this petition. I have said several time in this House that, within legal limits, people in the rural area want to be able to do what they want to on their blocks. This petition was not started by myself. It was started by people in the rural area who have had enough. They have had it up to pussy's bow concerning what they can and cannot do on their blocks with regard to Building Board regulations and planning matters.

I am not having a go at the Building Board inspectors or the planners themselves because they have to administer the law as it is presented to them. But, the time is coming when more and more people will revolt against the bureaucratic restrictions placed on their lives. If nothing else, the people in the rural areas at least know how to stand up for their rights. I have said that I will support these people as far as I can because I believe in the individual and I believe that the individual should come before the system. I am not talking about people who break the law; I am talking about people who live within the law. The rules and regulations should exist for the people, not the people for the rules and regulations.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on the case of Silvers Secondhand Shop which is a classic case of a couple pulling themselves up by their shoelaces from the dole to set up a little business and being put out of work by a decision of the Planning Authority and the costs associated with defending their rights. It is all true. The Gilberts do not mind my mentioning their names. They do not mind who hears about their story because they have reached the end of their tether. From starting out on the dole, they are back on the dole again. That is the worst case I have ever heard of the treatment of little people in the Northern Territory.

They set up their secondhand business in an RL1 area. Strictly speaking, you are not supposed to set up a secondhand business in an RL1 area except by consent. They may have jumped the gun a bit, but many other people have jumped the gun in the rural area and their neighbours do not object. The neighbours of the Gilberts do not object but - and I say this for everybody to hear - they were dobbed in. When they were dobbed in, they had to submit a development application, and they did that. For their development

application, believe it or not, they had 246 letters of support. There were 2 people who objected and 1 of those I could not find on any roll. The Gilberts and I and many other people have a pretty fair idea who this person was but he did not attend any inquiry or appeal. I have mentioned this case many times before.

To cut a long story short, the development application was refused. They appealed. It took 5½ days, after many months, for the appeal to be heard and it cost the Gilberts \$26 000 to vindicate their right to continue in their business. When the determination was handed down, the Chairman of the Planning Authority placed certain conditions on their continuing in business. I believe that the conditions were unreal in view of the enormous expenses the Gilberts have had to meet. They set up business in another area, as the Leader of the Opposition said. The planners, I believe, were splitting straws when they said they gave permission for this shed to be used for the storage of agricultural products only and that therefore the storage of the Gilberts' secondhand goods that they wanted to sell was not in line with planning decisions. They were forced out. They tried to continue business using a hawker's licence but found they were unable to do so. These people are on the dole again.

Mr Speaker, I have received a copy of a letter written by Mrs Gilbert to the Chief Minister. This is a letter of desperation from a little person who does not know what to do. I have referred these people to the Ombudsman and they have been given a respite of time, but it may have come too late. The letter reads:

Dear Mr Perron,

I guess over time, you have heard of Silvers Secondhand Shop. I would like to introduce myself. My name is Jeanette Gilbert of Lot 8, Gulgare Road, Bees Creek. My husband, Robert Gilbert, is the owner of Silvers. Over 4 years, we have been self-employed. I can assure you it has not been easy for us, let alone the long hours we have put into our business and always in strife with the NT Planning Authority. They say Darwin helps to promote small business. I can assure you it does not. The only help you get is the bureaucrats trying to put the little fellow out. If your name is well-known, if you have money in the bank etc plus investments and so on, sure the government is there to push you along, making sure you get what you want. It seems to me Darwin government only wants the big people here, the wealthy people, but government fails to see that the little people also employ and also give and help the big person's business, as we have an employment problem here in Darwin.

You must be wondering why I am writing this to you. What am I getting at, Mr Perron? My husband and myself had to go and apply for unemployment last week because of the NT Planning Authority. They took our livelihood away from us and my 11 year-old daughter. We got off the dole ourselves 4 years ago to do our business by buying a couple of fridges, doing them up and selling them and so on and so on. We saw quite a demand for this business in the rural area.

Not long after this, we got letters from planning telling us to apply for rezoning etc. We did and, oh boy, problems started! We had no idea that we could not do what we wanted on our block. It all lay in the hands of the rural people and 2 government people called the Rural Planning Authority. We applied to these people twice on our

own grounds and then somebody told us we would have to get a town planner, which we did. It still got rejected, so we appealed. It took 5½ days and well over \$26 000 in legal fees. Yes, it is a lot of money for a small rural business. We had 246 letters to support us but that still did not mean anything to the Rural Planning Chairman etc.

Anyhow, we won our appeal but it sure left us in a lot of debt which I feel, if we won, the government should pay. But, of course, the NT has no claim for compensation. The Appeal Board told us we had conditions laid on us. Lovely, isn't it, considering the price we have already paid? We said we would do these conditions as money was available and as soon as we could.

My husband and myself thought the best thing we could do would be to move off our block to a rural shed for a couple of years to do our block up. We went to real estate agents named The Professionals. They told us about this shed right out in the rural area. She phoned planning. They said, 'It should be okay in that area but put in for a redevelopment', which Andrew Nickolai had done, as he owns the shed, only to be rejected in the meantime. We moved into the shed as they all assured us that things would be fine.

We got letters. \$5000 was the fine, with \$100 per day every day we operate. Then another letter came closing down the Gulnare Road block which we paid \$26 000 to be passed because government bureaucrats were not doing upgrading fast enough. I wrote a letter stating we could only do as money came along. That wasn't good enough. When they sent the letter, I had already bought \$2000 worth of trees, started the fence line etc. But they referred our case to civil courts.

In the meantime, they had come to the shed we are in at Coolalinga next to the NT Stock Feeds, told my husband to get everything out of the shed and yard as nothing we had there was agricultural. That is why they did not pass our rezoning. The area there along by NT Stock Feeds was agricultural and they wanted it to stay that way. My husband said, 'Where can I put all this gear? You have already closed down Gulnare Road. We have to wait until you are ready to bring your solicitor down to inspect our block to say if it is okay or not'. The inspector, Kevin Webber, said, 'I don't care where you put it but move it. Nothing in the shed or yard is agricultural'.

I would like to know what our high-class government Planning Authority calls agricultural because the word means to me to grow on that land and set that product. There is nothing along there that comes into agricultural. NT Stock Feeds was there before the town planning came into effect. Rural Radiators, AP Motors, Mega Steelworks and Rural Cabinets, plus a fruit and vegie guy who sells from his truck are okay off the Stuart Highway and Howard Springs turnoff. Also he sells from his shed, which is shared. Last week, we asked if we could use this shed for fruit and vegetables and the planning said, 'No. Only if you grow the vegetables, you sell at the back of the shed on the lane because the shed is agricultural'.

Mr Perron, I ask you, where is justice in the Northern Territory for small business people? I think the Social Security people couldn't believe it when they asked why did we give up our self-employed

business. We said, 'We didn't. The NT Planning Authority closed our business on 6 August'. They replied, 'Here we are trying to get people off the dole and here is our government putting independent people on the dole'. So now we have nothing. Four years of hard work for nothing. I phoned NT planning asking for a solicitor to come and look at our block. Their reply: 'Our solicitor is far too busy at this stage to come to look'. So, in the meantime, we are out of business, bills to pay and waiting to be accepted by Social Security after we fought and got ourselves off the dole, all for NT government bureaucrats.

We have applied to different government parties and officers for help. I have phoned for interviews with you only to be told you are too busy. Not me, the government bureaucrats. The only thing we can do is to go public - to 60 Minutes, A Current Affair, The Investigators, NT News, Channel 8 and whoever else I can think of. Plus I am sending letters to all concerning people I think could help or just to let them know so other people get to know what is going on and who is paying who. We have never been dishonest people and have always taken people by face value but it does not help in the Northern Territory. There is a lot of corrupt things and people. I feel very disheartened by the whole matter and one day we will find justice.

Yours faithfully,  
Jeanette and Robert Gilbert.

If that is not an indictment, Mr Deputy Speaker, of the way these people have been treated, I do not know what is. The letter speaks for itself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the short time that is left to me, I would also like to talk about something which, in a way, is another matter of injustice. It may be remedied but I hope it is remedied in time. I refer to the Sporting Shooters Association facility, Winnellie Range. As everybody knows, this is behind the showgrounds. Because the Power and Water Authority is insisting on upgrading electricity services in that area, power to the block is about to be cut off. Members might say: 'So what? They are going to move'. The Sporting Shooters Association continually receives letters stating that it will be moved to the Leanyer complex. However, it is a real 'gunna' job. The association does not know when it will be required to move.

The association was told initially that the power supply would cost \$10 000. The National Field Rifle Championship will commence at the Winnellie Range on 6 October and will run for 3 days. In addition, the National Lever Action Rifle Championships will commence on 14 October and will run for 3 days. It seems a little odd to me that the government would first of all cut off the power and then advise that it will cost \$10 000 to put it on again. In addition to the 2 events, I have mentioned, a Classic Calibre event will be held at the range on 14, 15 and 16 October. This is the first time such an event has ever been held in Australia.

The sporting shooters have made inquiries on their own behalf. The price has come down from \$10 000. They believe they can have the electricity put on privately for about \$1700, provided that they supply the poles and the meter box. Hopefully, the government will pay that bill of \$1700. This group of shooters is a very strong lobby in the community. I would have thought that it would be politic, with a small 'p', for the government to help. Two national championships and a shooting event which has never been held before

in Australia are to be held here. Meanwhile, in August, the Sporting Shooters Association is still worried about whether it will have electricity connected. If the government does not pay, it will have to answer to the Sporting Shooters Association and the gun lobby in the future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, first let me add my support to the comments by the member for Ludmilla and the Leader of the Opposition regarding tonight's cartoon in the NT News. While all of us are proponents of the freedom of the press and agree that it should not be restricted, it is essential that people in any country, and certainly here in the Northern Territory where we are trying to promote good race relations, do not stoop to the cheap shot, as I thought that cartoonist did. It is important that the media should not compound racial stereotypes in order to obtain a cheap laugh. I have a great deal of respect for Mr Wicking, who is one of the most humorous cartoonists in the Northern Territory and can be matched only by some of the top cartoonists in Australia. I hope that he raises the standard of his cartoons to the level they were at when he worked previously for the NT News and that we never have cause to make these remarks again.

My other point follows on from the comments of the member for Koolpinyah. I certainly hope that, tomorrow, the government will give its side of this argument regarding Silvers Secondhand Shop. I recall hearing some of the remarks that were made when the rezoning application was being heard. I had a horrible feeling that these people were about to be crushed. The situation had all the hallmarks of a small operator running up against a big and inflexible bureaucracy. It looks as though the job has been done well and truly on them.

It may be that, underneath it all there are some very good reasons for everything that was done, but it certainly does not help small business in the Northern Territory when things like this happen. Obviously, they have not been given an adequate explanation. It seems to me atrocious that somebody in that situation has to spend \$26 000 on legal fees because everyone knows that maintaining cash flow is the thing that really kills you when you are trying to get a small business off the ground. To be hit with a series of court cases of this nature, and basically put out of business as a result of legal costs, on the face of it, seems to me to be outrageous. I hope that the Minister for Lands and Housing will let us know tomorrow what his side of that argument is and what he proposes to do to assist those people.

The main point I wish to raise tonight relates to the Overseas Student Program as it affects the Darwin Institute of Technology which, hopefully, is soon to become part of the University of the Northern Territory. Let me say at the outset that the Overseas Student Program has my full support. I believe that, if it is organised and run properly, it has the possibility of providing not only immediate economic benefits for the Northern Territory but also longer-term advantages through the contacts built up through the program and the fond memories that people will take away with them. Hopefully, those people will have a feeling that, in the future, their children should also obtain their education here.

One of the areas where the program is developing strongly is Malaysia. Australia is now second only to the United States as an overseas location for Malaysian tertiary students. I believe that some 10 000 students come to Australia each year. Many of those students go to Curtin University of Technology which has a very proud record of developing contacts with South-east Asia and Asia generally. Certainly, it has done an excellent job. That is the old Western Australian Institute of Technology which has now been developed into Curtin University of Technology.

Of course we have a long way to go. Some 22 000 students from Malaysia are currently enrolled in universities in the United States and close to 10 000 in Great Britain. While the program is laudable, I believe it has to be worked on a full-fee basis. I was rather surprised to see the charges. It may be that they are full fees, but I was looking at the charges that apply to courses in the Northern Territory. In relation to the faculty to which I wish to refer this evening, the Faculty of Business, the annual course fee is \$A6500. When I first saw that, I wondered whether that was the full fee given that the national figure that has been applied in relation to the graduate tax works on the basis of \$1800 per year which is 20% of the actual cost. Nationally, we are working on a figure of \$9000 per annum as a general figure. I am surprised that we have come in some \$2500 below that. Hopefully the honourable minister will be able to advise me on that.

There is not only the cost of the actual tuition. I realise that there are other matters involved; for example, the incremental cost of the extra tuition as against a straight unit cost. Additional costs are involved in recruitment, and we should keep an eye on those because it is very easy for people to talk themselves into a trip overseas and spend substantial time in Hong Kong or Malaysia kidding themselves that they are working whereas they are not achieving a great deal in terms of the money expended.

None of those things, however, is as important as the one major factor that will decide the success or failure of this program. I refer, of course, to credibility. It is the credibility of courses in Australia that we have to sell to ensure that, not only now but in the future, the program develops to be of real social and economic benefit. Australian universities have built up their credibility over many years. They have a good reputation in South-east Asia although I am not so sure about other parts of Asia. A degree from an Australian university is considered to be in the same class as degrees from the good universities in the United States and England. However, there have been some credibility problems during the last couple of years. Some institutions have offered courses which they were not able to supply or created expectations among overseas students which were not justified by the reality.

Mr Harris: It was raised at the ministers' conference.

Mr EDE: Yes. We spoke about it at some length during the shadow ministers' conference as well. The federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training has been vehement about the need for the development of a code of ethics. I have some news clippings regarding the development of that code. One comes from The Australian of 25 May. It says:

Any suspicions about the presentation of Australian education for overseas students will be laid to rest with a code of ethics. The code, still subject to change, requires Australian higher education to be promoted accurately and honestly in terms of quality, standing and availability. The prospective student should be provided with accurate and comprehensive information on the institution, admission requirements, procedures and courses, and advertisements should accurately reflect the nature of the course and the cost of the award.

Mr Speaker, I have also a copy of a memorandum to all vice-chancellors, directors and principals. It goes through those very points again. It talks about the code of ethics and practice in the provision of full-fee courses for overseas students by Australian higher education institutions. The memorandum

asks people to make a conscious commitment to the code. It says that Australian higher education should be promoted accurately and honestly in terms of its quality, its standing and its availability. I would like all honourable members to take note of that. It says that advertisements 'should not include misleading or ambiguous statements about the nature of the course, the cost or the award'.

Having seen that information, I was most upset when I was shown a copy of the Daily Express of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, dated 23 April 1988. That newspaper contained an advertisement inserted under the joint auspices of the Darwin Institute of Technology, whose logo appeared on it, and the AMC group of colleges. The heading was: 'Bachelor of Business degree in accounting, banking, computer science, economics/finance, management'. It stated that the degree can be achieved by form 5 students in 3½ years and form 6 students in 2½ years. Because of the short time available to me, I will not discuss the anomalies which appear when one compares the periods of study and entry requirements with those which apply to local students.

What I am particularly worried about is the fact that that advertisement says that students can advance to MBA courses at the DIT after completion of the bachelor degree program. There is no MBA at the DIT, although there may be in 2½ to 3 years time. That is misleading but it is not the worst part. The worst part is that the Northern Territory's Faculty of Business has a Bachelor of Business degree in accounting, computing, economics/finance, tourism and hospitality management. We have no degree of Bachelor of Business in banking and we have no Bachelor of Business degree in management.

The Northern Territory has been guilty of issuing false advertisements in Malaysia. We are in breach of the code of ethics. The federal minister has said that he will do everything within his power to stamp out this practice. Not only will it hurt the DIT; it will hurt our university. It hurts the Northern Territory. It affects our credibility and it affects the credibility of tertiary institutions nationally. This is something that I hope the minister will take up at the very earliest opportunity. I am sorry that I did not have the complete information earlier. If I had known about it, I would have raised it earlier. I have heard about it only in time to raise it in the adjournment debate. It was only today that I actually received the final information on the code of ethics. The federal minister has stated his intentions very clearly. The report in The Australian says:

Central to enforcing the new code is a proposal that public and private institutions be licensed by the states and then entered in a federal government register of approved courses and institutions before they can offer courses to foreign students.

The penalties include the withdrawal of licences, removal from the federal register and financial compensation for foreign students. Those penalties would be imposed on the institutions breaking the code. It is a serious matter. I am sure that the minister will be as upset by this as I am. I can give him a copy of this advertisement. I hope he will find out what sort of shenanigans are going on because there is no Master of Business Administration degree, there is no Bachelor of Business degree in banking and there is certainly no Bachelor of Business degree in management. I think that is false advertising.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION

Want of Confidence in Minister for Tourism

See Questions for text of motion moved by Mr Smith.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition has always treated want of confidence and censure motions very seriously. Let us be under no misapprehension that this is an extremely serious matter.

In his answer to the first question directed to him this morning, the minister denied any knowledge of the matter he was being asked about. In his answer to the second question, he accepted that, in fact, he did at one stage owe a considerable sum of money to the Tourist Commission. At that stage, he attempted to mislead this House about when he repaid that money. In his third answer, the minister continued to obfuscate about the period of time for which he owed the money and when he actually paid the money.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a document from the office of the Auditor-General.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, this document is entitled 'Final Audit 1984-85' and it comes from the Office of the Auditor-General. It is directed to the Commissioners, Northern Territory Tourist Commission, PO Box 2532, Alice Springs and is signed by E.M. Isaacson, Auditor-General. It is dated 7 May 1986. It is a 5-page document which relates to the final audit of the commission for the year ended 30 June 1985.

Page 1 of the document sets out the normal audit objectives. On page 2, we come to the essence of the minister's problem. The relevant section of this document, which is directed to the commissioners, is headed 'Executive Summary' and I will read it in full:

American Express Credit Cards. Your attention is drawn specifically to the matter of expenses charged by the American Express credit cards and not being properly acquitted by the staff concerned. The audit revealed that the chairman's expenses of \$33 133.86, unacquitted at balance date, were still not acquitted by 30 November 1985.

The balance date, incidentally, was 30 June 1985. The document goes on to say:

This was contrary to the commission's minutes of 21 March 1984, when the commission resolved that the chairman would provide monthly interim statements to acquit expenses. At 28 February 1986, unacquitted American Express expenses amounted to \$50 355.

I was informed today by the General Manager, Mr David Cox, that the former chairman ...

Mr Speaker, it should be noted that the phrase 'former chairman' is used because Mr Poole had resigned.

... will provide the necessary information to acquit the outstandings within the next 2 weeks; that is, by 21 May 1986. The final adjustment of these expenses will require a formal approval by the commission.

Since my previous reports to both the minister and the commissioners have occasioned no apparent corrective action, I must now consider what alternative or additional reports I should make in the event that future audits reveal that corrective action has not been taken.

Mr Speaker, the minister referred to was the member for Casuarina. There is no doubt that the future action being considered by the Auditor-General was the public identification, in his annual report, of the failure of the Chairman of the Tourist Commission to carry out procedures.

There are 3 schedules to the document. The relevant schedule is Schedule 1, 'Acquittal of American Express Credit Card Expenses'. I must stress again that there are 2 amounts being discussed. One of these is the sum of \$33 133, unacquitted at the end of the financial year, and \$50 355 which was unacquitted in the following February:

The debt as listed at the balance date included several staff members whose American Express charges have not been acquitted promptly. The principal amount was \$33 133.86 representing the chairman's expenses. The accumulation of unacquitted expenses to the chairman's account appears to be contrary to the commission's limit of 21 March 1984.

Mr Speaker, those are the relevant parts of the very strong letter from the Auditor-General to the commissioners of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Mr Coulter: Are you tabling that?

Mr SMITH: I have tabled it already. You can have a copy if you like.

Mr Speaker, on 7 May 1986, the Auditor-General was forced to write to the commissioners of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission concerning the behaviour of the then Chairman of the Tourist Commission, now the Minister for Tourism, in failing to acquit - that is, to properly account for - his American Express card expenses. This was not the first time that the Auditor-General had raised the matter with the commissioners and the minister. There is a specific reference which indicates that this had been an ongoing matter of concern to the Auditor-General and that he had previously raised it with both the minister, then the member for Casuarina, and the commissioners of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

The Auditor-General had become so frustrated that he stated that he would have to consider what alternative or additional reports he would have to make. I have no doubt, even though the Chief Minister might want to disagree, that he was contemplating mentioning the Tourist Commission in his annual report and perhaps putting it on notice that this would occur if it did not get its act together and resolve the problem. The document certainly evidences the amount of frustration felt by the Auditor-General in relation to this matter.

It is clear that the problems with the Chairman of the Tourist Commission acquitting his American Express expenses were longstanding. On 24 March 1984, the commission was forced to minute a requirement that the chairman provide monthly interim statements to acquit expenses. One can safely surmise that

there were problems with the then chairman before that. Despite the fact that the requirement was minuted at the commission's meeting on 21 March 1984, the then chairman and the present minister completely ignored it. The chairman went on his merry way, running up bills at the expense of the Northern Territory government and taxpayers and failing to meet the requirements which his own commission had put in place. That is the heart of this issue: he failed to meet the requirements that his own commission insisted he should meet, probably following representations to the commission by the Auditor-General.

As I said, 2 years later, he had failed to follow this directive and the commission had failed to enforce it, as had the member for Casuarina, then the Minister for Tourism. The amount of money is worth noting. At 30 June 1985, as I pointed out, the chairman had failed to properly account for \$33 133.86 that he had spent on his American Express card. By 26 February, this had increased to \$50 355. In other words, the amount had increased by over \$17 000 between July and February, an average expenditure of more than \$500 per week. That is a sizeable sum to be not accounted for.

Mr Speaker, that is bad enough but worse is to come. In early 1986, the chairman resigned to contest the seat of Araluen for the Country Liberal Party. He won that seat and, at the time of his resignation, he had not properly accounted for \$50 000 of Tourist Commission money - \$50 000, ultimately, of taxpayers' money.

Mr Coulter: What are you suggesting?

Mr SMITH: We are suggesting that a man who cannot follow the simple requirements of his own commission, as its administrative head, is not a fit and proper person to be a minister of the Crown of the Northern Territory. That is what we are suggesting, Mr Speaker.

We can safely assume that some of that \$50 000 was outstanding from at least early 1984 - 2 years earlier. One month later, as a member of parliament, the former chairman still had not accounted for the money and the Auditor-General had to threaten to take the matter further. Mr Speaker, I ask you what the government would have done if any other public servant had resigned from the public service in that situation. No doubt, it would have ensured that the full processes of the law were applied so that that situation could be resolved. Instead, what we have ...

Mr Perron: What offence was committed?

Mr SMITH: Are you finished?

Mr Perron: I am waiting for your answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, not only did the Minister for Tourism resign without properly acquitting \$50 000 of taxpayers' money, he became the endorsed candidate for the governing party. Now that really says something about the CLP's preselection procedures.

Mr Perron: He won too. That is more than your guy did.

Mr SMITH: That is right. It will be an embarrassment to you from this day on.

Mr Speaker, in that period, the Chairman of the Tourist Commission operated in direct contravention of the instruction of his commission and possibly his minister - hopefully his minister - and despite the repeated queries of the Auditor-General. It is clear that he regarded his American Express card as an extension of his own personal income. This man is unfit to be a minister of the Crown. He wilfully ignored a direction of his own board for 2 years. He failed to account properly for a sum of \$50 000 over a 2-year period. He ignored recommendations, if not directions, from the Auditor-General. He stood for the parliament of the Northern Territory without properly accounting for his American Express expenditure as head of a statutory authority of the Northern Territory.

That man is now in charge of the same statutory authority. He is now in charge of a statutory authority that has a budget of \$16m. What standards of fiscal propriety can we expect from that man, when he cannot even acquit his own expenses satisfactorily? He cannot acquit them satisfactorily even after he has been told specifically by the commission how to do it. Even after being given warnings by the Auditor-General, he still could not satisfactorily acquit his expenditures, and he did not do so until he had been sitting in this House for a month. If members opposite think that is satisfactory and suitable behaviour for a minister of the Crown, they are wrong. It is not an attitude that would be shared and supported by people outside this House.

Mr Speaker, another side of this relates to the minister then responsible, the member for Casuarina. He should have known about this but, according to the Auditor-General, he did nothing. Yet another side relates to the commissioners of the Tourist Commission who also knew about the problem and did nothing until they had the heavies put on them by the Auditor-General. The commissioners were sufficiently concerned - and I give them credit for that - to take a decision in March 1984. They fell down, however, in failing to implement that decision.

There is no getting away from the fact that a present minister of the Crown was unable, as head of a statutory authority, to fulfil the simple requirements expected of him in terms of acquitting his American Express expenditures. What makes it particularly outstanding and astonishing is that all of this happened at the very time that a previous Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, was embroiled in a major argument of his own about American Express cards. The number of previous Chief Ministers is becoming confusing. However, the result was that the most recently previous Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff, who came into office in May 1986, took the immediate step of saying that there would be no more use of American Express cards.

The whole brouhaha about American Express cards and the proper acquittal of expenses, together with the issue of whether expenses incurred against them were reasonable expenses, continued for 12 months or so. During that time, we had a situation where the present Minister for Tourism, then the Chairman of the Tourist Commission, was not taking any notice of the Auditor-General, his own commission or his own minister. That is not fit and proper behaviour for a minister of the Crown of the Northern Territory, and that is why he has to go. If he does not go voluntarily, the Chief Minister has no choice but to sack him because the Chief Minister cannot afford to have the reputation of his entire government sullied by the actions of 1 minister. The Chief Minister has to give himself a chance to put his government on the road, and the Minister for Tourism is expendable. The Minister for Tourism is expendable and, from the point of view of the Chief Minister, the minister has to go if the reputation of his government is to be maintained.

Mr Speaker, that is the case we have against the Minister for Tourism. Quite clearly, he has failed to exercise his responsibilities - simple responsibilities given to him by his own board - and he compounded that this morning by his attempts to obfuscate the issue, firstly by denying knowledge of it and secondly by attempting to give the impression that he had sorted it all out before he resigned from the Tourist Commission, when the evidence shows clearly that he had not. Mr Speaker, those actions make him unfit to be a minister of the Crown.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had no intention whatsoever of rising at this stage of the debate. My only reason for doing so is that the Minister for Tourism and the Chief Minister have not bothered to get to their feet. The Leader of the Opposition has arranged a series of documents for the benefit of the Minister for Tourism and, presumably, his Chief Minister. I find it absolutely extraordinary that neither the Minister for Tourism nor the Chief Minister is prepared to rise to his feet.

I understand and appreciate the severity of the situation that the Minister for Tourism finds himself in. I appreciate the embarrassment which he must feel when confronted with documents that he must have seen on many occasions. His lack of capacity to rise and speak in this debate, to address the accusations made of him by the Leader of the Opposition, indicates an admission of guilt. The accusations are substantiated unless he is prepared to get to his feet and satisfactorily explain why he did not perform in accordance with the requirements set out in the documents.

If it is an admission of guilt for the Minister for Tourism to fail to get to his feet, the Chief Minister is equally culpable. He must rise to defend the Minister for Tourism. If he is prepared to sit there in silence, it is tantamount to accepting that the minister is guilty as charged. While I am concentrating on the Chief Minister, I wonder when he knew about these bits of paper. I wonder when he knew, as a former CLP Treasurer ...

Mr Perron: Still.

Mr BELL: As a former CLP Treasurer and a recently renominated CLP Treasurer, just to get the niceties correct.

Mr Perron: What do you mean 'renominated'?

Mr BELL: More than any member of this House, certainly more than any member on the government benches, the Chief Minister should have an understanding of the severity of the accusations that have been so cogently put forward by my colleague. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Chief Minister has a great deal to answer for. Either he rises to speak in this debate or he accepts that the minister is guilty as charged. Likewise with the Minister for Tourism: either he gets up or he is guilty as charged.

Is anybody on the government benches going to tell me that, when the Chairman of the Tourist Commission became the candidate for Araluen, these issues were not addressed, that nobody in the Tourist Commission knew about this at that stage? Who in fact was Minister for Tourism at that stage? I would be very interested to know that. Was it in fact the now dismissed Chief Minister?

Mr Perron: The member for Casuarina.

Mr BELL: We know all about the honourable member for Casuarina. I am surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker ...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member has been in the gutter for quite some time but I think he just fell down into the sewer. He is making imputations that the honourable member is something less than honourable. I ask that he withdraw those remarks.

Mr BELL: I said that we all know about the member for Casuarina. If the Minister for Health and Community Services knows more about the member for Casuarina than I do, perhaps he had better tell us. I do not believe ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: ... that I was reflecting on him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I advise honourable members that, if I call order, I expect order. I do not need continued debate once I have reached a decision or have received advice from the Clerk on points of order. There is a point of order. By imputation, you have inferred something dishonourable against the honourable member for Casuarina and I ask that you withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly any imputation against the member for Casuarina.

Mr Dale: Get up on the footpath.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Health and Community Services will not interject.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the government is in a very difficult position. It is facing a controversial by-election in Flynn. It is issuing advertisements around Alice Springs in which it is quite unprepared to use the acronym CLP. Members of the government are feeling pretty ashamed of themselves. I suggest that, if they are on the nose in Alice Springs already, by the time this gets around they will be down in the gutter, to use the phrase of the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Let me get back to the point, Mr Deputy Speaker. The point is that, when the then Chairman of the Tourist Commission became the member for Araluen, there was a conspiracy of silence that involved the responsible ...

Mr Perron: Were you part of it?

Mr BELL: I am pleased that the Chief Minister is interjecting and showing a bit of life in this debate. There is a chance that he might get up to defend his minister. To respond to his interjection, the fact is that I did not know at the time. What I would like to know, and perhaps the Chief Minister can find out, is whether the member for Casuarina, who was the responsible minister at the time, knew about it. If so, there is clear evidence that there was a conspiracy of silence regarding these fiscal improprieties to which my colleague has quite appropriately drawn the attention of the House.

Bear in mind that this Assembly is responsible for the expenditure of \$1500m. If we are responsible for the expenditure of that amount of money, it behoves every minister in this House to act with propriety. My colleague has

demonstrated that serious improprieties have occurred, improprieties that more than warrant this motion of censure. I find it absolutely extraordinary that, even though we have tabled documents that originate from the Office of the Auditor-General, we are unable to get the Minister for Tourism or the Chief Minister to his feet in this debate.

The Minister for Tourism has changed from being Chairman of the Tourist Commission to being its minister. Now I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, where these documents come from. Obviously, they come from somebody in the Tourist Commission. I presume neither the minister nor the Chief Minister will attempt to say that there is any problem with the documents. The fact is that they were obtained by the opposition.

Mr Perron: How?

Mr BELL: I am quite happy to tell the Chief Minister how. I appreciate that he is deeply embarrassed and he wants to know. They were put in the mail to me in an unmarked envelope, an untraceable envelope.

Mr Poole: At your request.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I pick up the interjection from the Minister for Tourism. He says 'at your request'. If either the Minister for Tourism or the Chief Minister - and I appreciate their embarrassment - want to be satisfied in relation to that, I am more than happy to show them the envelope. I do not retain many envelopes but I make exceptions when they contain information like this. I will arrange for it to be put on an aeroplane from Alice Springs to Darwin this afternoon. If the Minister for Tourism wants to see it, he only has to get up and tell me so. I am prepared to provide it for him. The fact is that he will not be able to find any greater clue as to the origin of the documents by a study of the envelope than I was able to.

The Minister for Tourism can no longer be trusted by the employees of the Tourist Commission. When employees see that their minister has abused his position, it is impossible for them to trust him. That is exactly why we have moved this censure motion. It is more than called for because it is clear that the Minister for Tourism must resign. I am absolutely staggered that neither the Chief Minister nor the Minister for Tourism is prepared to offer anything by way of apology. If they do not get up when I sit down, Mr Deputy Speaker, it will be quite clear that they are guilty as charged and that the points made by the Leader of the Opposition are fully substantiated. That is what the people out there will believe, and rightly so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have a Chief Minister who is fairly new in the game. He is a reticent sort of fellow and this is his first test. I have known him for the 7-odd years I have been in this Assembly and I know he has a logical mind. Some people have been so unkind to suggest that his mind is like a rat trap. This is his first real test. Is he prepared to get up and defend his minister? I suspect that he will not. We have already seen one demonstration of his capacity in the context of this debate.

Basically, the government intends to just allow 2 or 3 opposition members to speak. Government members and ministers will sit there and crunch the numbers. It will look terrific. By golly, they are going to get their comeuppance, and it won't be too long.

Mr Coulter: You didn't give us much time.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, there has been a conspiracy of silence. Why didn't we know about this matter before? Secondly, how can the minister be trusted by employees of the commission in the future? Thirdly, will the Chief Minister stand up to the test? I suspect that he will not.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate in an attempt to bring some sanity into the consideration of the issue before the House. The Leader of the Opposition has moved to censure the Minister for Tourism as a consequence of events that occurred prior to his even becoming an elected member of this House. I am reminded of the present situation in the United States, where George Bush's vice-presidential running mate is the subject of some political controversy because of allegations that he received a knock-back from a very attractive woman in 1980.

Mr Bell: We promise that we won't do that.

Mr HATTON: You wouldn't want to.

I do not want to get down into the dregs of this, but I would like to bring this debate back to the reality of what we are talking about. There is no allegation of impropriety on the part of the Minister for Tourism.

Mr Ede: There sure is.

Mr HATTON: There is no allegation of impropriety in his duties either as a member of the Legislative Assembly or, more importantly, as a Minister for Tourism. What has been raised is the issue of what can be described, at best or at worst, as administrative inefficiency during his period as Chairman of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Mr Smith: Financial impropriety is a better description.

Mr HATTON: Then why do I say that? Not once in this entire debate has there been any suggestion that the minister, then the Chairman of the Tourist Commission, sought in any way to improperly expropriate moneys from the commission - no suggestion whatsoever. There has been no suggestion that he was seeking to misuse his credit card at all, merely that he had not filled in the paperwork to acquit the money.

Mr Smith: Repeatedly! That is the point.

Mr HATTON: I am pleased to have the opportunity to see the contents of the letter referred to by members opposite. I must say that this is the first time that I have seen it. It says that, on 30 June 1985, it appeared that an amount of \$33 133.86 remained unacquitted - not improperly spent, not improperly used for personal purposes, but unacquitted. Mr Speaker, that means that the paperwork had not been done. It goes on to say that, in the following year, there was an amount of some \$50 355. It does not tell us whether this included the previous amount of \$33 000-odd or whether that had been acquitted and that additional amounts had accumulated without being acquitted. Whatever the explanation, the fact is that all moneys have been acquitted and any disputed or questioned amounts have been repaid.

Mr Ede: That is what you say.

Mr HATTON: I say that, Mr Speaker. I say that because, as it turns out, in May 1986, I happened to become Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. At that time, the Auditor-General made me aware of concerns associated with



unacquitted expenses and the discussions that were occurring with the Tourist Commission itself. It is true.

I know from discussions with the present Minister for Tourism that he certainly had every intention of acquitting and paying that back, and had been trying to get appropriate accommodations of the information sorted out so that any balances could be adjusted as they might have needed to be. That was done. It is important that I say, as a fact of life which we should not deny, that the then Chairman of the Tourist Commission was not the only person affected. There was a great deal of confusion and concern about the use of government credit cards across government, and there were concerns because of delays in getting acquittals and balancing figures. At that time, members opposite were running campaigns left, right and centre on those issues.

As the Leader of the opposition said, to ensure that there would be proper accountability, in 1986 I put in place an alternative arrangement to avoid previous administrative difficulties - and they were no more than administrative difficulties - by eliminating government credit cards. People would use their personal credit cards and be reimbursed for expenditure afterwards. That arrangement has worked quite satisfactorily and has overcome the administrative difficulties. It certainly removed the opportunity for the opposition to engage in further smears.

Mr Speaker, I was aware of the matter. It was properly and promptly resolved with the proper balancing and accountability processes being completed. The Auditor-General was advised that all matters had been resolved as a matter of expedience in 1986. I was advised that the matters were fully resolved and all acquittals were in place by 30 June, which is the date when I happened to check. I was advised that the matter had been fully resolved and that all accounts had been properly and fully acquitted.

I remind honourable members that we are talking about events that occurred in what could be described as a prior life. We are not talking about anything that has occurred whilst the minister was either a member of this Assembly ...

Mr Smith: We are indeed!

Mr HATTON: ... or, certainly, events which have occurred since the member for Araluen became a minister in the Northern Territory government. There is no suggestion of impropriety. At worst, there is a suggestion of administrative inefficiency. That is what is being put to this House. If the opposition wants to make imputations, I will remind honourable members of debates in this House in early 1986, and I will remind the Leader of the Opposition of the exercises he engaged in to manipulate taxpayers' funds to his own advantage when he became Secretary of the Teachers Federation and talked the government into paying his salary.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Nightcliff to withdraw that imputation.

Mr HATTON: I withdraw any imputation, Mr Speaker. I merely refer to the fact that the salary of the Secretary of the Teachers Federation was being paid by the Northern Territory government whilst he was on leave without pay from the teaching service. During that period, when he was Secretary of the Teachers Federation, engaged on full-time duties for the Teachers Federation, he applied for and took advantage of subsidised public service loans. I am not saying that was illegal or improper but he certainly used the system to his advantage quite consciously. Certainly, it was within his rights to do

so. However, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to raise matters of high morality in this House to sustain his argument, he himself should resign.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Once again, the member for Nightcliff has made an imputation against the Leader of the Opposition. He has argued that he should be censured. If the member for Nightcliff wishes to do so, he can bring on a censure motion and we can debate it. However, he is not able to use this debate, which concerns the Minister for Tourism, to make imputations about the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: I am advised that there is no point of order and that there was no imputation.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this debate has shown 2 things. It has shown that the method of reporting in the Northern Territory is extremely questionable. At no time did the Tourist Commission ever make this House aware of the Auditor-General's concerns. That must be of grave concern to every member of this House. The other thing which this debate has shown is that the CLP has been poorly served by the recent palace coup. The only member to defend the indefensible has been a former Chief Minister. When the present Chief Minister or the minister himself gets up and tries to defend himself, there may indeed be some credibility or substance to the argument that this motion should not succeed. Until that happens, however, we are left in no doubt that the motion must succeed. The person who was purged from the palace is the only person who has had the guts to get up and try to defend the indefensible.

Mr Speaker, over a period, the Auditor-General made serious allegations and posed serious questions to the former Chairman of the Tourist Commission. There can be no question about that, from any interpretation of the document tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. There can be no other interpretation put on the events. The Auditor-General of the Northern Territory made very serious inquiries and was left with no alternative but to consider serious remedy unless the matter of the acquittal of the expenditure was dealt with expeditiously. It was not dealt with until the former Chairman of the Tourist Commission became a member of this House. Those are facts of life. There can be no doubt in anybody's mind that that is the actual series of events that occurred.

For this same person, the former Chairman of the Tourist Commission, to now be the minister in charge of that commission is absolutely incredible. The best face that the government can put on it is that the paperwork was not kept correctly, as the member for Nightcliff intimated, and that there was no mis-spending of public moneys. We are simply told that it was a case of sloppy accounting. That is the best face that this government can possibly put on those events. There can be retreat from that position. At best, the minister was an absolutely incompetent bookkeeper. He could not run a bookie's shop - that is what the member for Nightcliff said. He could not handle the finances of a kindergarten, yet he is now the Minister for Tourism. If members opposite think that can be condoned, they are off their heads. They are stark raving bonkers.

Mr Speaker, that is the best possible face that the government can put on this matter. If this House accepts that there has been no misuse of public moneys ...

Mr Poole: If you believe there has been, come outside and say it.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, over an extremely long period, the Auditor-General had grave difficulties in satisfying himself as to whether or not there was any misuse of public moneys, simply because he was never given adequate documentation as to where the money had been spent. That is a fact of life. If there has been no misuse of public moneys involved, the entire exercise is about incompetency. I am not talking about the incompetency of some grade 4 clerk in the public service. I am talking about the incompetence of the head of a statutory authority. If the government wants to reduce this charge to one of incompetence, how can it sustain that person in the position of being in charge of that incompetence?

Mr Coulter: What is the charge?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the motion is before the House. This House in fact expresses a lack of confidence in ...

Mr Coulter: Why?

Mr LEO: At the very least, it is incompetency. What we have is a situation of self-perpetuating incompetency. We have the fools in charge of the fools. That is the very least one can say. It cannot be reduced from that. We have a dunce running the farm. The Auditor-General has said as much in his correspondence. He noted that, over an extended period of time, adequate documentation was not supplied to satisfy his requirements. The very least charge that can be made in relation to that is one of incompetence. This incompetence is being perpetrated in the ministry. If members opposite do not understand that, they are off their heads. They are stark raving mad. This will prove to the entire Northern Territory and to Australia what we on this side of the House have known for ages - that they are a collection of knaves and fools. The Auditor-General says it and the Chief Minister has not bothered to deny it. The minister has not risen to try to refute the allegations. Nobody has tried to do that. In fact, what is being sustained in this debate is what we on this side of the House have known for ages.

If members opposite do not attempt at least to defend the indefensible, they are admitting to this House and to the Northern Territory that they condone incompetence and that they are incompetent because they cannot do anything else. They have to get up and at least try to defend him, Mr Speaker.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, firstly, I think I should simply point out that the Auditor-General has made no allegation against me whatsoever and never has. A second point, which seems to be lost on the opposition, is that we are not talking about American Express expenses on a government card. We are talking about my own personal expenses on my own personal American Express card. Thirdly, at the time of the events under discussion, just prior to my leaving the Tourist Commission, I was travelling for approximately 100 to 150 days a year. At that time, at no stage did I accept any moneys from the Tourist Commission. I travelled and charged my travelling expenses. I paid for functions that were attended on many occasions by numerous people - travel agents etc - on my credit card. There is no question of my seeking or getting any financial advantage whatsoever from the way I conducted my personal expenses. I am not guilty of any offence, I am not guilty of any dishonesty and I am certainly not guilty of doing anything that I am ashamed of 4 years later.

When I decided to stand for this House in the election in May, obviously I made a fairly hurried decision to leave the Tourist Commission. A number of

matters were outstanding at that time. I was asked by the Tourist Commission and, in turn, had a meeting with the Tourist Commission accountant and went through all outstanding acquittal forms. Basically, that is what we are talking about: a piece of paper which had various amounts of money on it covering each month that I had travelled. There were a number of months - I think, if my memory is correct, and we are talking about 4 years ago - 2 or 4 months for which the Tourist Commission did not have the documentation in support of those acquittals. They, in turn ...

Mr Smith: Who was head of the Tourist Commission at the time? Wasn't it you?

Mr POOLE. No. It was after I had left the Tourist Commission.

If my memory is correct, the matter was raised at a Tourist Commission meeting on 29 May. The Tourist Commission itself said that it was awaiting some supporting documentation from American Express and was quite happy with the progressive acquittal of my expenses up to that date. When the final amount arrived, the acquittal was made and the balance of moneys due to the Tourist Commission was paid on request by myself.

I am not guilty of anything. Obviously, the system was at fault but it is extremely hard when one is travelling for nearly half the year, sometimes for fairly long periods. One might come back and spend a long weekend at home before heading off again on another trip to sell the Northern Territory around Australia. With that sort of schedule, it is very difficult to sit down in the 3 or 4 days between trips and physically acquit expenditures by putting all the receipts and documentation together and keeping oneself up to date. All that I ever did was fall behind in a number of month's acquittals ...

Mr Smith: By 2 years.

Mr POOLE: Over a 2-year period, certainly not by 2 years.

The Auditor-General regularly audited the commission. The final report in 1986 - the section 67 report to the minister - raised no matters which warranted reporting. That is a fact of life. I never at any time received any letters from the Auditor-General in my capacity as Chairman of the Tourist Commission raising any substance to any of the allegations that the opposition has made. We certainly received criticisms of the way acquittal expenses were processed and so did many other authorities in the Northern Territory. I am certainly not guilty of any impropriety and I completely reject the opposition's want of confidence motion.

Mr Coulter: Did you hear what he said?

Mr EDE (Stuart): I heard what he said, Mr Speaker. He did not at any stage refute any of the allegations that we have made against him. What has he been charged with?

Members interjecting.

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

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, he is charged that, after March 1984, his commission was so unhappy with the way that he was acquitting his American Express charges that it stated - and it is referred to in this document - 'that, on 21 March 1984, the commission resolved that the chairman would provide ...'.

Mr Coulter: Would the honourable member table the document?

Mr EDE: It is the same document. You have it. Can't you read?

Mr Coulter: It would be nice if you would quote and say where you are getting it from.

Mr EDE: I am quoting. Mr Speaker, I will start again. Referring to a meeting on 21 March 1984, the Auditor-General quotes from the minutes of that meeting at which the commission 'resolved that the chairman would provide monthly interim statements to acquit expenses'. In March 1984, the member for Araluen, then Chairman of the Tourist Commission, was put on monthly accounts. The commissioners were so dissatisfied with the way the chairman was handling this matter that, in March 1984, he was directed to provide monthly accounts.

Mr Speaker, let us move on to 30 June 1985 - 15 months later. The Auditor-General states that the audit revealed that the chairman's expenses of \$33 133.86 were unacquitted at balance date, which was contrary to what he had been instructed to do by his immediate bosses, the commissioners, over a period of 15 months. He might wish that to be regarded as a mere peccadillo. It certainly is not. It is a continuing disregard for a lawful order from his bosses. There is no other face that can be put on it. That is the bottom line. For that period, he did not obey the lawful order of the commission. The June 1985 figures quoted in the document show that. The next statement refers to November 1985, another 5 months later. The expenditure still was not acquitted. By this stage, we have 20 months of month by month absolute and contemptuous disregard for the lawful order of his bosses.

In the light of that behaviour, anybody would ask about the then chairman's attitude to his bosses, the commissioners. What was his attitude to the orders that they gave him? He showed complete and utter disregard for them. He treated them with absolute contempt! He refused to take any notice whatsoever of the directives issued to him. With that attitude to the orders of the commissioners, is he a fit and proper person to sit in this House as minister responsible for the Tourist Commission? He is now the minister. He has to set standards for that commission. He has to tell the commissioners how they are to operate, when everybody in that commission must know that, when he was chairman, he had absolute and utter disregard for his bosses. How can we have confidence in the operations of the commission under his tutelage? How is anybody to have that confidence when he has demonstrated an utter disregard for the orders of his bosses? That is the minimum charge, Mr Speaker.

It is not a simple matter of inefficiency, although inefficiency is certainly part and parcel of it. A person who has an obligation to obey a lawful order in relation to the acquittal of finance and who then disregards that lawful order is guilty of financial impropriety. That is what this is! It is financial impropriety in terms of the rules laid down by the commission. Furthermore, it did not stop in November 1985. By 28 February 1986, the amount had risen to \$50 355. The member for Araluen, the then chairman, had so little regard for the orders of his bosses that not only did he not provide monthly statements but he increased the outlays on the card by another \$17 000. He showed absolute and contemptuous disregard for the orders of his bosses. How can a person like that sit here as a minister of the Crown, as a person who is responsible for the finances of the very organisation which he treated with such deliberate and utter contempt?

A number of questions are still outstanding. Why didn't he follow the commissioners' order? Could he acquit the amounts? Was he having problems acquitting them? We do not know. He has not explained that to us. How much did he eventually acquit by vouchers? Did he have to put in some cash of his own to make up the amount required? He has not answered any of those questions. He refused to answer the first question in question time and he basically denied any knowledge of the \$50 000. As if anybody could be in hock for \$50 000 on his credit card and fail to remember it!

Either the minister is a very wealthy man or he has a very short memory. Perhaps he has a very convenient memory. He forgot that, for this period from March 1984 - and, by inference, before that - until at least the end of 1986, he lived the life of Riley on his credit cards. In question time this morning, he refused to state that he had any knowledge of these matters which, on 28 February 1986, had reached a point at which the Auditor-General was absolutely frustrated and fed up with the lack of action by the chairman and, indeed, the then Minister for Tourism. The Auditor-General stated: 'My previous reports to the minister and the commission have had no apparent corrective action'.

Mr Finch: What does 'apparent' mean?

Mr EDE: It means that the matter was still outstanding. The minister knew about it and the commissioners knew about it. The commissioners had taken action. They had attempted to put the chairman on monthly acquittals. He had not taken any notice of that and, for some 20 months, he had continued in absolute disregard of their directive. In absolute frustration, the Auditor-General stated: 'Given that the minister and the commissioners have taken no corrective action, I must now consider what alternatives or additional reports I should make in the event that future audits reveal that corrective action has not been taken'.

The commissioners, hopefully the minister, the Auditor-General and the then Chief Minister all had to be arraigned against the member for Araluen before he would obey a lawful order. They all had to say to him: 'You will acquit those accounts'. That was when they finally got him to do it. Mr Speaker, I ask whether a person who had to be subjected to all that force to obey a lawful directive is a fit and proper person to now take control of the piggy bank. Of course he is not. It is on that basis that we are rightly and properly censuring the Minister for Tourism.

We have not, as yet, got all the details. If the minister really believes that he can clear himself, he will have to agree to table in this House the details of the expenditure and the details and dates of the acquittal. That is the only way he can demonstrate that he was complying with the lawful order. We will have to see whether he actually complied with it. People in this House have not only the right but the obligation to check that out. We know that, 2 years after the matter first arose, it was still unresolved. Honourable members will also remember that we did not receive the audited reports of the Tourist Commission for a considerable period because, at one stage, it was 12 months behind in its annual reports to this parliament, which was conveniently around the period we have been discussing.

We can accept, on the face of it at this stage, that the matter was apparently cleared up by 30 June 1986, well after the current minister had come into this parliament. It was something which occurred prior to his entry into parliament and continued after he entered parliament. He has not denied that. He will have to table all the details in this House: when he did his

acquittals; what the amounts were for; the vouchers that he used to acquit his expenses; and any details of any cash that he had to put in himself to make up the amount. I am not saying that any cash was involved but, if it was, it obviously raises another question. Mr Speaker, we have made it quite clear why the Minister for Tourism is being censured in this House. By his continued and flagrant disregard for a lawful order regarding finance and the handling of finance, he has demonstrated that he is not a fit and proper person to be a minister in this Assembly.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to this censure motion against the Minister for Tourism, there are a couple of points that I would like to make. The main point hinges on what the member for Stuart said with regard to a short memory. In defence of my colleague, when members of the opposition speak about accounts being outstanding for a period of some 2 years, they are quite incorrect. It is not inconceivable to have running accounts that extend from month to month. I can give an example. It is not inconceivable that tickets would be purchased in the Northern Territory for a minister and other members of a party who are to travel around the world. The reservations could be made in Darwin. These days, an around-the-world ticket costs anything between \$8000 and \$10 000. On arrival in New York, half that fare is still required in order to return to Darwin. It is not inconceivable that the remaining tickets could be surrendered and different reservations made and tickets obtained before the party moves on to its next port of call. Because of the way trips are organised and tickets issued, it is sometimes easier to buy a new ticket for the outstanding legs of the trip than it is to try to exchange portions of the original ticket where changes have to be made.

In those earlier years, the then Chairman of the Tourist Commission had to travel extensively in order to establish offices in Tokyo, Los Angeles, Singapore and London. It is not inconceivable that his accounts, once they were paid on American Express, came back some 60 days or even 90 days later. That would not be unusual. Sometimes one might sign one's American Express card or cheque on departure from a hotel, but the documentation might not get back to American Express for 30 or 40 days. One would probably be billed for that about 21 days later. It is not inconceivable to have accounts running on over a period of 18 months. That does not necessarily indicate that a particular account has been outstanding for 18 months.

I think that is a point that the member for Stuart picked up when he said that the current Minister for Tourism has a short memory. It is very difficult to remember whether a particular leg of the trip that you paid for out of Los Angeles cost \$1600 or \$5500, when you are back in Australia 3 months later. How would you know? You would not know what the computation was until you got back to Australia and until such time as that particular fare was converted back into Australian dollars. It is very difficult.

More importantly, honourable members opposite have not made any mention of what the Report of the Auditor-General at 30 June 1986 said. That is the area we are talking about. Page 23, under the heading 'Interim Audit', says: 'Report to the minister under section 67 raised no matters which warranted reporting'. Yet honourable members opposite say that, when I was the minister, I did not know what was going on. The Auditor-General had a responsibility, if there was something going on, either to advise the minister and, in turn, advise the Chief Minister, who had the responsibility of the audit.

Mr Ede: It says, 'Report to the minister'. Are you saying he is lying?

Mr DONDAS: I have not got a copy of that yet.

Mr Ede: Are you saying that the Auditor-General is lying?

Mr DONDAS: No, I am reading what is said there.

Mr Ede: I am reading what he says here.

Mr DONDAS: I am sorry. You will find that the Chief Minister has some later information which he will read out to you in a minute. I can only go by what the Auditor-General said in his audit report in relation to statutory corporations for the year ending 30 June 1986. Let us forget that report.

Let us look at the 1987 Report of the Auditor-General on Prescribed Statutory Corporations, where it relates to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. Under the heading 'Interim Audit' on page 10 of that report, it refers to the matter we are talking about:

1.16.4: The attention of the commission was drawn again to the need for adequate user manuals, as well as enhanced controls for the accounting system and to deficiencies in reconciliations of the Trust ledger. The chairman advised of remedial action taken and proposed.

Mr Speaker, nowhere in the Auditor-General's reports is there any inference that there have been any improprieties. I would like to know from the member for MacDonnell when he received that letter. He asked if members on this side would like to see the envelope. I would like to see the date on the postmark to see whether members opposite are playing shenanigans. If they had known about the matter since before the commencement of these sittings, if they had heard about it on 10 May or 15 June or 10 August, why didn't they raise it on the first sitting day? Why have they left it for this last sitting day? I ask the honourable member for MacDonnell to provide me with that envelope so I can see the franking date and determine whether this is a political attempt to stand down the Minister for Tourism.

Members opposite referred to my capacity whilst I was a minister. When one looks at the Auditor-General's reports, it is clear that there is nothing to indicate that there was anything untoward about the operations of the Tourist Commission. Members opposite accuse the Minister for Tourism of having a short memory. I ask the member for MacDonnell whether he can tell the details of his last credit charge on 16 August 1984? 4 years later, he cannot. Had he written to the former Chief Minister ...

Mr Ede: He didn't have that many noughts on the end.

Mr DONDAS: Talk about noughts - \$50 000, \$60 000. When you are moving around the world for 2 or 3 years, it does accumulate.

Mr Smith: That was the problem.

Mr DONDAS: I will give you one example. When the former Leader of the Opposition went on an around-the-world tour in 1984 or 1985, he spent something like \$21 000 in 5 weeks. The air fare was probably \$10 000 or \$11 000. The former Chairman of the Tourist Commission had been travelling for 5 years. It easily adds up.

Mr Ede: The amount is not the problem. It is the lack of acquittal.



Mr DONDAS: The Auditor-General made no specific mention other than the fact that there were some concerns. Those concerns were expressed to the Tourist Commission, not to the minister or the former Chief Minister. Let us look at the members of the commission at the time. There were some very upstanding businessmen from the community. They might have been Bill King and Richard Ryan. Both of those gentlemen are known to us. There were only 2 members of the commission in those days, plus the chairman. Now there are 3 members, plus the chairman. Neither of those gentlemen got in touch with any minister or the Chief Minister to say that they had a problem with the chairman. Nevertheless, members opposite are saying that he has disregarded every direction by his commission.

The Leader of Government Business has given me a letter which I will table. It is addressed to the Minister for Tourism and it is dated 31 October 1986. I quote:

In compliance with section 67 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, the accounts and records of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission for the year ending 30 June 1986 have been inspected and audited. My interim report, dated 21 May 1986, advised that I would be examining the status of the previous chairman's unacquitted travelling expenses. I now advise that the matter has been finalised. My report, required by section 68 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, was issued today under separate cover.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable member seek leave to table that document?

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the Auditor-General's letter.

Leave granted.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I call on the member for MacDonnell once more to provide me with a copy of the letter - at some stage within the next 72 hours will be fine.

Mr Bell: Right now?

Mr DONDAS: It can be faxed up if you like. I would like to see the franking stamp on the envelope. I am quite sure that it will demonstrate that the member for MacDonnell has been sitting on it for quite some time and has decided, because the opposition has had a lousy week, to try to place the government in an embarrassing position and at the same time ...

Mr Ede: You do that yourselves.

Mr DONDAS: ... embarrass the minister for Tourism who is working very hard to try to develop the Northern Territory through his portfolio.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the member for Casuarina suggested that there would be some impropriety if I had received this correspondence prior to the beginning of these sittings. I point out to the honourable member that I will indeed ensure that the envelope comes here. I will also point out to him - and I will not read through the litany - that the opposition has dealt with a large number of issues during these sittings.

The substance of the documents pertaining to the minister was discussed by the opposition prior to the sittings, as was quite appropriate. I make no apology for that and I am more than happy to provide that envelope for the honourable member. I will not only provide it for him; I will do so at my expense. If he had told me an hour ago, I might have been able to get it on today's plane.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, in this day of modern electronics, there are fax machines.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member speaking to the motion?

Mr COULTER: No, Mr Speaker, just making a point.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I find it pretty difficult to get excited about this motion. I have been here a long time and I have witnessed the opposition pulling stunts like this over many years. This seems to be just another one designed to gain a bit of mileage in the press. It is probably convenient for the opposition. It is the sort of issue it would like to tie into the Flynn by-election. It is the last day of sittings. The opposition has saved it up until now, no doubt, in order to squeeze maximum mileage out of it. I guess that is part of what politics is all about but it does indicate that motions like this do not need to contain any substance. They are part of our parliamentary process.

In his former role, the Minister for Tourism administered an organisation which now spends \$16m a year. When he started, it was less than that. I recall the days when, shortly after the minister became head of the Tourist Commission, the government decided to substantially increase the commission's funding. I think the amount was \$10m a year, which was a quantum leap and very much a part of the Northern Territory government's tourism development strategy and its recognition of the value of the industry to the Northern Territory.

The minister, then the chairman, was the person who brought forward the proposals on which that \$10m would be spent. It was part of a continuing campaign. Over the 6 years that he was its chairman, in the order of \$50m, \$60m or even \$70m went through the Tourist Commission under his control. As chairman, he had to travel very extensively and continuously across the world. Whilst that may sound like a pretty glamorous job, having done about a fiftieth of that amount of travelling, I certainly do not envy him for having had to do that.

He was establishing a worldwide network of tourist promotion agencies on behalf of the Northern Territory, an initiative which has been very successful. I think we need to bear that in mind because we have heard much today about how this supposedly terrible man did not fill in all the bits of paper he should have at the speed that the system requires and therefore he should be thrown out into the streets. There was no reference whatsoever to his contribution during his period as chairman.

Of course, members of the opposition would not really appreciate what his role involved at that time. They cannot come to grips with figures like \$50 000. For anyone to have that amount charged to a credit card is mind-boggling to them. It has to be a gross waste of money or all beer and champagne. They really need to get out into the wide world and see what it is all about. I was delighted recently when the Leader of the Opposition decided, for the first time in his life, to go overseas and actually see

something of the rest of the world. He went off on a uranium study and I am very pleased about that. He came back with the scales peeled from his eyes and is now a born-again promoter of uranium mines. We think that is pretty good, but it just goes to show what can happen when you travel the world - you might learn something and have a few of your views changed. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition might travel a bit more because, every time he goes on a trip, he will learn a great deal about what life is all about.

As Chairman of the Tourist Commission, the honourable member travelled around the world putting his expenses on his own credit card. I do not know of many private enterprise employees who are expected to put company expenses on their personal credit cards - the air fares, the accommodation, the entertainment, which is a very important part of tourist promotion, the functions and seminars. He had been putting those expenses on his personal credit card and I do not think that many people are asked to do that. Of course, the penalty for being involved in those sorts of things is the heap of paperwork that follows you around the world. You have to stop now and again and catch up with it.

The evidence that the Leader of the Opposition put forward in support of his motion is a demonstration that the systems of financial administration and audit work. That is what has been demonstrated.

Mr Smith: Belatedly.

Mr PERRON: But they work.

Mr Speaker, the reason that we have audits is so that someone runs the ruler over what is being done by government departments and statutory authorities and, if he finds inconsistencies or inappropriate practice or lags in practice and procedures, he highlights it and indicates that it must be fixed. That is exactly what has happened. The system is working. It would be terrible if we did not have an audit system and these things went on forever without being remedied. Certainly, the minister had some salt put on his tail by the system for not getting the acquittals up to date. That is how the system works.

The Auditor-General writes continuously to departments and authorities during the course of a year, pointing out that he has found this or that loose practice which should be attended to. He asks to be informed when it has been done. That is normal practice which occurs all the time. It has happened ever since auditors have been in place. A great deal of correspondence goes back and forth. Members opposite may be receiving brown paper parcels full of papers; they may even get some more one day. They will find that it is not uncommon for Auditors-General to write to departments asking for items to be cleared up. Every single Auditor-General's report contains little sections which relate to various departments.

Mr Ede: Interesting.

Mr Coulter: Have a look in here. There are various examples.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, can I have protection from this cross-Chamber chatter?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of Government Business will cease interjecting while his minister is speaking.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, every Auditor-General's report contains examples of loose practice which have been discovered in the course of a year. I am sure that honourable members keenly thumb through the Auditor-General's reports each time they are tabled. It is really no different from year to year because there is always a juicy bit of meat somewhere. One of the departments or authorities always gets a bit of a lash for not having run an absolutely shipshape system from the beginning of the financial year to the end. The reports of the federal Auditor-General always contain masses of information about some of the absurd practices which go on in government departments. Sums of money are lost, vehicles sold the day after they are purchased and all sorts of strange things happen. In a bureaucracy which spends billions of dollars and employs 100 000-odd public servants, one would expect some absurd things to happen. The purpose of the audit system is to monitor the financial accounting system of government, to minimise any possibilities of diversion of taxpayers' funds from their appropriated course, and to recommend methods of upgrading systems to avoid waste.

The opposition's motion has no substance. There is not a single suggestion either in the documents tabled by the Leader of the Opposition or in the arguments of any opposition member, that a single cent of taxpayers' money has in any way been diverted for the Minister for Tourism's personal use. Yet we have a motion which basically calls for the minister to be dismissed. All he is guilty of is getting on with the job in his former role, prior to his election to this House. He did that very successfully and we are reaping the rewards today. The Territory is reaping the rewards for the efforts that he made. He contributed more to the Northern Territory, before being elected to the Legislative Assembly, than the combined members of the opposition are likely to do for the rest of the time they are here.

The Auditor-General, as has been indicated by the member for Casuarina, has given a total clearance on this matter. There can be no mark whatsoever standing against the Minister for Tourism's name as a result of his activities in regard to administrative procedures in the Tourist Commission. The opposition is doing no more than grandstanding and wasting the time of this Assembly. That is a shame. We have business to get on with and the government totally rejects the motion.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, this morning, members of this House, the community and the media have seen the down side of politics. We have seen a grubby attempt - and it was only an attempt - to assassinate the character of the member for Araluen, the Minister for Tourism. This attempt was based on a letter, a letter that turned up in an unmarked envelope in the middle of the night at the member for MacDonnell's residence or office. We do not know when that happened but we can assume that it was some weeks ago. We can only imagine the glee on the member for MacDonnell's face when he thought he had something that would do some harm and score some political points. The letter contained a memorandum from the Auditor-General which pointed out that there were some problems regarding acquittals and accounting procedures. There was no imputation of any dishonesty. There was no suggestion that there has been an impropriety. There was a direct reference to failure to acquit according to accounting procedures. Solely on the basis of that letter, we have seen a rather sordid performance aimed at gaining some political points for a forthcoming by-election.

Mr Speaker, I certainly hope that members of the media who have had the misfortune to witness this grubby attempt will look behind the rhetoric that we have heard from members opposite today and understand exactly what this censure motion is about and why it occurred. The Leader of the Opposition

made no claims of dishonesty. The reason why he did not was because he could not. There was no evidence of dishonesty. What he claimed was that there had been a contravention of the rules. He pointed out that there had been a failure to dot the i's and cross the t's. The Leader of the Opposition is not perfect himself. How many times have we seen him transgress the rules of debate in this House? How many times has he been called to order because he did not cross the t's or dot the i's? What sort of play has been made in this House of his personal business and some of the mistakes he has made? That is no reason to assassinate the character of a person and to try to suggest that somehow he is dishonest and has misappropriated taxpayers' funds.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the instigation of this debate today demeaned the Leader of the Opposition and I think he probably feels a bit guilty about his grubby part in it.

Mr Smith: Not at all.

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, Mr Speaker, in retrospect, he probably believes that the member for MacDonnell put him right in because he was the one that received the letter in the first place.

Mr Smith: Not at all.

Mr MANZIE: What did the member for MacDonnell say? He said nothing. He made no accusations. Again, I ask the media to look beyond the rhetoric that he spouted and see that there was absolutely no substance in what he said.

We cannot discuss anything the member for Nhulunbuy said because it was a performance which would not have received favour in a preschool. I need say no more about it.

The member for Stuart was quite enthusiastic in saying that somehow or other the member for Araluen did not do what his boss instructed him to do. Isn't that terrible? How does the member for Stuart behave? I believe that the boss of this House, in terms of debating, is the Speaker. The member for Stuart gave a demonstration last week of how little he believes in following the instructions of his boss, so much so that he was punished for it.

The Auditor-General has stated in very clear and concise terms that the matters were attended to and that there was absolutely no impropriety at all on the part of the member for Araluen. That is in black and white in the Auditor-General's report on statutory authorities, dated 1986. Members opposite knew that, Mr Speaker. If they did not, they are guilty of failing to carry out the most cursory investigation to substantiate the information contained in the document which they have been quoting from. I believe that they were fully aware that there was no impropriety. They were fully aware that the Auditor-General was totally satisfied with the acquittals as they were provided and carried out by the Tourist Commission.

It is a shameful day in this House when a censure motion is brought forward to assassinate the character of a member, based on nothing but innuendo and a letter which brought to the attention of the commission some problems of accounting. Those problems were rectified and the Auditor-General was totally satisfied. He said so in his report. Again, I ask the media to look at what I believe is a very sad day in this House. The opposition has lost any ability it may have ever had to seize on matters of fact. Members opposite feel free to make grubby accusations based on nothing and in contravention of the facts contained in the Auditor-General's report which

quite clearly points out that matters were entirely in order. Mr Speaker, the motion has no place in this House and it deserves instant defeat.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the government's cover-up on this issue started with the minister's response to the opposition's first question in question time this morning and ended with the last words of the last speaker on the government side. Mr Speaker, let us refresh our memories. My first question to the minister this morning asked him whether he could confirm that a senior officer of the Tourist Commission had failed to acquit his expenses. His answer was: 'I cannot confirm that. The figures involved are totally strange to me'. Mr Speaker, that answer went very close to misleading the House, as we subsequently found out.

In response to the second question, the minister's case of selective amnesia improved a little. He was able to confirm that there was a problem and then, by the very clever use of tense, he attempted to give the impression that he had sorted it out before he left his job. I will read the question and answer because it is quite instructive. My question was:

Can the minister confirm that, at the date he resigned as Chairman of the Tourist Commission to contest the Araluen by-election for the CLP, he had not given an explanation for an amount of \$50 355 of Tourist Commission and taxpayers' money, which he had spent on American Express cards?

The minister then replied: 'I can confirm that I had addressed those matters and had acquitted various amounts of travel expenditure'. Mr Speaker, notice the tense. The word 'had' is used. Read in conjunction with the question, the answer gives a very clear impression that he fixed it up before he resigned as Chairman of the Tourist Commission. In our third question, however, we got to the actual situation. It is quite clear that he did not fix it up until well into May 1986, after he had been in this House for at least a month.

Mr Speaker, let us turn to minister's defence which is that it was simply an administrative error. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, it is good to see that members opposite are prepared to defend people among their own ranks who make serious administrative errors. It is a new standard in public administration, I must say. It is a serious administrative error that would get a public servant into severe trouble but, because this man happens to be a member of the government, it is covered up. It is an administrative error. The Chief Minister said something to the effect that it was a simple form that the minister forgot to fill out. If it was a simple form, why did not he do the simple thing and fill it out? That is the explanation that we are demanding and that is the answer we do not get.

We come next to the very interesting business of the personal credit card. It is amazing what you find out in this House if you listen, Mr Speaker. As part of his defence, the minister stated that he had used his personal credit card. Later, he said that, after the amounts had been acquitted, he had to pay money back. If you are using your personal credit card, how do you get yourself into a position where you have to pay money back? There is only one answer to that. You send the receipts from your personal credit card into the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, which reimburses you. Later, when it acquits the amounts, you pay back the amounts owing for any personal items which have been charged to the card. That is what has happened, isn't it? I am glad that the honourable minister is agreeing.

We have a situation, over a 2-year period, where this man in effect received an interest-free loan from the government. That is something significant that has come out of this and that is one of the real reasons why we demand that those accounts be tabled, and that the full acquittal be tabled so that the people of the Northern Territory can see to what extent the minister was ripping off them off by using taxpayers' funds as an interest-free loan. That is a new and more disturbing element about the whole business.

I would like the Chief Minister - and he will be getting these questions on notice - to tell the public of the Northern Territory how many of those nice little fiddles go on, whereby government members claim everything and, at a later date, pay for personal expenditures. That is just not on. If one positive thing comes out of this, I hope that it will be the cessation of this sort of abuse, if it is still continuing. It is a deplorable practice and is a rip-off of the funds of the taxpayers of the Northern Territory.

I would like to thank the member for Nightcliff for his contribution. At least he had the guts to get up and defend the indefensible. I would like to especially thank him because he finally proved our point about the seriousness of this particular case. The Chief Minister said that the whole episode was an example of the system working properly. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that when the Auditor-General had to go to the former Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff, and express his concern about what was happening in the Tourist Commission, that is not an example of the system working properly. That is an example of the system having fallen down. The Auditor-General has a very clearly specified role to fulfil and, if the system is working properly, it does not involve going to the Chief Minister and expressing his concern. I thank the honourable member for Nightcliff for his contribution because that, as much as anything else in this whole debate, confirmed the seriousness with which the Auditor-General regarded this matter and the seriousness with which this Assembly should regard it.

The Chief Minister, in his pathetic attempt to justify his minister, could do no better than say that the system was working - and, obviously, it was not - and that the minister failed to follow up the bits of paper required. Someone on that side of the House said - perhaps the minister himself - that they were simple bits of paper. It was a simple business to fill them out. Equally, there were 2 years when not one of those simple bits of paper was filled out. That is essentially the nub of this argument and the nub of our reason for moving a censure motion.

The member for Casuarina gave the seasoned traveller's tips on how to travel around the world. Of anyone in this parliament, he should know how to do that because he has done more of it than anybody else, probably more than all of us put together. I thank him for his contribution to this debate as well, because he contributed the letter of the Auditor-General dated 31 October 1986. In order to help us remember what it said, I will read out the relevant part: 'My interim report, dated 21 May 1986, advised that I would be examining the status of the previous chairman's unacquitted travelling expenses'. Note the date, Mr Speaker - 21 May 1986 - the very day on which the commission's secretary had given a guarantee that the acquitted receipts of the honourable minister opposite would be given to the Auditor-General. Thanks to this Auditor-General's letter, we have further evidence of another deadline that the honourable minister opposite has broken.

Mr Perron: Absolute rubbish.

Mr SMITH: Rubbish, do you say? That is very nice of you. The Auditor-General does not say that it is rubbish. The Auditor-General said, on 21 May, which was the deadline, that he still did not have the information and I am ...

Mr Poole: The Tourist Commission was waiting for some information from American Express.

Mr SMITH: The Tourist Commission was waiting for some information from American Express on accounts that, at the latest, were incurred before 28 February 1986!

Mr Poole: Rubbish. Accounts that related to about a month before I resigned.

Mr SMITH: So there is more than \$50 000 involved now, is there? The amount of \$50 335 relates to the period to 28 February 1986. There is now obviously more, Mr Speaker.

Mr Poole: Less actually.

Mr SMITH: To conclude my point, there is incontrovertible evidence that the member opposite failed to comply with the 21 May deadline imposed on him. That is just another example of his contempt for the processes of a system which, according to the Chief Minister, was working in the interests of people in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the honourable - sorry, we do not have to call him 'honourable' any more - Ray Hanrahan, when he became the Minister for Tourism, said, 'I will travel anywhere, any time, to promote Territory tourism'. That is what he did. The slogan of the honourable member opposite might well have been: 'Have Amex, will travel'. What he forgets is that he had a responsibility when travelling. No one denies that he should have travelled, but what is equally undeniable is that he should have followed the conditions for acquittal that were put in place by his own commission. He has failed to do that.

Mr Leo: Such is their arrogance.

Mr SMITH: As the member for Nhulunbuy has just said by way of interjection, this is a typical example of the arrogant attitude of this government to the expenditure of the taxpayers' money. We have an admission from the honourable minister that he was receiving interest free loans from the Tourist Commission for a period of time. It will be very interesting to see the extent of the period of time and the amount of money involved. This facility certainly is not generally available. Nobody else that I know of can go along to a friendly statutory authority and ask for an interest free loan for a period of time to help him over a bad time.

Mr Poole: Rubbish.

Mr Perron: Come on, you know it is the other way round.

Mr SMITH: It is not the other way round. The honourable minister has confirmed that that is how it worked. I would ask the Chief Minister ...

Mr Hatton: He was the guy carrying the liability.



Mr Perron: It is his personal card.

Mr SMITH: That is right. He sent in all the receipts and was reimbursed by the Tourist Commission. At a later date, the Tourist Commission demanded reimbursement from him for his personal expenses, which it had already paid.

The Chief Minister might like to have a close look at that particular section of the Hansard. It is in his interests to find out whether that practice is continuing because it is an unacceptable practice. If people in the government who use Amex cards as a means of covering their expenses - and that is perfectly legitimate - are obtaining an interest free loan from the government as a result of that system, that is completely unacceptable.

The member for Araluen is unfit to continue as a minister of the Crown in the Northern Territory. He was not able, in the words of the members opposite, to undertake a simple procedure and fill out the forms that were required on a monthly basis by his own commission. He was unable to follow the requests - and later the demands - of the Auditor-General, that he do the right thing and fill out the forms as required by his own commission. He was unable to tidy up his affairs before he became an endorsed candidate for the parliament and, in fact, before he became a member of this parliament.

Mr Speaker, this incident is likely to go down in the annals of Australian political history. A senior public servant who moved into parliament could not fix up his debts and his obligations in his previous job. That would probably be unparalleled in this country and the member for Araluen has probably earned himself a small, if infamous, place in history. One thing is certain: he is an unsuitable person to be a minister of the Crown. If he cannot be trusted to look after his own expenses, if he cannot be trusted not to take interest free loans in the guise of paying off his Amex card, how can he be trusted to oversee a statutory authority that controls \$16.1m of the Northern Territory taxpayers' money? That is the bottom line. The member opposite has forfeited the trust of members of this House and the people of the Northern Territory because of his incompetence, because of his inability to undertake the simplest of administrative tasks and because, in a very real sense, he has been ripping off the system. Those are our reasons for moving this motion. Those are the reasons why the minister should resign. If he does not resign, I have no doubt that, in the next week or so, the Chief Minister will be forced to sack him.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

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

Noes 14

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

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER  
Report of Committee Established to Review Legislation  
Relating to Sites of Significance to Aboriginals

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table a copy of a report to the Chief Minister of the committee established to review legislation relating to sites of significance to Aboriginals.

The members of the committee were the then Solicitor General, Mr Brian Martin QC, Mr Don Darben and Mr Creed Lovegrove. The terms of reference of that committee were:

To inquire into, report upon and make recommendations in respect of: (a) the philosophy and policy regarding laws designed to appropriately protect areas which are sacred or otherwise of significance to Aboriginals; (b) the laws and the effect of the laws of the Northern Territory of Australia relating to the protection of, and prevention of the desecration of, sites in the Northern Territory of Australia that are sacred to Aboriginals or otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, including sites on Aboriginal land within the meaning of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and, in particular, laws regulating or authorising the entry of persons on those sites ...

It shall examine the procedures and practices adopted by the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and may inquire into the circumstances surrounding the registration of any particular site or sites as sacred sites in the register established and maintained by the authority under the provisions of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, investigate why use has not been made of the provisions of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act for the declaration of a place as a sacred site by the Administrator; and consider whether or not the composition of the authority is appropriate to its functions.

I will not proceed with a page by page analysis of the report. However, I refer honourable members to the section entitled 'Summary and Recommendations' and, in particular, to the recommendations listed on pages 12 to 16 of the report. I will touch on some of those recommendations, highlighting some of my initial reactions and raise some other issues which may well be relevant to the debate which is likely to ensue.

Mr Speaker, it is my intention to seek public comment both in respect of the report and issues concerning sites generally. In particular, I seek comment from the Aboriginal community, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and other interested parties, such as the Commonwealth government. Digressing for a moment, one needs only to have dealt with matters relating to Aboriginal land rights and sites for a short time to appreciate the complexity of the various issues. As the report identifies, there is myriad legislation, often overlapping, often uncertain in meaning, creating what in effect is a legal minefield around what are clearly important and often emotional issues.

The climate of conflict which led to the former Chief Minister's establishment of the review committee remains. Unfortunately, we still have a situation where, in many cases, the sacred sites authority, developers, land councils, traditional owners and custodians, and government are at loggerheads. Unfortunately, the authority continues not to comply with the

act. We still have not had a site put up for declaration. Sadly, this means that the only existing method under the legislation which would allow for a proper consideration of sites and consideration of vital issues of detriment is disregarded. Where is the justice, the natural justice, in that approach? I can appreciate the concerns of many in the mining industry when they say that they have not had a proper hearing. In the interests of all Territorians and in the interests of development, not just of our resources but of our people, it is incumbent on this government to take such action, to the extent possible within its legislative and executive capacity, as might reduce that conflict and provide a fair hearing for parties whose interests are affected.

I have qualified our capacity to act. We are restricted to a great extent by the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act. In that regard, however, I will be asking for Commonwealth cooperation and, if necessary, amendment to Commonwealth legislation. I am confident that the Commonwealth will be prepared to take a responsible attitude and will accept some of the responsibility it has placed on itself through the introduction of land rights legislation for the Territory and will accept the need for change. Both the interests of Aborigines and the economic development of Australia, in particular this part of Australia, depend on a sensible and rational approach being taken by the Commonwealth. Again, I am confident of a positive approach from the Commonwealth.

Mr Speaker, I will now deal specifically with some of the report's recommendations. Recommendation 4.9, which suggests that there be provision for 'open' sites - where entry is authorised without the need for individual permits in appropriate cases - is sensible for the reasons set out in the report. Recommendations 4.10 to 4.13 are, in my opinion, acceptable for the reasons set out in the report. There is a need for proper recognition of sites in a body of water.

The next important series of recommendations deal with the composition of the authority. This is an area requiring detailed consideration and, I would hope, detailed comment. This government wants to ensure that there is proper recognition and respect for Aboriginal culture and traditions. It is also important, in my opinion, that the decision-making processes in relation to sites involve Aborigines. Aborigines are more than capable of safeguarding Aboriginal interests and are certainly able spokesman for their various causes. It is important, therefore, that any role they have in relation to sites be their role and not that of intermediaries. I will ensure that any legislation which ensues will give Aborigines a chance to come to the forefront in these issues.

I would like generally to actively encourage more direct communication between Aborigines and the responsible minister. Again, this would create the much-desired perception that it is the Aborigines who are concerned with the protection of their sites. For too long, I believe, there has been a lack of direct contact between government and Aborigines. Instead, discussion is held with intermediaries present. A more direct approach will create an appreciation on both sides that we have more in common than differences. Such an approach can only assist in vesting better relations between all Territorians.

In dealing with the method by which sites might best be protected and the interests of affected parties be properly taken into account, it may be there should be provision in future legislation allowing for the input of a local member, by which I mean a senior custodian for the area where a site is up for

consideration. Taking the matter a little further, I would ask whether there is necessarily anything objectionable about obtaining input from a representative of the pastoral industry, the mining industry or a local government representative, as may be appropriate in certain matters. Such a process - and I only put it forward as a possible alternative - would perhaps allow a mechanism whereby the various interest groups, who on some occasions are in disagreement, can be brought to the table to discuss their differences and reach an amicable resolution.

It is my genuine belief that the majority of miners and pastoralists are willing to recognise the importance of sites and to protect them. Similarly, the majority of custodians are willing to accommodate the reasonable interests of their fellow Territorians. Ultimately, there will be a minority of occasions when conflict does arise and there is a need for decision. At this stage, I believe that the decision must rest with the minister. Whatever happens, we must create a mechanism which allows all parties an opportunity to be heard. We must provide natural justice and, as I have said, I am concerned that this does not exist under the current operating methods of the authority.

Recommendations 9.13 to 9.16 deal with the need for recognition of sites of significance to Aboriginal women and for women to deal with the registration of those sites. This is clearly one of the more important recommendations and I am anxious that interested parties, particularly Aboriginal women, put forward suggestions as to the manner in which the needs of Aboriginal women are best catered for in this regard.

Recommendation 10 concerns, in part, the definition of 'sacred site' in the act. I consider the recommendation sensible for the reasons set out in the report and I note that the approach is consistent with that taken by the Commonwealth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act. I consider that, apart from dealing with obvious inconsistencies in the definition, it will alleviate a lot of current misunderstandings which arise when all sites are seen by some as being lumped into a category of the highest significance which, clearly, many are not. There has long been talk about a graded system under which sites are classified according to their importance. There is no doubt that some sites are more important than others. I believe this situation needs either legislative recognition or, at the very least, administrative practices which take into account the different categories of sites.

The recommendations at 12.6 involve amendments to Commonwealth legislation and, in that regard, I will be contacting the federal minister. I note, however, the committee's comments regarding 'desecration'. I have some concerns regarding what was the proposed Commonwealth definition and I note that the Commonwealth has not proceeded with that part of the legislation. I also have problems with the word as it is now used in the legislation, it being an emotive word which, if the dictionary definition is any guide, would make it very difficult to prove an offence. I shall be considering the issue further.

Recommendation 14 obviously raises some issues of concern and it seems that an amendment is appropriate. Of course, the second part of the committee's recommendation is essential and I will be taking further advice.

Recommendation 16.4 is also a matter for some concern. The Territory has been given specific undertakings from the Commonwealth regarding amendments to the Australian Heritage Commission Act, particularly an amendment which would make it clear that that act does not apply to the Northern Territory in the

same way as it applies to the states. We received a written undertaking from Minister Cohen that such an amendment would be made. To this date, we have not seen anything happen. The Commonwealth has not so far honoured its undertaking. It has failed to explain why and I hope future approaches on this issue receive a more responsible response.

Recommendations 17.14(a) and (b) are noted. I understand that a deal of work has already been undertaken in this regard, and the matter is likely to be considered by Cabinet in the near future. These recommendations relate to legislation to protect native and historical objects.

Recommendation 17.14(c) is obviously important and I have mentioned it already. The recommendation should be read in conjunction with section 4.6, section 8 and appendix B of the report. The committee considers that there is a need for a review mechanism and puts forward a number of proposals. It recommends that ultimate authority in respect of sites rests with the minister and suggests that we follow the approach adopted in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act, a Commonwealth act where ultimate responsibility also rests with the minister responsible for that legislation. I agree with that approach. I consider such a provision to be essential if we wish to further enhance the credibility of the site recognition process. For there to be general public confidence, there must be a mechanism for review or testing of procedures, and the ultimate decision-maker in this most controversial issue must be a person squarely answerable to the public - that is, the minister.

Recommendation 17.15 is also sensible, given that it recognises that there may be a need to review decisions taken in respect of sites where changing circumstances call for a reconsideration.

Mr Speaker, those are the substantive comments that I wish to make. I ask for a constructive debate to ensue. The matter is one which has resulted in some emotion in the past. I expect some more now, but I hope all efforts of honourable members and the parties who subsequently comment will be directed most towards resolution of the controversy which, unfortunately, has plagued this area. I advise that it is my intention to further consider this report and to consider any comment that honourable members and other interested parties may make.

During the next sittings of this Assembly, I expect to be in a position to introduce more effective legislation that, to such extent as is possible, achieves a balance between the protection of sites of significance to Aboriginals and the proper development of the Territory, its people and its resources. I do not believe the existing legislation achieves that balance, but such a balance needs to be obtained. In my opinion, that is beyond dispute. Such a course is in the best interests of all Territorians. I ask that those who wish to comment note that it is my intention to introduce legislation dealing with this matter at the next sittings. I expect that comments should be made no later than 3 weeks before the start of the next sittings which commence on 4 October.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in delivering statements on subjects like this, the tone of the Minister for Lands and Housing, as minister responsible for the administration of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Act, contrasts markedly with the hysterical outbursts we hear from the Minister for Mines and Energy. I do not want to make any definitive comments

about the large number of complex issues that the minister has raised in the context of this statement and, in a few moments, I will be seeking the leave of the House to continue my comments at a later date.

A member: Why don't you do it now?

Mr BELL: Because there are a couple of things that are worth saying right now and some things that are worth saying after I have had a considered reading of the report.

Mr Speaker, the recommendations of this report are particularly complex. I note that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority itself has not had the opportunity to read this report before it was tabled in this Assembly. Had that been possible, it would have been possible today to have a more informed debate. I express my concern at the lack of trust that exists between this government and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. I have come to know the director of the authority during the 7-odd years that I have been a member of this Legislative Assembly and I am quite happy to place on record my appreciation for his hard work and integrity and I think that that is worth placing on record in the context of this debate.

A couple of other matters are worth placing on record now. I hope to be brief because we have a lot of work to do today. The government has a definite problem in terms of its understanding of Aboriginal aspirations, Aboriginal sacred sites and other Aboriginal issues. I could talk for a considerable period about my understanding of Aboriginal sacred sites and I could dilate on the various words that are used in the language of many people in my electorate. That may or may not be illuminating for members of the government and I will resist that temptation, Mr Speaker, which you will probably find unusual.

I am concerned that we did not have an opportunity to have a sensible debate on the report today. Had we had the chance to see it before the minister tabled it, we could have debated it more fully today. I can, however, flag our concern in relation to recommendation 10.1(b) that the name of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Act be changed to the Aboriginal Sites Protection Act. I take the minister's point that there are different traditional associations for different places and I have no problem with that. However, I believe that those sort of considerations can be taken into account without changing the name of the act or the authority. Such a change will be perceived in the Aboriginal community as a downgrading of this government's commitment to the legislation that was entrusted to it by the Fraser government in 1976. That bothers me considerably, Mr Speaker.

The other issue, which I raised incidentally in my opening remarks, relates to the Minister for Mines and Energy. I said the sweet reason of the Minister for Lands and Housing - and we will take him at his word and consider this as unemotionally as possible - is in stark contrast to the misleading rabble-rousing of the Minister for Mines and Energy. In question time on Tuesday, the Minister for Mines and Energy purveyed the old myth of created sacred sites. That it does him no credit. Under the previous Chief Minister, I thought that these sort of debates had got back on the rails. However, the comments made on Tuesday by the Minister for Mines and Energy made it clear that we are back to the bad old Everingham days. In fact, judging by his comments, it is fair to say that the Minister for Mines and Energy makes Paul Everingham look like Martin Luther King.

The Minister for Mines and Energy said: 'You are wondering why this sites claim has emerged only now in one of the Territory's oldest mining regions'. He created the idea and he got a good run in the press with it. The Minister for Mines and Energy purveyed the myth of created sacred sites in relation to mining in the Mount Samuel area but we have a prima facie case that he was actually misleading the Assembly. He should know from his department that there was a policy reserve which restricted that particular Mount Samuel area to gougers. For the benefit of the minister, it was policy reserve No 3333 and it was removed. I see a sly little grin on the Chief Minister's face. He knows well and truly. He knows exactly what is going on. I hope that the member for Nightcliff, the former Chief Minister, is watching this because it is very sad, retrograde stuff that will damage the credibility of this legislature. It is also in sad contrast to the sensible comments that we heard from the Minister for Lands and Housing today. Whatever reservations we might have about the recommendations of the report, he is prepared to discuss them in a sensible, open, enlightened fashion. That is in stark contrast to the Leader of Government Business who basically is only interested in rabble-rousing. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

I will not dwell on the Mount Samuel issue, but I will point out the central problem as I understand it. The central problem is that traditional owners have seen the gougers at work on Mount Samuel for 50 years and, as the minister pointed out, they had basically come to terms with that. They did not particularly like it, I would dare say, but there is a vast difference between what gougers do and what is done with a hole that is 3000 ft deep. Mr Speaker, I appreciate that it will be impossible for the Minister for Mines and Energy to understand but I have some faith that the Minister for Lands and Housing might be able to understand that, in the Aboriginal ...

A member interjecting.

Mr BELL: I hope that is not the kiss of death, Mr Speaker.

I have some faith that the Minister for Lands and Housing will appreciate that, in the Aboriginal mind, that sort of activity means a heck of a lot more. I will give 2 examples. Mr Speaker, you remember the kafuffle over Noonkambah? Western Australia does not have Noonkambahs any more. Why not? Because the mining industry has come to terms with sacred sites. There was a blue over Aboriginal land rights, and so on and so on. The west does not have a perfect record or anything like that, but there are no more Noonkambahs there.

Mr Manzie: They don't have sacred sites over there either.

Mr BELL: Be that as it may, Aboriginal people have essentially won that battle. They have not just backed off on their concerns.

The other example is nearer to home. It involved the Chief Minister, to his eternal discredit. I have already raised his involvement during these sittings, and I will not refer to it again.

Mr Speaker, you will recall the Golf Course Estate in Alice Springs and the view of the traditional Ntjalkentjaneme. Ntjalke, incidentally, is the same Ntjalke as Gus Ntjalke Williams. Ntjalkentjaneme means the place where the Ntjalke was sitting, and people like Gus Williams and other people who have been learning about these things were not too happy, to be quite frank, about weekend golfers hooking and slicing on the body of the sacred Ntjalke. However, they were prepared to put up with it. What they were deeply

distressed about was the possibility of footings being dug and houses being built on top of the body of the sacred Ntjalke. I see the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Lands and Housing sitting in the gallery. I am sure that he will be able to brief the minister in that regard.

That was one highly-successful example, with the exception of the outrageous behaviour of the Chief Minister, where successful negotiation was possible. On the Friday afternoon, the developer was on my doorstep saying: 'We are moving the bulldozers here on Monday, what do I do?' I thought: 'Oh hell, this is going to be dreadful'. We had CLP politicians wringing their hands, swearing, talking about 'all Territorians' and so on. Fortunately, there was some give and take on the part of the developers and the Northern Territory government - I believe it might even have been the Chief Minister as Minister for Lands at the time. No, I see a stony look on his face. He would not be involved in any give and take. It must have been another incumbent. But there was some give and take which allowed the project to go ahead, thus solving the issue.

The problem with the Minister for Mines and Energy's line is that he picks 1 out of 600 cases, states that there is a problem and that Aboriginal people have to compromise. Quite frankly, as an Australian, I am quite happy to admit that I have a great deal of difficulty in deciding on the comparative merits of mining for gold or preserving a particular site. I am quite happy to place that on record. I might point out that some of the principals of Adelaide Petroleum are close friends of mine and have been well-known to me for 15 years. At least one of them is well-known to you personally, Mr Speaker. I am quite happy to place on record that, in relation to that 1 case out of 600, there are huge difficulties. I am quite happy to admit that I am not sure where to go in relation to that particular case. However, it certainly should not be addressed in the manner that the Minister for Mines and Energy is addressing it. That is most unfortunate.

As shadow minister for lands, I proposed a non-urban land use seminar. That has been boycotted by the government. Because the government is boycotting it, the mining industry is boycotting it. That is unfortunate. The Cattlemen's Association basically will not have a bar of us anyway and it is boycotting it as well. The Minister for Mines and Energy might like to take it on board - and I am not referring to Adelaide Petroleum - that other mining companies are not impressed with the way he seeks to heighten confrontation in these issues. It does not produce the sort of environment where sensible mineral development and sensible economic development can be carried out in the Territory.

I suggest that the non-urban land use seminar that we proposed would have been a good antidote to the perpetual shooting match, conducted through press releases, that the government seems to want to encourage in this particular debate. It is about time that we had the miners, the land councils, the pastoral industry and the tourist industry, with their various conflicting demands for non-urban land use, sitting down in the same place in a public seminar so that people know who is who. The Minister for Lands and Housing today made sensible comments about seeking resolutions. I have respect for his views in that regard; I have respect for the way he does business. As I said at the outset, I welcome the opportunity to study the proposals in greater depth. My constituents will be interested, as I am sure the land councils and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority will be, to study the proposals. I look forward to a reasoned, informed debate.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to continue my comments at a later date.



Leave granted; debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER

Annual Report of Public Accounts Committee

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I table the fifth report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled 'Annual Report Year Ended 30th June 1988'. I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting of Annual Report of Public Accounts Committee

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

During the 12 months ended 30 June 1988, the Public Accounts Committee delivered 3 reports to this Assembly: Report No 2 on Actual and Contingent Liabilities of the Northern Territory Government, Report No 3 on the Auditor-General's Annual Report 1985-86 and Report No 4 on Accelerated Year End Spending. I believe those reports were well-received and the debate which ensued was mostly productive.

Since the establishment of the committee on 19 June 1986, 12 individual members of this Assembly have sat on that committee. It was the relative stability of the membership of the committee over the last 12 months which, I believe, allowed the committee to go about its task and allowed it to complete the 3 reports. In the next 12 months, the committee will complete further reports on the Auditors-General's Report for the year 1986-87. It will also report to the Assembly on the Waste Watch Scheme and on the aero-medical contracts.

In the chairman's review, I referred to the fact that the committee was still a sessional committee, operating on a trial basis only. In view of events of the last few days, I completely retract those statements and commend the Assembly for making the committee a standing committee.

In the last page of the report, there is a graph showing the expenditure of the committee in the last 12 months compared to its allocation. It shows a net decrease of 9.09% over the previous year and a 44% savings on its allocation. Mr Speaker, that graph and what you can deduce from it is pure ratbagery. It bears no relationship to the real costs of operating the committee in that it does not take account of wages and a few other costs, including the cost of the floor space. I included it to show that, in at least 1 area of our expenditure, we have saved money and to show that not all accounts presented to parliament bear any relationship to the costs which are actually incurred. I assure you, Mr Speaker, that in the next annual report, we will attempt to show the full costs of the program of the Public Accounts Committee.

Another interesting part of this report sets out what the committee sees as its aims and objectives. These are: to increase the efficiency and effectiveness with which government policy is implemented; to increase the public sector's awareness of the need to be efficient, effective and accountable for its operations; and, to increase the awareness and understanding of parliamentarians and members of the public of the financial and related operations of government.

I believe that it is essential that, in any program of government, including programs of this Assembly, one being the Public Accounts Committee, that objectives be identified so that, in time, the parliament can truly measure whether programs are effective in meeting those objectives. I believe that, thus far, the Public Accounts Committee has been effective. There have been a number of changes in the presentation of government accounts. There have been a number of changes in the way moneys are allocated or appropriated. I believe that, slowly but surely, there will be a further move towards program budgeting which will allow both governments and their managers to manage their funds better and to properly account for the effectiveness of the programs which they manage.

Mr Speaker, with those few words, I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as is my habit when speaking to Public Accounts Committee reports, I will not spend any time on the Annual Report of the Public Accounts Committee save to say that I have enjoyed the last 12 months, as I did the previous 12 months. I look forward to other members of the Assembly contributing to debate on the Annual Report of the Public Accounts Committee. It is important that the committee have the views of the Assembly when making its deliberations. We need that continuing comment because, unless we have the full support of this Assembly, we cannot efficiently and effectively carry out our operations.

The report contains some observations about our own operations over the last 12 months. I think that they are pertinent. However, other members may feel that they are less pertinent or less relevant. I would certainly say for myself and, I am sure, all committee members, that we appreciate the views of this Chamber on our activities.

Mr Speaker, I move that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Town Planning in the Emily Hills Area

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have 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 acquiescence in ad hoc town planning, specifically in relation to the various plans for a subdivision in the Emily Hills area and the resultant impact on the lifestyle of neighbouring rural residents.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil Bell,  
Member for MacDonnell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I am sure that the significance of this matter of public importance debate will not be lost on any member of this

Assembly, particularly those of us who live in central Australia. It is appropriate that I commence my comments by referring initially to some of the history of the town planning difficulties that the CLP government has got itself into. I will make some comments about the history of town planning in Alice Springs since self-government and I will leave it to the member for Stuart to make some apposite comments about the specific draft planning instruments and the subsequent planning instruments that have been effected as a result of the opposition's sensible comments.

It is vital that the Northern Territory government get this question of town planning in Alice Springs right. We have already had one debate in these sittings about the difficulties that this government has created for itself, for entrepreneurs and for the people of the Territory through its refusal to act on the question of heritage legislation. There is a perception in the community that the Country Liberal Party government is in somebody's pocket. There has been a continuing ad hoc approach to town planning, specifically around the Emily Hills subdivision. I will make it clear, if not to the government members of this Assembly, certainly to the people of Alice Springs, that this government is responsible for extremely unattractive and unserviceable development in that particular town.

I know the member for Araluen has been complaining bitterly about the lack of services in the Larapinta subdivision. He is scoring some brownie points with his constituents by getting them some parkland and organising some telephone services. I am sure they think he is a good fellow. Of course, it is a bit of a confidence trick because the difficulties that are already being experienced with the Larapinta subdivision are a direct result of the failure of this government to plan adequately for the growth of Alice Springs. The people of Alice Springs have been well served by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and by candidates for election in Alice Springs who have raised these issues and drawn to the attention of people and policy makers the ad hoc decisions for which this government has been responsible.

Let us go back 13 years to the bad old Commonwealth government's structure plan for Alice Springs. Let us recall that, in that particular structure plan, the Mount John Valley was to be reserved for tourist development, as it is now. Mr Speaker, that may not strike you as particularly noteworthy. What is noteworthy and a matter of concern for people who know anything about land development in central Australia is the sort of about-face that this government did with respect to Mount John.

Prior to the 1983 election, the opposition repeatedly pointed out to the government that, in a period of rapid growth, it was failing to turn off land at a rate that would keep housing prices within an affordable range. That is not a problem now because the rate of growth has slowed down somewhat. However, prior to the 1983 election, there was considerable difficulty. What did we find? We found the Minister for Lands and Housing at the time saying: 'Don't worry about it. We will subdivide the Mount John Valley'. People in the construction industry and some people in Alice Springs actually believed that the government would keep its election promise, subdivide the Mount John Valley and transfer its use from tourist development to housing.

Mr Speaker, it will come as no news to you, although I dare say the member for Braitling occasionally blushes about the fact, that the government that was elected in 1983 decided to renege on its election promise. It decided that it had 4 years to run and, therefore, that it did not matter. That is the sort of cynicism and adhocery that the people of Alice Springs have come to expect from the CLP government which is looking rather shaky as a result.

I am sure that the people who live in the Larapinta subdivision are very happy there. It is nice to see the area growing. The problem with a debate like this is that the local member will probably run off and say to people in Larapinta: 'Bell does not like where you live. He reckons it is a rotten area'. I think they will agree with me that the area could have been better. The member for Araluen should not have to spend his time providing services that should have been there to start with. In terms of providing services to people in their houses, the Larapinta subdivision is a disaster. In terms of the shape of Alice Springs, the Larapinta subdivision is a disaster.

The government is again referring to public transport. We hear the Minister for Transport and Works talking about a bus system for Alice Springs as though he was the first person to think of it. People like myself and, to his credit, the member for Sadadeen have been battling away at issues like that for yonks. If the CLP government decides that it is okay to foot the bill for a shortfall for a bus service in Darwin, Alice Springs deserves exactly the same treatment. If the Larapinta subdivision had been better planned, there would be no need for it.

The town should have been much better catered for in terms of the provision of services. It is this government's fault; it has been in power for too long. It will get a shock in a couple of weeks because the people of Alice Springs are sick and tired of this sort of adhocery. No longer can the Country Liberal Party be proud of itself. The sort of nonsensical decisions that are evidenced in land development, the lack of heritage legislation and the failure to act on public transport are ringing home with the electorate in Alice Springs. It will receive a message come 10 September and it will not be a pleasant one.

I was talking about the area north of the ranges. Let me talk about 2 other areas. We had the Undoolya area described as the area for the growth of Alice Springs. We have heard no more about it. The previous Minister for Lands and Housing, the now singularly unlamented Ray Hanrahan, spoke with deathless eloquence in June last year about the development of Alice Springs:

The Alice Springs Structure Plan, a strategy to take the city well into the 21st century, has been endorsed by Cabinet. Cabinet yesterday endorsed the Undoolya option as the future residential growth area of Alice Springs. Preparation of the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan is to be completed by June 1988.

Let me reinforce that for the Minister for Lands and Housing: 'The preparation of the Alice Springs Regional Strategy plan is to be completed by June 1988'. It is 25 August and we have not seen it. Members opposite are so obsessed with changing Chief Ministers and changing seats on the frontbench that they are unable to make the sort of sensible decisions that are necessary from a responsible government. It is high time that they had a rest in opposition. The first indication of that will be 10 September. Let me assure them that they are on the nose. It is precisely because of matters of public importance like this that the opposition has been doing a great service to the people of the Northern Territory by bringing to the attention of this legislature issues which will sink the government. The fact of the matter is that the government will receive a message on September 10 and this is one of the reasons why.

The minister made some quite extraordinary comments in his lengthy press statement. He attempted valiantly to suggest that the development of Alice Springs was in responsible hands. We know that is not the case. It is in

hands which are far from responsible. The minister commented on traffic flows through Heavitree Gap. In the list appended to the minister's statement of June last year, he talked about the major advantages of the Undoolya option. One of its major advantages was that future traffic problems in the Gap would probably be avoided for a longer period.

The problem with the way this government does its business in relation to land development is that it has to be pushed and prodded by this energetic opposition before it arrives at sensible decisions. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will clearly identify the amount of money paid for land in the Emily Hills area by Northcorp Pty Ltd. He will talk about the actual value for the planned subdivision and raise a few questions about that. I will leave that issue to him, but suffice it to say that at least we know that this government ran away from a very dense subdivisional proposal in the Emily Hills area because of pressure from the opposition. The people of Alice Springs ought to be relieved that the opposition has in its ranks people who are able to make sensible comments in this regard.

In the time that remains to me, Mr Speaker, let me refer to the central problem that this government has. It does not govern; it allows people with money to govern. I do not know the principals of Northcorp Pty Ltd but I have had a look at the list of its shareholders. A number of them are people who are well-known to me. Indeed, the Chairman of the Planning Authority has shares in Northcorp. I want to state a position in that regard and I think that this is something that the Minister for Lands and Housing ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is making accusations regarding the make-up of a company and the people who hold shares in it, and claiming that certain people hold shares. I do not know who holds shares in that particular company. However, I think that accusations of the type that are being levelled by the member for MacDonnell should either be verified or withdrawn because such claims made in this House under privilege could be detrimental to particular individuals. I believe that the member has a moral obligation to ensure that any damaging statements made under those circumstances are actually backed up by some facts to show the basis for his claims. Otherwise, he should apologise for any inferences that he makes.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I find that a staggering admission. The Minister for Lands and Housing is doing business with a company whilst remaining ignorant of the identity of its shareholders.

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell claims that I am doing business with a company and I ask him to withdraw that. I am doing no business with any company, especially a company that was just named by him. Any assertion that that is the case is incorrect.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will not dwell on that. I will just say that, where the Chairman of the Planning Authority or a company in his name holds shares in an applicant company, the chairman should withdraw from hearing the application, as he did. My point is this: the public of Alice Springs need to be told that. This is a word of advice to the minister and to the Planning Authority. The Territory has a small population and it is easy for rumours to spread. It is about time that, when those declarations of interest are made, they are publicised so that rumours are not left to spread. Book IV of

Virgil's Aeneid tells us 'vires acquirit eundo' - the rumour gathers strength as it goes.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, dealing with engineers is painful.

Mr Finch: We might not have real good English but we can add up. That is our big difference.

Mr BELL: The problem with the Minister for Transport and Works is that he cannot remember. I would never excuse him of not being able to add up.

Mr Speaker, the issue is important. I had to make phone calls to a number of people in order to ascertain the difficulties in that regard and I am absolutely staggered that a minister in charge of planning in the Northern Territory is ignorant of precisely those issues. I suggest that he of all people ought to be able to explain why those questions were put in people's minds and what he intends doing about it.

In closing, Mr Speaker, let me say this. This government has allowed developers to determine the shape of Alice Springs. It has not determined it itself, let alone leaving it to the people of Alice Springs to determine how their town grows.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise in response to the member for MacDonnell who again has seen fit to waste the valuable time of this House. The Territory is a place whose population is spread over a vast area. We have difficulties in relation to housing. We have problems in relation to federal funding cuts and our ability, with meagre funds, to be able to look after the well-being of all Territorians. We have problems in providing infrastructure for the growth in tourism and in areas such as road building and airports. We have problems regarding the cost of education and the provision of education on outstations. We have some very pressing problems that we should be dealing with in this House. But what does the member for MacDonnell contribute? For the fourth or fifth time, he raises an MPI about planning matters in Alice Springs. We had one in August 1984, another in November 1986 and another in April 1987. The subject comes up continually. He makes the same ridiculous accusations. This time, he has put a bit of spice into them. Shame on him! He does not have the ability to make these claims and accusations outside the House because he knows that they would result in litigation against him. I have little faith in people who make unsubstantiated claims in what is known as coward's castle. I do not think it is very fitting or proper for members of the House to behave in this way.

Mr Speaker, what we heard was a general ramble by the member for MacDonnell and claims about the Larapinta subdivision. He rambled along and finally came to the point: lack of phones. He congratulated the member for Araluen who, I am sure, will be able to provide some details in this debate. He claimed that the member for Araluen, and I am sure this is correct, is providing great help to his constituents in Larapinta. Then, the member for MacDonnell got down to tin tacks and said that he was getting a few telephones. Obviously, the planning and provision of telephones is a matter for the Commonwealth and Telecom, and I am sure they do very well under quite difficult circumstances.

Mr Bell: Public transport?

Mr MANZIE: That is an issue which gives a perfect example of the ignorance of members opposite. They claim that the government subsidises public transport in Darwin and then question why it does not do the same in Alice Springs.

Mr Bell: It does.

Mr MANZIE: Yes, there is a subsidy provided for public transport in Darwin and there is a subsidy provided for public transport authorities in major urban areas in every state of Australia. The Commonwealth ...

Members interjecting.

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

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I see the member for Stuart has belatedly joined in with a few interjections. He might learn something here too.

A very minor amount of research would show this to be true. The Commonwealth actually provides an amount of money to every state to enable a subsidy to be applied to the provision of urban transport. It enables each state to provide, in its major centre, an urban transport system. Obviously, the Commonwealth has not seen fit to provide assistance for provision of urban transport in 2 centres in the Territory, as it has not seen fit to provide that sort of assistance to 2 areas in any state. However, we live in hope that it might happen one day.

My next point relates to something that the member for MacDonnell should be aware of but, given his general ignorance of matters that occur in Alice Springs, probably is not. With the encouragement of the member for Sadadeen, the government actually provided a bus service in Alice Springs on a trial basis. I believe that the trial was unsuccessful. I also believe that the Minister for Transport and Works is looking at another trial service to see whether there is a need for a bus service in Alice Springs.

Per capita funding for assistance to public transport in the Territory is very high. In actual fact, Alice Springs receives the highest per capita assistance for public transport, for the provision of school buses. Again, I realise that the member for MacDonnell would not understand that because he either does not know what is going on around him or closes his ears to anything that shows any sign of success.

I must run through the comments and claims of the member for MacDonnell regarding the Undoolya option. It is quite untrue to suggest that all development in the Emily Hills area was precluded by the decision that future growth in Alice Springs would be in the Undoolya region. When Cabinet considered the matter, it was decided that future development proposals for Emily Hills must be considered first by an Alice Springs Joint Planning Group. On previous occasions, I have informed this House that that group consists of representatives of the Power and Water Authority, the Department of Transport and Works, the Department of Lands and Housing and the Alice Springs Town Council. The town council is well aware of that. Again, I have told the member for MacDonnell that a technical sub-group of the joint planning group considered a proposal last year that was made by a company called Northcorp, and it was decided that that proposal had reached a stage where it should go through the public planning processes and that is what happened.

When the proposal reaches me, which so far it has not, I will be waiting for the release of the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan. I will be talking about that as well. As has been stated already, it was hoped that the strategy plan would be ready for presentation by June 1988. It has yet to be finally completed, although I can assure honourable members that I had a full briefing on its progress the last time I was in Alice Springs. It is proceeding well and I expect to receive the draft in a matter of weeks.

The Undoolya option is one which this government is committed to. That indicates that the government's planning processes are in no way ad hoc but are based on an understanding that the growth of Alice Springs will be an ongoing process which requires detailed planning. We did not get the strategy plan out in June because it is not finished. Any suggestion that we should have hurried it to have it ready for the sake of appearances is typical of an attitude which the opposition often displays: 'She'll be right. Anything will do'. We certainly do not share that attitude.

I turn now to the situation in respect of Northcorp. A contentious proposal was actually submitted by that company in October 1987. Originally, the proposal was for 218 ha to be subdivided into 440 lots ranging in size from 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, which is not much larger than a suburban block, to 5000 m<sup>2</sup> which is equivalent in size to some of the small blocks in a rural context. The small size was one of the controversial aspects of the proposal. Another related to sacred sites in the Emily Hills area. The proposal has recently been amended to take those concerns into account and I have been informed that 144 ha will now be subdivided into 200 lots of not less than 4000 m<sup>2</sup>, the minimum size being 1 acre. The alteration also avoids the area which is contentious on sacred sites grounds. This amended proposal has not yet been put on public display although I believe that the company has made a public announcement about these changes.

Honourable members will recall that, in May this year, I gave a public commitment, which I repeated in this House, not to consider the recommendations of the Planning Authority in regard to these 2 proposals until the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan was completed. Nothing has been said to change my mind nor have I indicated any change of mind in regard to that commitment.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: Honestly, the member for Stuart must have some hearing problems. I did say, and I will say again, that I was in Alice Springs recently. I saw that the strategy plan was proceeding well and I expect a draft of that plan in a matter of weeks. However, I can assure the honourable member again that there will be no undue haste in the development of that plan because it is imperative that it be done properly. We do not want the sort of situation that we are accused of being involved in - that is, ad hoc planning. There has never been any indication that planning is carried out in that fashion despite the number of times planning in the Alice Springs area has been raised as a matter of public importance. We have always made sure that what we do is planned well in advance and we continue to do that.

To return to the public commitment I made and repeated in the Assembly, I quote from page 3025 of the May Parliamentary Record:

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 has made similar statements. It would 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 ... and I do not intend to change my mind to satisfy various individuals who wish to achieve some sort of political glory for themselves.

Mr Speaker, that situation has not changed. The only comments and utterances regarding this matter have come from the member for MacDonnell. I have gone out of my way, in this House and publicly, to inform the member about what is occurring. However, he does not wish to take any notice. Not only that, he continues to waste the time of this House on a matter about which information is freely available to anyone who cares to look.

Neither of the proposals I have spoken about have come to me for decision. When they do, I will maintain my commitment not to consider them until the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan has been released. That exposes the fallacy which underlies this so-called MPI. The government certainly has acted responsibly. The reality is that no decision has yet been taken on either of the proposals, the amended one or otherwise. No decisions will be made before the strategy plan is finalised. The member for MacDonnell is wasting the time of this House, something which he is very keen on doing.

Mr Speaker, it is incumbent on me to comment again on claims by the member for MacDonnell that I am doing business with a company whose shareholders hold influential positions in particular deals or are attempting to make some kind of gain. Those claims are a shabby attempt by the member to use his position in a cowardly attack on people who cannot protect themselves. There is no need for me to know who operates a company when a proposal made by the company moves through the planning processes. I have nothing to do with what the Planning Authority considers or does. The Planning Authority is independent. It is made up of 3 permanent members and, in Alice Springs, it includes 4 aldermen from the town council. My role is not to consider or become involved in that process. That process is independent of me and I await recommendations from the authority. Any suggestion that I should become involved or that I should find out who owns the companies which put applications to the Planning Authority is abhorrent.

I understand why the member for MacDonnell continually harps on matters like that because it has been shown that, in the history of the Labor Party, not only do its parliamentary members find out who is involved in planning matters, but they become involved themselves. Usually, there is a little on the side for some people. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that we do not operate like that and we have no intention of doing so. Continuous accusations by the member for MacDonnell and attempts to slur hard-working Territorians are abhorrent.

The development of Alice Springs over the last 10 years shows that we are well on top of planning processes. Alice Springs is the fastest-growing regional centre in Australia. The growth there over the last 10 years has been phenomenal. It has been faster than any other similar-sized place in the country, yet we have managed to provide the infrastructure, housing, amenities and facilities. People do not have to wait in traffic queues. There are

hospitals, schools and sporting facilities and it is a marvellous place in which to live. It is an environment that shows evidence of planned growth. We are well in control of what will happen in the future and, when the strategy plan is released, people will again see what is occurring and will have an opportunity to comment and have input.

Any suggestion that the planning processes in Alice Springs are not working are ridiculous and any suggestion that something will happen at Emily Hills is ridiculous. We have a well-trying process in place to ensure that development occurs properly. People have the ability to comment on any aspect of the planning process. Any suggestion which is made regarding the propriety either of people on the Planning Authority or the composition of companies that make application is something that should be dismissed with contempt in this House. It is ridiculous. The member for MacDonnell has only one record. It might be an LP but it contains only half a dozen tunes and, every sittings, he replays one of them. This is a perfect example.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has attempted repeatedly over a number of years to achieve the implementation of proper planning principles, the enactment of heritage legislation, the restriction of building heights and appropriate turn-off of land. Mr Speaker, you would recall the very interesting series of seminars that he ran on the shape of Alice Springs some time ago. If there has been any improvement in what has occurred in the last few years, much of the credit can be laid at his door because of his unremitting interest in land matters. He has exposed rorts and he has encouraged proper development. I think we owe him a debt of gratitude for the work that he has done. Certainly, that is acknowledged by the people of Alice Springs and people right throughout the Territory.

Today, he mentioned again the broken election promise in relation to Mount John Valley. I remember the promises about Undoolya before the 1987 election. It was ready to proceed but, after the election, it was forgotten. The basic problem is that people need knowledge so that they can make decisions. They want to make decisions about how they will develop their own blocks. Can they expect to continue to live in a rural residential area or will they be surrounded by a typical urban environment?

People have bought businesses such as caravan parks and want to develop them further. They want to know whether they should install their own septic systems or whether there will be a sewerage system in that area. One operator there told Mrs Di Shanahan, our candidate in Flynn and soon to be member for Flynn, that it would cost some \$50 000 to upgrade the septic system in his business to undertake the expansion he desired. Obviously, he wants to know whether it would be worth while spending that money now or whether a full sewerage system will service the subdivision.

Everybody knows the need for the continued development of caravan parks and other businesses in that area so that we can cope with the influx of tourists that we hope will return to the Centre next year. People want to know whether they should invest their money in such works now or hold off in the hope that a full service will be provided. Thus, both business people and residents are waiting for some answers so that they can plan their own affairs on the basis of realistic information.

At this stage, I would like to give a potted history of the area. I believe that the land in question was bought by Northcorp from Bert Kramer in 1985 for something in the vicinity of \$1.6m. Northcorp put a proposal to the Planning Authority for urban development in 1985. The town council

commissioned a report from Cameron McNamara and that was completed in May 1986. It recommended 3 options. I am not sure of the first but the second was for 240 lots plus a tourist precinct on the Ross Highway and a Rural C zoning which would allow blocks of a minimum size of 0.4 ha. The third option was full urban development.

I am told that, initially, in June 1986, the council supported the second option with some modifications. In June 1986, the council again objected to the Ilpapa Road proposal on the basis that it was not part of the town plan. In June 1987, the plans to develop Undoolya were released. The government said in a press release that Emily Hills would be discussed by a restructured joint planning group which would consult with the local people. I have had complaints from people - and I hope that the minister will be able to clarify this - that the planning group has not met since July 1987 and has not carried out consultation with local people in that area.

Since that time, further proposals have come from Northcorp for the development of the area. I would like to go through those. I have a copy of a draft planning instrument of 9 February 1988. Basically, it envisages 100 lots of about 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, 38 lots of a minimum of 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, 61 lots of 2500 m<sup>2</sup>, 240 of 3000 m<sup>2</sup>, a couple of 3 ha ones and a couple of 8 ha ones. Basically, most of them are around a quarter to half acre blocks, with a couple getting up towards 1 acre. That created considerable consternation amongst people there because, obviously, the size of the blocks was far smaller than the blocks in the adjacent rural area and people felt, quite correctly, that it would create a major change in their lifestyle.

I was surprised when the minister said that he did not have the instrument of determination dated 21 July 1988. That surprises me because I had no problems at all in obtaining it. It is an actual instrument rather than a draft. It states that 'each lot in the subdivision will have an area of not less than 2 ha ...'. It then talks about 'the cost of subdivisional works to be borne by the applicant' and easements, electricity, stormwater drainage etc to be provided free of charge. It talks about electrical reticulation being required at the applicant's expense, water reticulation at the applicant's expense and effluent disposal meeting the requirements of the Department of Health. It says that access roads, kerbs, boundaries and stormwater drainage are to be at the applicant's expense and approved by the Department of Transport and Works. It continues in that vein. Clearly, however, we have moved from what was substantially an urban-type area with a couple of larger blocks, back to something which looks more like a rural subdivision.

Apparently, that is what has given rise to difficulties. I believe that the answer to those difficulties can be found in the report of the Northcorp directors of 30 June 1987. It is freely available and I have a copy. It discusses the land at Emily Heights and states that it was valued by J.L. Kenny. It sets out his qualifications and states that the valuation of the land suitable for 2 ha blocks, in its existing state, was \$1.25m. Mr Speaker, as I said, the rumour is that it was bought for \$1.6m. The balance sheet item shows a figure of \$1.645m which would represent a loss of some \$400 000 if the land is used for 2 ha blocks, a fairly substantial loss at that stage of planning. However, further valuations based on the assumption that the zoning change would proceed and 0.75 ha blocks would be permitted, increased the value from from \$1.25m to \$1.8m. If the zoning changes allowed conventional urban allotments with a minimum size of 800 m<sup>2</sup>, the valuation would be \$2.9m.

We have a situation where Northcorp stands to make a very substantial capital gain if it can subdivide into blocks of 800 m<sup>2</sup> or 0.75 ha. On the other hand, it would sustain a substantial loss if the zoning continues to prohibit blocks smaller than 2 ha. I thought 2 ha blocks had been decided on and that the reason there were problems was the loss Northcorp would sustain. I was most surprised to hear the honourable minister state in his speech that, in fact, we are talking about 4000 m<sup>2</sup> blocks. That is a new proposal again. I have not seen a draft planning instrument for it. I thought that the instrument of determination dated 21 July 1988 had gone through. There has been no advice that it has been knocked off and that another one has gone ahead. The minister said that it had not gone out.

Nobody knows what is going on. People thought that the matter had been resolved and that the only question outstanding was who would pay all the costs. However, the minister has now indicated that a proposal which allows for 4000 m<sup>2</sup> blocks has the front running. He also said that people cannot have more information because they have to wait until the regional structure plan is completed and released in a few weeks' time.

Mr Speaker, people are fed up with being told just before elections that they have to wait until just after elections only to find, when that time comes, that it is too late and that their wishes are no longer being taken into account. People want answers so that they can make the decisions they need to make in order to get on with their lives. They also want some other answers concerning the specific development we are discussing. They want to know whether it is a fact that Northcorp will have to pay for all the costs in relation to the project or whether there will be government assistance.

A specific part of the concern about costs relates to sewerage. There is a real problem, particularly in the area closest to the ranges, where the bedrock is very close to the surface. The installation of sewerage lines would require extensive blasting. That would be incredibly expensive and people want to know who is to pay so that they can get an idea as to whether it will go ahead or not. If septic tanks are to be the basis of the sewerage system, people will have to blast them out for themselves and for the rest of their lives have the worry of French drains clogging up. If that is the situation, they will come down to the lower areas. There are problems in the lower areas as well because the watertable is only 30 ft below the surface. Obviously, people are worrying about contamination of their water supply if septic systems are installed in that area. These are very realistic and genuine worries.

People are also worried about road access. If there is a substantial development in the area, traffic through Heavitree Gap will be much heavier. Already, Heavitree Gap is becoming congested at certain times of the day and people are wondering whether the causeway will be redeveloped or whether something more unsightly will have to be substituted. I recall that, when the original Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan was being discussed, one of the arguments for Undoolya was that it would not entail major redevelopment of the Heavitree Gap area. People are worried about the visual impact. Other people have raised ecological considerations relating to the large numbers of wildlife in that area. Someone made the ridiculous statement that they could be turned into junk food addicts. If wild animals are turned into virtual pets, that is a real problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the visual impact was another argument.

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

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I listened to the member for MacDonnell this afternoon with a sense of *deja vu*. I suppose it was to be expected that the shadow minister for town planning would get to his feet and rave on in his usual fashion about an alleged lack of planning controls. It was to be expected because of the by-election which is imminent in the seat of Flynn. In his usual opportunistic fashion, the member for MacDonnell has leapt in to present himself as a new breed of urban environmentalist. The truth is that he is far from anything except a repetitiously noisy critic who never listens to any answer that is given to him in this House.

On a number of occasions, the member for MacDonnell has raised the issue of the Emily Hills subdivision. This self-taught town planner opposite seems to have difficulty in coming to grips with anything in relation to the subject. It is obvious that his interests have little to do with improving the lot of urban residents and more to do with grandstanding for his own political ends. Many of the statements that he has made in this House in relation to town planning have not only been untruthful and irresponsible but quite often defamatory.

For instance, he suggested that the government has given preferential treatment to Northcorp Pty Ltd because, he says, the Chairman of the Planning Tribunal is a shareholder. The member for MacDonnell has accused the government of 'dilly-dallying' - his word - in respect of the plans for Alice Springs. The truth is that the government has no intention of leaping in and imposing a draconian plan for Alice Springs based on his socialistic belief in a one-class urban society. He would have us all regimented under the Bell land plan, in tidy rows, in look-alike 2-bedroom bungalows with the regulation 2.4 children, a grey cat, a grey dog and a cockatoo in the backyard screeching 'Down with capitalists. Vote for Comrade Bell'.

Alice Springs is an old town with a special character all of its own. It is famous throughout the world as epitomising the essential character of central Australia. The Alice is a town which has never suffered interventionists or fools such as the member opposite who, with very little knowledge of the area, would seek to impose rules and regulations on it. Alice Springs is a conservative town. It rejects sudden change. It rejects irresponsibility. It rejects interference in its character without due consideration. This government has always taken pains to ensure that any debate over change is allowed to run its course before decisions have to be made which could alter the lifestyle and quality of life of anybody in the Territory. This is why we tolerate the rantings of people like the member for MacDonnell who have constantly rejected reasoned argument, who are never interested in facts, who are more interested in hearing themselves stuttering away in this House or on radio talkback programs.

In this session, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had to listen to more of Mr Bell's 'I', 'I', 'I's' than you would hear at a Mexican folk festival. The people in Hansard must have had a terrible time trying to edit out his searches for words because what is eventually published bears little resemblance to the boring, wide-searching filibusters we have had to put with in this House today. We have been patient and tolerant with the member for MacDonnell on many occasions. He seems to feel that he has some skills as an orator. He stands before us arms outstretched, glasses in hand, lecturing to us as though we were back in the classroom. The situation is inane. I feel that, if he had his way, he would like to have the power over us to inflict detention, to send us into the playground, to inflict corporal punishment. If only he knew it, having to listen to him and his repetitious holier-than-thou deliveries in this House is punishment enough.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I think that the honourable minister's speech writer ought to be acquainted with standing orders. I take exception to 'holier-than-thou' and various other sobriquets that the honourable minister has applied.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr POOLE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the only reason the member for MacDonnell has introduced the matter of Emily Hills area into this House again is that there is a by-election in Flynn and he feels that he sounded good when he last raised the matter. We have news for him. He has been told many times in this House that the government has no intention of interfering with the character of the Emily Hills area. There is no way that we will interfere with the local planning process. If change is needed in the development and planning of Alice Springs, that change should come from a local initiative, from the people of Alice Springs, from the people of the area concerned, through proper channels and with due consideration to the rights of all concerned and in the context of the harmonious development of the town and the surrounding district.

The member for MacDonnell's knowledge of town planning would seem to come from his old primary school textbook. Modern town planners have discovered that the creation of sweeping curves, ordered streetscapes and strictly controlled covenants on buildings and landscaping has created more community problems than it has solved. In the 1970s, the idea of neighbourhoods in which neighbours communicated with each other was lost on the federal Labor Party's appointed urban guerillas who called themselves town planners.

The Department of Urban and Regional Development told people where they had to live and how they had to live. They told them what they needed. They did not bother to ask the people what they needed. Greater Canberra is one of their creations. Canberra looks great from the air and even at street level if you can find your way through the maze of curves and precincts. However, modern Canberra has been found by sociologists to be a failure. It has a high level of social problems. There is little if any urban communication normally found in Australian towns and cities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a raft of Canberra-based town planners imposed their collective will on Darwin after Cyclone Tracy. Fortunately, there were some level-headed Territorians around to rein in these urban dictators and insist on the maintenance of some of those essential elements which gave Darwin its unique character. If town planners had their way, every Australian town and city would look the same.

This government has no intention of destroying the essential character of Alice Springs through the introduction of inflexible planning guidelines and our way of dealing with the Emily Hills development is a case in point. Let us look at the facts. The developer of Emily Hills has been in close consultation with the Planning Authority ever since the project was first mooted. The Planning Authority now has 7 members, 4 of whom came from Alice Springs. The plans were sent back and forth several times before the development plan was put on public display. There were objections from the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, from the Conservation Commission and from a number of residents. The Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority was concerned because it thought the subdivision went over an area of the MacDonnell Ranges which might have been a significant site. The commission thought the development might have been moving into the foothills of the MacDonnell Ranges. The local residents were concerned that there were too few 2 ha blocks.

Northcorp had a rethink and came back to the Planning Authority with a revised proposal which did not affect the alleged sacred site, did not intrude into the foothills and did not include any lots of less than 4000 m<sup>2</sup>. The Planning Authority considered this revised proposal and it resolved to commend it to the minister. The minister decided, and rightly so, not to consider the proposal until after it had been publicly displayed and commented on and certainly not before the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan was released.

The Alice Springs Town Council has not objected to the revised plan although it has been consulted on it by the developers. It should be pointed out that no inordinate delay is expected in considering the plan because the draft planning strategy should be in the minister's hands by the end of the month. It should also be pointed out that there was close consultation with the Alice Springs Town Council officers on the development of that strategy plan. At no time has anyone suggested that this area should not be zoned rural residential. The only argument has related to lot sizes. It is the view of some people that anything under 2 ha - or 5 acres - is too small. That is a matter of continuing debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the planning of Alice Springs seems to have a morbid fascination for the unqualified, opinionated member for MacDonnell. It seems to me that he rises in every sittings of the House, red-faced and full of theatrical fervour, to rant on with no regard whatsoever for the facts. His fascination with his own voice is incredible. He repeats everything at least twice. Every accusation he makes is replied to reasonably and factually but, like a record, he says the same thing over and over again.

If we were his teachers, we would say something to this child's parents. We would send them a note saying: 'Your boy Neil exhibits classic symptoms of suffering from deafness. He does not seem to hear what he is told and, instead of talking reasonably and quietly to the class, he shouts, waves his arms and seems to have a personality disorder such that he cannot control himself while the rest of the class is working. His influence in the class is erosive and we feel that, when the Flying Doctor holds his next clinic, you should have Neil's hearing tested. His performance in class ...'

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! That is the second time that the minister has not referred to the member for MacDonnell by his correct title. I would ask him to retract and to do so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the minister to refer to honourable members as honourable members.

Mr POOLE: Mr Deputy Speaker, we would say that the honourable member's performance in class could be improved in the meantime by fitting himself with a temporary hearing aid and by scrubbing out his mouth, as he has been making some vile unsubstantiated comments about his classmates. He has also been handing around some notes which fell off a truck and which have no bearing on the important work being done by his classmates.

This morning, in turn I guess, I had to suffer a fairly vicious personal attack on my integrity and honour by the self-styled upholder of the systems of government. He would do well to consider his obligation to the people of the Territory to ensure that the business of this House is not delayed or impeded in any way. The work of the government of the Territory, the proper and rational debate of bills before the House, and the performance of our role as a government interested in the welfare of all Territorians is far more

important than the member for MacDonnell's grubby little attempts to get his name in the papers.

NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY BILL  
(Serial 141)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is to enable the creation of the Northern Territory University by merger of the Northern Territory University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology. The new university is to begin operation on 1 January 1989. The bill involves the repeal of the University College of the Northern Territory Act and the Advanced Education and Darwin Institute of Technology Act, with effect from 1 January 1989, and their replacement by the Northern Territory University Act with effect from a date fixed by the Administrator by notice in the Gazette.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill is based as far as possible on the University College of the Northern Territory and the NT College of Advanced Education Acts which, in turn, were based on the University of Queensland Act and the acts establishing other Australian universities. As they have stood the test of time, the government has continued to take the view that our university legislation should be modelled on the best available elsewhere in Australia.

In February, my predecessor released an information discussion paper containing 3 broad options for the amalgamation of the 2 institutions. The Higher Education Planning Group was also formed at that time to advise the minister. It was made up of representatives of the councils of the Darwin Institute of Technology, the University College of the Northern Territory and the TAFE Advisory Council. It established working groups to consider the necessary legislation and structural organisation, the educational profile, finance and administration and academic staffing and general staffing. These groups included student and staff participants from each institution with union representatives participating in the staffing working parties. The planning group's first report was released in May and was used as a basis for further discussion within the Northern Territory and between the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth. Subsequently, the proposed merger of the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology, including TAFE, was specifically endorsed by the Commonwealth White Paper on Higher Education.

This has not been an easy task and we would not have undertaken it had there not been very substantial short and long term benefits for the people of the Northern Territory. At times, feeling has run high but there has always been the balancing effect of the good sense, vision and constructive thinking of the great majority of those involved: students, staff, individual staff associations, unions, chief executive officers and councils.

It is important to be clear about the nature of the proposed university. The Northern Territory government has been striving for this moment since 1980. After several early attempts, we finally thought we were heading in the right direction following advice given to us by the Commonwealth during the 1982-84 triennium that we should seek to establish the university as a college of an established university. During discussions in 1984 for the 1985 to 1987 triennium, however, we were rebuffed. We tried again in 1985 and



were told not to come back until 1991 when the matter would be reconsidered. It is now history that, in August 1985, we decided to go ahead at considerable cost to the Northern Territory. We did this because Northern Territory people had indicated each year since 1980 that one of the highest priorities for development was the establishment of a Northern Territory university because of the plight which our students and their families found themselves in. They either had to leave the Northern Territory or undergo family separation and crippling financial burden if students wished to receive an University education.

In 1986, the Commonwealth countered the Northern Territory's proposal with an offer of 20 places for limited university teaching under the auspices of the Darwin Institute of Technology which, at the time, was classified as a TAFE College by the Commonwealth. The Northern Territory government rejected that proposal because it did not in any way meet the needs of the Territory for a state university. This Commonwealth offer became known as the 'lean-to' university and it was supported by the opposition in this House.

Since that time, there has been a significant change in the attitude of the Commonwealth that has been brought about by 2 factors. Firstly, the University College of the Northern Territory has been successful. It grew from 250 students in 1987 to 430 students in 1988, with over 700 enrolments expected for 1989, well ahead of projections. Secondly, the revitalised Darwin Institute of Technology also experienced substantial growth in higher education. Since the successful establishment of secondary colleges in Darwin and Alice Springs, senior secondary retention rates have increased dramatically and more and more students are going on to various levels of tertiary education. The demand for higher education courses in particular has resulted in enrolments at the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology far exceeding original expectations. In 1987 and 1988, higher education enrolments outstripped Commonwealth projections by over 40%.

Of course, there is a long way to go. The Northern Territory has Australia's lowest participation rate in higher education and many students who aspire to higher education in the Northern Territory still study interstate. The Northern Territory is now getting a reverse of the lean-to university. The Northern Territory University will be what we have always sought, a fully-fledged state university with credentials equal to anything in the world.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a major provision of the bill now before the House is the creation within the new university of an Institute of Technical and Further Education. While ensuring that the university will attract Commonwealth funding, the inclusion of the TAFE institute will also ensure that the integrity of the Darwin Institute of Technology TAFE sector is preserved. Whilst there is some concern about the inclusion of a TAFE component in the university, it will not affect the status of the university and its inclusion is endorsed by the University of Queensland. The TAFE component of the Darwin Institute of Technology, while part of the new institution, is constituted as an institute of TAFE and it will have sufficient independence to allow it to pursue its destiny of training a skilled Northern Territory work force, being responsive to the needs of Northern Territory industry and contributing to Northern Territory growth and development.

Some concern has been expressed regarding the placement of associate diplomas in the new institution. Prior to the January 1985 meeting of the Australian Education Council, in which I was privileged to participate,

associate diplomas were offered in both advanced education and TAFE. Those in advanced education required Year 12 as an entry requirement and those in TAFE did not. The June 1985 meeting of the Australian Education Council moved to establish the Australian Council for Tertiary Awards to register nationally all awards in advanced education and TAFE. One of its first acts was to end the distinction between advanced education and TAFE associate diplomas and to standardise the entry requirement on successful completion of Year 12. Since then, they have simply been called the associate diplomas. For historical funding reasons, the Commonwealth has continued to fund those in higher education while the states have funded them in TAFE. In both the Green and White Papers, associate diplomas have been identified as higher education and funding is negotiable. For these reasons, associate diploma awards are included in the higher education area of the new university. The institute of TAFE will cover all certificate courses up to and including advanced certificate level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is the government's intention that some of the benefits to students which have been developed because of the relationship of TAFE and higher education in the Darwin Institute of Technology be continued. For example, the council of the new university will foster credit transfer and course articulation so that students who begin their studies in the technical and further education area can gain appropriate credit for higher awards should they wish to do so, without the need to start again at the beginning. The merger of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College will lead to more tertiary places and more tertiary courses for Territory students and will make it easier for students to follow pathways of study at different tertiary levels. At the same time, the shared use of resources will mean a better deal for existing students of both institutions.

Funding has always been a sensitive issue at the Darwin Institute of Technology. As members will know, the federal government funds most advanced education expenditure and the Northern Territory funds most of TAFE. TAFE funding is the subject of annual agreements between the Northern Territory minister and the Commonwealth minister, and it is this government's intention to ensure that all TAFE funding is both properly accounted for in the new university and used for the purpose for which it is appropriated.

Among the provisions of the bill is the establishment of a university council which will be the university's governing body. The council will consist of the Chancellor, the Deputy Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Chairman of the Academic Board, the Chairman of the TAFE Board, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, 2 elected graduates, an elected member of the TAFE Institute staff and an elected member of the non-academic staff, up to 10 members appointed by the Administrator, elected academic staff representatives and elected student representatives.

The bill empowers the council to appoint a Vice-Chancellor, subject to confirmation by the Administrator, to enter into affiliation arrangements with other institutions and to confer degrees and grant diplomas, certificates and other awards of the university. While the university will be empowered to issue awards in its own right, current arrangements with the University of Queensland will be retained so that students at present attending the University College will receive University of Queensland degrees.

The government has been concerned to preserve the link with Queensland to ensure that the standards of the new institution are acceptable throughout Australia and the world. It is also concerned that the links forged by the

Darwin Institute of Technology with other institutions, and the high standards it has achieved through the national registration process must be preserved. In maintaining these links, the Northern Territory government is following the proven pattern set in the establishment of the Australian National University, the James Cook University and other Australian universities in their formative years.

Other provisions of the bill include the establishment of an academic board to advise the council and the Vice-Chancellor, the establishment of a congregation of the university and the establishment of a student association. I hasten to add that it also provides for the preservation of existing rights of the present chief executive officers and staff of both the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The Commonwealth has given an undertaking that it will provide funding for the new university at rates comparable with those for higher-education institutions elsewhere in Australia. It will fund recurrent costs and growth at national average prices plus establishment and capital costs. Depending on student numbers, this will mean that, for the 1989 calendar year, the Territory should receive approximately \$400m for recurrent costs. As student numbers increase, Commonwealth funding will increase accordingly. As the number of full-time students approaches 5000, Territory funding should no longer be required other than for specific research which the government may wish to see undertaken.

It is the government's view that more substantial Commonwealth funding should be forthcoming earlier in the merging process and we are continuing to negotiate with the Commonwealth on that basis. In order for the new university to receive any Commonwealth funding over the next 3 years, it is imperative that this legislation be passed during the October sittings. Commonwealth legislation for the funding of higher education for the 1989-91 triennium is to be introduced in October and passed in November. We need to have the university up and running by 1 January. That means that this legislation needs to be passed during the October sittings.

The passage of this bill will mean that, on 1 January 1989, the Northern Territory will attain what has been one of this government's greatest goals. By starting out alone and holding fast to our commitment, to gain access for Territorians to university education on our own terms, we will have achieved the goal which many thought impossible. The Northern Territory can look forward to all the far-reaching benefits that such an important institution will provide. Therefore, it would be remiss if I did not spend some time acknowledging the efforts of people who have made this merger possible.

In the wide-ranging and sometimes intense discussions over the last 8 months, there have been times when the pot boiled over. In this respect, the experience here has been similar to that of mergers elsewhere. However, except for 1 or 2 incidents, this period has been characterised by sincere debate over what is best for the future of the Northern Territory. There has been concern to preserve, in the new institution, the best aspects of both institutions and to protect the interests of students and the rights and conditions of staff.

For this I give my sincere thanks to the Darwin Institute of Technology Council, the University College of the Northern Territory Council, the TAFE Advisory Council, the Chief Warden of the Northern Territory University College - Professor Jim Thompson - the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology - Mr Kevin Davis - the staff and student association

representatives, members of the councils who served on the Higher Education Planning Group and the members of the working parties who have developed the principles on which the new institution will be based. I would also like to thank the Secretary of the Department of Education, Mr Geoff Spring, for the time and effort he has put into the task. It would be remiss of me not to also mention the support of the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr John Dawkins, and the officers of the Department of Employment, Education and Training both locally and in Canberra.

Soon I will announce the formation of the Interim Council of the Northern Territory University. I believe that it is essential that the new university develop as a continuous process, building on the firm base of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory. By the end of the triennium, 1991, we will see an institution which has dramatically increased the choice of courses available for Territorians. It will increase substantially the participation of Northern Territorians in higher education. It will have a significant impact on research and development in northern Australia, and play a significant part in the growth and development of the Northern Territory towards statehood. I trust honourable members on both sides of the House will work together on this very important exercise, the establishment of our Northern Territory University, and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 124)

Continued from 23 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this legislation arises from an announcement made by the government in the budget speech of the honourable Treasurer. Its effect is to extend the dutiable amount to include the value of a transfer of a licence, right or privilege associated with the relevant land and the valuation of that land.

The amendment is designed also to subject transfers of land to duty at the conveyancing rate and not the marketable securities rate. In the case of marketable securities, the duty will also be payable. The dutiable amount in that case will now be the higher of the consideration or the value of the security. The opposition supports the bill!

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 132)

Continued from 23 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker ...

Mr Perron: Do you want to oppose this one?

Mr SMITH: Don't challenge me like that.

This bill is also consequential on the Treasurer's budget speech, and the main impact of this bill is - I am not quite sure whether it is to increase or lower the threshold but I think it is to increase it - from \$300 000 to \$400 000. Quite obviously the opposition supports the bill. I have spoken about payroll tax on previous occasions in this House but I will take the opportunity to do it again. The payroll tax has to be one of the most inequitable forms of tax that can be imposed on employers because it essentially penalises them for employing people. That is a ridiculous state of affairs that we have got ourselves into Australia-wide and it applies also in other countries. On top of wages and other conditions that employers are responsible for, we tax them for the privilege of having them employ people. There is growing recognition around Australia that it is not an equitable tax and I think that all state and Territory governments are looking at ways in which its impact can be reduced.

The tax has become such an integral part of our present tax system that it is difficult to imagine its total abolition. It is part of the revenue-generating effort that is considered by the Grants Commission in determining state and territory allocations at present and therefore it is difficult to contemplate removing it completely. I suspect that, over the longer term, there will be more and more pressure imposed to have a very close look at payroll tax to see if it is an inhibiting factor in companies taking on more staff and, if it is, to see if something can be done about it. In the meantime, we are stuck with it. The government has been realistic in recognising that it is a significant disincentive for business, particularly small business. I am sure that the raising of the threshold from \$300 000 to \$400 000 will be warmly appreciated.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 129)

Continued from 23 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill is also consequential on the Treasurer's budget speech. It gives the commissioner greater powers and imposes harsher penalties. The amended legislation enables forfeiture of alcohol where quantities held suggest commercial operations and enables use of a garnishee for recovery of amounts outstanding.

Mr Speaker, we noticed that the amendments are consistent with the objectives of the Liquor Act but are much fairer than existing provisions in the Liquor Act covering the items that they have in common, such as search warrants and so forth. In fact, we would suggest that, at some stage in the development of this legislation, we could have another look at the Liquor Act to see whether some of the provisions of this bill could be transferred across to it. That is an argument for another day, however, and the opposition supports this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

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)

Continued from 25 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving a motion to defer consideration of these bills.

Mr Speaker, I believe that consideration of these cognate bills should be postponed until the Attorney-General has tabled legal advice on the relationship between these bills and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. My concern is that various aspects of these bills are unclear and I suggest that the Attorney-General's second-reading speech did not necessarily clarify the position. I appreciate that the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association is very enthusiastic to see these amendments passed and I refer honourable members to General Circular 9/88 from the Executive Director of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Is the honourable member speaking to the suspension of standing orders or to the second-reading?

Mr BELL: I have moved suspension of standing orders and I am explaining why I believe the House should defer its consideration of the cognate bills.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: In that circular, Cliff Emerson says: 'When (if) these bills are passed and enacted, it will serve the extremely useful purpose of ensuring that landholders, particularly in the pastoral regions, have equal rights in regard to the practical aspects of access to land'.

Mr Speaker, there is a technical relationship between 3 of these bills and the Aboriginal Land Amendment Act. Section 71 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act is relevant to this situation and I will quote it for the benefit of honourable members: 'Except in the performance of functions under this act or otherwise in accordance with this act or a law of the Northern Territory, a person shall not enter or remain on Aboriginal land'. In other words, if the function for which access to land is sought is permitted under a law of the Territory, there is no problem with access. Although it is not clear from the minister's second-reading speech, my advice is that 3 of these bills - the Summary Offences Amendment Bill, the Stock Diseases Amendment Bill and the Fences Amendment Bill - currently apply on

Aboriginal land. There is, however, some doubt about the Bushfires Amendment Bill. I am concerned that that particular issue was not spelt out by the minister in his second-reading speech.

Obviously, there has been concern in the land councils about these bills and honourable members will recall that, although the bills have been on the Notice Paper since the last sittings ...

Mr Manzie: They have been on it for 6 months.

Mr BELL: That is incorrect. For the benefit of the minister, they have been on the Notice Paper since 25 May.

I do not believe that a great deal hangs on these particular bills. I understand, however, that there is a question of primacy in relation to the Aboriginal Land Act and the interrelationship between the Aboriginal Land Act and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the other Territory legislation that section 71 of that act refers to. That interrelationship needs to be explained adequately and that is why I am seeking some legal opinion with respect to the current situation. I am most reluctant to give carte blanche support to amendments when the minister has not made the current legal situation completely clear. It is appropriate that such legal advice be tabled so that the situation is clear. I point out that it might have been easier to come to terms with these bills procedurally if the government had not dropped on us on the day before the commencement of these sittings, the Interpretation Amendment Bill lying at No 6 on the Notice Paper. I think I have outlined clearly the opposition's position in this respect.

There are a couple of other points that are worth making at this stage. One is that, as a matter of principle, I am concerned about a specific class of land being included in general legislation or what should be legislation of general applicability. The proposal here is to include references to Aboriginal land within the Summary Offences Act, the Stock Diseases Act, the Bushfires Act and the Fences Act. I am a little concerned about that and that is another reason I would like to see the whys and wherefores of these particular bills spelt out rather more clearly.

I am cognisant of concern expressed by Mr Justice Toohey in his report 'Seven Years On'. I draw the attention of honourable members to paragraph 124 of that report which says:

Subsection 70(1) of the Lands Rights Act provides that 'except in the performance or functions under the act or otherwise in accordance with this act or a law of the Northern Territory, a person shall not enter or remain on Aboriginal land'. The dual reference to the act and a law of the Northern Territory ensures that the Territory may, by legislation, empower officials and others to enter or remain on Aboriginal land for particular purposes. Specific legislative amendment to this end has been proposed by the Territory in the case of the Aboriginal Land Act, Bushfires Act, Fences Act, Stock Diseases Act and Summary Offences Act.

Mr Speaker, I am not seeking to register absolute opposition to these proposals, but I consider it appropriate that they be deferred in the way that I am proposing. I believe that the matter needs to be given further consideration. It is well within the government's capability to defer debate on the bills. They have not arisen because of particular cases indicating a

need for them. As Mr Justice Toohey noted in 1983, the matters have already been before the legislature. Honourable members who were in the Assembly at that time will recall the amendments tabled in this Assembly alongside far more contentious legislation introduced by a former Chief Minister, Hon Paul Everingham. They became lost in the sort of kafuffle that Paul Everingham was very capable of creating. That is when the issues became obfuscated.

The government will not lose any dignity nor cause any distress in the community if this legislation is not enacted during these sittings. I believe the government can acquire only goodwill in the community, particularly with the land councils, if it is prepared to accept the point of view that I am proposing in this motion. As I have said, there is no evidence of need in the community for these amendments to be carried out ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes there is.

Mr BELL: The member for Koolpinyah ...

Mr FIRMIN: A point of order, Mr Speaker! In listening for the past 13 minutes to the speech of the member opposite in support of his motion, the government has been particularly relaxed and tolerant. However, I put it to you that, under standing order 70, the member should discontinue his speech, because he has now become involved in irrelevant and tedious repetition.

Mr BELL: In speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I point out for the benefit of the honourable member that I have made a series of points in the 13 minutes I have been on my feet. I have only a couple more. I do not believe that I have been tediously repetitious. I have made 3 or 4 important points. I have referred to the position of the Cattlemen's Association and I have referred to the position of the Toohey Report, neither of which, incidentally, was mentioned in the minister's rather thin second-reading speech.

There are complex issues that involve my constituents, the constituents of the member for Victoria River and the member for Katherine as well as those of members on this side of the House and I believe that it is appropriate that an argument be put in favour of deferral.

Mr Dale: You are outraged.

Mr BELL: No, Don. I am not outraged. I am too tired. I have the flu. You blokes bung these bills on with urgency. It is getting late. We were here till far too late last night ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, but I would ask the member for MacDonnell to relate his remarks more closely to the motion.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the motion seeks the suspension of standing orders in order to allow a further motion for deferral of these bills. I will not go over this again in a second-reading speech. I am putting the arguments as I understand them. There are certain matters which the Attorney-General did not refer to in his second-reading speech. He made no reference to the relationship between the Aboriginal Land Act, the 3 prior pieces of legislation and the subsequent piece of legislation. That is new information for this Assembly and I hope the member for Ludmilla is listening.



The Central Land Council has made the point that amendments are simply not necessary with respect to some of those acts. That has not been made clear to the legislature as it should have been. There is a feeling that there has been a lack of consultation with the land councils. There is no evidence that these amendments are required. The current legal situation for permits under the Summary Offences Act, the Stock Diseases Act and the Fences Act would appear to be quite clear. Because of the issue of primacy and the date of the legislation, the situation is different in respect of the Bushfires Act. Those issues need to be addressed.

Obviously, there is a great deal of feeling amongst the land councils and amongst my constituents about these particular bills. I believe that, if the Northern Territory government wants to gain the sort of goodwill that I referred to earlier, it will accede to this reasonable request to defer this legislation until October on the basis that nobody will be any the worse off for it.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell's argument for deferral would appear to be that the minister's second-reading speech was a bit short on information in his opinion. That seems odd when he has had since the last sittings to raise questions with the minister if he wanted to or to write to him and ask for some more detail. He has not taken the opportunity in this House to pose questions of the minister and the minister may well have satisfactory answers to the questions of the honourable member which he would present when he closed the second-reading debate. Surely, that is the normal procedure in this House.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the point made by the Chief Minister is quite inadequate. It is a nonsense to say that we can wait until the Minister for Lands and Housing makes his closing speech and simply accept that what he states will cover adequately our concerns and the concerns of the land councils and many people in my electorate and other electorates. That is quite incorrect and quite outrageous. That would be to accept that it is a fairly shallow argument. It is not a shallow argument. The point of the matter is ...

Mr Perron: Until you hear his reply, how do you know it is inadequate?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, to expect members on this side of the House simply to sit on their hands and pose questions, and then to expect that we would cut off our options for further questioning by simply taking it on good faith that the minister would cover adequately all of those areas is quite obviously outrageous. Of course we will not do it. We would not be doing our job if we accepted that.

The point was made about consultation with the land councils. When it was teased out, that consultation amounted to a letter indicating that this would be done. That is not 'consultation' on a subject as important as this. The point has been made that we have adequate legislation for this purpose already. In respect of our proposal for heritage legislation, the minister himself argued that he would not agree to it because he had not been able to establish in his own mind the need for that legislation, despite Turner House, despite Marron's newsagency and despite other examples that we gave to demonstrate the need for that legislation.

Honourable members should compare the 2 cases. In the case where there is a demonstrated need for legislation, the minister said that we do not need it yet. In this case, where it has been demonstrated that there is no need for

the legislation, he takes the opposite tack. Obviously, we should defer further debate and the minister should discuss the legislation further with interested parties and attempt to find a reasoned set of proposals which, if all parties agree they are required, he will bring back to this House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak against the deferral of these bills. I happen to have a copy of a bill introduced in 1984 which is exactly the same as 1 of the bills introduced on 25 May 1988. That should be long enough for honourable members to have considered them. Bills were introduced on 7 June 1984. They were reintroduced, with slight changes which did not affect their content, on 25 May 1988. We are wasting our time if we need more than 4 years to consider legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I feel sorry for the member for MacDonnell. He was complaining a moment ago about how late this House sat last night yet he wastes the time of the House again today by prolonging this debate with this ridiculous motion. These bills were presented on 25 May 1988, yet he tries to convince the House that he needs more time to consider them. He has had ample time to seek from the minister's office the information which he is now requesting. It would have been made available to him if he had asked. What he is trying to do is to hide his own incompetence because he has not done his homework. That is what it is all about. He is not ready to debate these bills and he is trying to put forward these furbies. It is his own incompetence that we are debating today and he is trying to cover it up. I am not going to swallow it and I am quite sure that my colleagues on this side of the House will not either. I do not support his motion.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to oppose this motion. I think it is important that members of the House and the community at large understand the problems that have been suggested by the member for MacDonnell. If I were unkind and ungenerous, I would say that this was an act specifically contrived by the member for MacDonnell to gain some support from or kudos with some people in the Central Land Council and some people in his party. However, I will not be small-minded. I will give him the benefit of the doubt and I will suppose that possibly he does not understand what the bills are meant to do, how they work and how they relate to the problems that he spoke about when proposing his motion.

The first point I would like to bring to the attention of the House is exactly what was stated in the Toohey report. The member for MacDonnell quoted paragraph 124. I will refer to paragraph 122 first:

... a whole range of statutes dealing with matters such as planning, bushfire control, stock diseases, boundary fences and access to land for the purpose of boundary fencing or recovering straying stock apply to Aboriginal land as much as they do to any other land in the Territory. ...

Paragraph 123 then stated:

Problems have arisen, not because of the general operation of laws of the Territory, but because of the implementation of those laws where entry upon Aboriginal land is necessary. Usually these problems may be overcome by legislation making it clear that entry on to Aboriginal land is authorised for the purposes of the legislation.

Then paragraph 124 says:

Subsection 70(1) of the Land Rights Act provides that, except in the performance of functions under the act 'or otherwise in the accordance with this act of the law of the Territory', a person shall not enter or remain on Aboriginal land. The dual reference to the act and a law of the Northern Territory ensures that the Territory may, by legislation, empower officials and others to enter or remain on Aboriginal land for particular purposes. Specific legislative amendment to this end has been proposed by the Territory ...

That is what the member for Koolpinyah alluded to and that is what these bills relate to: amendments are being 'proposed by the Territory in the case of the Aboriginal Land Act, Bushfires Act, Fences Act, Stock Diseases Act and Summary Offences Act'.

Mr Justice Toohey pointed out very clearly that there were problems and that they needed to be fixed. He said the Territory had the power and the legislative ability to do so and he mentioned specific amendments. He saw the problem and he was satisfied with the Territory's proposals to relieve the problem. Any suggestion that any law we pass in this House may contravene the Aboriginal Land Rights Act enacted by the Commonwealth is ludicrous. We do not have the power in this House to pass any amendment or to change any legislation which has been passed by the Commonwealth in relation to Aboriginal land. If we did so, such an act would be invalid and it would have no force in law. Any fears that the honourable member has that we may be deliberately trying in some underhand way to sneak something through here have no basis in fact.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I ask the member for MacDonnell to sit quietly and listen. As I said, I am giving him the benefit of the doubt. We must consider that he is fair dinkum in the protest that he has made.

As I said in my second-reading speech, these amendments will provide a right of entry to Aboriginal land to a person who has an obligation or responsibility to take action relating to bushfires, the erection or repair and maintenance of fences, the detection and prevention of stock diseases and the legitimate recovery of straying stock, without obtaining a permit if he is entering for the purposes of these acts. We do not have the power to pass acts that contravene the federal Land Rights Act. Mr Justice Toohey pointed out that we needed to make amendments. He had seen the amendments and he approved them.

Mr Ede: He is one man.

Mr MANZIE: I think Mr Justice Toohey has far more knowledge than the member for Stuart. He has been quite specific.

It is important to realise that these amendments have been discussed in detail with Commonwealth officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs over a couple of years. Those officers and that department have pressured us and encouraged us to introduce these amendments and pass them. I introduced these amendments in May. On a number of occasions, I have offered the services of my department to the member for MacDonnell when he expressed some vague doubts about whether there might be some problems. I consistently offered him briefings and he assured me that he was too busy to receive any expert advice

on this matter. That made me think that he might not be fair dinkum in his motives but, as I said, I gave him the benefit of the doubt. However, I made specific offers to him. My staff have made offers to give him the opportunity to resolve any doubts he has because I can assure him and members of the Aboriginal community and the remainder of the Territory community that there is nothing in these amendments which will derogate from the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or reduce any powers or abilities of Aborigines to operate on their land or which will give any power to any person that is not already being utilised.

At the moment, if there is a bushfire, people enter Aboriginal land to fight that bushfire. They do so in contravention of the act and the same goes for all the other activities covered by the cognate bills. We have a situation where people are breaking the law. Mr Justice Toohey has said that the law has to be changed. We have spoken about the legislation with Commonwealth officers and with members of land councils over a number of years. We introduced those amendments months ago and yet today we hear a member of this House arguing that he wants to postpone consideration of the bills in order to find out what the legal implications are. He had a duty to find out about these things if he was so concerned about them. I offered him the facilities of my department and access to expert personnel to discuss any concerns he might have had and now he comes up with a furphy.

I can assure honourable members that this legislation will be passed in this House at these sittings. We will certainly oppose the suspension of standing orders to enable the member for MacDonnell to move a motion to postpone consideration of these bills until the next sittings, and I invite him to address his specific concerns as the bills proceed through the House.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a very disappointing response from the Attorney-General.

Mr Dale: Didn't you listen to him?

Mr BELL: Yes, I did listen to him. The Minister for Health and Community Services has an army of public servants to organise him, and I am told that he says what they tell him to say. He needs a dose of opposition. We on the opposition benches have to carry out our own research. The Minister for Health and Community Services might not be aware that the Attorney-General is seeking urgency also for the Interpretation Amendment Bill and I must admit I am getting sick and ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Interpretation Amendment Bill has no relevance at all to the particular matter that is before the House and I do not think that any connection should be made between them.

Mr BELL: The fact of the matter is that, procedurally, they are related. The research we had to carry out on the Interpretation Amendment Bill made it particularly difficult to get down to the nitty gritty which the minister did not have the courtesy to spell out in his second-reading speech, which was nothing short of platitudinous.

Mr Manzie: What have you done since March? Go on, tell us.

Mr BELL: I have done a great deal since March. These bills were not on the Table in March: they were tabled in May. The member for Koolpinyah - for whom this is not a particularly burning issue - said that, if they had been brought before the Assembly in 1984, why were we not able to do something about them ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order but the honourable member must confine his remarks to the matters in hand.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the urgency sought for the Interpretation Amendment Bill has put a considerable burden on a hard-working opposition. I would hasten to add that I appreciate the cooperation I receive from the Attorney-General. Most of the time, he manages to keep his cool.

I will return to the issues raised by the various speakers. The member for Koolpinyah asked why, if the bills had been on the Notice Paper since 1984, were we not able to do something about them? That can be easily turned around: why, if the bills were able to be deferred from 1984 to 1988, could they not be deferred for another 3 months until October, particularly given the difficulties that have been expressed?

In this particular debate, the minister used a reference from the report of Mr Justice Toohey, echoing my comments in support of my motion to suspend standing orders. I might point out for the benefit of the honourable minister, in case he does not have a copy of his second-reading speech at hand, that the only reason I was able to raise Justice Toohey's comments in this debate was because of the research that we have done on these particular bills. I am not accusing him of misleading the House. The fact is that the minister has not adequately explicated the interrelationship between these 6 bills and the federal act.

Mr Manzie: Tell us what you are talking about, Neil.

Mr BELL: This will take a long time, Daryl, I promise you.

Mr Deputy Speaker, no reference was made to Mr Justice Toohey in the minister's second-reading speech although he decided to make one in his contribution to this debate on the motion to suspend standing orders. The minister has not addressed the question of primacy of legislation, which I referred to when I moved this motion. For the benefit of honourable members, I said that the Aboriginal Land Act stands in a different relationship to pre-existing legislation like the Summary Offences Act and the Stock Diseases Act than it does to the post-occurring Bushfires Act. The Attorney-General did not pick that up and I think that he needs to do a little more homework on it.

The Attorney-General made a great point of telling us that we should not worry about exceeding our legislative power. He said that, if the Territory legislation is in conflict with the Commonwealth act, it will not apply. That is quite right, Mr Deputy Speaker, but it is not a particularly good precedent. I believe that, as legislators, we should be aware of the interrelationship between the various acts involved. I am not introducing this motion for the sake of taking up the Assembly's time. The Minister for Health and Community Services does not have to sit here and listen. It is appropriate that these issues be discussed in a debate such as this. I appreciate the cooperative attitude of the Attorney-General in this regard. Basically, I am saying that I want more information. I do not accept the Chief Minister's argument that I will be able to obtain that in the context of a second-reading speech.

Mr Manzie: Ask the questions and you will get the information. You have not raised a problem yet.

Mr BELL: If the Attorney-General imagines that we will be able to get anywhere in the committee stage, let me point out to him that, now that standing orders have been altered so that only 2 speeches are available to participants in committee ...

Mr Manzie: That is your attitude towards this House, this parliament. That is nice, isn't it? You are really showing yourself up for something ...

Mr BELL: Look, the sooner I get home to bed with this dose of flu, the happier I will be. The sooner you blokes shut up, the sooner we will get home.

The honourable minister referred to his 2 years of discussion with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I think he is to be commended on that, considering that the Commonwealth is usually regarded as the bete noir by every Territory government minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give you the facts. The land councils were advised on 10 May that these amendments were to be introduced and they were introduced barely a fortnight later. If the Attorney-General was interested in his government having a productive relationship with the land councils that is characterised by goodwill, I would have thought that he would have let them know rather more than a fortnight before he introduced the legislation into this Assembly.

As for the question about briefings, I have already stated that I appreciate the cooperative manner in which the minister has offered these facilities. We have had 3 exceedingly busy days. I left here at 10 o'clock last night. I was back here at 7.30 this morning. I understand that a few people did not leave here until 11.45 pm. As far as I am concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, the conduct of business in this House yesterday was less than desirable. The 3 bills that were rushed through at 9 pm or 10 pm were not considered adequately either. If, in that context, I am to be required to make a sensible contribution, something has to give. I am afraid that this is something that ought to give because there is nobody out there who wants it.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

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

Noes 15

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

Motion negatived.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I do not intend speaking for any length of time to the second reading. I have indicated an in-principle support for

some aspects of these bills. It is not completely clear what the relationship is. We have those comments from Mr Justice Toohey in his report 'Seven Years On'. I am concerned that the Attorney-General did not make any reference to it in his second-reading speech. I reiterate that the Attorney-General did not discuss the issue of primacy and the current legal position in his second-reading speech. I have continuing concerns about the relationship between these bills and the Land Rights Act.

I accept the reference by the Attorney-General to section 73 of the Land Rights Act which indicates that the Assembly does not have the power to pass laws that are in conflict with the Land Rights Act but, for the reasons that I have already outlined in prior debate, we have some reservations about aspects of these bills.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the amendments proposed will in no way change the status of title to Aboriginal land, nor will they result in Aboriginal land being opened to all and sundry. That is quite obvious from a reading of the bills, from the Attorney-General's explanation and from his second-reading speech. I feel quite sad that the member for MacDonnell, who has shadow responsibility in this area, has not taken the trouble to do some homework to find out what this is all about so that he would be on firm ground when making his comments. Obviously, he is on very shaky ground. In fact, he is on no ground at all. He stood there for 5 minutes and then sat down. If he had troubled to inform himself, he would have been able to conduct a reasonable debate on this matter in this House, but he has totally failed the constituents of MacDonnell and, indeed, the Aboriginal people he purports to represent, the Central Land Council. He has failed totally, and he sits there shaking his head and complaining about having the flu. I am quite happy for him to go home now. If he is not well, he should go home now. In fact, I think we would all applaud if that occurred.

Mr Speaker, the minister made it quite clear in his second-reading speech on 25 May 1988, and I would like to quote ...

Mr Smith: That is about all you can do. You cannot pick up an argument for yourself.

Mr SETTER: I will pick that up. We have another insult from the Leader of the Opposition, and he would be the master of insults. We have heard so many in this House from the mouth of the honourable member since he became Leader of the Opposition. It is quite sickening and, in fact, disappointing to hear the Leader of the Opposition. Perhaps he should go home as well because he is going to sleep. It was a late night last night and we all know why it was a late night. It was a late night because of the way members of the opposition carried on in this House yesterday. They are giving a repeat performance today. If they have to sit here until 11 or 12 tonight, then so be it. The responsibility is on their heads, not ours.

Mr Speaker, if I could return to the honourable minister's second-reading speech, I will quote:

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. This in fact is provided for by section 74 of the Commonwealth act.

It is there in black and white. If honourable members opposite had doubted the minister's statement, they could have quite easily sought legal

advice in the ensuing several months. They could have asked the minister for a briefing. They could have requested access to Crown law officers. They could have obtained their own advice or have consulted with legal advisers to the land councils. I am quite convinced that they did seek legal advice through the land councils and from others and that they were told that there was no impediment to these amendments. There is no doubt about that. What we have seen this afternoon is a delaying tactic. If they can put it off for another hour or 2, make a big noise about it, give an example of petulant displeasure, maybe the media will pick up some of the comments of members of the opposition and they may gain a little political kudos out of it. Of course, we always have to keep in the back of our minds that there is a by-election approaching in Flynn in Alice Springs.

Mr Bell: It would be a gripping issue there.

Mr SETTER: One wonders, why this sudden activity ...

Mr Bell: Why won't you sit down and shut up?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr Bell: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw, and I move that the member for Jingili be no longer heard.

Motion negatived.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I take that as a compliment. It shows that the honourable member has some sensitivity. I have been wondering over the last few months whether he had any sensitivity at all. I have seldom seen any indication of it. On this particular occasion, we did get some sort of positive reaction out of him. Being positive is certainly not in the honourable member's list of attributes.

In my opinion, there is no doubt that Territory law should and does apply to Aboriginal land in such matters as those before us today. Even though it is granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, a Commonwealth act, Aboriginal land is Territory land. It is land within the Territory and, in relation to matters like these, Territory law must apply. I am pleased to see that section 74 of the Land Rights Act relates to this.

Mr Speaker, I note that the member for Arnhem is becoming vociferous with regard to this matter. Perhaps another nerve has been struck. I am quite sure that we will have the opportunity to listen to his contribution to this debate in a few moments. I will listen with great attention to what the honourable member has to say because we will find out whether or not he is an expert in this matter.

There are 4 particular acts involved: the Stock Diseases Act, the Fences Act, the Bushfires Act and the Summary Offences Act. These relate to emergency situations and that is what this is all about. Mr Speaker, I am quite sure that you have read the minister's second-reading speech, and you will understand that there has been some doubt raised with regard to this legislation. It has become a bit of a cloudy area and the purpose of these amendments is to clarify that situation so that, when officers of the Crown and others require access to Aboriginal land for perfectly legitimate reasons, there will be no doubt as to their right of entry.



For example, if there is a suspicion that there may be stock on Aboriginal land that may be suffering from tuberculosis or brucellosis, a Crown stock inspector must have the right to urgent access to that property to check the situation. If the inspector has to go back to Darwin or Alice Springs to obtain a permit and then return, that is ridiculous. I see that the member for Stuart agrees with me. If there is a bushfire roaring through Aboriginal land and threatening life and limb, the firefighters should not have to return to Darwin to obtain a permit. That would be a ridiculous situation. We cannot allow any doubt to exist about that whatsoever.

These amendments address the situation. There is no doubt that it is in the interests of Aboriginal people as well as other Territorians to ensure the passage of these amendments this afternoon. I am quite concerned that honourable members opposite are doing all in their power to prevent that from occurring. There is no doubt that persons having a legitimate reason for access to that land must be able to accomplish that purpose and they must be able to accomplish it without the need to obtain a permit.

It is very important in this modern Territory that all Territorians be subject to the same Territory laws. We cannot have a section of the community to which Territory laws do not apply. That situation is absolutely ridiculous. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act does apply in the Northern Territory and it has some special provisions that apply to Aboriginal people - and I am not arguing with that at all - but I am saying that those people live in the Territory, their land is in the Territory, and therefore Territory law must apply. For example, the Northern Territory government provides a considerable range of services on Aboriginal land - roads, electricity, water, health, education and so on. Aboriginals are Territory citizens and Territory laws should apply to those people as well as to any other Territory citizen. This is what this is all about.

The amendment to the Aboriginal Land Act removes that requirement to have the permit to which I referred earlier. The Interpretation Act is to be amended also to rationalise the Commonwealth and Territory legislation and to eliminate any inconsistencies that may arise.

I am pleased that, during the latter part of my comments, honourable members have been prepared to listen in silence. Quite obviously, they have agreed that the argument that I have put forward is fair and reasonable because it has certainly silenced their interjections. I would be very pleased to hear comment from subsequent speakers from the opposition because, like the member for MacDonnell, they have no reasonable argument to put against the passage of this legislation today.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, previous speakers have said that, at the moment, it is okay for people to go on Aboriginal land to fulfil duties connected with the Bushfires Act, the Stock Diseases Act and the Summary Offences Act. Under the Aboriginal Land Act, it is true that certain people can go on Aboriginal land if they have permits. Section 5(1) says that the land council 'may issue a permit'. Subsection (3) says that 'a permit to enter on to and remain on Aboriginal land shall be in writing'. Subsection (7) says that 'a land council shall, before commencing to issue permits for an area of Aboriginal land, consult with and come to an agreement with the traditional Aboriginal owners of the area as to the terms and conditions upon which the land council may issue permits or delegate its authority to issue permits'. Section 6 says that the 'minister may issue permits to a government employee in the course of his duty only'. Section 6A refers to permits including the immediate family for people residing on

Aboriginal land. Section 9 relates to 'defence in certain circumstances'. It states that it 'shall be a defence to a charge under section 4(1)' - that relates to entry on to Aboriginal land - 'if the person proves that, the entry on to Aboriginal land was due to necessity, it was impractical to apply for a permit and he removed himself from the Aboriginal land as soon as was practicable in the circumstances'.

In relation to the Bushfires Act, the Fencing Act and the Summary Offences Act, the Aboriginal Land Act says that a government employee, in the course of his duty, can obtain a permit. A government employee can put out a bushfire perhaps. He can go on to Aboriginal land in the course of doing work under the Stock Diseases Act, the Fences Act and the Summary Offences Act but, if anybody else goes on to Aboriginal land, he will face a charge. There is no getting around that. In his defence, the person could say that he went on to Aboriginal land to put out a fire because it was threatening his land, that he went to retrieve his straying stock or that he needed to repair a fence between his property and Aboriginal land. If a person is able to do all those normal things on non-Aboriginal land without requiring a permit, why is it necessary that, under the current Aboriginal Land Act, a person who had done those things on Aboriginal land should be charged and have to use all those reasons in his defence? Why can't he act as he would act if the person next door to him was a non-Aboriginal?

I heard members of the opposition say that the member for Jingili did not know much about bushfires, fences or summary offences. They cannot say that about me because I do know about them. The 'normal course' of a bushfire is never normal. You never know what will happen. If the owner or occupier of land sees a bushfire coming from whatever direction and the only sensible way to put that bushfire out is to go on to the Aboriginal land and burn back, he cannot do that without the possibility of facing a charge. In the normal course of events, if he knows the people on the next block, he will cut the fence, enter the land and burn back. The person who owns the land may be there helping him. If he is not, he will probably ring him that night and say: 'Bert, I had to burn a bit of such-and-such a paddock and I had to cut your fence. I have repaired it'. I have a particular case in mind which I will refer to in conclusion. Bert will say: 'No worries, mate'. And that is the end of it.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the honourable minister a question, and I think this is important. The proposed amendment says:

Where by or under this act, a person is empowered to go on to land of which he or she is not the occupier, or it is necessary or convenient for a person to go on to the land for the purpose of carrying out an obligation or function or exercising a power, imposed or conferred on him or her by or under the act, the person may go on to the land for that purpose notwithstanding that ...

That amendment implies that the person is a government employee. I would like to ask the minister whether the same latitude applies to somebody, under this amendment to the Bushfires Act, if he is not a government employee? In most places in the Northern Territory, volunteer bushfire brigades have very few public servants who are acting in the course of their duty. They are comprised of ordinary men and women who are not government employees. Would the same latitude to enter Aboriginal land apply to them?

We come to the Summary Offences Act. The amendment proposed to that act relates to the driving of stock away from a property that is not one's own.

Again, I will be practical. The scenario would be that the fence was down, for whatever reason, and the stock had gone through to the neighbouring property. In the normal course of events, one would ring the neighbour and make arrangements for a suitable time to go in and fetch them back.

Mr Ede: You are talking about cattle stations.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am not talking about cattle stations. I am talking about a particular case.

You go in there and retrieve the stock. The neighbour does not mind and, in fact, he will probably help you. You can do that under the Aboriginal Land Act, but you run the risk of having a charge laid against you. You can use it as a defence that you were going after your own heifers, but why should you have to stand at risk of having this charge laid against you that you entered on to Aboriginal land without a permit? The same applies in relation to fences. You would need to repair the fence after retrieving your stock. At the moment, you can go on to Aboriginal land for that purpose, but again you run the risk of having charges laid against you. It is only common sense that, as is proposed in the amendments, people should be able to go on to Aboriginal land for such purposes.

In relation to the Fences Act, and assuming you are non-Aboriginal and your property adjoins another property which is non-Aboriginal, you usually come to an agreement in relation to the repairing of fences. Usually, it is a 50:50 arrangement under section 15 and section 23 of the Fences Act. Section 15 specifies all the conditions applying to a notice to repair. Section 23 applies to a form of service for notices. If you intend to repair a fence or put up a new fence, it is only right that you notify the person who has the adjoining land and come to some agreement.

I fully support the amendments proposed by the honourable minister. If these amendments are not passed, it is completely unfair for the current situation to continue any longer whereby a person may be charged with those offences under the Aboriginal Land Act when he has gone on to Aboriginal land in the course of his work, to put out a fire, to retrieve straying stock or to repair a fence. It is too ridiculous to even consider but, if these amendments are not passed, the scenario could be that, if you have stock that stray from your land on to Aboriginal land, you will have to apply to the land council for a permit. The land council will consult the Aboriginal traditional owners of that area. The Aboriginal traditional owners will convey their decision back to the land council and the land council, at some time in the distant future, would indicate whether you can have a permit or not. In the meantime, the stock that strayed on to the land would be scattered hell, west and crooked and I do not think you would get them back again. With closer settlement of the Northern Territory, and the likelihood of more and more non-Aboriginal land being contiguous with Aboriginal land, it is necessary to have legislation that helps everybody get on well together.

We come to the Stock Diseases Act. The Stock Diseases Act gives permission for anybody who is carrying out an obligation or function or exercising a power to go on to Aboriginal land and do all of these things. Under the Stock Diseases Act, the main sections that will be covered are the powers of an inspector. The powers of an inspector under the Stock Diseases Act are very comprehensive. The Stock Diseases Act says that the inspector may not only enter or cross into any land at any time that he considers suitable for his work, but he can muster on that land and he can seize stock on that land or fodder on that land. He can destroy stock on that land or he can order any person on that land to produce documents.

We are talking about an inspector going on to Aboriginal land. He can order a person to answer questions. He can apply to stock any treatments or tests that he considers necessary, and he can stop any stock entering or leaving that land. To use a practical example again, if your stock have gone on to Aboriginal land and there is hint of a disease, the stock inspector will say: 'Sorry, they are over here now and they cannot go back on to your property'. Those stock would have to be yarded, agisted or kept somehow on Aboriginal land. Under the Stock Diseases Act, the inspector has the power to demand the disinfection of land, yards, pens and vehicles. He can order persons to undertake repairs and he can seize and detain any stock. It is only proper that those sort of provisions under the Stock Diseases Act be carried out under the same conditions on Aboriginal land and non-Aboriginal land. Mr Speaker, I support the bills.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, it is interesting that, in his second-reading speech, the Minister for Lands and Housing picked 1 recommendation of Justice Toohey's report which relates to the access provisions as they exist under the federal Land Rights Act at the moment. The Territory legislation is complementary to the federal legislation. In the same report, I believe Justice Toohey recommended that land excisions be granted on pastoral properties as Aboriginal land. I would like the Northern Territory government to consider that recommendation in the light of some of the difficulties that Aboriginal people are having on pastoral properties.

Mr Speaker, I will not take as much time as did the honourable minister or the member for Koolpinyah by speaking to each of these bills because they are cognate and we are discussing the aspect which they have in common: entry on to Aboriginal land. I have never heard of any occasion when the Northern or Central Land Council has refused a permit to any officer of the Northern Territory government, whether he was from Primary Industry, the Bushfires Council or the Stock Squad. I have spoken to many land council officers and, as far as I am aware, there has never been such an occurrence. The Attorney-General has not mentioned any incident which would substantiate the need for such legislation.

I believe that the land councils have a good relationship with government officers and other people who work on Aboriginal land from time to time. Some years ago, a landowner whose property adjoined Aboriginal land at Palumpa in the VRD area made an agreement with the Aboriginal owners which allowed him to go on to their land when stock strayed. That agreement was worked out without even being referred to the land councils. Those sorts of relationships can exist. It would have delayed the whole process if the land council had had to request permission from the traditional landowners. Traditional landowners might be away for a couple of months and that would cause problems in an emergency situation. However, if there is a good relationship between adjoining landowners, this legislation would not be appropriate. I know that the Aboriginal landowners have always been cooperative.

I note that the minister said in his second-reading speech that he has made the land councils aware of these amendments. Has he taken the opportunity to discuss these matters with them? Has he spoken to the legal officers of the land councils so that some agreement or arrangement could be made without the need for legislation?

I appreciate the fact that, in his report, Justice Toohey referred to some of the anomalies under the existing legislation but I do not believe that these bills will help to establish a good relationship between people in the Northern Territory. All these bills will do is bring about massive conflicts

between the land councils and the pastoralists. The minister announced the amendments to the legislation at a conference in Alice Springs and I wonder whether the government was told by the Cattlemen's Association to do something about it. I am still waiting for any member on the government benches to tell me about a single incident where the Aboriginal land councils have taken out writs against government officers who have had access to Aboriginal land in the course of their work. I do not think it has happened and therefore the opposition is not supporting the bills.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to the comments made by the member for Arnhem. If there have been no problems with people entering Aboriginal land for the purposes stipulated in the bills, and if the land councils have been cooperative and there have been no restrictions, I cannot understand why the opposition opposes the legislation. These bills simply mean that, under specified circumstances, a person will be legally on Aboriginal land despite the fact that he does not have a permit. It is removing what should be regarded, in those particular circumstances, as an unnecessary bureaucratic step. That is the point of this legislation. It seeks to clarify and simplify the processes in respect of situations which might occur when there are bushfires or when stock cross property boundaries. Aboriginal land will be treated on the same basis as other private land, a term which applies equally to pastoral properties.

The permit system has been debated in this House over the years. In its defence, opposition members and pro-permit advocates argue that, if you are entering somebody else's property, it is reasonable to ask for permission first. They argue that Aborigines should have the same rights in that respect as, for example, do pastoralists. If that is true, the situation in regard to entering other private land for specific legal purposes should also apply to Aboriginal land.

The member for MacDonnell said earlier today, although not in the course of debating this motion, that he was somewhat concerned to find specific types of land specifically referred to in general legislation in the Northern Territory. Obviously, he meant special provisions in legislation in respect of Aboriginal land. If the Aboriginal Land Rights Act were a Northern Territory act, such provisions would not be necessary. Unfortunately, it is not a Territory act. It is under the administrative control of the federal government and that is why there are special arrangements for Aboriginal land and why Aboriginal land has to be specifically mentioned from time to time in legislation.

I do not see anything controversial or confrontationalist in these bills and I am quite amazed at the reaction from members opposite. The bills simply mean that, under certain circumstances which are common throughout the Northern Territory, rights to enter Aboriginal land will be the same as rights to enter other private land. The heat of the debate on this point has surprised me. If the member for MacDonnell is correct in saying that there is no need for amendment, there would be no effect other than a clarification of the situation for the community. The fighting of bushfires, fencing activity, the combating of stock disease and the recovery of stock are commonplace right across the Territory. These have been common practices throughout the Territory for so many decades that I am amazed that honourable members opposite are getting themselves so worked up about it. We are simply trying to clarify and rationalise the legislative framework of the Northern Territory. Anybody who is arguing against this is trying to say that people should not have those rights on Aboriginal land. I do not believe that is the intention of anybody in this House.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I have lived in Nhulunbuy for almost 18 years now and it would be quite wrong of me to say that I understand Aboriginal culture and the imperative of land to that culture. However, after 18 years, the original arguments in support of land rights have some meaning to me. Aboriginal people do not see land as a resource. That is a fact of life. They see land in terms of belonging to it. The land does not belong to them; they have an obligation to the land. We are entering into a very difficult area - and I acknowledge the difficulties - when we frame laws in the context of the relationship between 2 cultures. Whilst I accept my ignorance in matters of Aboriginal culture, I can say that Aboriginal people do not see land as an exploitable resource or something to be manipulated and affected as a consequence of contemporary law.

I listened to the member for Nightcliff and I heard what he had to say. I listened to the member for MacDonnell and I heard what he had to say. The problem with this legislation is that it is on the edge, the sharp edge, of cultural confrontation. Aboriginal people do not mind people coming on to land to do what is acceptable. I have never met an Aboriginal person who minds that. In my own electorate, despite the European presence, I know of only 2 prosecutions of persons for going on to Aboriginal land without a permit. I know that every day of the week people go on to Aboriginal land without permits and the ability to prosecute for the lack of a permit is always there. That is a fact of life where I come from.

We are talking about the basis of land rights. We are not just talking about Aboriginal people's rights to their land; we are talking about their obligations to their land. That is the sharp edge. As the member for Arnhem clearly indicated, there has been no dispute about persons going on to Aboriginal land for matters of importance, whether they relate to stock diseases, bushfires or whatever. There has been no dispute in the past and I do not see why there should ever be any dispute in the future. There is a fundamental difference in the logic of our 2 cultures in so far as the value of land is concerned. Aboriginal people have an obligation to their land that we cannot comprehend. We find that concept extremely difficult to cope with under our laws, and I have a great deal of sympathy for the Attorney-General in that respect. That difference in values is very difficult to cope with in the framing of legislation.

Aboriginal people have not disputed that persons in pursuit of matters of importance should be allowed on their land. Equally, they have insisted for generations that they themselves must act as custodians of their land. It is not a right for Aboriginal people - it is an obligation. As custodians of their land, they must be able to look after it and have the final matter-of-fact say about it. We may not agree with that concept of land tenure. We may not be able to accept that logic and we may have a great deal of difficulty in framing laws to recognise it, but that is the way they think. That is the motivation for their existence. It is not that they want to keep people out, but that they have an obligation to look after that land. It is not that they want to stop people doing what is right and proper on their land, but that they have an obligation to look after that land.

I appreciate the dilemma of the Attorney-General in formulating laws which can come to grips with that great clash of cultural values which exists within the Northern Territory, but to ignore it invites disaster. I repeat, for the sake of members opposite, that I accept my ignorance in matters of Aboriginal culture. However, these people have fundamentally different values in relation to land and its ownership than we have. We are talking about people who may not hold the same values as we hold, but they have children, they

breathe the air, they have thoughts for the future and memories of the past and they are human beings like ourselves. This legislature should recognise with some degree of compassion the obligations that these people have. We can pass this legislation and people will continue to go on to land as they have for the last 10, 20 or 30 years. That will continue to happen, but what we are doing is removing the obligation that those people perceive they have and understand they have in relation to their land.

It is a difficult concept for any legislature to come to grips with and I appreciate that. If we remove that obligation, we are diminishing those persons. Their purpose of existence is being diminished in their own eyes if not in ours. I think that we owe more than that to the dignity of those persons. As the member for Nightcliff said, there has been no problem caused over the present laws. The present ownership and rights over land have not caused any great degree of difficulty. If they had, there might be a point to these amendments. If persons had been prosecuted for fighting fires or pursuing stock or whatever, there might well be very good reason for passing legislation to enable them to do that. In the absence of that, what we are doing is diminishing the dignity and the purpose of many of our people's existence. That is a fact of life. You can try to deny that. I will admit my ignorance about Aboriginal culture. I happen to be privileged enough to have an inkling of an understanding of Aboriginal culture and I would plead with this Assembly not to diminish those individuals, not to diminish their obligation and not to diminish their dignity. I hope that this Assembly will reconsider this legislation because it will certainly affect individuals in a very gross way.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to take up very much time tonight. Frankly, I find it difficult to understand the concerns of the opposition in this matter because there is nothing strange or unique in what is happening here. I too represent, as does the member for MacDonnell, a seat that has within it very large tracts of Aboriginal land which, for the most part, are surrounded by cattle stations although some are on the edges of towns. I am very much aware of the concerns of Aboriginal people and others within my electorate. I certainly hope that I am recognised as representing the interests of all people within my electorate.

I am very much aware of situations where, over a number of years, people living on their own land beside Aboriginal land have had a relationship with the Aboriginal people whereby they have been able to arrange access to the land for certain purposes, and that has worked both ways. That has worked fairly well but, in the case of pastoralists going on to Aboriginal land to collect cattle, to fight a fire or to mend a fence, they have been breaking the law. They have been doing it without a permit. They have been doing it because it needed to be done. Often, there is no time to obtain permits, particularly in the case of bushfires. A bushfire could be threatening both an Aboriginal community on Aboriginal land and a station property. It is ridiculous to have to seek a permit to go on to that land to fight the fire. It is quite ludicrous to think that that should be necessary.

The same applies in respect of the control of stock diseases. Stock disease in the Territory has been under fairly tight control for some years, but it is a fact that it is as prevalent on Aboriginal land as it is anywhere else. Aboriginal people themselves are attempting to run cattle stations among other cattle stations. They have difficulty with being able to operate freely and have other people assist them when they do not have the power to do so under the act. I can cite classic cases where Aboriginal communities or

Aboriginal stations have sought the help of their neighbours when rounding up cattle and fencing.

The bills before us do not conflict in any way, as the member for MacDonnell would like to think they might, with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Mr Bell: I did not say that.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the way I heard it, he was implying that there was likely to be some conflict there.

Mr Bell: No. Read Hansard tomorrow.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Bushfires Act, the Fences Act, the Stock Diseases Act and the Summary Offences Act already allow right of entry to leased land. There is no reason why that should not apply also to Aboriginal land. Aboriginal people themselves would seek to have the same protection as other people in the Northern Territory. As a consequence, it would seem quite logical that these bills should be passed in order to provide the same protection that is available to everybody else. Quite clearly, there is an obligation on the part of the government to ensure that Aboriginal people have the same protection as everybody else in relation to matters mentioned in these bills.

There must be the ability to move on to Aboriginal land to control and prevent bushfires. Where there is a threat of stock disease on Aboriginal land, adjoining landholders should be able to retrieve stock and build and maintain common fences and boundaries. Considerable time is involved in obtaining permits to carry out such functions. I have known it to take some weeks for a permit to be obtained. In respect of bushfires, we are not talking about people who would normally hold permits to go on to Aboriginal land such as government employees. We are talking about volunteers or neighbours. It would be quite ludicrous to expect them to obtain a permit. It would be quite ludicrous also to expect them to obtain a permit if a fence is broken down and dirty cattle stray on to Aboriginal land and need to be brought back. People should have that ability. They do it now, but they do it in contravention of the law.

Mr Bell: Nonsense.

Mr McCARTHY: They do.

Mr Speaker, there are Aboriginal pastoralists in the Northern Territory who are striving to make a go of things themselves. They do it usually with support of the surrounding stations. For example, each year, Palumpa has a joint muster with the adjoining property, Dorisvale. Both stations do quite satisfactorily out of that. They do this on a joint arrangement without necessarily arranging permits. However, in fact, they are breaking the law in doing it.

I am surprised that the member for Arafura would not support these bills because he must recognise that they are of value to Aboriginal people and to the Northern Territory. Earlier, we talked about the potential for conflict. There is more likely to be conflict if, blindly, people purporting to represent Aboriginal people oppose bills that ...

Mr Bell interjecting.



Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would you like that withdrawn?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Mr Speaker, I would expect that that should be withdrawn.

Mr Bell: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will stand and withdraw as other members would do.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the blasphemy and I withdraw the imputation on the member for Victoria River, and I apologise from the bottom of my bended knee.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, there is more room for conflict when, blindly, people purporting to represent Aboriginal interests oppose anything just because the word 'Aboriginal' appears and 'Aboriginal land' is mentioned. It is as though they think that, if those words appear in any legislation that the Territory government proposes, there must be some problem with it. Often, this is the attitude of land councils and it is surprising to find it is also the attitude of some of the people on the benches opposite. There is far more potential for conflict if we do not pass this legislation, than there is if we do.

I did say that I did not intend to speak very long about this. I do not think there is any need to. Most of it has already been said, but I strongly support these amendments and I believe that all Territory citizens will be happy that we are taking them through.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I am not going to say too much. With regard to the amendments, I do not think that any Aboriginal communities that have areas that are close to any of the cattle stations or anything of that nature would refuse any permit of entry on to their land ...

Mr McCarthy: How long does it take to get it?

Mr TIPILOURA: That is not the point, Terry. The point is - look, the way this government is carrying on in putting through these bills is an embarrassment to my people, Mr Speaker. The fact is that they were not consulted first. None of the land councils was consulted until weeks later.

Mr McCarthy: That is not true. The land councils had it 2 weeks before it came into this parliament in May.

Mr TIPILOURA: Have your constituents been consulted on this matter, Terry?

Mr McCarthy: They had it 2 weeks before. They were talked to about it 2 weeks before.

Mr TIPILOURA: No. Were they consulted about the changes by the government?

Mr McCarthy: They have had 3 months to do that.

Mr Bell: Oh! Come on! There is a difference.

Mr TIPILOURA: The difference between 2 years and 3 months, a big difference. Come on, Terry!

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

Mr TIPILOURA: We talk about cooperation and working together and building a better future for everybody. In this particular case, nothing has happened. It was only a couple of days before these sittings that the Department of Law spoke to my colleague, the member for MacDonnell, and myself. On top of that, the government did not even bother consulting with the land councils. They are the ones who are concerned about these bills. They represent the traditional owners and they were not consulted at all.

Mr Speaker, I find that hard to understand. I do not think we would oppose these bills; I do not think so at all. We would support them. Yes. But how about some consideration being shown? If we are going to work together to build a better life for everybody, we need better cooperation between the government and the people who are concerned for their land. We do not take land as if it is nothing. Land is life for us, and we do not take it as a joke. You might say that this is a small matter. It is not. It is big for us because it affects our land. About entry permits, I have no problem. When I was the chairman on the community, I had no problem about any government personnel or anybody ringing up about a permit. If it was an emergency, I would give it straight away. There is not a problem.

The member for Arnhem said that there had never been an incident, nothing whatsoever had ever happened. The only excuse that this government has is that it is to help the Cattlemen's Association. I appreciate that. That is good and I understand that. But there was no consultation with the land councils and the people concerned, and that is the thing I want to bring up. It is ridiculous. This Territory is going to grow up, and we are going to grow together, not as individuals or wanting to put things in your own words instead of consulting with the people.

I heard the member for Victoria River. By what he said, he is insulting his own constituents. The member for Victoria River knows very well that the land means more to us. It is not a little thing. On anything about land, we should be given the courtesy, at least, of consultation. That is all I have to say, Mr Speaker.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I believe the person who should rise and apologise to this House is the Minister for Lands and Housing. One would have thought that by now he would understand the sensitivity of land issues for Aboriginal people. He says that he has consulted. The fact is that a letter, which was not detailed and which did not cover all aspects of the proposed the amendments, was sent to the Central Land Council a couple of weeks before the legislation was introduced into the Assembly. If, as the honourable minister says, the legislation is non-contentious and there are no problems with it, why did he act in such a provocative manner by giving a brief outline and then introducing it into this House without discussing it with the people first?

Surely by now he would realise just what a sensitive matter this is and that it would be like waving a red rag in front of a bull. Is that what he was attempting to do? Surely not, Mr Speaker. If the honourable minister was putting something through that, as he said, was non-controversial or non-contentious, surely he would have had his officers sit down with the land councils first and say: 'These are the issues, and this is the way it will be drafted. How do you feel about it? Can you suggest some other way that we

can do it? You can see what we are trying to do. Here is what Toohey says. How can we work out this problem?'

As all honourable members on this side have said, Aboriginal people have a long record of cooperation with the pastoral industry. People talk about the owners of cattle properties as their sons and their nephews. They grew them up. They take a proprietary interest in cattle properties in which they do not have any ownership because they say: 'Look, we grew up those cattle. We worked in there. Of course, we have to look after it'. Those are the adjoining properties to the one that people have now. It is insulting that the member for Victoria River was insinuating that the Aboriginal people would be stupid somehow and would prosecute somebody who was coming on to land to fight a bushfire. That is absolutely outrageous.

Mr McCarthy: The fact is that they break the law when they do it. That is the point.

Mr EDE: If that is the problem, why didn't you sit down with the land councils and say: 'We have this problem. If it is in pursuit of fire, how can we get around it?'

Mr Perron: You are an MLA, why don't you do it? Aren't you supposed to consult your constituents?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, if the Chief Minister had given me prior advice of what was going on ...

Mr Perron: You have had 4 years.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, either the Chief Minister will not or cannot listen. If the government had discussed it before it was introduced into this House, it might have been able to solve the problem. But it did not do that. All I can assume is that it wanted to provoke an issue.

When the mustering is under way, the situation occurs right throughout the bush. I was out at Mt Allan not long ago. The Chisholms were there from next door at Napperby and Bill McKell was there from Yuendumu. The people there came from north, south, west and everywhere. People come along and they say: 'Righto, let's get out our cattle and you get yours'. They bring trucks along and everybody trucks the cattle back. That is standard procedure. Nobody talks about permits or anything like that because there is a degree of cooperation there. As the member for Koolpinyah said, people ask permission.

Permits are the permission that you get when you know who the owner is of the property next door. It is very simple in our law because there is a title and there is an individual or there is a manager or someone like that. It is not so simple when you are talking about traditional ownership of an area and you are talking about a land trust. The reason why there are permits, as I have said before, is to cope with that situation.

The other point, and I still think that it is valid, is that the minister should at least give 1 example, whether it is in relation to the Fences Act, the Bushfires Act, the Stock Diseases Control Act or whatever, where there has been some problem. He should give us 1 example of an actual case where there has been a difficulty. There have not been any. Why not leave well enough alone? Why jump in and stir up problems where there has been none?

Mr Perron: You are forcing people to break the law.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am not going over that old ground again. The point of the matter is that, if the government felt that there was a difficulty, given that it says the intention of the legislation is not contentious, it could have gone to the land councils and worked out a set of amendments which would have overcome the problem. Members opposite did not want to do that. They wanted to stir it up and turn it into a contentious issue.

I am not going to speak at great length because the arguments have been covered very adequately by members on this side of the House. All honourable members should know that the Minister for Lands and Housing has stirred this issue up and turned it into something which could have been avoided. I heard of a possible amendment which could have overcome the problem. It was a form of alternative drafting which, unfortunately, arrived too late to be framed as an amendment. I will put it into the record because the minister may wish to look at it and possibly come back with an amendment to the Bushfires Act and the Stock Diseases Act. I am told that this alternative would have solved his problems. It would have provided an alternative section 56A in the Bushfires Act which would have read:

For the purpose of this act, where a person is empowered to go on to any land for the purpose of performing a function or exercising a power under this act, the person may go on to that land, notwithstanding that (a) the land is Aboriginal land within the meaning of the Aboriginal Land Act; and (b) the person does not hold a permit under that act to enter or remain on Aboriginal land.

Mr Speaker, I am told that that alternative drafting would have satisfied the problems that the Central Land Council has. If the minister had discussed it with the land council, instead of provoking a controversy, we probably could have had this matter worked out. That is the whole difficulty. The government works on controversy. It loves to stir these things up because it knows that, every time it proposes an amendment to the Aboriginal Land Act, Aboriginal people become angry. It is very easy to foment confusion. There is confusion because the minister does not talk to the land councils first. That is why they exist. That is why they employ lawyers and that is why the minister employs lawyers so that they can get together if there is a problem and work out a simple solution.

I am most disappointed with the Minister for Lands and Housing. He has a very important task ahead of him as he has stated that he will be looking at the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. I would hope that he will do it with a little more delicacy and care and that he will give a little more attention to the principles of consultation.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act causes resentment in the non-Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people have the freedom - and it has been tested already in the courts - to go on non-Aboriginal land for the purposes of hunting, even with rifles. Members may well recall that rifles were declared to be a traditional hunting tool and that caused resentment. In the course of dealing with the types of matters referred to in the bills - matters which need to be acted upon quickly - a non-Aboriginal neighbour would accept his Aboriginal neighbour coming on his property. When it comes to taking cattle off another property, you would be most unwise not to obtain the permission of your neighbour, whether he was an Aboriginal person or a non-Aboriginal person. The best approach would be to do it together, and the member for Stuart gave examples of this cooperation. It is a sensible approach because it covers both parties against any charge of cattle stealing and so forth. It is just common sense.

However, the law is what we are on about. The member for Arafura pointed out that charges have never been laid in relation to people entering on Aboriginal land for necessary purposes, and I appreciate that.

Mr Bell: I said that too.

Mr COLLINS: I didn't listen to you. You are hardly worth listening to. You put so much rubbish in between ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member should direct his comments through the Chair, I believe.

Mr COLLINS: I will do so, Mr Speaker.

In all honesty, I find the member for MacDonnell very hard to listen to. He makes a few good points, but he is often so hard to follow that he destroys a good argument. If he could only be concise in his arguments, he would be much better off and we might have some pearls of wisdom from him. He buries his pearls in the mud.

As the member for Arafura has pointed out, no charges have ever been laid when people have entered Aboriginal land for sensible purposes. That should be appreciated in the wider community. However, there is still resentment that, because of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, non-Aboriginal people entering on Aboriginal land do so in contravention of the law. I would like to think, as the member for Arnhem said, that common sense should prevail. If the people who could be involved in working out a solution - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians - could listen to this debate today, they would probably shake their heads. The key point, however, is that there is resentment because the Land Rights Act allows free access in one sense but not free access in the other when it concerns a matter which is of importance to both neighbours.

The land councils have been mentioned. In the vast majority of cases, the land councils are not a help but a hindrance. The Aboriginal people are our next-door neighbours. They are just over the fence. The relationship should be just like the relationship between any neighbours. Colour should not have anything to do with it. It should be based on common sense and respect. This is generally what happens, but the Aboriginal people should be able to see that the Land Rights Act can cause great resentment. On Aboriginal land, somebody from a land council can cause great resentment by challenging a person and demanding a permit. To have to go through the land council to obtain a piece of paper causes resentment. Surely we are old enough and mature enough to be able to go to the Aboriginal people next door and say that we would like to go on their land for a particular purpose? That is plain good manners. If the purpose is reasonable, I doubt whether there would ever be a time when they would not give permission. Why force people to go through a land council? The member for Stuart said the land is held in trust. I am quite sure that the Aboriginal people can appoint a person who is the person to get in touch with if one neighbour needs to talk to the other about a matter that affects them both. Surely that is not difficult.

Much has been made of the minister supposedly creating confrontation. The very fact that he sent a letter to the land councils a couple of weeks beforehand gives the lie to that. It may not have been as detailed as the member for Stuart said it should have been. Why hasn't there been dialogue? Surely there are responsibilities on both sides. If the issue is not clear,

why didn't the land councils ask the minister for clarification? I have spoken to the minister and he says that he has had absolutely no communication from the land councils, not even a letter or telephone call. He gave them a fortnight's warning before the legislation was introduced here.

Why didn't the members, whose electorates contain Aboriginal land, consult with their constituents about any problems they may have? There has been nothing in the newspapers. I read them pretty avidly and there is not too much that passes me by. There has been no consultation there. I say that the land councils have let down badly the people whom they are supposed to represent. Their job is to serve, not to dominate. They should have gone to the minister and obtained from him exactly what they needed to know in order to clarify any difficulty they had. They had a duty to talk to the traditional owners, to explain what was involved and to take their views back to the minister.

Mr Ede: To all of them?

Mr COLLINS: They might have not been able to reach everybody but they could have spoken to some and at least obtained an overview. The land councils are a disgrace. In my view, in this matter, they are not trying to serve the people whom they are supposed to serve. They might not have been able to contact every group but they could have contacted some. They could have clarified the matter with the minister, gone to the people, explained it to them and brought back to the minister not their own wishes but the wishes of the Aboriginal people. They are a weak link in the chain. They have not done their job. They have had time to do it. They have not been urged to do it by the honourable members opposite. The government would be far better off if it had spoken to the traditional owners itself.

The government signalled its intention to this House by presenting these bills. There are members in this House whose constituencies are involved in this. They should have been out explaining it, pointing out any difficulties that they saw but, above all, obtaining an understanding of the wishes of the people. Who is king in this? Yesterday, I introduced a bill in relation to conveyancing. In my opinion, the people who are supposed to be the servants are the ones who want to be king. They have been lazy and they have not done their job. They have let down the people whom they are supposed to serve. It is all too easy to lay the blame on the government. It is a 2-way process. Thank heavens, it seems to be happening in practice, on the ground. There is more cooperation out there than there is in here. In the real world, people have to live with one another.

As the member for Arafura said, no charges have ever been laid. However, it is not very nice living under the threat that somebody could become resentful and prosecute. It is like putting yourself in the lion's mouth in a sense. The lion says that he will not bite you, but he could. It is not a very happy position to be in and that builds resentment. There is nothing in these bills which allows a person on to Aboriginal land for no good purpose. They all relate to reasonable purposes and there are reasonable safeguards. Members should be able to see both sides of the story. If you go on the land without a permit, you are breaking the law. Opposition members should put themselves in the other person's position. I have tried to put myself in Aboriginal people's shoes as well. There has to be a bit of give and take. These bills have safeguards and should be supported.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I was misquoted and clearly misunderstood by the member for Victoria River, and I apologise again for my intemperate outburst. The honourable member raised the issue of conflict and suggested that somehow I was encouraging conflict between whoever - I am not quite sure. I presume he meant between Aboriginal traditional owners and other landholders. I want to make it quite clear that I said none of that whatsoever. Along with other members on this side of the House who travel around the bush a fair bit, I know that it works pretty well. For the benefit of the member for Victoria River, I was talking about conflicting applications of various laws.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, it is a bit hard to work out where to start because, clearly, there are some genuine misunderstandings, some cases of not really wanting to know and, possibly, in some cases, a deliberate decision to ignore knowledge and advice that is understood. I will run through comments and concerns expressed by members.

The member for Koolpinyah expressed a concern that, under the provisions of the Bushfires Act, there could be a problem with volunteers who were not employees of the government. I assure her that any volunteer who was performing his duties as a volunteer in relation to the act is covered by the act.

The member for Arnhem expressed concerns about consultation. He did not refer to any problems that he saw with the bills themselves. He did not refer to any potential problem or any contravention of the Land Rights Act or the spirit of the Land Rights Act. He pointed out that there have always been excellent relationships between Aboriginal landowners or custodians and people with adjoining properties and that there has always been total cooperation in matters relating to bushfires, stock mustering, fences and all other matters to which these bills refer. I certainly would not disagree with the honourable member. I am sure that relationships between Aboriginal landowners and adjoining landowners are excellent and I have never suggested they were not.

The honourable member also pointed out that, to his knowledge, there had never been any contraventions of the Land Rights Act that had been brought to the attention of the courts. However, the facts are that, if people carry out their duties under these acts, there is a possibility that they may be contravening the law. I am sure that all members of this House would want us to ensure that, if the duties that we impose on our employees or others result in their breaking the law, that law is changed so that their duties can be carried out in a manner that does not contravene the law. I can assure the honourable member there is nothing in these bills that in any way would do away with any powers of the Land Rights Act or deprive the traditional owners of their rights of ownership or occupancy under the Land Rights Act.

Regarding discussions on the matter, it is important for honourable members to realise that their role in this Assembly is one of being involved in the legislative process. When matters come before this House, I think it is incumbent upon members of this House to move among their constituents and explain to them the matters that are before this Assembly and seek their comments. I know that I do that. In a matter such as this, I think it was incumbent on the member for Arnhem, who has a constituency which covers a large area of land which is under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, to explain to his constituents the provisions of these bills. If he did not understand

what they meant, they could have been explained to him. He should have sought their opinions and asked how they would like him to vote or what points they would like him to raise during the second-reading debate. I commend that course of action to all honourable members.

The honourable member said that he only had a month in which to do this. I would like again to bring to the honourable member's attention that these bills were introduced in the May sittings. In fact, it is more than 4 months since they were introduced. Prior to that, copies of the bills and letters were provided to the land councils nearly 3 weeks before their introduction explaining the amendments and asking for comments. As well, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has been encouraging us, through discussions with our officers since 1984, to introduce these amendments to ensure that what was practised was in fact done legally and to ensure that the provisions of the law applied equally to Aboriginal land as they do to any other privately-owned land in the Territory.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, the member for Arafura is not in the House at the moment. However, from listening to what he was saying, I believe that he has misunderstood what the provisions of these bills are. He pointed out that there would never be any refusal to provide a permit to enter Aboriginal land. He pointed out forcefully that, under any circumstance with which he was involved as the Chairman of the Tiwi Land Council, at no time had he refused any permit which was sought for an emergency situation. I certainly would not argue with that, Mr Speaker, and I am sure the honourable member would not have done so.

However, we are talking about a situation that relates either to emergency situations or where employees need to carry out their duties and, in the past, they have been carrying out their duties under circumstances which make it an offence for them to do so. It is incumbent on us to ensure that the legislation allows our employees the ability to carry out their duty without breaking the law. I would remind the member for Arafura that in no way do the provisions of this legislation contravene the Land Rights Act or cause any problems regarding the ownership or control of land under the control of Aboriginal persons.

Mr Speaker, some comment was made regarding the Cattlemen's Association and a suggestion was made that this legislation has come about as a result of my consultations with the Cattlemen's Association at the CLP conference. I remind honourable members that this legislation was introduced in May. The CLP conference was held in July. I can also say to honourable members that I have not had discussions with the Cattlemen's Association regarding these bills. If its representatives had wished to see me about them, I would have seen them. These bills were tabled in May. As an MLA, it is incumbent on him to take legislation which is under discussion in this House and make his constituents aware of it, especially when it relates to them as is the case with this legislation. It is incumbent on him to find out what the bills mean so that he can assure his constituents that they do not pose any threat to their ownership or control of their land.

I do not need to say much about the member for Nhulunbuy. He did not present any problems that he foresaw occurring or detail any instances in which the legislation might contravene the spirit of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. There is no need for further comment in relation to his contribution.



The member for Stuart said that I must apologise to the House for creating controversy over a very sensitive issue and for failing to consult. Again, he did not rely on facts. I would like to repeat the circumstances regarding the introduction of this legislation and the consultation which was attempted. The bills were introduced into the House in May, which was 4½ months ago. Prior to their introduction, the bills were sent to the land councils with an accompanying letter setting out all the details. We actually had a response from the Central Land Council.

I find it rather unfortunate, with such an important matter before us, that members who have no understanding of the issues, rather than listening to my answers to their queries prefer to talk to one another. I ask the member for MacDonnell at least to concentrate for a short period while I go over some of the problems that he thinks may exist in relation to these bills. As I said, we received a response from the Central Land Council. An officer of the Department of Lands and Housing received a query from a Central Land Council lawyer asking some questions on a minor matter relating to the bills. Nothing more was heard from any of the land councils until the beginning of June when Mr Pat Dodson of the Central Land Council issued a media release which accused me of undermining the basic principles of land rights. I wrote again to Mr Dodson and I released comments to the press pointing out that his claims were totally incorrect. Mr Speaker, I still have not heard anything further from Mr Dodson. I asked him to contact me and I said that I would like to hold discussions with him. I have not heard any more from him. Possibly, that is because he received advice that our legal position was correct and realised that, in a political sense, it would do him no good if he had to deal in matters which gave him no ability to cause controversy. I cannot understand why he would not meet me and discuss these matters when he publicly claimed that there was a problem. However, the offer was made and the contact was made. I am still waiting. I will certainly be pleased to meet Mr Dodson at any time to discuss these matters and I recommend that he speak to legal advisers about the details to enable himself to be fully conversant with what the bills mean.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart was quite critical about my lack of consultation. I think that he should be aware that these matters have been discussed with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs since 1984 and that officers of that department have urged the Northern Territory government to introduce these amendments. I ask the member for Stuart what he did, as a member of this House representing a large Aboriginal constituency, when these amendments were introduced during the May sittings. I am pretty sure that he would have taken copies of the bills and gone amongst his constituents to explain what they meant and to seek comment on them. I am sure that he did that, Mr Speaker. I am sure that he spent a number of months over the winter period travelling around among his constituents and discussing what he describes as a very important and sensitive matter. I am sure that, as an MLA, he carried out the role that he was elected by his constituents to do.

I was expecting the honourable member to stand up in this House to represent his constituents and let us know their views. But I was disappointed. I heard a lot of mishmash and mush and absolute rubbish spoken by the member for Stuart. Not once did he give me any indication of what any of his constituents thought about this or any indication as to how they reacted when he discussed the matter with them. I did not hear any of that. I got some rather interesting ...

Mr Ede: You must have been asleep.

Mr MANZIE: I heard some crazy claims but not once did I hear what his constituents thought.

Mr Speaker, I know why. He did not even let them know that this was occurring! He did not take it upon himself to find out what is meant. It is obvious that he does not know what it means or he is trying to pretend he does not. He did not go and ask his constituents for their opinions. No, he sat around. He has probably been spending the winter holidaying. He has now come in here claiming that there has been no consultation. I believe his attitude, his actions and his words are appalling and show to his constituents that he is not interested in matters that concern them and he is even less interested in being able to present their views to this parliament.

He asked me to apologise. Mr Speaker, I do not intend to apologise for consulting with the land councils a fortnight or 3 weeks before I introduced these bills. I do not intend to apologise for writing again and saying my door was open and I wished to discuss these matters. I do not intend to apologise for introducing legislation which makes it legal for employees of the government and volunteer workers to carry out acts which they have been doing illegally for a number of years. I do not intend to apologise for introducing legislation which ensures all Territorians are created and treated equally. I do not intend to apologise for finally introducing into this House legislation which was described by Mr Justice Toohey, in his report 'Seven Years On', as being needed in the Territory.

I think that the performance of honourable members opposite today has been appalling. It has been based on ... . Mr Speaker, I heard the member for MacDonnell let out his breath in exasperation. He is the 1 person on the opposition benches who has the intellectual capacity to understand what these amendments mean. He is the 1 person who has the ability to understand what they mean, and he is the 1 person on the opposition benches that I have offered to provide expert advice to so that it could reinforce the sort of understandings I know he is capable of. He has all those abilities, and he knows what this means. He knows it does not contravene the Commonwealth Land Rights Act and he knows it does nothing to remove rights that Aboriginals have in regard to ownership of land. I know he knows that because he has not been able to show 1 instance where these bills may contravene the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or where they may in any way diminish ownership and the rights of Aboriginals.

He is the one person I expect to be, and I know is, fully aware of the ramifications of this legislation. He has deliberately created a problem in this House tonight which will probably have ramifications and repercussions right throughout the Territory in terms of the ability of both black and white Territorians to get on with one another. He has a role in this House to ensure that there is full understanding of these matters. Instead, to score cheap political points and gain the support of his left-wing comrades and members of the land councils, he has deliberately distorted the facts about this legislation. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bills to the House.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable minister said that I was fully aware of the legislation and that I was somehow being bloody-minded about these bills. Let me assure you that I am not. I put some effort into drafting the particular amendment that I moved before, and I did so in good faith. I must admit that I resent the suggestion that I did not do it in good faith, and that I did it for some malign purpose of slowing up the business of this House.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek some advice in this regard. I want to debate particular clauses in each of these bills. I want to let the Minister for Health and Community Services and the Attorney-General know that I have done a fair bit of work on these bills.

The interpretation amendment is unexceptionable. There is no point to this but I might as well get it on the record. That amendment refers to any other act of the Commonwealth relating to the power of the Legislative Assembly to make laws in respect of particular matters, and that envisages things like section 75 of the Land Rights Act, that empowers the Territory Legislative Assembly to make particular laws. I have no trouble with that. However, I do have some trouble with serial 90.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am advised that the only way we could do what the honourable member wishes is for him to seek leave of the House to go back to the committee stage and, of course, it is in the hands of the House as to whether that would be permitted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave of the House to go back to the committee stage of the bills.

Leave denied.

Mr BELL: I will put the questions to the minister. He will not be able to answer them because he did not answer the questions that I raised during my last 2 contributions. The general position is that there is a very good argument for saying that the sections of the Stock Diseases Act, the Fences Act and the Summary Offences Act that are being amended already apply by dint of section 71 of the Land Rights Act. Let's just go through 1 of them. I will read section 42(1)(a) of the Stock Diseases Act:

- (a) an inspector may at any time, if he has reasonable cause to believe that any stock, fodder or fittings or the carcass or dung of an animal are on any land or in any building, vehicle, vessel or aircraft, enter or cross any land and enter the land, building, vehicle or vessel for the purpose of inspecting, treating or seizing the stock, fodder, fittings, carcass or dung.

That particular section of the Stock Diseases Act was part of the original bill that dates back to 1954. It was subsequently been amended in 1955, in 1962, twice in 1981, and in 1988. That particular section, if read in conjunction with section 71 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act says:

Except in the performance of functions under this act or otherwise in accordance with this act or a law of the Northern Territory, a person shall not enter or remain on Aboriginal land.

I draw the attention of the Attorney-General to the phrase 'otherwise in accordance with this act or a law of the Northern Territory'. I want the Attorney-General to explain to me why the current reading of section 42(1)(a) of the Stock Diseases Act does not apply as the law is currently?

Similarly, with summary offences, the current provision in section 43(1) of the Summary Offences Act says:

Any owner of stock may, when any of his stock are upon the lands of any other person, including lands leased from the Crown to that other person, enter upon those lands and drive his stock off the lands of that other person.

Depending on the commencement provisions of that, read that in conjunction with section 71 of the Land Rights Act. I want to know why, given the way the act is read at the moment, it does not apply?

We would have liked to have done this at the committee stage, Mr Deputy Speaker. We might have got to the nub of it. I think it is particularly bloody-minded of the Attorney-General not to be prepared to do it. I presume he has copies of these bills and acts and is able to answer these questions. I strongly suspect, contrary to the idiot ramblings of the Minister for Health and Community Services, that it is the Attorney-General himself who has not done his homework and, in fact, would not be able to answer these questions. That is why he is not prepared to go back to the committee stage.

Mr Setter: If you had not been asleep at the time, we would not be where we are now.

Mr BELL: Would somebody get rid of him.

Mr Speaker, I will not go through the similar provision in the Bushfires Act and the Fences Act that I have concerns about, but the minister has not explained why those acts do not work now. I pick up the comments made by the Chief Minister and various other people which suggested - without their having read the legislation, I'll be bound - that the rights of neighbours under those acts are somehow sequestered at the moment.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They are. Didn't you read the Land Rights Act?

Mr BELL: That is why we need a committee stage: to actually thrash these things out.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why weren't you alert to it and awake up to it?

Mr BELL: As I said, it is particularly bloody-minded of the Attorney-General not to do this.

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

Mr BELL: Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw the attention of the Attorney-General to clause 3 of the Aboriginal Land Amendment Bill which says: 'Subject to this part and to any provision to the contrary in a law of the Territory ...'. I want some explanation of that too. The Aboriginal Land Act deals basically with the issue of permits and so on. These bills will broaden it to include all sorts of other exclusions and I have serious reservations about this amendment in particular. I want some explanation. As I said at the outset of this debate, I must admit that I am getting sick and tired of having my motivation for being involved in this debate questioned by half-wits who have not taken the trouble to ...

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

Mr BELL: I withdraw any imputation about the intellectual faculties of members opposite. I withdraw unreservedly. Far be it from me to reflect on the intellectual capability of any government member.

There are unanswered questions and the Attorney-General stands condemned for not being prepared to discuss those in committee.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that the member for MacDonnell stands condemned for accusing of us of refusing him the process of the committee procedure in this House when he refused to avail himself of the procedures of this House to carry it out.

Mr Bell: I did not.

Mr Ede: Wait until you ask for leave next time, boyo.

Mr Firmin: Oh, you have just learnt something from your colleagues have you? You can both join the IRA.

Mr Ede: I have learnt about not ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ludmilla and the member for Stuart will cease their interchange.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the fact that the member for MacDonnell was not aware of what he was supposed to be doing in the House, and that we cannot read his mind and did not realise what he wanted to do, means that he cannot turn around and blame other members of this House when he himself put things in an incorrect manner. I think that the member for MacDonnell's emotions on the subject of Aboriginal land rights have got the better of him. We are all aware of his commitment to Aboriginal people and their aspirations but, on this occasion, he has thrown his usually sensible approach out of the window. He has become quite excited and rather irrational. I believe that we will probably see a little more from other members along those lines as well.

The member for MacDonnell spoke about the provision in the Stock Diseases Act which relates to the ability to enter any land for the purposes of mustering or moving stock. He asks why, given that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act says that that act must act in concert with the law of the Territory, it is presently illegal for people to enter land for the purposes of that act and carry out their duties. It is quite a simple matter. We certainly could have provided advice to help him out in this regard. It is not a matter of reading 2 acts together and matching one with the other.

Most honourable members know that the prohibitions of the federal Land Rights Act certainly take precedence over Territory legislation. One of the problems that we often speak about is the inability of the Territory government to do certain things because it does not have the power to legislate. Again I point out to honourable members who may have lost sight of this fact that there is nothing we can do in this House, whether intentionally or accidentally, to create legislation which will contravene the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or in any way remove or endanger ownership of land and control of land by Aborigines under that act. I think all honourable members ought to stop and think about that before they bring forward more furphies. There is nothing this parliament can do and there is no legislation we can introduce which will contravene the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Section 70 of that act - and this relates to the member for MacDonnell's problem regarding the reading of the 2 acts together - refers to 'no entry to Aboriginal land, except in the performance of functions under this act or otherwise in accordance with this act or a law of the Northern Territory'. The Land Rights Act is an overriding act and it restricts entry. If there is to be entry in accordance with a Territory law, there must be a specific statement in the Territory law to that effect. It must specifically authorise entry on to Aboriginal land as the Aboriginal Land Act does. If the member for MacDonnell's argument was correct, we would not need to have the Aboriginal Land Act. As I said, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act takes precedent, and there is nothing we can do in this House which can contravene that act. Before the member for Stuart says something, I would ask him to think about that. There is nothing we can do in this House which will contravene the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

I am disappointed in the attitude taken by members opposite because I can assure all honourable members of this House that the government has absolutely no intention of undermining the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I will also give an undertaking that, if these bills lead to problems of any sort, we will most certainly look at any amendments that are proposed. If any provisions of these acts override the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, they are invalid.

Mr Speaker, I certainly hope that, in future, we will have far more sensible and measured debate in regard to Aboriginal land matters instead of this ill-informed nonsense which can cause such disharmony in our community. This is not a fit and proper place for uninformed debate. This is a House where we should have reasoned and sensible debate in relation to matters that are for the benefit of all Territorians. I would urge honourable members to ensure that they research matters that come before this House so that they can contribute in a sensible and constructive manner.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 115)  
ADULT GUARDIANSHIP BILL  
(Serial 118)

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in late 1986, magistrates in Alice Springs expressed their concern that the criminal justice system was failing to address the needs of a group of people who were described as behaviourally disturbed. A number of them had committed offences and would continue to do so in the absence of appropriate services. Most of them were considered to be unable to exercise responsibility for their actions as a consequence of intellectual disability and psychiatric illness. In response to this, a working party was established to investigate the concerns of the magistrates. In October 1986, Cabinet approved the drafting of legislation that would provide guardianship for adults who, for reasons of illness, injury or intellectual inability, were unable to make informed decisions about specific aspects of their lives. Another Cabinet decision was relevant to the provision of appropriate services.

It is pleasing to see that the government has finally given some recognition of the need to clearly differentiate intellectual disability from psychiatric illness. The Mental Health Act provides for people who are

psychiatrically-ill. It is a shame, however, that the government was unable to instruct Parliamentary Counsel to move more quickly, having established that the bill was important. A tremendous amount of time has elapsed between late 1986 and now.

Let me turn to some of the practical issues. With respect to the court system, the bill provides for hearings in local communities, utilising the court circuit system to determine whether an order should be made for guardianship of an adult who is deemed to be incapable of managing his or her affairs as a result of an intellectual disability. In the states, autonomous tribunals have been established. These recognise that people with intellectual disabilities should not be processed by a court system and thus be stigmatised by a court experience. They also recognise that specialist knowledge is required in the decision-making process. We acknowledge the difficulties associated with having to deal with people who often are located in very remote Aboriginal communities. However, it seems that the Territory government has tried to economise yet again. The outcome is an inappropriate decision-making system that is very different from that in the rest of Australia. It makes the Territory look as if it is lagging behind again.

Another practical problem is that the Territory has a lack of professional expertise in this field. The mobile court concept will only reinforce this. There will not be a consistent body of expertise being developed by a decision-making panel because different magistrates will be involved. The Northern Territory will need to ensure that it allocates sufficient funds to enable the employment of a suitably-qualified expert who can effectively advise the courts in their capacity as a member of the guardianship panel.

I have some concerns with the bill, Mr Speaker. I refer to some of the language. There is a constant reference in the bill to a person being 'under an intellectual disability'. This sounds as if he is under a cloud. It reeks of judgment and, in the view of the opposition, should be amended. It is unnecessarily dysphemistic in our view.

With respect to the bill itself, clause 8 provides for applications for guardianship. The range of people who can become guardians is a little limited. It should be expanded to include a close friend or a citizen advocate; that is, someone who is concerned but does not necessarily have to prove a past or future history of caring for the person.

Clause 9 talks about the guardianship panels. There is a reference to 'community'. It needs to be spelt out more clearly that this means an Aboriginal community. It is good that there has been recognition of the cultural issues involved.

With respect to clause 21, medical procedures, there is an inherent difficulty in providing for a link between clauses 21(7) and 21(8). There is no provision made for a person who is able to give informed consent having his opinion agreed with. For example, he may not want a particular form of treatment even though a doctor thinks it is in his interests, and the court abides by the doctor's recommendations. Clause 21(7) should not be subject to clause 21(8).

There is a need to develop a schedule of what actually constitutes major medical procedures. Medical procedures of a major nature are yet to be clarified in Victoria where similar legislation has been enacted. The Northern Territory needs some very clear guidelines on this.

Under clause 24, the appeal provision should be widened to allow an independent person who is not a party to the application to lodge an appeal.

With respect to the amendments, in relation to clause 3, it is good to see the definition of 'intellectual disability' changed and that reference to 'mental condition' is to be eliminated. In addition, clause 17 pertains to the authority of the guardian, and this amendment is appropriate in defining the nature of the parent-child relationship and appropriate responsibility. In clause 21, it is our view that it is appropriate to incorporate dental procedures because the clause deals with general medical procedures.

Overall, Mr Speaker, this legislation is consistent with developments in the Australian states. In the states, however, applications are referred to a special tribunal or board. The application of this system to the Northern Territory is not possible given the need to provide for people in remote areas and the exorbitant costs involved in establishing a separate body. The model is a reasonable attempt to cope with the peculiar characteristics of the Northern Territory balanced with cost effectiveness. On the surface, it may appear to be an invasion of civil liberties. However, in the view of the opposition, reasonable safeguards are built in to protect people.

Mr Speaker, there are a couple of general comments that I would like to make. It appears to me, from a more-or-less casual observation of these matters around Alice Springs, that there have been improvements with respect to behaviourally-disturbed people. I refer particularly to the case of Danny Dinnie who has been before the courts on a large number of occasions. He is an Aboriginal man with an intellectual disability, who is behaviourally disturbed in the terms we discussed before. I feel it has been one of the positive things of the last 12 months. I may be proved wrong because, as I say, my evidence stems essentially from personal observation and is, to that extent, subjective. It seems to me that, if the Minister for Health and Community Services can bear it, I think the government has got something right. I will be very interested to see the figures of who is coming before the courts because, as I say, my belief is that the particular man I was referring to, who is often obvious around Alice Springs causing difficulties, seems to be a much happier man. I say that on the basis of the occasions that I see him in public.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying that, in addition to those comments that I have already made and those qualifications that I have discussed, the opposition essentially supports the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I have 1 main question to ask the honourable minister. I have been rather curious about his frequent inquiries of me as to whether I have any problems with this bill. I do not know whether the honourable minister thinks I will become a subject for guardianship in the near future.

Mr Dale: I promise that I will always look after you, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I thank the honourable minister. That sounds really nice coming from somebody in the CLP.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the minister what prompted this legislation. Is he simply blindly following legislation in the states or is providing for an actual need because it has been requested of him or the government? Is it because of the obviously ageing population all over Australia or because of the greater number of aged people who are coming to



the Territory to live with their young relatives or those who have grown old here? I would like to hear the honourable minister's answers to those questions because I think they might be quite interesting.

If the honourable minister is putting this in place simply because he thinks that, at some time in the future, it might be needed, I think it will go the way of other legislation and clutter up the statute books. None of us is Robinson Crusoe in this. We all grow old at the same rate, though some age faster than others. Unfortunately, when they reach old age, some people do become senile or incapable and are not able to look after themselves, and it is necessary to have someone look after them. It is a pity that we do not have the extended family system that was current 40 or 50 years ago when legislation of this kind was not necessary because the older members of the family were always looked after by the younger members of the family. Even when the relationship was not very close, nobody was neglected.

From reading through the legislation, it was not clear to me what would happen if the subject of a guardianship order had extensive property or a large estate. What happens to the power of attorney of that person or what happens to the control and management of that estate or the affairs of that person? The legislation mentions people on social security and of limited means, and that is easy to understand. However, the minister would have to be very careful in his appointment of guardians, whether it is himself, a relative or a friend or some other person other than somebody like himself, it would be very important that the subject of the guardianship order was not taken advantage of with regard to his property and his estate. It is not unheard of for that sort of thing to happen, human beings being what they are.

The member for MacDonnell spoke about guardianship panels in clause 9. Clause 9(2)(b) states that the panel includes '2 other persons appointed by the minister, of whom one shall have skills or expertise in the assessment of persons under an intellectual disability' and 'a member of the community'. The member for MacDonnell said that he would like that spelt out as meaning 'a member of the Aboriginal community'. That is in direct contradiction to the answer I received to a question I asked of the minister. I asked the minister what the expression 'a member of the community' means. Does that refer to black people or white people? The minister assured me that it could refer to black people or white people. In his reply to the debate, I would like the minister to clarify what is meant by the expression 'a member of the community'.

I do not have any major argument with this. However, I have another question. Clause 13(2) says: 'The Executive Officer shall ensure that in any proceedings the person, in respect of whom the application was made, is legally represented before the court'. I would like the honourable minister to clarify this for me. If legal representation is necessary, who pays for it? Do the costs come from the Crown or from the person's estate if the person can afford it? Who decides whether the person can afford it: the minister, the guardian or the guardianship panel? I am pleased to see that the wishes of the represented person are promoted all along so that there is no possibility of younger relatives having older relatives committed for obvious gain.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, even though we are supporting this bill, we must remember that it is breaking new ground in the Northern Territory. There is legislation in New South Wales - the Disability Services and Guardianship Act - and also legislation in Victoria. Whilst I support it, there are a few clauses on which I would like to comment. Some of these have been touched on by the member for MacDonnell.

Clause 4 relates to the best interests of the represented person being promoted. Some people say that the principle stated in the clause should more forcefully emphasise the desirability of persons for whom guardianship is proposed being, as far as possible, self-reliant in matters related to their own affairs. This is covered in section 4 of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act of New South Wales which could serve as a model in that regard.

Clause 8, the application for guardianship order, was covered by the member for MacDonnell. Under this clause as it stands, a close friend or citizen advocate would not be able to apply for a guardianship order unless he or she could show that she or he had provided or was providing substantial care and attention to the person under the disability. Presumably an advocate or friend could approach the public advocate to request that an application be made and clause 8(2) could be interpreted as allowing a person to approach the court to request authority to make an application. However, that is unclear.

Although such a person could apply for a temporary order under clause 19, this clause would be used only in emergencies. In several situations that have been brought to the attention of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service, it has been a person such as a citizen advocate who has realised that abuses have occurred or that a person with a disability requires help with some aspect of his or her life. For such persons to be ineligible to apply for guardianship orders could be potentially harmful to those people the legislation is designed to protect. A suggestion was made to me by the Disability Information Group of Alice Springs, who have provided me with some information in this regard, that an adaptation of section 9(1) of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act of New South Wales might be a better option.

Clause 9(2)(b)(ii) of the bill provides that the third member of each guardianship panel shall be a member of the community in or near to which the proposed represented person resides. As the honourable member for Koolpinyah stated, no criteria are set to determine how such a person would be selected. The fact of living in or near the same community is no guarantee that this person would be able to contribute anything worth while with regard to the decision of whether or not a person with a disability needs a guardian. That can be particularly so in European communities given the heavy turnover we have among our community in the Northern Territory. In the case of a non-Aboriginal proposed represented person, it would possibly be preferable to appoint a lay person with considerable experience in the field of the particular disability concerned. In addition to the matters listed in clause 9(3), perhaps the panel should be required to inform the court of the wishes of the proposed represented person.

In clause 11, the jurisdiction of the court, it is of concern that the local court is to have jurisdiction over the appointment, review etc of guardians. One of the biggest problems in this area is the lack of knowledge about disability issues among people other than professionals in the field and those who have personal connections with the type of disability under consideration. The Disability Information Group of Alice Springs feels that often judges and magistrates may be no more knowledgeable about such matters than the rest of the population. For that reason, they state that all other jurisdictions in Australia that have guardianship legislation have a specialist tribunal which is the decision-making body. They believe the jurisdiction of the local court is particularly inappropriate as there is apparently no obligation that the court shall accept the recommendation of the guardianship panel. I believe that the honourable minister will say that this

is actually a cost-saving measure or perhaps that he is a bit worried about building up the whole paraphernalia into a bureaucracy. I would like to take his comments back to the people who brought these concerns to me.

Clause 12, procedure of the court, provides that the court may regulate its own procedure. Even allowing that an informal court process is adopted, the court cannot achieve a degree of informality that would allow the proposed representative of the person to feel really comfortable and able to contribute to the discussion. A courtroom is, by its nature, a formal and intimidating place and an informal process is unlikely to alter this significantly. Children's courts and others are able to be held outside the formal courthouse and probably this is another area where we should take that route.

In relation to clauses 15, 17, 18 and 19, several points should be made. There is no provision requiring conciliation to be attempted before an order is made. Such a provision is an important aspect of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act of New South Wales. A look at section 66 of that act indicates that, to be able to fulfil the principle set out in clause 4(a) of the proposed legislation, a provision requiring conciliation to be attempted is particularly desirable. The bill has no provision requiring that a full order should not be made if a conditional order would suffice. Such a provision would also be consistent with the principle set out in clause 4(a). Both the New South Wales and Victorian acts contain such a provision. Section 22 of the Guardianship and Administration Board Act of Victoria should also be noted. This provides that, in determining whether or not to appoint a guardian, the board must consider whether the needs of the person could be met by other means less restrictive of the person's freedom of decision and action - probably a very good point.

The bill provides for a temporary order to be made in a case of emergency, but does not provide for the removal from premises of the person the subject of the application where the person is being unlawfully detained against his or her will or is likely to suffer harm unless immediate action is taken. Compare that with section 12 of the Disability Services and Guardianship Act of New South Wales and section 27 of the Guardianship and Administration Board Act of Victoria. Having a clear power set out in the legislation is preferable to the general power set out in clause 11(2) of the bill.

Medical procedures were covered by the member for MacDonnell, and clause 21(7) provides that, if the court is satisfied that the represented person understands the nature of a proposed major medical procedure and is capable of giving or refusing consent, the court must give effect to the person's wishes. However, this is subject to clause 21(8) which provides that, if the court is satisfied that the proposed procedure would be in the best interests of the person, it may consent to the procedure being carried out. That means that the court, for example, could order cancer therapy for a person who was under a guardianship order even if that person was in fact able to give informed consent and did not wish to undergo the treatment. Such a situation would be totally contrary to the principle stated in clause 4(2) of the bill. It is apparent that clauses 21(7) and 21(8) are modelled on sections 41 and 42 of the Victorian legislation in which case section 41 is not subject to section 42. Possibly the Victorian example should be followed in that particular as well.

Mr Speaker, many people approached me asking for copies of this bill and saying that they wanted time to discuss it. In fact, there was a considerable amount of discussion in Alice Springs. A number of groups combined to hold a series of meetings to examine the bill clause by clause. They obtained legal

interpretations from various places, including Victoria and New South Wales. They obtained copies of interstate legislation. The bill had a thorough examination, as it deserved.

Almost everyone wished me to pass on their congratulations to the honourable minister for breaking this new ground and taking on this subject. It has been painful to me and many others to see people who may be the beneficiaries of this legislation in the streets of Alice Springs, often being accosted by people, objects of ridicule and obviously suffering very deeply. The frustration that the magistrates felt was certainly shared by myself. It seemed that nothing could be done. Certainly, funds were not available to be able to develop an enormous institution to keep people in some cocoon and that, in itself, would probably have been counterproductive. I believe the legislation is to be reviewed at periodic intervals. I certainly support the bill. I will be looking forward to the results of those reviews and to an improvement in the situation of these unfortunate people.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, unfortunately my shorthand was not quite up to the previous 3 speakers in taking down all of the matters that they raised. Suffice it to say, since about 18 months ago, there has been a great deal of discussion on this. There was discussion on the preparation of the draft bill which was tabled in March this year. Since then, the people whom the member for Stuart mentioned from Alice Springs and others have been in constant contact with myself and officers of the department. That process of close consultation with the entire community has led to the final product that we have before us.

The bill itself is an extremely controversial one. In a sense, it attacks the civil rights of people, but I think it proves adequately that, as I said the other day, this CLP government cares very much about the people of the Northern Territory. This particular bill addresses a section of the community who deserve to have some attention paid to them, as a number of magistrates have mentioned in the past. I believe that most people will be satisfied with the bill as it is at the moment. I give an undertaking that the implementation of the legislation will be watched very closely over the next 12 months, and I will be reviewing its operation totally at that time. If there is any need for amendments then, we will be quick to respond.

Magistrates have drawn attention in the past to problems in this area, particularly about 18 months ago in Alice Springs. People have been labelled 'behaviourally disturbed' and the courts were having great difficulty in appropriately handling the circumstances that were presented to them. I believe that this bill addresses the issue that was causing frustration at that time and I will be extremely keen to see the response from the judiciary in terms of handling people affected by the legislation.

The member for Koolpinyah asked what circumstances led to the legislation and what persons are likely to be affected. I think I have answered the first question already. The people most likely to be affected include: ageing parents of disabled people worried about who will look after the best interests of their offspring if they die or are incapacitated; aged people suffering from dementia; and people not covered under the Mental Health Act who cannot look after themselves and for whom no one takes responsibility. The legislation may become the centrepiece of a move to community-based services for disabled people because a guardian can assume responsibility for ensuring that appropriate support services are available to permit the person to remain in a particular community.

Mr Speaker, that leads me to the question which was asked in relation to clause 9 which sets out the membership of guardianship panels as including the executive officer and 2 other persons. One of those 'shall, in the opinion of the minister, have skills or expertise in the assessment of persons under an intellectual disability'. The second is to be 'a member of the community in or near to which the proposed represented person lives'. The idea is to get the best possible information on all aspects relative to the person for whom the application is being made. The appointment of a person with expertise in assessing intellectual disabilities should allay the concern of the member for MacDonnell in relation to expert advice available to the court.

He had concerns about continuity because various experts will have that role throughout the length and breadth of the Northern Territory. I concede that that may well be a problem but it is one which we really cannot overcome at this stage. I suppose that the continuity will come from within certain areas of the Northern Territory such as the Alice Springs region, the Katherine region and so on. I am sure that the experts required to serve on the panel in that capacity will gradually build up a continuity that will satisfy the member for MacDonnell.

The other member of the panel, the member from the local community, would have a very important role. The magistrate would obviously need to know about a number of things in the community, be it Aboriginal or otherwise. The legislation does not discriminate in any way as to ethnic background or any other background. It talks about people. All residents of the Northern Territory come under this act and they will certainly need to be advised on the various resources which may be available in a particular community to assist the person who is being assessed. All of that relevant information should come from a person who has a very broad understanding of the various facilities that are available and which might aid in the management of the particular person concerned.

Mr Speaker, I have some notes about issues raised by the various speakers on this bill but I will not endeavour to read them. All of those issues have been taken into account in formulating this bill and I believe that we have come up with the best possible package to address what is a very serious and urgent concern for all thinking people in the Northern Territory. When today's Hansard is available, I undertake to follow through the issues raised by honourable members. I thank honourable members for their contributions to debate and their support for the bill. It has taken a great deal of courage to address this issue but it is one that undoubtedly needed to be addressed.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Powers of Attorney Amendment Bill (Serial 115):

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Adult Guardianship Bill (Serial 118):

See Minutes for amendments agreed to without debate.

Bills passed remaining stages without debate.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS  
Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 26)

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 26) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the opposition opposes urgency on this bill for a variety of reasons. Our discussions with the land councils and with others suggest to us that it is impossible to support the government's call for urgency.

However, before I come to that, I would like to say that I appreciate the efforts of the Attorney-General to find some common ground in this regard. I also appreciate the time spent by officers of the Department of Law in briefing myself and other members of the opposition with respect to this bill. It has been particularly difficult with these sittings. As I said in relation to the Aboriginal land bills, the effort that we have put into this bill has made it more difficult to concentrate on the issues involved with the other legislation. I oppose urgency because affected communities have not had the opportunity to discuss the import of the legislation. Further, on the basis of the information that has been provided to me, I believe that the effect of the bill on other Territory legislation is unclear.

During a previous debate, the opposition was berated for not having gone round its constituency to sound out views with respect to legislation the second-reading of which had been moved 3 months earlier. It is absolutely impossible for opposition members to do that under these circumstances and that, of course, is the chief reason why the opposition opposes urgency. I might say, in passing, that there has been a marked increase in the number of bills that the government has sought to put through on urgency. I hasten to add that, where there are overwhelming reasons for doing so, the opposition is amenable. But, in this particular case, the reasons given, in our view, do not justify urgency. I refer particularly to the retrospectivity.

I will not discuss the issue of retrospectivity in this debate on urgency. It is more appropriate that that be discussed in the second-reading debate, and I will take it up at that stage. The reason for seeking urgency was because there was a concern that some prosecutions under the Traffic Act would fail if the amendments were not passed retrospectively. I appreciate the cooperative nature of the government's exercise in this regard, but I refer the honourable minister to an opinion from a member of the Darwin bar, Mr Colin McDonald, in respect of this amendment. I will not rehearse those arguments in their entirety here. All I will say is that the Attorney-General has advised me that, with respect to those prior occurring offences, he will look at them on a case-by-case basis. In my view, that is not adequate and I point him to the opinion that he obtained.

For the benefit of honourable members who may be less aware of the question of retrospectivity than I am - and I am sure there are some here who are more aware of it and can dilate on the subject at greater length than I can - in layman's terms, it is abhorrent for a legislature to seek to declare illegal acts or omissions or whatever that were lawful in the past. That is the basic principle that is involved in the retrospectivity provisions here. I am not satisfied that that particular area demands urgency. In addition, the question of urgency has been referred also in relation to legislation such as the Motor Accidents Compensation Act. It is unclear, at this stage, whether there are actions pending in that regard, and I am not completely aware of the impact that this retrospective legislation would have.

Just to reassure the Attorney-General, let us make sure we are starting off with the same ground rules. The opposition has no hesitation in saying that common law tests for what is a public road and what is not a public road should apply on Aboriginal land for the purposes precisely of motor accident compensation and so on. But, what does bother me is that the impact that this omnibus provision will have on other legislation that uses the word 'public' has not been ascertained, and that is a further argument against the need for urgency. I appreciate that the Attorney-General will gun this bill through willy-nilly. I suggest that it is a bad precedent and, on the basis of the information available to me, there can be no justification for his doing so. As I said before, there are no motor accident cases pending that will be affected by it, and it is clearly unjust to legislate a barrier against acts, omissions or whatever that have already been carried out.

For those reasons, we have no hesitation in opposing urgency for this legislation. To sum up, there are 3 reasons: affected communities have not had the opportunity to assess the impact of the legislation; the effects of the bill's retrospective provisions are unclear; and the effect of the bill on other Territory legislation is equally unclear.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise a fourth matter in relation to our opposition to the motion for urgency. A matter of urgency is considered in this House, as I imagine it is considered in every House, as basically a suspension of the standing orders of the House so that legislation will proceed as soon as possible rather than allow the normal period to elapse between presentation and passage. Under normal circumstances, it is necessary that there be extenuating circumstances before urgency will be granted and the minister is required to demonstrate that. When he moves the motion, he must demonstrate that there are extenuating circumstances.

I am prepared to accept that my hearing may be failing me, but I would love to hear from the Attorney-General of a case which is before the courts which demands that this bill be passed as soon as possible. Until the Attorney-General demonstrates that there is a case before the courts which demands that this bill be passed with urgency, we cannot possibly accept that urgency should be granted. The Attorney-General can correct me. The Attorney-General can say that he has demonstrated that there is a case in the Northern Territory wherein a person or persons will be demonstrably disadvantaged or justice will be perverted because this bill has not been passed with urgency. I have not heard the Attorney-General demonstrate a case where that will happen.

We went through this exercise yesterday wherein a demonstrable case, a clearly defined case, was involved as a result of which standing orders most certainly should have been suspended to allow the passage of legislation to be undertaken urgently. It was demonstrated very clearly that an innocent person was being persecuted and the law was being perverted. The other side of the House would not allow it. We demonstrated quite clearly that an innocent person was being persecuted and that is a perversion of justice. Mr Speaker, in this case, the Attorney-General has not demonstrated that to this House. He has not demonstrated to this side of the House that what will occur if urgency is not granted will be a perversion of justice and that persons will suffer horrendous hardship and in what cases and how. When he does that, I will be able to consider whether or not there may be a case for urgency but, at the moment, I do not even have a case to consider. There is nothing to consider. We have been offered no demonstrable reason why urgency should be granted to this legislation. Until the Attorney-General provides that, I will oppose the bill by the most strenuous means that are available to me in this House.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, as honourable members have pointed out, the situation regarding an application for a suspension of standing orders for the passage of a piece of legislation in 1 sittings is something that is unique and it should not be treated lightly. Our standing orders actually point out that urgency should be applied only when there is a question of hardship. I will address that particular aspect. However, first, I will run through some of the matters that the member for MacDonnell raised.

I was very pleased to hear him say that the common law tests in regard to public streets should apply to streets on Aboriginal land. I certainly support him in that. This government has pointed out quite often that some of the problems with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act are brought about because the provisions of normal legislation cannot operate and certain aspects of the common law are precluded from operation because of the federal statute. I am very pleased to see that there is some common ground, at least in one area. Possibly, through some bipartisan approach, that can be moved further forward in the future to obtain an amendment to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

The honourable member felt that there was no consultation with affected communities with regard to this bill. He pointed out that he was worried about the retrospective provisions of the bill and he was worried also about the effect it might have on other legislation. The effect of the bill, hopefully, is to provide that the provisions which apply to public places and public streets which are not on Aboriginal land will apply for the class of 'public' on Aboriginal land. In other words, private property remains private property but public places, as we know them and which statute law recognises, will also be public places on Aboriginal land.

What the member for MacDonnell and the member for Nhulunbuy are doing by suggesting that we delay the passage of this legislation ...

Mr Leo: Not delay it; allow it to take its natural course.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, it is imperative that this course of action is taken with this legislation. The approach that members opposite want is irresponsible. I am surprised that the honourable members, who represent a large number of constituents who live on Aboriginal land, could even make the suggestion. Are they prepared to explain to their constituents that the approach they endorse means the protections and benefits of Territory law, in so far as they relate to public places, may not be available to them? The honourable members might explain the following to their constituents: why they are prepared to allow persons to wander around public places on Aboriginal land with firearms; why they are prepared to place in doubt the public health protections provided by Territory legislation in respect of Aboriginal land; why they are prepared to take away the minister's ability to close a road at the request of Aboriginals for certain ceremonial purposes; why they want to place in doubt the safe storage of dangerous goods on Aboriginal land; why they want to place in doubt the ability of their constituents to gain crimes compensation benefits in certain cases; why they are not worried about the operation of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act; and why they are prepared to accept a situation where persons on Aboriginal land might be able to drive drunk around the towns of, say, Yuendumu, Port Keats, Galiwinku or Yirrkala, or to drive on the wrong side of the road. In short, they should tell them why they are prepared to allow a potential situation of lawlessness to occur on Aboriginal land. I am in no doubt that those are not the wishes of their constituents.



In effect, what the member for MacDonnell is prepared to suggest is that this Assembly abrogate to the land councils the responsibility to determine what laws should apply on Aboriginal land. I think that is unconstitutional and is contrary to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. He knows the bill contemplates that Territory law should apply on Aboriginal land to the extent that it is not inconsistent with the Land Rights Act rather than not inconsistent with what the land councils may suggest. The members for MacDonnell and Nhulunbuy are concerned about the bill's retrospective provisions.

Mr Leo: No.

Mr MANZIE: The member for MacDonnell is concerned about the bill's retrospective provisions. I disagree that the bill is retrospective. It clarifies the law. It puts beyond doubt that Territory law does apply. Three weeks ago, the member for MacDonnell would have said there was no doubt the law was what we are putting beyond doubt by this bill. However, in regard to question of retrospectivity, I am prepared to concede some ground and I will deal with the issue further when dealing with the bill.

The honourable member says the effect of the bill on other legislation is unclear. It is as clear as a bell. It says that Territory law applies on Aboriginal land subject to section 74 of the Land Rights Act or to such extent as is not otherwise inconsistent with Commonwealth legislation. That is and always has been the intention of both this legislature and the Commonwealth. I certainly cannot agree with the honourable member's proposal. What we have is a situation where what is considered to be the law has been found to be in doubt. If it is in doubt, all Aboriginal people will be denied the protections of the law.

Mr Leo: Give us a case.

Mr MANZIE: I have just given you a list of cases in which this legislation has application. If you continue, I assure you that I will be forwarding this debate to members of your community so that they can understand that, in a matter as important as this, you closed your ears and eyes to advice which has been made available to you. I will be tabling an opinion which points out that what we are doing is not only correct and proper but that, if we do not do it, there could be big problems for your constituents. I believe any other approach by this House is totally irresponsible. I will be providing that information to your constituents.

Mr Speaker, the provisions of many acts in the Territory relate to public places and public streets: the Firearms Act, the Traffic Act etc. What about the provisions relating to third party insurance? What happens if there is an accident on a road on Aboriginal land and someone is injured, and he is unable to claim because, under the act, the road has been found not to be a public place?

Mr Leo: They have claimed in the past.

Mr MANZIE: That is right. They have claimed in the past. Can't you get it into your head that what we are trying to do is ensure that what was accepted as the law in the past remains the law? We have the problem that there could ...

Mr Leo: Give us a case. Just one.

Mr MANZIE: I am sorry, Mr Speaker. I think that people who read the Hansard will understand that any person who does not support this bill is abdicating his responsibility to 25% to 30% of the Territory's people. The problems raised by the member for MacDonnell are not problems. It is imperative that this legislation be passed because, if it is not, the protections of the law will not be available to a large number of Territorians.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14	Noes 5
Mr Collins	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Ede
Mr Dondas	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Finch	Mr Leo
Mr Firmin	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Harris	
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mrs Padgham-Purich	
Mr Palmer	
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Motion agreed to.

#### TABLED PAPER

#### Opinion on Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 26)

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I table a copy of an opinion I have received, upon my request, from Mr Colin McDonald in relation to the bill which will be before honourable members. Honourable members will note that all of the matters raised by Mr McDonald, except for the issue of impending prosecutions, have been addressed by the amendments which have been circulated. A number of concerns have been raised regarding retrospective operation of the act and its effect and potential interference with existing rights of defence which a claimant might seek to raise. Honourable members will note that Mr McDonald raises this very issue in his opinion.

The possibility of withdrawing the retrospective operation of the provision or, alternatively, withdrawing all pending charges involving the existing element of 'public place' etc has been mooted with me. I advise that, as a general rule, I am minded not to proceed with prosecutions which may be in train and which may involve a consideration of the issues identified in the bill which is before the House. However, whether or not a prosecution should proceed is a decision which should properly be taken only on a case-by-case basis. Any decision would need to be dependent on the particular circumstances of any case. Amongst other things, I would need to be convinced that no person is placed at a disadvantage by not proceeding with a prosecution. For example, a person's action for public nuisance may be diminished by the Crown not proceeding with a prosecution for a breach of statutory law. Further, a victim of a crime or offence could lose an avenue of compensation otherwise available as a result of a decision by the Crown not to proceed with a prosecution, and it is for these reasons that I have decided to take the approach of considering each pending prosecution which involves consideration of these issues on a case-by-case basis.

I believe that this decision, coupled with the proposed amendments as circulated, will remove criticism that the legislation has some hidden agenda on the part of the Northern Territory government. The proposed legislation does no more than clarify the law. The approach taken is entirely consistent with section 74 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of the Commonwealth. Indeed, that section obviously contemplates that Territory law should apply on Aboriginal land. If the legislation is in any way inconsistent with the Land Rights Act, it will fail to the extent of its inconsistency.

Mr Speaker, I commend the opinion as tabled and I inform honourable members that this bill merely clarifies and places beyond doubt what has always been understood to be the case.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I promise not to take too much of the Assembly's time but I want to make clear my view on the opinion that the Attorney-General has just tabled. I believe that the opinion starts with the assumption that we are going to have an omnibus provision in the interpretation legislation and it seeks some way of making that legitimate. I am quite prepared to accept that the opinion itself is sustainable and that the amendments will do exactly what the minister wants them to do. However - and this is a big 'however' - there is a glaring inconsistency between what the minister offered in his speech tabling the opinion and what is actually in the opinion. I refer the honourable minister to paragraph 9 of the opinion and I quote:

If the government maintains the deemed retrospectivity provision, my strong opinion is that all charges involving the element of public place, road, street or place of public resort, however described, ought be withdrawn in the interest of fairness and in the interest of the integrity of the criminal justice system.

I reinforce the phrase 'all charges'. There is a chasm between that unequivocal statement and what the minister had to say to us in his speech. I thank him for providing me with advance copies of this material so that I could blow him out of the water. Seriously, I thank him for doing that. I am sure he will agree that there is a dramatic difference between the McDonald opinion that says that 'all charges' ought to be withdrawn and the minister's statement that he has decided to take the approach of considering each pending prosecution which involves a consideration of these issues on a case-by-case basis. It is quite clear ...

Mr Manzie: What is this based on?

Mr BELL: You said: 'I believe that this decision, coupled with the proposed amendments as circulated, will remove all criticism that the legislation has some hidden agenda ... '.

Mr Manzie: What are you quoting from?

Mr BELL: Your speech tabling the opinion. I think important issues need to be addressed in this.

Mr Manzie: Keep reading.

Mr BELL: 'Amongst other things, I would need to be convinced that no person is placed at a disadvantage by not proceeding with a prosecution'.

Mr Manzie: Keep going.

Mr BELL: It does not matter which sentence is read. The paragraph is equivocal.

Mr Manzie: You have to read the whole paragraph.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would suggest that both honourable members address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the opinion is unequivocal but the minister's statement is highly equivocal. That is what I complain about.

There are a couple of other issues which I want to draw to the attention of honourable members. I reinforce the point made in paragraph 6 of the opinion: 'However, there is a long history of legislative convention and judicial interpretation against statutes being retrospective'. The bill contains words which clearly indicate that there is retrospective intent. I know that the minister has already argued in a previous debate that he believes that these particular retrospective provisions are declaratory in the sense that they only state what the law is, but I refer him to Mr McDonald's opinion in relation to proposed subsection 59A(1). The opinion says:

However, the subsection does not purport to be declaratory. If the act were no more than a declaratory act, then the issue of retrospectivity would disappear as it would not purport to be altering the law in any way but only making its meaning clearer. That being so, the wording of the subsection should be considered as having retrospective effect and that it may change the law.

Mr Speaker, it is not declaratory. There are serious discontinuities between the tabling speech that the Attorney-General gave to us and the opinion that he tabled at the same time. It is for that reason that we have serious concerns.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I want to take the member for MacDonnell a little further in terms of the paragraph which he started reading out from page 2 of the Attorney-General's speech tabling the opinion. The Attorney-General was explaining why he proposed to proceed on a case-by-case basis. I will read about 3 sentences from the relevant paragraph. The Attorney-General said:

Amongst other things, I would need to be convinced that no person is placed at a disadvantage by not proceeding with a prosecution.

The next 2 sentences are the important ones:

For example, a person's action for public nuisance may be diminished by the Crown not proceeding with a prosecution for a breach of statutory law. Further, a victim of a crime or offence could lose an avenue of compensation otherwise available as a result of a decision by the Crown not to proceed with a prosecution.

In dealing with past matters on a case-by-case basis, the Attorney-General is trying not to prejudice the rights of third parties. If he does not proceed with a prosecution in some cases, another person may be disadvantaged as a result of other law. That is why he does not want to cast them all aside and to heck with the consequences.

Mr EDE (Stuart)(by leave): Mr Speaker, we might be able to resolve this if the minister were to go on the record stating that he would not proceed in any case in which no criminal charges would have been laid if the legislation had not been made retrospective and would only allow proceedings to continue in such cases as involve a person attempting to gain damages or obtain a benefit under the motor accidents legislation or something like that.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: I agree with the member for MacDonnell. It is equivocal at present. If it were less equivocal, that might solve many problems.

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 126)

Continued from 17 August 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have raised most of the issues already and I will not take up a great deal more of the Assembly's time.

I will correct 1 gross distortion on the part of the Attorney-General which I really do resent. It is his assertion that I do not care whether my constituents have appropriate legal protection. If he wants to send a dozen copies or 2000 copies of his speech around my electorate, he is most welcome to. It really does not bother me. I thought that was a particularly cheap shot.

Mr Manzie: I was talking about the member for Nhulunbuy, actually.

Mr BELL: Whether the Attorney-General was talking about the member for Nhulunbuy or both of us is not important. I believe a perusal of the Hansard will indicate that we were both regarded as being in the same camp.

Mr Speaker, we are in agreement with the Attorney-General that the applicability of the legislation ought to be considered on a case-by-case basis. I have no doubt that the Traffic Act and its definition of the common-law test of what is a public place ought to apply. Our problem is not that Territory laws in that area should not apply. What we are saying is that it should be done on a case-by-case basis. The omnibus provision is wrong. It is a scatter-gun approach, and neither the Attorney-General nor his department really knows what its effect will be. That is a telling argument. Add that to the fact that people in the community have not had a chance to read it and the land councils have not had a chance to read it, and you have a recipe for a perception of irresponsibility.

I will spell it out again. We agree that those acts should apply and that the common-law test of what is a public place should apply for the purposes of the Traffic Act, the Motor Vehicles Act, the Motor Accidents Compensation Act and those acts where we can see that there are immediate problems. A scatter-gun approach, however, is not appropriate. I would urge a particular course of action on the government ...

Mr Manzie: All laws should apply where they are relevant, shouldn't they?

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection from the Attorney-General. Let us talk about places of public entertainment. I know there has been concern in that area. Mr Speaker, I think it would be appropriate to table this schedule that Parliamentary Counsel has been able to provide for us. It has

been particularly useful to the debate. Parliamentary Counsel has provided a 5-page schedule of acts that contain the word 'public' that may be affected by this omnibus provision and may cause problems that we do not know about. It is clear, and I am sure the Attorney-General will agree, that he does not know, neither does the staff of the Department of Law know, what sort of problems may occur. I seek leave to table that particular document.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the Places of Public Entertainment Act is not, I hasten to add, a piece of legislation with which I am particularly familiar, but I know enough about it to know that it is conceivable that problems could arise with it. Already, the question has been asked whether this may apply to separate corroborrees - sacred corroborrees, men's business - as a result of this omnibus provision applying on Aboriginal land. I think that is a matter of serious concern and it deserves far more consideration than it is able to be given in the context of this debate.

Mr Manzie: Only to the extent that it has applied in the last 50-odd years. What are you talking about?

Mr Ede: You can't have it both ways.

Mr Manzie: You keep out of it. You don't understand it.

Mr BELL: With respect, I suggest that the member for Stuart has more than a working knowledge of legislation, and the Attorney-General should appreciate his contributions rather than becoming involved in making cheap shots.

We have already had the question of lack of consultation. Obviously, the opposition would like to know to what extent these acts that contain the word 'public' apply, for example, on pastoral land. I did not actually get it out on the debate on the Aboriginal land bills, but I might as well do it here. I have a philosophical objection to including in general statutes a reference to a specific class of land - in this case, a reference to Aboriginal land. That may, in fact, justify an omnibus provision of some sort. Quite clearly, the land councils and my constituents want to know what the impact of this will be. To what extent do these laws apply now to pastoral land or excisions on pastoral land, as well as to Aboriginal land? That is where I think that it is appropriate that more thoroughgoing advice be sought before we proceed in this way.

I think the opposition has clarified its position. For the benefit of honourable members, and to convince the Minister for Health and Community Services that I have done my homework, let me point out that I did research some of the case law involved. There is the interesting Chellingworth case. The accident occurred north-east of the airport at the old bombing range at the bottom end of the member for Karama's electorate. Compensation was applied for and there was a question as to whether or not that was public land. The court took into consideration various matters such as usage and signs that had been erected and so on. In that particular case, it was found that it was not public land and Chellingworth missed out on compensation. There are serious issues like that.

Mr Manzie: But that will still apply. It does not matter. It does not make Aboriginal land public places.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that, but I simply mention that case to let people know not just that I have done my homework but that I understand the seriousness of the issues involved. I am arguing that this is not the best way to do it. We want to ensure that certain legislation applies appropriately on Aboriginal land, but we do not believe that this is the way to go.

I will make another brief comment to reinforce that. Back on the retrospectivity issue, Mr Speaker, you may or may not recall an anecdote I told in this House about the motor vehicles legislation. A local barrister I recall meeting socially was rubbing his hands with glee that he was getting custom from a large number of truck drivers who were particularly pleased that he had found a loophole in the definition of 'pneumatic tyre' in the Traffic Act. Off the top of my head, I do not recall exactly what the terms of the definition were, but there were some examples where people had been charged with either overloading or speeding - I am not 100% sure which. The gist of the issue is that this barrister had the loophole closed off by an amendment to the Motor Vehicles Act that I remarked on at the time. That is what this legislature ought to be about. It ought to be about identifying real problems and fixing them. This does it in the clumsiest of ways. It does it in a way that is offensive to the legal traditions not only of this country, but of the western world. I cannot support the retrospective provisions. I do not accept that the retrospective provisions are declaratory.

Before I finish, Mr Speaker, I want to endorse the comments of the member for Nhulunbuy. The alacrity with which the government is legislating in this area is in dramatic opposition to its tardiness in legislating on the forfeiture provisions of the Liquor Act. It is outrageous, and I believe that the comments made by the member for Nhulunbuy are more than justified. In fact, I think his behaviour was incredibly restrained. I find it outrageous that this CLP government is prepared to legislate in this way, which offends legal traditions in a way described precisely by the opinion that the government itself has commissioned, yet it is not prepared to amend the Liquor Act in a way that will provide a just outcome for people who are suffering at this very moment. They are now suffering and have been suffering for 7 years through unjust forfeiture of motor vehicles by the Crown. I think that is absolutely outrageous. If the government has not got enough to do, I suggest it address that problem first.

As the member for Arnhem indicated, it is extraordinary the way this government is prepared to fiddle around the edges with questionable problems like these and ignore the plight of Aboriginal groups who do not have excisions 17 years after the Gibb Report was brought down. It is absolutely outrageous, digging-in-their-heels stuff.

With those comments, I reinforce the fact that the application of the Territory's laws to Aboriginal land is appropriate. To the extent to which they do not already, as a result of the Land Rights Act, where we find problems we should be addressing those specific problems, such as those that exist with the Traffic Act, the Motor Vehicles Act and the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. I know that the Motor Vehicles Act defines 'public' in terms of a law that was repealed 6 years ago in this Assembly, namely the Social Welfare Ordinance. I suggest that, where there are those sorts of problems, they need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. I know the minister will go ahead with this. Once again, I urge him not to. This will do no credit to this legislature whatsoever.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, this is an interesting session because rather than continuing to suffer abuse and badmouthing, we could take the easy way out as a government on this issue and say to heck with it. Why should we bother? Why should we get what will probably be bad press, and certainly a lot of abuse? But I guess we become pretty used to that. Why shouldn't we just leave the thing on the Table as the opposition is proposing and to heck with the ramifications of it. Members opposite seem to believe that, because this legislation will apply in the remote parts of the Northern Territory, maybe we could let it slide. That is the easy way out, but we are not prepared to do that.

Mr Bell: We are suggesting more than that, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: The member for MacDonnell said that we were fiddling around the edges of a relatively unimportant problem and that we should be addressing more serious ones such as the seizure of vehicles used in running alcohol etc.

Mr Speaker, this is a difficult legal matter. We do not often table legal opinions to try to convince the Assembly to follow one course or another. It is a complex matter. One aspect of it that I do understand, I believe, relates to the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. I had a great deal to do with that revolutionary act which is the current law pertaining to what happens to people who are injured in motor vehicle accidents. As honourable members may recall, it is a no-fault act. It means that, in most cases, any person injured in a motor vehicle accident in the Northern Territory, including the driver, receives compensation. He has an automatic right to compensation; he does not even have to go to court. There is a schedule to the act which sets out how much compensation applies for the loss of an eye, an arm, an ear, a tooth and so forth. It is a very good act in that regard.

There are, however, a couple of exclusions. If a driver is found to have been over the maximum blood-alcohol level, he does not receive compensation. Indeed, the Territory Insurance Office may claim against him for the money that it pays out for other persons who may have been injured in the accident. That is how serious it is to be found in an accident that injures somebody when you are over the 0.08 level when driving in the Northern Territory. It is far more serious than losing your licence for a few years. You can be hit with the bill for the damages.

As far as this legislation is concerned, the important aspect is that the Motor Accidents Compensation Act contains a couple of principles. It applies to public roads and public places where a motor vehicle is driven. It does not apply off public roads. The act envisages people using vehicles on public roads. As far as I can understand this bill, it applies to public roads on Aboriginal land which are recognised as public roads. They may indeed be the streets within a settlement. They would be public roads as far as the MACA was concerned. They are used every day, they are graded and they are known to be public roads. It appears, however, that the deep minds of lawyers and advisers have found that all Aboriginal land may be regarded as private land. In other words, no benefits would apply under the MACA if the accident was deemed to have occurred on Aboriginal land. We are really talking serious stuff here because the benefits are substantial in the case of a person who becomes quadriplegic as the result of an accident. Compensation could amount to a couple of million dollars. In an accident on private land, however, that would not apply. That is what makes this matter so serious.

The MACA covers any person injured in a vehicle accident. You do not even have to be able to identify the vehicle. It is very progressive legislation



which I have always been proud of. A person is even entitled to compensation if he is injured by a hit-and-run driver who is never found, provided he can demonstrate that he was injured by a motor vehicle, which is probably not too hard in most cases. He would, of course, have to demonstrate that he was injured on a public road because the act does not cover people bush-bashing. This applies even if the driver is never found or the vehicle is never found.

Those are the motor vehicle accident rights which exist in the Northern Territory today and payments are made every day under that act. According to advice we have received, however, every individual on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory, whether he is Aboriginal or not, may not be covered by the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act for a period of time leading up to now and from now until this amendment comes into force. That is why the government has taken the view that this legislation should be in force as soon as possible. It is one of those occasions where, as the member for MacDonnell said in this House some time ago, politicians should take a lead, where MLAs should act on behalf of their constituents without consultation. There are occasions when we should do that.

Mr Bell: We had to consult for the other one and now take a lead on this one. That is neat.

Mr PERRON: There are occasions when legislators should act promptly to close loopholes in the law. 'Loopholes' might be a bad word. Perhaps 'potential flaws' is more appropriate.

Mr Bell: It depends on your point of view, doesn't it.

Mr PERRON: It depends on legal advice as well. In any case, one should act promptly. We are doing no more than acting to maintain the status quo. We are not trying to add a single power for any person on Aboriginal land or to alter his rights whilst he is on it. We are trying to maintain what has always been thought of as the status quo - no more, but no less. That is the important point: no lesser right, no lesser privilege, no lesser obligation and no lesser liability. Those are the 4 terms that are used in the bill. I am sincere about this because we could take the easy way out and say 'to heck with it'. I do not think we should do that. It would be no skin off our nose except for the fact that we believe it would be very much the wrong thing to do.

I ask honourable members to think of it in this way. It would be a gamble to hope that no motor vehicle injuries would be incurred, let alone the other aspects of the law that this act affects, on the whole of the Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory between now and whenever the legislation will take effect. Such accidents and potential injuries are the issue we are dealing with. We are talking about people's lives. It is that grave. The government is not prepared to abdicate its responsibility in this regard. We really must proceed and we would like the opposition's concurrence if that is possible.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will go back to the point I was attempting to make earlier. In relation to the retrospectivity, I would be happier if the Attorney-General would give a guarantee that proceedings may only be considered in civil cases. I cannot see why an amendment could not be passed stating that no retrospectivity will apply in criminal cases. That was one of the things that really stuck in my craw when I read the bill. I know that the minister said that he had made that clear, but I want it to be definitely clear that a person carrying out an act which he believed to be legal at the time will not be liable to prosecution under retrospective legislation. It is

possible that a person might believe himself to be in a place which is not a public place but for this retrospectivity to change that.

I will give an example to illustrate my point. It is one that the member for Sadadeen will probably be aware of. I have written many letters to many different people in an effort to clarify whether the road from Ti Tree Homestead to Ti Tree is or is not a public road. The community maintains that it is not. They say that it was always a pastoral road long before the property was purchased and before the land claim. The police say that the grader goes up and down at certain intervals and therefore it is a public road. I have argued this out with people. I have asked about the implications in respect of MACA. They say that the road is exactly the same as all of the other station roads, that it is just the one that comes out that way and that they have other station roads that go in other directions. They are all on the station and they do not consider them to be public roads.

Mr Perron: Does a government grader grade the road or the community grader?

Mr EDE: It is a government grader but in the same way that government graders often work under grants of maintenance etc. They do a considerable amount of work on Aboriginal land sometimes at outstations or on bores or whatever. Take the example of Neutral Junction where the government, in return for some work that the station did, left the grader behind there. The owner used the grader to grade his own roads but also graded this particular road. It was something like that, Mr Speaker. I may not have the details exactly right. These deals go on all the time out bush. Most of the time, they are very sensible.

Mr Speaker, that is an example where discussions need to be had with the community. I have attempted it, but it really does need the assistance of lawyers and police, people who know MACA, to go down there and work it out. Do people really want that to be a public road or not?

Mr Perron: No. Either it is or it is not.

Mr EDE: The honourable minister knows himself that there are ways that a place that has a certain degree of public access can be prevented from becoming a public right of way by restricting access to a certain number of days a year.

Mr Manzie: It comes under the Traffic Act. It can be on private land because the definition is separate under the Traffic Act and it always has been.

Mr Perron: The matter of public roads is a very complex issue, that's for sure.

Mr EDE: I know, but I would hate to think that somebody who thought that he was doing the right thing on that road 2 weeks ago, by virtue of this, would find that someone could say that he had been doing the wrong thing. I would like the minister to clarify that. It has been put to me that there have been people who have been arrested under that circumstance who might have got off, but who will not now.

Mr Perron: Guaranteed no change in status as a result of this legislation.

Mr EDE: Right.

The other point is that I would like to know whether all the amendments that have been recommended by Mr McDonald have been complied with. I take it on board that the removal of retrospectivity, in the sense that he requested it, has not actually been complied with. Have the rest of his recommended amendments been complied with? He discussed quite a number of amendments in his opinion. Maybe the honourable minister can tell us about that when he closes the debate.

Mr Speaker, I remain concerned by the omnibus nature of the amendments. I was told that something like 134 acts would be affected by this. Not that many?

Mr Perron: I do not know how many. I'm sorry.

Mr EDE: A figure of that order was given. It was 127 or 134. I was told that it was well over 100. I was told that, in discussions that were held between the land councils and the lawyers, even the government's own lawyers were not certain as to what the actual effect would be on some of the other laws. I cannot understand that in terms of what the Chief Minister said. He said that there would be absolutely no effect because the effect that was there before would still be there. If that is the case, I cannot understand why the lawyers are arguing so strongly one way and the other, and saying this will have extensive effects.

Mr Perron: But the whole thing involves not altering the rights, responsibilities and liabilities. That is all it says.

Mr EDE: This is where I end by being totally confused because I have one group of lawyers telling me one thing and the Chief Minister tells me that his lawyers are saying something absolutely different.

Mr Manzie: No, they are not, Brian.

Mr EDE: When I become confused like that, that is when I am opposed to the granting of urgency. I cannot support something and then come in later and tell the government that I had supported something which allowed all these hidden effects to occur when ...

Mr Manzie: We can't just leave it.

Mr EDE: No. I have to take my advice when my advice tells me to say no and that this is not the effect of it. I accept that the government is committed to going ahead with it, but I have real problems in supporting it when I have a legal opinion which tells me that there could be a many hidden ramifications.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I guess I can understand the doubts in the minds of members of the opposition. That is what this is all about. It is all about the question of doubt. However, I really do not understand the cynical approach by members opposite in regard to the need to implement this amendment immediately. I am surprised because all of those members who have spoken represent fairly large Aboriginal communities.

What we have not had is any demonstration at all that some adverse effect is anticipated from this amendment. If, as a result of their further deliberation, members come up with evidence of any adverse effect from this

amendment, they should be comforted by the fact that a number of avenues are open for corrective action to be taken, whether it be by the government making further amendments or whether it be by bringing the matter before the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. If it is a matter that cuts across entitlements under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, obviously this amendment would be nullified.

Certainly, when we introduced the Traffic Act earlier in the year, I was given to understand that everything was quite watertight. In fact, in response to a query raised by the member for Stuart, he said that he found that Aboriginal people in particular were becoming extremely confused about just where the line was drawn. He was referring to requirements under the Traffic Act and under the Motor Vehicles Act. I guess they are the more common situations that are likely to arise but, obviously, many other laws would apply to public places. What has been stated quite clearly is that we are not talking about changing the definition or the interpretation of 'public place'. It is that the same interpretation of a public place should apply on Aboriginal land as elsewhere. The test still has to be made as to whether a track, a road or some place, because it does not necessarily have even to be a formed road, stands the test of being public. Given that, I cannot understand for a minute why honourable members are concerned. Mr Deputy Speaker, to be honest, I would not have it on my conscience that I had put this amendment off for 2 or 3 months if something went wrong. We have these honourable members, who represent Aboriginal communities, suggesting that this whole matter ought to be delayed. I see absolutely no justification for that.

Mr Bell: Have you actually read the bill, Fred?

Mr Ede: I wish you would sit down, Fred. We were getting on quite well until you started.

Mr FINCH: Most definitely.

The member for MacDonnell referred to lawyers who make mileage out of finding loopholes in ...

Mr Bell: I did nothing of the sort!

Mr FINCH: You did so! You were talking about finding loopholes in regard to pneumatic tyres and other such matters pertaining to the Motor Vehicles Act.

Mr Bell: You mean defending their clients?

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the matter is straightforward. I think they are pretty game if they are prepared to run the risk of accepting, as they might have to, responsibility for deferring the passage of this legislation. Doubt has been raised and the member for Stuart keeps insisting that he wants to defer the passage of the legislation. I believe the amendment is most appropriate, removing beyond any doubt what the definition of 'public place' means so that all laws pertaining to public places elsewhere in the Northern Territory would apply equally on Aboriginal land.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to cover some points that have been raised. I will say that I welcome the level of debate on this particular bill because I am sure it has been much more informed than that on the previous bills. I understand the concerns that have been expressed. I think that it is important to say that it is beyond the power of

this Assembly to make an act that overrides the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or which deprives Aboriginal people of powers, ownership and rights and responsibilities under that act. It is important that we all keep that in mind. This act does nothing more than ensure that there is no change in the status of the law and the land in question. It ensures that Aboriginal people are afforded the same protections at law as are all other Territorians. I think that it is incumbent on us to ensure that that will always be the case.

With regard to the query from the member for Stuart as to whether we have picked up the amendments suggested by Mr McDonald, certainly we have picked up amendments suggested, except for the one which relates to retrospectivity. I will go over what I said when I tabled the opinion. I said that I am minded not to proceed with prosecutions which may be in train and which may involve a consideration of the issues identified in the bill currently before the House. However, whether a prosecution should proceed is a decision which should be properly taken only on a case-by-case basis. I pointed out that I would be making that decision on the basis that I would need to be convinced that no person was placed at a disadvantage if the prosecution did not proceed. I will not run over the examples again but I think most honourable members would agree that, if I did make a decision regarding a prosecution, I would have to ensure that I was not affecting any right or ability of an individual in respect of his ability to receive any compensation or benefit or protection as a result of that prosecution.

If there are any problems that members foresee regarding this particular bill or if members opposite believe there are areas where the laws of the Territory should not apply, I ask them to come back to me with the details. I believe that we must ensure that all laws apply equally throughout the Territory and that all Territorians are afforded all the protections that are available under the law.

Somebody mentioned pastoral land. Most honourable members are aware that, on pastoral land, there are some areas which, at times, are public places. The Brunette Downs races would be an example of that. I think the same applies with Aboriginal land in respect of Barunga which would have to be a public place at the time its festival is held. The provisions of this bill enable the law to apply equally. It does not do away with the rights of private property ownership and control. Any area that was private property remains private property and any area that has been a public place remains a public place. There are no hidden agendas. This is a genuine effort by government to fulfil its responsibility to ensure that all Territorians have the protections of the law applied equally.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 38.1, 38.2 and 38.3.

Amendment 38.1 deletes all the words after 'and even though' in proposed section 59A(1) and inserts in their stead: 'that act of the Commonwealth or the Aboriginal Land Act limits the persons or classes of persons who may enter and remain on that Aboriginal land'. The purpose of that amendment is to clarify, in light of the proposed amendment to proposed section 59A(2), that

the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of the Commonwealth and the Aboriginal Land Act limit the persons or classes of persons who may enter and remain on Aboriginal land.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to place on record my concern about the retrospective provisions in clause 2. I have not circulated an amendment schedule. I do not believe that is appropriate but I believe it is appropriate, in the context of the committee stage, to point out once again our concerns in that regard.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

#### MOTION

Noting Statement on Referendum on Proposed Amendments  
to the Constitution

Continued from 23 August 1988.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, there is a saying that is no doubt well known to honourable members but is nevertheless very true and it strikes to the heart of the referendum. That saying is: 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. I am pleased to have cleared the House on my right-hand side. In my study of the 4 constitutional questions, and in my reading of the many letters and articles pertaining to both sides of the issues, I have come to the conclusion that the referendum is a sugar-coated attempt to get more power for Canberra. Many years ago, I recall a Boyer Lecture delivered by the then ACTU leader, Bob Hawke. He said that Australia was over-governed. I agree with him, but not in the sense that he intended. He gave his impression that the states were not necessary, that we would be better off if we had one federal government making all the decisions and many small, local councils. How well would those little councils be able to stand up to Big Brother in Canberra? I certainly cannot see it.

The third question is an attempt to pander to local government without giving it any real powers. To a person who did not bother to study it, it could look pretty reasonable. However, a reading of the arguments shows that it really does nothing for local government. A comment in The Australian today echoed an opinion I have had for some time. It is that, if the freedoms of Australian people are important to them, they will keep the distribution of power spread. They will keep the various levels of government in their own compartments - local government, state and territory government, and the federal government - and keep the power distributed. That is the only safeguard ordinary citizens have.

The Hawke government has demonstrated how the international powers which were given to the federal government at the time of federation have been used in a manner which, no doubt, the founding fathers never dreamed they would be, with the aid of the High court, to thwart state sovereignty over forest areas and so forth. I am talking about World Heritage matters and the problems they have caused. Such matters should remain the province of the states, but

developments in this area show how the courts can become the rulers. I agree with Professor Blainey who said in an article in *The Australian* earlier this week that he has much greater faith in the collective wisdom of the millions of Australian voters than he has in the 10 High Court judges even if they are the brightest and brainiest people in the land. I believe we should not be put in a position where the people of Australia, having given a mandate to a government and having seen the government make laws related to that mandate, then see the High Court rule that those laws are not valid because they are against the Constitution.

I could continue in this vein for a long time but, looking around the House, I see that I am preaching to the converted. It will not be our actions in here that will be important. It will be what we do in our electorates in terms of talking to people. Many people still do not know what is involved. It is just over a week before we have to vote on this matter and I appeal to members not to take the referendum lightly. A poll published in *The Australian* today shows that the 'Yes' vote is coming down. We should not rest on our laurels. People who are interested in individual freedoms should sell the 'No' case to the people of our electorates. It may not be as simple to explain as the honeyed 'Yes' case, which sounds so right and so fair.

The issue of 'one vote, one value', for example, is initially appealing. What could be more democratic and fair than that? Let us consider the Senate in that context. Tasmania has 12 Senators and New South Wales has 12 Senators. Does that represent one vote, one value? It does not, but the Senate was created for a very good reason. The vast majority of Australians, and certainly those of us who live in the smaller states, cannot afford to support that if we do not want to be absolutely swamped by New South Wales and Victoria. It rolls off the tongue easily but, if you think about it, the question is a lot deeper than it appears to be at first.

Mr Speaker, I will not continue except to remind all honourable members that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Mr Hawke has said that we are over-governed. When he said that, he meant that he would love to eliminate the state governments and the Territory government and have 1 big government in Canberra and many small local ones which would have very little power against him individually. I also believe that we are over-governed. I do not believe that that is because of the number of parliaments that we have but because of the functions that the parliaments take on. We have a great tendency to rob people of freedom and responsibility. We want to take on those responsibilities and legislate for every little sneeze. In the process, we take away freedoms. That is how we are over-governed. We need fewer laws and less red tape in order to guarantee people the greatest freedom.

Mr Speaker, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The referendum is simply a grab made in a honeyed manner to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Australia and to gain more power for Canberra. We must resist it.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):  
Mr Deputy Speaker, I am rather surprised that the honourable members opposite do not support their Canberra colleagues. They have left the House. Obviously, they are not going to speak in favour of the 'Yes' vote. Perhaps they are a little ashamed of it. I am not surprised that that is the case but I had expected that they would try at least to uphold the wishes of the power-hungry federal government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 4 referendum proposals. The first, the constitutional alteration of parliamentary terms, would alter the Constitution to provide a 4-year maximum term for members of both Houses of the Commonwealth parliament. The constitutional alteration of fair elections would alter the Constitution to provide for fair and democratic parliamentary elections throughout Australia. The constitutional alteration to local government would alter the Constitution to recognise local government. Constitutional alteration to rights and freedoms would alter the Constitution to extend the right to trial by jury, to freedom of religion and to ensure fair terms for persons whose property is acquired by any government.

All of those things sound very nice. They are things that I thought we had. I have been around for 48 years thinking that I had all of those things. I know that I do! Yet here is a call to change our Constitution - or so the federal government says - in order to give ourselves what we already have. The federal government issued a booklet setting out the 'Yes' and 'No' cases. Its presentation is rather slanted. The 'Yes' case is printed in very large letters and the 'No' in very small letters. The booklet failed, however, to bury the strength of the 'No' argument.

The booklet says: 'The 4 questions in this referendum are different'. You can say that again, Mr Deputy Speaker! 'They do not seek any extra powers for politicians or government. They offer extra rights and guarantees for the people'. That is a blatant lie! 'They are the result of an extensive process of consultation with ordinary Australians' - most of which was rejected. 'In a few words, what they will mean is fewer elections, fairer elections, the recognition of local government and the rights of the people'. We know that the first of those is untrue. There is no way in the world that it will necessarily mean fewer or fairer elections. The recognition of local government is already there, and the rights for the people we have already.

In respect of question 1 concerning the parliamentary terms, the federal government wishes to extend the ability to have a 4-year term, but does not stipulate that the term must run for 4 years. It could still call an election in the first, second or third year or whenever it chose. We know that at least the Prime Minister does not believe in state governments. I agree with a 4-year term for the Lower House. I think that is quite logical. However, particularly given that some federal governments are prepared to call elections at the drop of a hat, I believe there ought to be a minimum term. I think very few people could argue with that.

One thing that really worries me is that there would not be a half-Senate election, as we have now, with an 8-year life for the Senate and a half-Senate election each 4 years. That has been rejected by the federal government even though the Constitutional Convention recommended it. In a Boyer Lecture, the Prime Minister said that he advocated the abolition of state parliaments. He said: 'I do not have any idea what states' rights are'. The Prime Minister does not know what states' rights are! No wonder he does not see any value in the states.

The former Attorney-General, Senator Evans, launched his anti-Senate crusade in the Canberra Times by saying: 'The way to abolish the Senate, or at least muzzle it, is to white-ant it from within'. Obviously, that is what he is doing. He did try to get out of it once but they would not have him in the Lower House. The Treasurer, Mr Keating, described the Senate as the 'swill of Australian politics' after it had opposed the ID card. That is why they want to get rid of it. They want to muzzle it, cut down its powers and, in fact, wreck the ability of the states to run things in Canberra. In 1977,



Senator John Button admitted that simultaneous elections reduced the power of the Senate. He said the Labor Party wanted to see the proposal pass because, in his words, it 'limits the significance and influence of the Senate'.

These are powerful people. These are the brains, I suppose we could call them, of the federal government. They are very devious, in my view, and they have set out in this attack on our rights - which it is - to change the Constitution to give themselves more power. I could go on and on in relation to that question, but I really would like to know why the federal government rejected the Constitutional Commission's recommendation that it must serve a minimum of 3 years before calling an election and why it rejected the Constitutional Commission's recommendation for the full 8-year term for the Senate? The answer is that it wants to control the Senate. That is what it is all about.

Question 2 relates to fair elections. What does the federal government know about fair elections? This proposal would give the High Court the power to override the states. In fact, it could intervene directly in state polls. The proposed new sections 124C and 124D would allow any elector to challenge state electoral boundaries. They would also set up a mechanism for a state election to be held on a state-wide basis with no single-member electorates, just like the Senate election. I think that that, on its own, is enough to cause us to reject this particular proposal.

There have been many mistakes found in this proposal already. The federal government has found already that, if it had put through the original proposal, it would have wrecked the proposed system for the ACT that it was putting into place. It would have forced major changes in both New South Wales and the Tasmanian Legislative Councils. I do not think that we need go further on that because it is quite obvious that it has not done its homework. In its drive and power-hungry craze to gain control of the Senate, it has forgotten about its own federal territory.

Question 3 is the one that really interests me. I read this for the first time about 3 months ago. I thought that it seemed reasonable and that there was no harm in it. It is a very simple thing: all states must establish a form of local government. It looks very nice on the face of it. As it turned out, only a few weeks later, I was in Brisbane for the Local Government Ministers Conference. Item 3 on the agenda was this particular referendum question on the constitutional recognition of local government. I had not seen the agenda papers until that day. I was perusing the agenda and the last or second last item was 'IULA declaration of recognition of local government'. The IULA is the International Union of Local Associations. That started the bells ringing. I asked myself what was going on. There was not only the recognition of local government in our Australian Constitution but a call for a declaration on the recognition of local government through the IULA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on the item of recognition of local government, I was preceded by 2 of the Labor states who had no problem with it. At least 1 of them has had since. When I was asked for my comments, I said that, on the face of it, it seemed pretty harmless. However, I drew attention to the second last item over the page. I queried whether that would give the federal government the same power it took unto itself with regard to World Heritage and allow it to use its external affairs powers in order to circumvent the states, deal directly with local government, and make decisions for local government - in other words, wipe out the states' rights.

The federal minister denied any such possibility. He said: 'That is not possible. We would not do a thing like that'. However, I was convinced in my own mind that it would have that power. As it has turned out, our legal advice tells us that it would. In fact, the IULA declaration, combined with the constitutional recognition, would allow the federal government the ability to circumvent the states, deal directly with local government and forget about states' rights. In his Boyer Lecture, the Prime Minister said: 'We must have a government with unquestioned powers'. He went on to argue that this meant eliminating the states and dealing directly with what he described as 'relevantly demarcated geographical areas, in other words, regions'. There is no doubt about the devious nature of this man that calls himself a Prime Minister of Australia but who wants to be President.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: I am surprised that we have actually attracted the member for Stuart. Obviously, he is going to try to defend his federal colleague. He does not care about the Northern Territory. He does not care if the Northern Territory is done away with provided he sticks up for his mate in Canberra.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt at all that that would give the federal government the power to circumvent us and do as it likes. Well, at the moment, it would not apply to the Northern Territory. However, it would apply to the states and we are aiming to achieve statehood. This certainly does threaten the independence and authority of states.

The federal government has not been kind to local government. It has reduced funding for local government. It has reduced PITS - Private Income Tax Sharing - money from 2%, under the former coalition government, to 1.6% at this time. It says it is a supporter of local government. It also abolished the Advisory Council for Intergovernment Relations. That was the only forum that local government had in its dealings with the federal and state levels to get across problems that affected all 3 of us. It abolished that ability of local government to have a say. In the Northern Territory, we have a new and very vibrant local government system. We support local government and believe in local government. The federal government wants to take away our right to handle local government as we see fit. I would support a Territory constitution recognising local government.

That brings us to question 4. Why should you vote 'No' on religion? I will give a number of good reasons why you should vote 'No' on religion. First, I might just read to honourable members the press release of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference:

The Central Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has considered the 4 proposed laws which are to be put to the referendum on 3 September 1988. Each question involves significant issues of public policy and individual rights. In accordance with the Catholic Church's commitment to providing guidance in matters of social justice, the Bishops offer the following for consideration.

The alteration to the Constitution is a matter so significant that all voters have a clear moral responsibility to inform themselves of the issues. Each voter should vote according to conscience rather than simply through loyalty to any political party. The Central Commission is concerned about the manner in which the issues in this referendum are presented. Indeed, the issues have been selected, not

by any pressure by the electorate but rather by the government. The Australian legal and political system involved a federation, with separate tiers of government. The principle of subsidiary demands that there should not be undue concentration of political power in the Commonwealth.

Of particular concern is the grouping in 1 question of 3 quite distinct issues - right to trial by jury, freedom of religion and no establishment of religion, and just compensation for property. This grouping is confusing and limits to a single 'Yes' or 'No' vote the choice of individuals who may wish to support 1 or 2 but not all 3 of these propositions. On the issue of freedom of religion, the Bishops have obtained specialist advice from a variety of experts. In the light of the advice, the Bishops place on record their concern that a 'Yes' vote on this question would, in fact, end up seriously restricting the freedom of religion. Experience in the United States of America, where there is a constitutionally-enshrined prohibition against the establishment of any religion, suggests that the proposed alteration to our Constitution may open the way for unnecessary litigation.

Some groups of individuals may challenge the constitutional validity of any state law or administrative action that they consider in some way touches on the subject of religion or religious organisations. In particular, the now settled question of government funding for non-government schools and other educational institutions may be reopened since the legal basis of the decision in Attorney-General Victoria v The Commonwealth - the so-called DOGS Case 1981 - may be affected by the removal of the significant words 'make any law for establishing'.

Those words are specifically eliminated, and those were the words that that case was upheld on.

The long tradition of freedom of religion, which our country has enjoyed, is best protected through the democratic process in the federal parliament and each state and territory legislature. If the Constitution is altered, then issues are removed to the High Court for a decision. The legitimate right of the electorate to overturn a High Court decision would then depend on a further referendum or on a constitutional amendment.

Voters need to be particularly cautious in assessing the proposal to provide a constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. The proposal is vague, its meaning uncertain and its outcome unpredictable. There is no widespread discontent among ordinary Australians with the present religious freedom that exists. This proposal, however, raises serious concerns for the future and deserves to be treated warily.

I would like to quote a few comments made, in this case, by a Western Australian minister. Dr Carmen Lawrence has said: 'Our government would oppose any change which would open the way for a High Court challenge to state and or independent schools and, if the threat were real, we would put a strong case to the Commonwealth'. Asked on 1 June to give a guarantee that the change proposed in question 4 would not lead the High Court to cut aid to church schools, the Minister for Justice, Senator Tate, said in the Senate: 'I cannot, nor can anyone, give any absolute, untempered guarantee about any

decision'. That is pretty vague in some ways, but it is quite clear that he does not know. Later in the same debate, Senator Tate said that it was 'impossible to say with any absolute certainty in advance how any court might interpret any provision of the Constitution'. Another minister, Senator Bolkus, conceded that 'anything is conceivable'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, certainly anything is conceivable. Anything is conceivable when a federal government can make proposals to the people of Australia to change the Constitution that are just about - well, they are hardly even veiled attempts to take away powers of the states and take away the freedoms that Australians currently have and, in other words, create division in this country and create more power for the Commonwealth. There can be no doubt. If any of you have read this, and it was put in everybody's letter box, then you would have read both the 'Yes' and the 'No' cases. You would have had no doubt on reading it, even though the 'Yes' is in big print and the 'No' is in small print. Quite sneaky of them, Mr Speaker, but given that, if you read it all, there is no doubt that you will agree with me that a 'No' vote is the only possible answer.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, when I first apprised myself of the fact that there was to be a referendum at some time in the future, and I read what the 4 questions were, I thought they did not sound like bad questions. They sounded sort of reasonable and I could not understand why they had been put forward. I must say my suspicions were aroused immediately and I thought that, if I read between the lines, I would be sure to find out more - and I did.

When that booklet that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government has just shown us was distributed, I read it and noted, as did the honourable minister, that the 'Yes' side was laid out much more elaborately than the 'No' side. That put my back up immediately. It is a bit like somebody trying to bully you into agreeing with him and, therefore, my suspicions were again aroused. Of course, by this time, even before reading the 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, I was half way to saying No, No, No, No. I will say now that I will definitely vote No, No, No, No. I have told people who have come to me for advice of my decisions and told them the reasons why I am voting with 4 noes in this referendum.

I am not a betting person really but, with a bit of luck, I think the federal ALP government which has put forward this referendum might be - well, I am pretty sure - will be disagreeably surprised with the result. I cannot see why it cannot leave well enough alone. The Constitution has been working okay as far as I am concerned and everybody else is concerned. I have never heard any argument against any sections in the Constitution since it was worked out at the end of the last century and came into being at the beginning of this century. If something is working okay, you leave it alone.

The first question proposes a maximum 4-year term for the House of Representatives and the Senate. One might think that sounds pretty reasonable but, when you look into it, everybody knows that the House of Representatives has a 3-year term, and there is a half-Senate election every 3 years, making a total for any 1 Senator of 6 years. I do not think it takes too much work to think back to a very recent case when the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister and his government, tried to push through legislation to introduce the Australia Card, that terrible ID card. I would say that the vast majority of people out our way and elsewhere in the Northern Territory were against it. The Senate found loopholes in the government's legislation and it was wiped out. In that case, without the Senate, we would have been done like dinners

and we would have that ID card foisted on us. There are other well-known cases where the House of review, the Senate, in looking at a question a second time has made a different decision from that of the House of Representatives.

The Prime Minister has said that, if he had his way, he would like to have a 4-year term. Nowhere does it say the minimum term shall be 4 years. It is the maximum term for the House of Representatives and the Senate that is to be 4 years. As we all know, that is so much argy-bargy that it does not mean a thing. He could go to the polls after 1 year or 2 years. Maximum 4-year terms do not mean very much at all. It may be an indication that he would like to go to 4 years, but it does not tie him to it. If the Prime Minister had had control of the Senate when the ID card legislation moved from the House of Representatives to the Senate, and the Senate had knocked it back, he would then have declared a double dissolution with the hope that the new Senators elected would see reason his way and agree to bring in the ID card.

The second question relates to fair and democratic elections. It is supposed to be directed at stopping gerrymandering. Gerrymandering of boundaries is a fact of life which we have all had to live with for many years. If any state government is in for a long time, and I do not care whether it is Labor, National or Liberal, it always adjusts the boundaries to suit itself. It is a fact of life. The Labor people cannot say that only the Liberals do it, and the Liberal people cannot say that only the Labor people do it. Everybody does it. But that is not really what this question is about. If this question were passed, it would give the federal government enormous power to intervene in state matters, in relation to state electoral boundaries and state representatives, and that something that we definitely do not want.

The third question relates to the federal government wanting us to recognise local government. On the surface, this looks pretty reasonable. We would like a federal government that recognises local government, but the federal government already recognises local government by giving it a share of what used to be called PITS money. They now receive money from the Grants Commission. That is a form of recognition and, as far as I am concerned, that is as much recognition as I would like local government to receive from the federal government.

Mr Speaker, I am getting very parochial again, but the Litchfield Shire Council was foisted on rural residents. All in all, the shire representatives have not done a bad job at all. In fact, they have done a pretty good job. Nevertheless, we still say that the Northern Territory government is interfering too much in our affairs in the Shire of Litchfield. Everybody says that. However, when we compare the comparatively small amount of interference from the Northern Territory government in our life in the rural area with the enormous influence which the federal government would have if it became active in local government affairs, the issue becomes very clear. If we do not want the Northern Territory interfering in our affairs in local government, we certainly do not want the federal government. What is to stop the federal government, once it obtains control of the local government scene, saying that local government is not needed in Darwin or Palmerston or the Litchfield Shire and forcing an amalgamation of all 3 in order to save money? That is the sort of thing the federal government is capable of. It would certainly go down like a lead balloon in the rural area. Again, that is the reason for another 'No' vote.

The fourth question is the most unusual question of the bunch. The first 3 questions relate to single items but the fourth is an unholy collection of

questions on the right to trial by jury, religious freedom and fair recompense for land taken by the government. I do not know whether the decision to put them together was a death-wish, but a 'No' to 1 of them will mean a 'No' to all 3. On the surface, it might appear reasonable to extend the right to trial by jury. We are all in favour of that. However, if a majority 'Yes' vote was recorded against that, it could pave the way for juries only to need a majority vote to convict a person. Juries could also be chosen on the basis of race, sex, education or other specialist grounds. If that eventuated, impartial trial by one's peers could be destroyed and even more divisiveness on racial lines could be created.

The second part of the fourth question relates to religious freedom. Here we see a government wanting to interfere in religious freedom. I have been brought up in Australia. I spent all my school life in Catholic schools before I went to university. Religious freedom was always extended to Catholics. It has always been extended to every religion in Australia. Even if you are a Calathumpian, you still have religious freedom. Reading between the lines of this question, one can see that it means the federal government wants to cut out state aid to religious schools. Particularly in the big cities, Catholic schools cater to children from lower-income families. Even if these schools are established mainly to attract children of a particular religion, the cost to the state of the education of these children is a hell of a lot less than it would be if the children had to attend state schools. No state school system could possibly handle all the children, not only from Catholic schools but from every other religious school in Australia if they were off-loaded on to the state system because of a restriction on state aid. I heard one of the Catholic clergy being interviewed on this matter. It is not often that I agree with the member for Victoria River or Catholic clergymen these days, but I certainly agreed with them that the federal government has Buckley's chance of getting a 'Yes' to this question from any Catholic in Australia and probably from people of other religions as well.

In the last part of question 4, the federal government wants us to vote 'Yes' to ensure fair compensation for any land taken from us by the federal government. Having been a victim of acquisition by the federal government, I know that this legislation will not give fairer compensation. Already, federal legislation is in place to give compensation to people whose land is taken. A 'Yes' reply to this question will not make it any easier for the victims and it certainly will not give any more compensation to people whose land is taken. What it will do, as everybody has said before me, is make it easier for the federal government to take land from governments such as the Northern Territory government. If a 'Yes' answer is given to this and legislation follows from it, the Commonwealth will not be obliged to give any compensation to the Northern Territory government. I have made similar comments to those I have made tonight in the 2 local newspapers for which I write articles. I concluded by saying that, if the federal government can simply reef land off us at will without paying compensation, I wonder if this is paving the way for more land claims.

Mr Speaker, I think the people of the Northern Territory will show their good sense by voting 'No' to all questions. I will continue to do my utmost to encourage people to register a 'No' vote to all 4 questions.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to make some comments in relation to the proposed referendum. Firstly, in regard to the proposal for 4-year terms, I point out that the parliamentary term proposal has 2 conjunctive parts: one is a 4-year term for the House of Representatives - that is, an increase of 1 year - and the other is a 4-year

term for the Senate which is actually a decrease of 2 years. It is the second limb of this proposal that we oppose. This proposal by the Hawke government is a sham, and members of the opposition know it. The Constitutional Commission was assisted by such worthies as Mr Gough Whitlam and Mr Peter Garrett. These people were hand-picked, but the Constitutional Commission did not want to do things the way the Hawke government wanted them done. It hand-picked the commission and gave it a task, but even such notables as Mr Peter Garrett and Mr Gough Whitlam would not have a bar of this proposal. They recommended a 4-year term for the House of Representatives. That is quite sensible. It follows our 4-year terms in the Territory. They recommended 8 years for the Senate or double the House of Representatives term. If there is to be a move to 4-year terms, the Senate should double as well.

It is important that we understand that the system of government that we know in Australia today was created by our founding fathers in such a way that the Senate would be half the size of the House of Representatives and would be elected for double the term. The idea was to ensure that the heavily-populated states would not be able to override the smaller states or, to put it another way, the south-east corner of Australia would not be able to overrule the west or the north of our vast country. This mechanism has worked extremely well, but this proposal actually talks about changing the form of government that we have known since federation. It would be one of the most drastic moves that could ever be made and it would be the beginning of the end of our parliaments and our form of government.

Regarding the freedom of religion question, it is worth while looking at some comments made by the member for Stuart. I certainly would challenge the Labor Party to come clean on the question of freedom of religion. There was no mention in the member for Stuart's speech of the Catholic Bishops' opposition to the proposal or the Anglican Dean of Sydney's opposition to the proposal. The Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and the Dean are all committed to freedom of religion, but they see dangers in changing the wording of the existing provision for the freedom of religion. I think that we must heed the dangers that have been pointed out by the Bishops and the Dean.

The member for Stuart tells us that the Attorney-General for the Commonwealth, Hon Lionel Bowen, has resolved all the concerns of the Bishops. Perhaps the member for Stuart believes that the Commonwealth Attorney-General has given the definitive interpretation of the new section. Maybe he should realise that the Attorney-General, even of the Commonwealth, is not a High Court judge and that, in this country, the judiciary is independent. The Chief Minister has outlined this government's position. We certainly support freedom of religion, but it should be realised that the changed wording of section 116 of the Constitution will push the Australian Constitution towards the American position, as expressed in the United States Bill of Rights. What has happened in the United States? The Supreme Court has held that religious freedom means that there can be no prayers in state schools, that no religious matter can be taught in them and that ministers of religion cannot take classes on school grounds. Christmas mangers are not permitted in public buildings or on public land. There is no legislation to keep religious collectors of money out of public places like airport terminals. Consequently, on arriving at an American airport, one can be bailed up by someone seeking money or trying to sell religious books. Days like Christmas Day and Good Friday cannot be public holidays because that offends against freedom of religion. My point is that the last thing we want to do is move down that road. This proposal is not only the first step; it is probably the first 300 or 400 yards.

In relation to trial by jury, the Chief Minister has certainly reminded this House that trial by jury is an ancient right that found its expression in the Magna Carta. The right to trial by jury is certainly a most important and precious right. However, it is clear that not all matters can or should be dealt with by trial by jury and the cost and delay would certainly be a fairly intolerable burden, not only on the public but, in many cases, on the accused. The proposal to entrench the right to trial by jury for offences where the maximum penalty exceeds 2 years imprisonment or involves corporal punishment, is deceptively appealing at the first glance. I think that, with a moderate amount of consideration, the appeal of this proposal fades rapidly.

We have all been aware of the problems and the complexities of cases which are now coming to trial. Trials involving company fraud are very long and extremely complex. Breaches of copyright acts often involve a substratum of complex scientific facts. Cases involving complex medical or forensic evidence are often very long and difficult for the average person to comprehend and assess and it may well be that, in the future, consideration needs to be given to restricting or even removing trial by jury in some of these very difficult cases. There has been discussion in legal circles of where the future lies in respect of these very difficult, technical matters.

The total sum of knowledge in the world is accelerating at a very rapid pace, and the problems that I have outlined will only increase. By locking ourselves into one system, we may be placing a millstone around the neck of future generations. I think it is important to realise that every citizen has the right and the duty to serve on a jury, and we have to look at this proposal in terms of some of the things it will do. Certainly, it will increase the number of trials by jury and the time of such trials is likely to increase as years go by. That will require the ordinary citizen to spend more time in court. There are problems in even getting people to go along and do their duty at the moment. If it were of some value - not simply to feed the vanity of some of the Senators and members of the federal government in Canberra - I would encourage all Territorians cheerfully to serve longer times on juries and give up their business commitments or work for extra days or weeks in order to have time to serve on juries. But this proposal has no value. In fact, it appears that it will hamper the administration of justice, increase the time before trials. In addition, it will cost more to administer the judicial system, especially in the Territory. The proposal does not appear to have any merit, but it certainly has its defects.

Relating to just terms, it is understandable to me and, I think, to most Territorians that there can be no rational justification for denying the Northern Territory of Australia the full rights to compensation from the Commonwealth. I was totally amazed to hear the member for Stuart espousing support for the Commonwealth's view that the Northern Territory should be treated as second class. The constitutional status of the Northern Territory is certainly no justification for any Commonwealth government to treat the Territory as second class or its citizens as second class. It is important to realise that the member for Stuart's speech contained 1 major fallacy: he suggested that we were adopting a dog in the manger attitude because we opposed the proposal. Nevertheless, he conceded that the Territory government misses out on compensation. He seems to think that it does not matter to Territorians that Northern Territory government property will continue to be expropriated, in vast amounts, without compensation under this proposal.

Mr Ede: Have you got it now? Are you losing anything?



Mr MANZIE: I had better explain to the member for Stuart that the property that is invested in the Northern Territory government is not to the benefit of any one individual. The property of the government belongs to all Territorians. How can he say that individual Territorians are protected when the Commonwealth can expropriate the vast amounts of property which the government holds in trust and manages for all Territorians, and do so without offering any compensation? I believe the member for Stuart has carefully and deliberately avoided the real issues in the debate. I would like to know whether the opposition supports the Commonwealth's continuing power to expropriate, without compensation, the property that this government holds in trust for the people of the Territory? I do not think such an attitude can be justified in any way.

Mr Speaker, when we are talking about just terms, it is important that we are aware of the justifications on which the federal government has based this particular exemption of the Territory. It is on the comments of the Constitutional Commission contained in its first report, April 1988 volume 2. In discussing the grant of self-government powers to territories, the commission says:

These powers of self-government will vary from territory to territory and, in respect of each territory, from time to time. In most cases, the initial property of the territory will have been transferred to it from the Commonwealth. It is not possible to determine in advance the occasion when just terms would be appropriate for a federal acquisition of property that belongs to the territory government. In our view, it is a matter to be resolved between the Commonwealth and the territory, as the territory moves towards statehood or requires a greater degree of self-government. The example of the Northern Territory referred to shows how suitable arrangements can be made under existing constitutional provisions.

Mr Speaker, in the case of the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth had 1 year, from 1 July 1978, to acquire any property vested in the Northern Territory of Australia without compensation. That was provided for quite specifically in section 70 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act at section 70. The Commonwealth government did acquire a great deal of property without just terms. As examples, think of the defence facilities and Kakadu stage 2, and I am sure members can think of a number of other areas. We object strenuously to appropriation of Territory land or property without compensation.

Mr Ede: It is still here.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, that is a typical remark, isn't it? The member for Stuart has made it quite clear that he believes that Territorians are second class and should be treated as such. I do not agree with that, and I think most people would not agree with it. A stupid remark such as, 'it is still here', is typical of his lack of intellectual capacity even to understand what is going on around him.

While I am an Australian citizen and I am living in Australia, I expect to be able to enjoy the same benefits as my fellow citizens who live in parts of Australia other than the Northern Territory. One of the reasons that I am in this House is because I believe all Australians should be treated equally and have the same opportunities. It is quite clear that we do not. It is quite clear that the Commonwealth government and Labor Party members in the Northern Territory agree that we should be treated as second class citizens in certain

areas. I disagree with that. I do not argue against the honourable member's right to hold those sorts of views, but I certainly disagree with them strongly and I will take every opportunity firstly to point out what the views of people like the honourable member opposite are and to ensure that people understand them and, secondly, to point out what my views are. It is important that we be treated equally with other Australians and I ask the member for Stuart to reconsider his views in that regard.

The whole situation with the questions on the referendum is such that we have 4 very simple and apple-pie-type questions. At first glance, they seem very harmless and quite appealing. But, when they are looked at in some detail, we are talking about 33 clauses effecting far-reaching changes to the Australian Constitution. The most important is the proposal relating to 4-year terms because, in fact, it is a provision which changes the whole relationship between the Senate and the House of Representatives. It changes the whole basis of the mechanics of the government of this country. It is a monstrous change, and it is one which I do not think anyone would know the end results of but it is one on which our forefathers, when they were drafting our Constitution and our form of government, were quite specific in the arrangements that they made to ensure that no such thing would occur.

The way the federal government, led by the Prime Minister, Hon Bob Hawke, has gone about trying to con the Australian people has been a very cynical exercise but, as the member for Koolpinyah pointed out, the Australian people are not cannon fodder in this regard. They can think. They are intelligent enough to realise that this is a giant con job, and I am sure that the referendum vote will show that in no mean terms to the federal government.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, what we are seeing pushed on the Australian people by way of this referendum is the next step in the federal government's plan to socialise Australia. That is what it is all about, and make no mistake about that.

Mr Ede: I think that the socialist left in Victoria might disagree with you.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I think that it was opportune that the member for Stuart interjected just at that moment because I happened to listen intently to his contribution to this debate several days ago. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me refresh your memory with regard to some of the comments that he made. I will give him this: he is one of the 2 members of the opposition who has contributed to this debate. The others have run for cover.

He said that he accused the Chief Minister of a cheap, political trick. One would assume from that that he meant that, by making a statement to this House, the Chief Minister had attempted, in some political form, to deceive the people of the Northern Territory. But it was not just that. He went on to tell us all about the rise of the trade union movement. He told us how the existing Australian Constitution was written before the turn of the century, before women had a vote, before the introduction of social welfare and just at the time when the servicemen were returning from the Maori wars. He told us that, at that time, this country was under the control of the ruling classes. He said that the Constitution was not relevant today because it reflected the attitudes of the 1880s and the 1890s. I have never heard so much garbage in all my life about a constitutional matter as I heard on that day from the honourable member. These people opposite are still fighting the class war. That is what socialism is all about: a class war. But, in this day and age in the Northern Territory and in Australia, what class war are they fighting?

Mr Ede: They are out there waiting for you.

Mr SETTER: You would have us believe that, but I do not believe it.

Let us reflect on what he said about the Constitution being outdated. After all, it is only 88 years old. I will refer, dare I say it, to a humble address by the Lord Chancellor of Westminster, Rt Hon Lord Mackay of Clashfern, delivered on Wednesday 20 July 1988 to the House of Lords when Her Majesty was present. I would like to quote this because it puts the lie to what the member for Stuart said about our Constitution:

Most Gracious Sovereign, we the Lords Spiritual and Temporal welcome this occasion to commemorate and celebrate with Your Majesty and with members of the House of Commons the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the occasion on which the Prince and Princess of Orange were declared joint sovereigns of these islands. By their acceptance of the Declaration of Rights, presented to them on the 13th of February 1689 at Whitehall, and subsequently enacted as the Bill of Rights, and by the assent to the claim of right of Scotland, their late Majesties King William and Queen Mary concluded a solemn pact with their people. Thereby were vindicated and asserted the ancient rights and liberties of the dutiful and loyal subjects of Your Majesty's predecessors. In consequence of this deliverance from the arbitrary power, in affirmation of the people's rights, this nation has, since 1688, security under a constitutional monarch.

The British people have been ruled since 1688 on the basis of the Declaration of Rights and the Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, the member opposite tries to tell us that, because our Constitution is 88 years old, it is out of date. That is absolute rubbish. Our Constitution is as relevant today as it was in 1901. There is absolutely no reason to change it - none whatsoever.

My view was shared by the NT News on 24 June 1988 in an editorial, headed 'Constitution Under Threat'. I quote:

There should be no mincing of words about this. Our way of life, our traditional system of government and our essential sovereignty may be in jeopardy. All that the federal government of the day has to do to eliminate the states effectively as a political entity is to enter into a covenant or treaty or sign a convention with any foreign power or body. It can then argue in the High Court that its rights and powers take precedence over the states.

Mr Speaker, our journalists, those people who are well schooled in these matters and who listen to a whole range of views, totally disagree with the member opposite.

As I said, the Constitution that we have at the moment has served this country very well indeed. I do not see any infringement of our rights at all. Indeed, the fact that we have parliaments such as this where we can debate a whole range of issues, as we have been doing these last 6 days, is the proof of that.

The Labor Party is attempting once again to deceive the Australian people. It has been attempting to do that for the last 5 years. However, it is not just as simple as that because, this time, it is spending some \$40m in the process - \$40m-worth of deceit. This document is an example of the sort of

material that it is issuing. It is running television advertisements and it has posters all around the place. I will not debate the contents of this document at the moment. Look at the way this has been set out. On this side, we see the argument in favour of a 'Yes' vote. The word 'Yes' is printed in type about 2 inches tall. On this side is the 'No' case. The size of the letters are about one-sixth the size of those used to express the 'Yes' case. Can that be called equality? Is that a fair go? On pages 12 and 13 of the document, the 'Vote Yes' is very large in comparison to the 'No'. That is the sort of equality we see from this government. That is the sort of equality that we see for \$40m of the taxpayers' money. It is another charade.

There is always a hidden agenda in anything that this federal government does. It tells us that there are only 4 changes which are all very simple. They are all motherhood. The average person would say: 'That is a good idea. It sounds all right to me'. The reality is that 33 changes to the Constitution are envisaged. Those 33 changes would require the addition of a further 13 pages to the Constitution. Do you agree, Mr Speaker, that that is 4 straight questions and 4 minor changes, 4 'motherhood' alterations to our Constitution? No way! The hidden agenda is there. When you read this document, do you learn about the 33 changes? You certainly do not. It is typical of the way that this federal government goes about its business.

In my opinion, the current Constitution offers the citizens of this country ample constitutional protection and security. These proposed changes achieve absolutely nothing other than to assist in the socialisation of this country. Let me have a look at one of those changes. Let us have a look at the 4-year term. The Prime Minister has stated publicly that the public will be spared the disruption caused by having too many elections if we have a 4-year term. That is absolute nonsense because the reality is that it is Prime Ministers who call elections. It has nothing to do with the Senate. What is proposed is reducing the Senate terms to 4 years and locking Senate elections in with the House of Representatives elections. In that whole package, there is no minimum term, which was recommended by the Constitutional Commission, and there is no restriction on the Prime Minister's right to call early elections. We all know that, in the 5 years that this current government has been in power, we have had 3 elections.

Mr Ede: The first was called by Fraser.

Mr SETTER: I do not deny that. However, since then, the current Prime Minister has called a further 2, both well within the term of 3 years. In fact, on each occasion, it was within approximately 18 months. The point I am making is that nothing in this package will change that. All the hullabaloo about reducing the term of the Senate to 4 years and locking it in with the House of Representatives will not alter that situation. Nevertheless, the federal government is trying to push the argument that it will prevent too many elections being held. This is really just a ploy to erode the power of the Senate. It should be remembered that the Senate is the states' House.

Mr Ede: Oh rubbish!

Mr SETTER: It is not rubbish. Each state has equal representation in the Senate, as the honourable member would well know, regardless of population and regardless of size. It is the states' House. This is all about eroding the power of the Senate.

It is well known that the Labor Party detests Upper Houses. It is on record as saying that it really would like to do away with Upper Houses. Let

us have a look at the role of the Senate. The Senate was responsible for preventing the ID card from being imposed on the Australian people. If it were not for the Senate, we would be all carrying those little cards with our photographs on them. Mind you, the government has got around it with its tax file number. Nevertheless, that is not as bad as the Australia Card would have been. These amendments will give the government of the day greater control over that House of review. It really wants to get its sticky little fingers on the Senate, restrict it and squeeze it. It is not the first time that this has been tried. It was tried in 1974, 1977 and again in 1984. The move will be defeated again this time but I am sure that, at some time in the future, the federal government will try again.

Let us look at fair and democratic elections. Much play has been made about one-vote one-value. The Labor Party loves it.

Mr Smith: So do the Liberals in Queensland.

Mr SETTER: For different reasons.

Mr Speaker, Australia is a large and diverse country. It has a small population relative to its size. Unfortunately, that population is centred along the eastern coast, around the major capital cities. The electorates vary considerably in area but the reality is that the majority of electors in this country are along the eastern seaboard or in those capital cities.

Mr Smith: Where the people live. Isn't that coincidental?

Mr SETTER: But there are different types of people in this country.

Mr Smith: Some are more equal than others.

Mr SETTER: Not at all, not at all. There is a whole range of interests and types of people in this country and none of those interests should be disadvantaged to the advantage of others.

If this question is carried, the interests of country people, the ones who sweat their brows off in the country, will be disadvantaged. I know it is very hard for members opposite to understand that the wealth producers in this country are the people who live in the rural areas.

Mr Smith: What?

Mr SETTER: It is true. This country rides along, as much today as it did in Macarthur's day, on the sheep's back.

Mr Ede: We have a lot of sheep in the Territory.

Mr SETTER: It rides on the sheep's back, on the backs of the miners and on the backs of the grain growers of this country. That is where the wealth comes from in this country. Where is our major export income derived from? It is derived from primary industry and from the work of the miners, not from the people who live in the cities. That is why it is absolutely critical that the interests of rural people be protected. It is very important that we see through this charade of so-called fair and democratic elections and one-vote one-value and find out what it is really all about. We must vote 'No' on that question as well.

Mr Speaker, the question relating to recognition of local government is very interesting. Again, the reality is that local government is already recognised by most of the states - New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia. Queensland and Tasmania are soon to include recognition in their constitutions and the Northern Territory Select Committee on Constitutional Development has recommended the inclusion of local government in a Territory constitution. What those people within local government who are promoting this issue do not realise is that, if the federal Constitution recognises local government, it will become beholden to the federal government. The federal government will be funding local government directly and there is no doubt about that. It wants to eliminate the states. There is no doubt about that either. We all know what Bob Hawke, now the Prime Minister, said in his first Boyer lecture. He said: 'I believe the logical implication is that Australians would be better served by the elimination of the states which no longer serve their original purpose and act as a positive impediment to achieving good government'. The man who gave that lecture years ago is currently the Prime Minister of this country, and leopards do not change their spots. He has the same attitude today. Mr Speaker, I leave you with that sobering thought.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Publications Committee - Sixth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Sixth Report of the Publications Committee and move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Last evening, the member for Stuart raised the issue of the overseas student program at the Darwin Institute of Technology. His major concern was in relation to a particular advertisement which appeared in the Daily Express in Sabah in April 1988. That particular advertisement was promoting the Darwin Institute of Technology courses. I would like to take some time this evening to inform members of the situation that exists between the Darwin Institute of Technology and the AMC School of Business in Kota Kinabalu.

The Darwin Institute of Technology has signed a twinning agreement with the AMC School of Business in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, for that institution to teach the first year of the Darwin Institute of Technology's Bachelor of Business. The course is fully moderated by the staff of the Faculty of Business who, during overseas marketing exercises, visit the school to check on standards of teaching and student progress. This project was approved on 9 March 1988. At present, 9 students are enrolled. This course is part of the institute's offshore teaching program and is approved by the Commonwealth government. Students will complete only 1 year in Sabah and will transfer for the final 2 years to the DIT campus where they will pay the full yearly fee of \$7500. The institute is participating fully in the development and conforms to the Australian overseas student code of ethics which was introduced for Australian educational institutions this year. This Australian

overseas student code of ethics was accepted at the 57th meeting of the Australian Education Council held in Darwin in June, a meeting which I chaired.

The education system of Malaysia differs markedly in terms of the dates of its academic year, the structure of courses, the subject arrangements and the types of vocational entry points. The advertisement to which the member for Stuart referred was drawn up and lodged in Sabah's Daily Express newspaper by the AMC group of colleges and not the Darwin Institute of Technology. Perhaps this is where the problem originated. Whilst the advertisement was referred back to the Darwin Institute of Technology, I believe that the matter needed to be looked at in more detail. I agree with the member for Stuart in this regard, and I will address that in a minute.

In arranging the twinning courses and other overseas marketing strategies, the Darwin Institute of Technology and other institutions have had to adapt and distribute their information in terms overseas students will understand. I have received assurances from the institute that, in follow-up material and student counselling, it will be explained to Asian students that the Darwin Institute of Technology does not offer a Bachelor of Business course which is a formal banking qualification. It offers a Bachelor of Business degree in accounting, computing, economics/finance, and tourism and hospitality. These course are well accepted within Australia and elsewhere as being directly suited to banking and other related career streams.

The overseas market is most competitive and students must feel confident that they know exactly what their course will offer and what it will lead to. I agree with the member for Stuart. Any form of advertising must be accurate and in no way misleading. This degree should be marketed as a Bachelor of Business in accounting, computing, economics/finance or tourism and hospitality management, followed by a descriptive word 'banking', placed in brackets, if this description is suitable and acceptable in the context of the local education system. I have spoken to the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology on this matter. Australia does not offer specific degrees in banking but they are common in Asia. Advertising for courses offered in the Northern Territory must be accurately worded and should describe to potential students the nature and purpose of the courses involved.

Mr Speaker, another part of the advertisement referred to by the member for Stuart was the mention of the Master of Business Administration. The Darwin Institution of Technology, with Territory government approval, has forecast expansion into a Master's degree in business in its triennium submission. The DIT received verbal approval from the then CTEC to commence a Master of Business course in 1988 but, under the new arrangements, this requires final confirmation from the Department of Education, Employment and Training. Hopefully, this will be given within the next few weeks for a 1989 start. AMC students will be seeking to enter the program in 1991. The Bachelor of Public Administration and Graduate Diploma of Administration are the courses offered at present for students seeking management administration qualifications.

I believe that this matter could have been more accurately portrayed and I am having that examined as well. It is important that our offerings in education are accurately promoted otherwise our institutions will receive a bad name. Students will not enrol in our institutions if that is the case and we will miss out on a growing and profitable market. I wanted to make it clear that the incorrect information was not given intentionally but was couched in terms which matched the requirements of the local educational

environment. I have asked that the Darwin Institute of Technology examine that matter in more detail.

I would like to turn now to another subject. Since becoming Minister for Education, I have been promoting, wherever possible, positive happenings within the education portfolio. Tonight I would like to acknowledge the work of a linguist, Mary Laughren. Mary has been at Yuendumu for many years. Some members would know of her. She has done valuable work in research on and documentation of the Walpiri language. That work is now completed, and has provided an excellent foundation for future development. She will be missed in the community of Yuendumu, both for her work and personality. I was fortunate in meeting Mary Laughren on one occasion on a visit to Lajamanu, and I can recall that occasion very clearly.

The teacher linguist position will remain at Yuendumu and will be occupied by another long-term resident of Yuendumu, Wendy Bader. I am sure other members may also ...

Mr Ede: Mary Laughren was not a teacher linguist.

Mr HARRIS: No, she is a linguist.

Mr Ede: Is the linguist position staying?

Mr HARRIS: The teacher linguist position is being retained there and will be occupied by Wendy Bader. Warumungu is the next priority language, and it is appropriate to transfer the linguist position to Tennant Creek. That is the heart of the Warumungu country ...

Mr Ede: Yes, that is the bad news.

Mr HARRIS: ... and I hope that Mary is able to carry out with the Warumungu language work similar to that which she has done in relation to the Walpiri language. There is a great deal of expertise, interest and enthusiasm in Tennant Creek and productive linguistic research in Warumungu is able to be carried out. I congratulate Mary Laughren for the work that she has done, and I wish her well with her work in research and documentation of the Warumungu language.

Before my time runs out, I would like to touch on one other subject. In the adjournment debate yesterday, I called on the opposition spokesman on education to give us some comments in relation to discipline in the school system. Tonight, I would like the honourable member to expand on what I believe is the unworkable proposal that he has put forward to combat truancy. The honourable member released the opposition's proposal last month and honourable members would be aware that the Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, as have I, has some grave concerns about the proposal. Words such as 'undesirable', 'unworkable' or 'cost a fortune', 'the proposal is not dissimilar to putting people in jail' - all of those comments were made at that time.

Mr Ede: By you?

Mr HARRIS: No, not all by me. I made some of those comments. The Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation has made similar comments, and I would like the member for Stuart to rise in this evening's adjournment debate to let us know exactly what his proposal is because those issues need to be discussed in detail. It is all very well to ask the



government to raise these matters for debate; we do raise these issues for debate. On other occasions, I have asked the honourable member to give his views and I am asking him again tonight to explain his proposals in relation to truancy and discipline. I will be very interested to hear what he has to say.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to touch on 2 subjects. The first was brought to my attention very recently.

Mr Ede: Real smart arse, isn't he.

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

Mr Ede: I withdraw that remark.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I would like to point out the great difference in treatment of black and white schoolchildren who qualify for tertiary education. I am not fantasising, but have actual knowledge of a sad case of inequality of treatment because the young man involved is white. This young man comes from a family of 2 children, both boys. He has a mother and a father. His mother is a public servant who holds a good job which does not pay a very flash salary. Coupled with the father's income from working at home, the combined incomes of the parents is just within the bracket above \$34 000 which is just enough to disenfranchise him from receipt of any Austudy. He can receive no Austudy allowance at all. Of course, if he were in the top 2 matriculants in the Northern Territory, he could get \$4000 per annum during his studies and, if he were one of the next 8, he would be eligible to receive \$2000 per annum from the Northern Territory government.

He cannot receive Austudy because of level of his parents' income and he can receive no air fares or any allowance. In fact, all he could obtain in terms of financial help was one, great big zero. He passed his matriculation well - not brilliantly, but well. This young man wants to study veterinary science and I believe he will be very good. He is a deep thinker, he has practical sense and he is pretty bright but, because he is non-Aboriginal, he receives no help to further his studies.

If he were an Aboriginal or of Aboriginal descent, the information I have is that he would be eligible for air fares and allowances to enable him to attend interviews in the Northern Territory or interstate. No means test at all is applied to students who have matriculated if they are of Aboriginal descent or of part-Aboriginal descent. There are many part-Aboriginal parents getting much more than the \$34 000 combined income of the parents allowed for white students before they are no longer entitled to Austudy. For Aboriginal students, it does not matter how much the combined income of the parents is. They can be as wealthy as I have heard the Chairman of the Northern Land Council is, and still have no means test applied to their children's application for tertiary study, unlike this young man that I am talking about.

These Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal students can become recipients of Aboriginal study money. They receive 3 return air fares a year if there is a spouse and they are sharing the air fares. They receive an allowance of \$182 per fortnight or \$150 per fortnight if at home. They receive \$250 for books and fees. They receive funding for higher educational charges, lab fees etc, and fees for extra tutoring. This young white man is not in a position that you could call really rosy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you know what he has to do to qualify for Austudy? You probably do, but I will tell you anyway - and to get the \$182.40 per fortnight that the Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal student walks into because of his skin colour, regardless of his parents' income. This non-Aboriginal young white man has to work for 3 years out of every 4, doing work of some sort, to prove his independence before he can receive the full Austudy allowance of \$182.42 per fortnight, and he does not receive air fares if he has to study down south, as this young man will have to do because he intends to study veterinary science. The funny part of it is that, if he marries or if his spouse is means tested, he could be eligible for 3 air fares.

That is the difference between black and white in Australia now. If one is Aboriginal or of Aboriginal origin, one can walk into any university if one qualifies, but this young man has to waste, you could say, 3 years of his young life before he will qualify for any help at all, before he even starts his studies. I wonder how many young white students or non-Aboriginal students in this category lose heart and opt for the easy way of not undertaking studies and therefore we lose their potential, professional expertise forever - all because their parents' combined incomes just pip the \$34 000 a year. This points up again the serious disadvantages of non-Aboriginal people on low incomes. They cop it all ways; they are not poor because they are too proud not to work. They do not want to bludge. They are not exactly poor, but they are not in the millionaire class either. They are really the 'poor whites' because they miss out on all that marvellous social security, that treasure chest of handouts. They really have to work all the time to make ends meet and to obtain social and financial justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is another matter on which I would like to touch this evening. I refer to the shoot-outs of buffalo that have been occurring over a number of years. The government says that this will culminate in the complete eradication of all feral buffalo within a couple of years. I have had representations made to me that BTEC is quickly destroying the buffalo industry which is still in its infancy. It is not a healthy infancy; it is foundering. A swag of questions has been put to me.

First, is it a fact that 2 spokesmen from the US Department of Agriculture have denied the presence of brucellosis and tuberculosis in Australian stock would seriously affect Australian export of meat to the USA? One spokesman is Dr George Vinegar from Import-Export, who said: 'If the USA ever becomes free of brucellosis and tuberculosis, it would probably change testing procedures from infected areas'. He said that there is no way that they would put an embargo on Australian beef because of brucellosis and tuberculosis. Another spokesman was Dr Dale Schvindermann who backed up Dr George Vinegar.

Is it a fact that an animal welfare group in the USA, 'Friends of the Animals', requested through freedom of information legislation from the United States government papers which specifically asked Australia to eradicate brucellosis? These papers could not be produced.

Is it a fact that humans can eat cattle carcasses infected with tuberculosis? I believe the answer is yes, depending on where and how far it is infected, which anyone killing or slaughtering in the field would know, and which is a routine check for veterinary inspectors at abattoirs. In regard to destroying buffalo infected with tuberculosis which are subsequently eaten by humans, the risk of the people becoming infected is very low. The same applies in relation to brucellosis.

During the coming 7 months, the Northern Territory government intends to slaughter 100 000 buffalo as part of the national Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign. Compensation money for BTEC runs out at the end of this year. The government has been given \$21.9m to speed up the eradication program. Many of these animals will be shot by helicopter marksmen, a method of eradication which has raised the ire of animal protection groups in Australia and internationally. There is little doubt that many pastoralists in the Top End have been brought to the brink of financial disaster as a result of BTEC. In a final report prepared by GRM International Pty Ltd, entitled 'Northern Territory Pastoral Industry Study' and dated April 1987, the following statement is made: 'The situation in the Darwin and Gulf district gives cause for concern with the proportion of properties with negative returns approaching 50%'. BTEC was listed as one of the most significant problems faced by the industry. The report goes on to state that the difficulties, costs and technical uncertainties related to the implementation of BTEC are likely to increase, not decrease, as the campaign moves north into the naturally-watered areas of the Top End. It is apparent that some pastoralists will not be compensated adequately for the disadvantages imposed on them and that a proportion of pastoralists will not be able to survive financially in the face of BTEC requirements. Many pastoralists in the Territory are questioning the sense of eradicating buffalo as part of BTEC. They see the proposed slaughter as an appalling waste of animals which have adapted well to the environment.

Calving rates in buffalo are much higher than in beef cattle. There is a growing demand for buffalo meat and the animals are easier and less expensive to raise than beef cattle. As well, there is a huge export market in Asia for both live and slaughtered animals. In December 1986, some 1470 buffalo were shipped live by sea to Cuba where they were met at the wharf by President Castro himself. The animals were imported to graze swamplands and earned \$100m for Australia. The value of 100 000 buffaloes left to rot in the Territory, which is what is intended, would be at least \$69m on the Cuban market. The average domestic price for a buffalo is around \$400 - a luxury indeed for a government known to be in financial difficulties. Pastoralists point to the fact that the Territory's buffalo are free of brucellosis. They claim that the majority of buffalo are also free of TB which, they say, is carried by an estimated 40 million wild pigs, magpie geese, kangaroos, goats, sheep, cattle and other vectors.

The incidence of TB in the Territory is 0.01% or 10 animals in 10 000. To get rid of that 0.01%, 100 000 animals have to be eradicated. Everybody with any sense regards that percentage as economic lunacy. Wild pigs eating rotting carcasses add to the spread of TB in the Territory. Many of the buffalo have been killed during the Wet, creating ideal conditions for the spread of the bacteria which can live outside its animal host for up to 1 year, according to Sydney University scientist Dr Tony English, an expert in bovine TB.

Present tests can differentiate between avian and bovine TB. Animals which react to the bovine TB test, in fact, may be sensitised to avian TB as a result of drinking from infected waterholes. The Northern Territory government refuses to undertake comparative testing which would ensure that only animals infected with bovine TB would be slaughtered. As a result, according to some pastoralists, thousands of healthy animals are destroyed and left to rot. Wild pigs then move into areas which have been destocked of buffalo, causing havoc to the environment and, at the same time, spreading TB.

The Australian government's occasional paper No 97 on the BTEC program states that the potential cost savings of an improved test which is 95% reliable have been estimated as high as \$120m. The new test would also reduce reliance on the expensive destocking option. In northern Australia, where mustering is much more costly, repeated testing over a prolonged period has failed, in some instances, to yield a sufficient rate of detection of new or established infection to permit any progress to be made towards eradicating tuberculosis. The report suggests that the efficiency of the test itself might be reduced in extensive pastoral conditions. In any event, Australia is the only country in the world which has attempted large-scale tuberculosis eradication in what is essentially a wild animal population.

Sensible people realise that complete eradication of TB in beef and buffalo herds in the Territory is a virtual impossibility. Although the Australian government has stated that the US would impose sanctions prohibiting the import of Australian beef unless the BTEC program were completed by 1992, questions have been raised as to the legality and probability of these sanctions. I mentioned this at the commencement of my remarks, quoting the 2 authorities from the United States. The report sums up the key points:

Brucellosis and tuberculosis present very small human health risks to nations importing beef from Australia because individual carcasses are inspected at slaughter. Australia is highly competitive by international standards. Discriminatory action against Australian supplies of beef relative to other supplies is very unlikely given the free trade provisions of GATT regarding human and animal health. The risk of total US market closure at present is very small, since this could only occur when there is specific discrimination against Australia.

No import legislation regarding brucellosis or TB appears ever to have been tabled in the United States. This is despite the fact that we are told again and again that it was a decision of the United States to ban any Australian meat from coming into the country unless brucellosis and tuberculosis had been eliminated from herds in Australia.

I will conclude by quoting from an economist at the New South Wales University of Technology, Dr Owen Stanley, who warned in 1985 that the Northern Territory's BTEC program was ill-conceived. He said:

Importers of beef such as America determine quotas on the outcome of conflicts between domestic producers and consumers, as part of economic and political international relations, and on their desire to open up markets for their exports. If it is convenient for such countries to reduce import quotas for Australian beef, no degree of brucellosis and tuberculosis cleanliness in the Australian herd will deter them.

I have brought this to the attention of the House because I believe we are fast eliminating the buffalo herds in the Northern Territory without getting any return from them. The government has given \$1.9m in extended loans to assist in fostering the buffalo herds. Those loans will become grants if certain conditions are met. As I said earlier in another speech, I feel that this is too little too late. Rather than this indiscriminate slaughter, I believe other courses of action should be undertaken so that the gene pool that we have in our buffalo population is not squandered.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I would like to be able to get down to Longreach for the end of the Last Great Cattle Drive because I was at Newcastle Waters when it began. Unfortunately, however, something of equal importance is happening in the Northern Territory at that time - the weekend after next. That event, of course, is the Timber Creek Races.

As you know, Mr Speaker, the Timber Creek Races are held annually and attract people from all over the Northern Territory, from Darwin, Katherine and even Alice Springs. People come from diverse locations in Western Australia and even from Queensland. It is a great day of events organised by the people of Timber Creek. For those members who do not know Timber Creek very well or even exactly where it is, it is not a very big town but it does have a very active community which treats the Timber Creek Races very seriously. The venue and events have been improved year by year until the Timber Creek Races has become one of the 'musts' of the racing calendar each year. I would not miss the Timber Creek Races even for the Last Great Cattle Drive and therefore I will be there while others are enjoying the Longreach event.

Timber Creek is a small town on the Victoria Highway towards the Western Australian border. It is very well placed to become a growth centre in time for the Northern Territory. Timber Creek is the obvious service centre for the development of the Gregory National Park that was outlined yesterday by the Minister for Conservation. It is almost at the western gateway and it is also close to the Keep River National Park. I do not know how many members have visited the Gregory National Park and have seen what it has to offer but I am sure that those who have will have been very impressed. I believe that ultimately it will rival and even outdo Kakadu National Park. It has all the necessary attributes. Keep River National Park is of equal importance but is much smaller.

I would like to mention a little booklet which I received only today and which I had never seen before. It is called 'Arriving and Surviving in the Northern Territory' and it is edited by Leanne McGill and Roslyn West of the Department of Health and Community Services. I congratulate the Department of Health and Community Services for this very valuable edition. Obviously, it will be available to everybody but it will be of particular interest to tourists coming into the Territory. It gives a great deal of very useful information on Territory culture in a section called 'A Look at Territorians and their Lifestyles'. It also gives tips on: eating and drinking in a hot climate; how to avoid heatstroke, sunburn and heat stress; dressing for the desert and the tropics; coping with storms and seasonal changes; getting where you want to go safely; enjoying the Territory safely and without incident; Territory wildlife and natural assets; health problems people may encounter; health care in the Territory; and travelling on to Asia. The book is full of very useful information. It lists various facilities and services including police and ambulance phone numbers.

I intend to buy a number of copies of this excellent publication to put in my electorate office. I believe they should be in every Tourist Commission office around the country, and indeed even around the world, so that people have some idea of what they are coming to. I commend both the minister and the department on the production of that publication. I recommend it to anybody who wants to be aware of local conditions, facilities and services. It will be just as valuable to locals as it will be to tourists.

I intended to raise this next matter earlier in these sittings, but I have not had the opportunity. It relates to a comment in last weekend's Sunday

Territorian from the Director of the Northern Land Council, John Ah Kit. Under the heading 'Communities Doing it Tough', John has this to say in relation to the Territory budget: 'What this budget shows very clearly is that the Northern Territory government has little regard for the aspirations of 25% of Territorians, the Aboriginal people'. There is a good word for that comment that I cannot use here, but suffice it to say that it is visited upon all people who handle cattle.

I want to spell out some of the facts in my own specific area of responsibility. For the first time, in this year's budget we have funds targeted specifically at Aboriginal employment and training. The amount is \$1.3m, and \$800 000 of that is directly available to remote communities for employment and training. Over the last 6 months, I have visited about 30 of the 50 major communities in the Territory and a large number of very small communities. At each of those places, I have talked to the people about the new initiatives of the Territory government in relation to employment and training and I sought their views on what their needs are.

Among the needs identified one was in the area of commercial management. The community management course is very well handled currently by Batchelor College and is jointly funded by the college, the Department of Education and the Department of Labour and Administrative Services. Other needs related to tourism, plant operation, the pastoral industry and horticulture. Some of those are already being addressed by the pastoral industry. Already, the Katherine Rural College runs a very good training course for stockmen. We need to provide for other needs of pastoral managers who have been asking for trained people. It is certainly an industry that the Aboriginal people can get back into, and are getting back into, all around the Territory. There is a very strong commitment from this government to developing courses. Currently, we are seeking consultants to develop the courses that are required and we will have those in place by the beginning of the next school year. Hopefully, some of them will be ready to run 12-week courses by September.

The aim is to develop skills in areas where there is suitable and viable employment. These are not job-creation programs. These are programs that examine the community and seek the community's views on what jobs it can handle. That is proving to be successful and it is being very well received by the communities. That will reduce the dependency of the residents of communities on the welfare system. I have every confidence that it will work. It is certainly getting considerable support from the communities. I reject the comment of the Director of the Northern Land Council that the Territory government does not consider Aboriginal people when it is bringing down its budgets.

We have expanded the funding available to local government. The Minister for Education can tell honourable members about the funds that he has available this year for Aboriginal education. The Minister for Health and Community Services certainly has very large sums of money directly available for Aboriginal health care.

I received a note today from Bill Sykes, the Principal Veterinary Officer BTEC with the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Bill Sykes has been here for about 2 years. I think he came on a 2-year contract and he is leaving in September. Bill has done an excellent job on the BTEC program whilst he has been here. In respect of the member for Koolpinyah's criticism of the BTEC program with regard to buffalo, certainly nobody likes to see large numbers of buffalo shot out, least of all myself. I have a great feeling for the buffalo as perhaps do most of us here. In fact, it is

necessary to reduce the numbers of feral buffalo and to monitor, in those places where they can be controlled, the health of those buffalo so that the BTEC program does not break down. Large sums of money have been spent on the program and any idea of cutting it off in midstream and leaving buffalo running wild is out of the question. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has substantial sums of money available this year, as the honourable member pointed out, for buffalo schemes. There is a great deal of interest in those and I have no doubt at all that the buffalo industry will survive and become a very valuable resource for the Northern Territory.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to take the opportunity to make one last effort to get this government to back off from an incredible proposal. Despite the fact that it has caused the demise of one Chief Minister, the government is still running this incredible proposal for a new parliament house. It is an obscenity. This government intends to spend \$100m on what it is now calling the 'State Square precinct', which was previously called the 'Anderson proposal'. It will spend \$100m on 2 buildings. That amount of money will be spent so that 25 members of parliament can sit in comfort for 25 days a year and so that they can have flash dining rooms and comfortable members' bars. I rightly call it an obscenity, and it is labelled as such by every elector whom I have come across. They have rightly labelled it as an obscenity.

I have spoken before about alternative uses for this money which would provide ongoing benefits. I have spoken about the Menzies School of Health Research. I have spoken about the Palmerston TAFE Centre. Mr Speaker, I would like to put another proposal to you. I do not believe that we should have a new parliament house before Territorians themselves are adequately housed. Any person who wishes to debate that with me on television or at any location he chooses to nominate will be sadly disillusioned if he believes that the public will support him.

We have a backlog in the Northern Territory currently of some 3000 houses. At the current rate at which we are building houses in Aboriginal communities, we are only keeping pace with the rate of family formation; we are not getting ahead at all. How many houses could we build for this \$100m? We could build 1500 houses in the Northern Territory with that amount of money, to cater for some 5000 Territorians who are currently either not housed or housed in abysmally substandard accommodation. So that we can sit in comfort for 25 days a year in this Legislative Assembly, we are denying those 5000 Territorians the right to have accommodation - something which would not only be of benefit to them now but would be of benefit to their children. It would assist us with our education programs because people would have a decent place to study in at night, and that is something that the Minister for Education should be backing. It would help in relation to the health problems of the children and their parents, and that is something that the Minister for Health and Community Services should be backing. It would help with jobs in rural areas and in towns, and that is something that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government should be backing. I am surprised that those ministers for a start have been backing this proposal.

Mr Speaker, look at the flow-ons. We have heard about flow-ons to the economy from this parliament house project. When we start talking about specialised buildings such as that, there is no way in the world that a large proportion of the benefits will not flow immediately interstate. Houses are something that the average, small builder in the Territory can handle. It is

something that the business community is already geared up for. It would ensure that the maximum benefits remained in the Northern Territory. It would flow right through the economy of the Territory. The beneficiaries would be those 5000 Territorians who would have those houses. Their health would benefit, their welfare would benefit, and their education would benefit. They would benefit from jobs. They would benefit from having, finally, a decent lifestyle. But they would not be the only people who would benefit; the benefits would flow back into the economies of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

This Berrimah-line mentality says that the government must grab all these big projects for Darwin and keep them here. This is the economy that it intends to look after, Mr Speaker. I hope that the Chief Minister will get up and attempt to justify this. There are people in need of jobs in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, and in Katherine now that the work on Tindal is starting to drop off. There are companies there who are finding it extremely difficult to keep going. Under the government's plan, they have been consigned to oblivion while it talks only about Darwin. Once again, we have this mentality.

Mr Perron: There are more capital works in Alice Springs than there were last year.

Mr EDE: Capital works in Alice Springs? Do I have to give the figures again? The capital works allocation for Alice Springs has been cut substantially this year, and there was no way that I was wrong.

Mr Dondas: You have the wrong figure. It is up.

Mr EDE: I will debate that down on the hustings with you if you like.

Mr Perron: Happy to.

Mr EDE: Let us debate it down in Alice Springs in the lead up to the Flynn by-election. You can name the area.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will cease his play acting. I have been fairly lenient with him. He will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr EDE: I will address my remarks through the Chair, Mr Speaker, with pleasure.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister is challenging me to a debate in Alice Springs within the next fortnight. I call on him to name the locale, anywhere in Alice Springs. I will debate with him at any time in the next fortnight. We will have that out without any problems whatsoever because capital works in Alice Springs have been cut and, I will prove it to him down there.

Mr Speaker, as I was saying, the mentality that says that we will get this quick shot in the arm in Darwin will mean that all we will end up with is 25 politicians enjoying a comfortable lifestyle for 25 days of the year. That is akin to an alcoholic who decides that things are getting rough and, because he has the shakes a bit, he goes out and has a big booze up. During the course of it, he feels really great and forgets all his problems. He thinks that he is great but, the next morning, comes the hangover. That is what will be happening here if the government persists with this type of proposal. All it will do is heat up the economy. It will provide no ongoing economic or



social benefits. It is those ongoing and social benefits that we are after the Northern Territory. That is why the housing that I have proposed will, as I said, do far more for jobs, far more for the economy of the Northern Territory, far more for the health interstice, and far more for the education interstice. It will be far better for the Territory to draw back ...

Mr Dondas: \$1500m spent in the Territory. You are a coot.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will resume his chair. The member for Casuarina will withdraw that remark.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, to conclude, I call on this government to draw back from the brink and realise that it is not simply its own fate that is at risk here. That may be sealed or maybe it is not sealed, but the government has to adopt a responsible attitude to the economy of the Northern Territory and ensure that it uses the money that it can raise to create real social and economic benefits for Territorians now and in the future.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I apologise for rising at this late hour, but I have intended to ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why?

Mr COLLINS: Yes, why should I apologise? I have listened patiently to those who have gone before me, and I did not speak on the last 2 nights because of the lateness of the hour. However, there is something which I do want to say to this House and I thank those honourable members who are still here.

The topic I want to discuss tonight is highlighted by an article in today's NT News that is entitled 'Teenage Toll of Suicides and Drugs'. There is a photo of Sydney students consoling one another after a fellow student's suicide. It is quite an article. I will not try to read it out. Many members may have read it already. The effects that drugs can have is very serious, not only in a physical sense but also in terms of creating an attitude among young people that life is pretty stressful and pointless. They feel very pessimistic and, to many of them, the future looks very bleak.

The topic I want to talk on tonight, which has some relevance to this article, is Life Education Centres. The Life Education Centre was the brainchild of the Reverend Ted Noffs, and I believe that many members of the Assembly would be well aware of that fact. The Reverend Ted Noffs, who is well known through his work with the Wayside Chapel, had tried for several years to rehabilitate people whose lives were ruined through drug addiction. Many of those people died and eventually he concluded that he was tackling the problem from the wrong end. He and his helpers set out to develop a program to tackle the problem effectively. The program began in Sydney and is spreading right across Australia.

Young primary school children visit the centre and use the electronic wizardry provided by people such as Dick Smith, who is a great supporter of the program. The idea is to instil in these young people a sense of wonder about the marvels of their own bodies and an awareness that they are important as individuals and different in some ways from all other children, and that their individuality is something to be treasured. In a gentle way, as the years roll by, in the 6 years of primary school, they discuss, as you often

can with younger children, subjects such as drugs. It is not done in a manner to frighten the children but to bring them to an understanding of the effects various substances, including alcohol and nicotine, have on their bodies. By role playing and other means, they try to instil in the kids the capacity to resist the peer pressure which is believed to be the key factor in teenage children experimenting with drugs and some succumbing to the horrors that can be associated with that scene.

Life Education Centres are under way here in the Territory. The scheme in Darwin, which is servicing an area as far south as Katherine, has a caravan with electronic gear on board. It was taken around to the schools. There is a teacher who has been to the Life Education Centre in Sydney and is specially trained in the methods. That teacher distributes booklets because follow-up is a very important aspect. The van can spend only a week or so in each school but the teachers use the booklets and the program is worked into the school program. I would like to commend the Department of Education here in the Territory and the schools that, after checking the programs out, have seen fit to introduce them and are happy to endorse the work as a part of the training of the children. For the weeks that it goes on, that follow-up work is very important.

I dare say time will tell just how effective the program is. The first students who have been through the program in the Sydney area are getting into the high school years, and those are the years where the temptations to be involved in the drug scene in particular are most likely to be upon them. I suppose it will be very hard in many ways to judge just how effective it will be. How do you monitor these things? I dare say some general picture will emerge as time goes by.

It is a program that I would urge all members to find out about and become interested in. It is a costly program. In Darwin, it cost \$110 000 for the actual van, and the Territory Insurance Office came to the party there and helped the scheme get under way very quickly. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided \$50 000, and the local committee is gathering further support either in cash or kind. It has to obtain help from the community and sponsors are always being sought. The other day, I was talking to Mrs Lyla Nottley, who is the president in Darwin, and the organisers have calculated that, with the wages for the teacher, the maintenance of the van and the materials which are passed out to the schools, the scheme will cost some \$88 000 a year, which is a great deal of money. However, in recent days, the Life Education Centre in Sydney has done some calculations. It estimates that, over 6 years, it costs about \$40 for materials for each child who undertakes the program, yet it costs something like \$750 000 in medical bills and attempts to rehabilitate people who have become hooked on hard drugs. That \$40 is a very small investment in money terms in a preventive program. If Life Education is only 10% more effective than no program at all, then it represents a very big saving.

Mr Speaker, this brings me to a subject of some sadness. It could be our children who are affected. It does not matter what political party we might belong to or even if we do not belong to a party, the drug problem can affect families. Even the Prime Minister's family has been affected. None of us can guarantee that we will be free from this problem and the great sadness it can bring and I believe we all should get behind the Life Education program.

I am concerned about the situation in respect of tax on donations to Life Education Centres. Donations to Life Education Centres, which are trying to implement preventive programs, have been declared non-tax-deductible. On the

other hand, donations to institutions dealing with people who are already addicted are tax deductible. This reminds me of the old Temperance Alliance cartoon depicting a person falling over a cliff and another person putting up a fence at the top of the cliff. Life Education is trying to put the fence around the top of the cliff to prevent the person falling over in the first place. That \$40 over 6 years is not a very great cost. The price tag in respect of the person who has crashed could be anything up to \$750 000. Therefore, I would urge all members to apply whatever pressure they can in relation to this matter. A Life Education van is already operating in Darwin and, in Alice Springs, we are keen to become involved and we are working on it. It would be great if this House would unanimously pass a motion requesting that the federal government look at this matter. It is very important.

The Life Education Centre in Alice Springs is just beginning the process of incorporation. I would like to thank Imparja for its help in promoting Life Education by running the advertisement featuring Dick Smith, the Reverend Ted Noffs and the kids. People are becoming really interested. It is a great community service.

When Imparja was first mooted, many of us had doubts about it. That was perhaps because we remembered the early days of CAAMA, when it was a little amateurish. I see the member for Stuart has a wry smile on his face. Considerable pressure was put on Imparja but we have to admit that it is doing a grand job. It seems to be getting the best programs from all over Australia and it is totally professional. I would like to thank Imparja, not only for helping to spread the word and get people interested in Life Education, but also for the fine job it is doing. In a way, I do not regret the pressure that was put on it. That pressure made it perform. It has performed well and I congratulate it.

That brings me to my last point in relation to Life Education. Australia has a lady whom I would consider to be a heroine. I refer to Kay Cottee who sailed around the world alone and without stopping. The point is that Kay undertook that task in support of Life Education Centres. To my mind, she typifies the spirit of the Life Education Centre program - individuality and the importance of being able to stand alone and say no to things that you know are harmful to you. Kay Cottee will visit the Territory on 7, 8 and 9 December. Unfortunately, the people in Darwin felt that they could not use her talents, but she will be travelling to Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Yulara. We are aiming to give her a thoroughly good welcome. We are looking for the support of people in those communities to help raise funds which will go to Life Education and help us get our van so that the people in the southern part of the Territory, from Borroloola through Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Yulara and down to the northern part of South Australia, can also have programs for their kids which we believe will be of great advantage to them and a great saving to us.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



ADJOURNMENT

- Aboriginal -
  - employment and training 4058
  - health workers 3570
- Advertisement by DIT in Asian newspaper 3923, 4050
- Airfreighting of perishables from Darwin to Asian markets 3585
- Aked Graham, health 3783, 3903, 3912
- Alice Springs, preservation of character 3581
- Animal shelter for Alice Springs, petition 3653
- Arlington War Cemetery, United States 3644
- 'Arriving and Surviving in the Northern Territory', booklet 4057
- Australian Study of Parliament Conference in Perth 3517
- Aviation museum 3643
- Billygoat Hill, redevelopment 3580
- Brock John, book on Top End native plants 3571
- BTEC 4055, 4058
- Buffalo, government eradication program 4054, 4058
- Building industry, effects of State Square proposal 3647, 4059
- Bushfire Radio, awards for program 3666
- Cemeteries, preservation 3568
- Child abuse allegations, handling by welfare officers 3516, 3572, 3645, 3656
- Child adoption case, handling by welfare officers 3517, 3573
- Commonwealth parliamentary committee into classification of videos 3571
- Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3648, 3649  
3655, 3659, 3664, 3668
- Criminal Code 3653, 3662
- Darwin International Grammar School 3574
- Deputy Speaker, visit to New Parliament House, Canberra 3910
- Discipline in schools 3909, 4052
- DNA identification system 3569
- Doctor's Gully, land use 3569
- Education, agreement on resource sharing and curriculum 3667
- 'Education NT', publication by Department of Education 3574
- Expo, Territory involvement 3514
- Federal Aviation Commission, air traffic control 3915
- Federal opposition shadow minister, Mr John Sharp 3586
- Ghan Preservation Society 3780
- Gilbert, Bob and Jeanette 3905, 3917
- Heritage protection 3567, 3580
- Imanpa school -
  - failure of department to provide teacher 3562, 3565
  - vandalism 3566
- Indonesia, trade working party 3582
- Land council for Warumungu people, comments by Justice Maurice 3577
- Laughren Mary, work on Aboriginal languages 4052
- Life Education Centres 4061
- Long Tan Day ceremony at cenotaph 3641, 3643, 3671
- Ludmilla Primary School, birthday celebration 3915
- Manolas George, death 3510
- McAskill Malcolm, treatment by Central Land Council 3578
- Marron's newsagency, destruction 3580
- Martinair Holland, advertisement for air cargo service 3585
- Medical Association for the Prevention of War, letter 3574
- Member for Braitling, letter to editor of Panorama 3789
- Member for Koolpinyah, speech in relation to welfare officers 3572
- Member for MacDonnell, performance as shadow minister for health 3658

Minister for Health and Community Services, remarks about member  
for Koolpinyah 3645, 3656  
Mirridi outstation, water supply 3575  
Nader, Mr Justice, comments on member for Sadadeen 3652  
National Art Award 3667  
New Parliament House, Canberra 3910  
New Parliament House for Northern Territory 3646, 3650, 4059  
Northern Land Council, comments by Director in Sunday Territorian 4058  
Northern Territory, debt and liabilities 3511  
Nuclear fuel industry, report by Opposition Leader 3905  
Nuclear waste, letter from Medical Association for Prevention of War 3574  
Old Timers' fete in Alice Springs 3581  
Overseas Student Program 3921, 4050  
Power and Water Authority, high-voltage line to Katherine 3787  
Preschools, air-conditioning 3653, 3667  
Primary production, access to markets 3585  
Privileges Committee, report on remarks by member for Barkly 3913  
Publications and Films Review Board, annual report 3564, 3571  
Religious education, petition 3570  
Ringers, low-cost accommodation in towns 3648  
Royal Darwin Hospital, location of Alcohol Detoxification Unit 3658, 3670  
Sadadeen Secondary College -  
    language courses 3661, 3909  
    programs to assist migrant and Aboriginal students 3791, 3907  
Schoolchildren, prizes for self-government competition 3786  
Seafood products, access to Asian markets 3586  
Sentencing by courts, statistics 3651, 3661  
Silvers Secondhand Shop 3905, 3917, 3921  
South-east Asia, development of trade with 3582, 3584  
Southport Cemetery 3568  
Statehood for NT, possible boundaries 3660  
State Square project 3646, 3650, 4059  
Statistics relating to convictions for slayings 3651, 3662  
St Phillip's College, Alice Springs 3574  
Sykes Bill 4058  
Teachers -  
    induction program 3567  
    recruitment for remote areas 3568  
    training for remote area work 3566  
Tertiary education, support for non-Aboriginal students 4053  
Timber Creek -  
    growth centre 4057  
Races 4057  
Times Literary Award, presentation to Sadadeen students 3666  
'Top End Native Plants' by John Brock 3571  
Truancy, comments by member for Stuart 4052  
Vandalism at Imanpa School 3565  
Van Oosterzee, Penny, article in Panorama 3788  
Videos, R- and X-rated, restriction on display 3564, 3571  
Vietnam Vets, recognition 3642, 3643, 3671  
Visa processing, comments by federal opposition on streamlining 3586  
Warumungu Land Claim, report of Justice Maurice 3577  
Welfare officers, handling of cases 3515  
Wicking, cartoon in NT News 3905, 3914, 3921  
Wynn's Safari, support by NT government 3790  
Yulara Town Advisory Board 3669

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS 3449

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3978, 3986  
Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 139) 3879  
Adult Guardianship (Serial 118) 4010  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3521, 3589, 3710  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3978, 3986  
Business Franchise Amendment (Serial 129) 3705, 3977  
Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3554  
Disasters Amendment (Serial 121) 3882  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3538  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3743  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3978, 3986  
Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3631  
Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) (Serial 133) 3830, 3844  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3978, 3986  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 3534, 4018, 4025  
Justices Amendment (Serial 103) 3627  
Justices Amendment (Serial 122) 3894  
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 3875  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 3885  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 3888  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 3887  
Magistrates Amendment (Serial 100) 3707  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 3537  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 3972  
Oaths Amendment (Serial 101) 3900  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 132) 3704, 3976  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3743  
Powers of Attorney Amendment (Serial 115) 4010  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 114) 3899  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 3877  
Small Claims Amendment (Serial 108) 3898  
Soccer Football Pools Amendment (Serial 97) 3561  
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 124) 3703, 3976  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 130) 3895  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3978, 3986  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3978, 3986  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 3885  
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 98) 3562  
Taxation Administration Amendment (Serial 125) 3883  
Trustee Amendment (Serial 123) 3896  
Work Health Amendment (Serial 128) 3893

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 3673

DISCHARGE OF ITEMS FROM NOTICE PAPER 3509

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Lanhupuy 3509

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Provision of health care for Aboriginal citizens by the NT government 3689  
Town planning in Emily Hills area 3958

MESSAGE FROM ACTING ADMINISTRATOR 3521

MESSAGE FROM COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION 3509

#### MOTIONS

- Adoption of report of Privileges Committee on statements by member for Barkly 3510
- Adoption of Sixth Report of Publications Committee 4050
- Discharge of items from Notice Paper 3509
- Membership of parliamentary committees 3509
- Noting papers -
  - Public Accounts Committee - annual report 3957
  - Public Accounts Committee - Third and Fourth Reports 3882
  - report of committee of review of legislation relating to sites of significance to Aboriginals 3953
  - 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 3793
- Noting statements -
  - constitutional referenda 1988 3679, 4034
  - directions of Northern Territory government 3454, 3487
  - draft Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Bill 3882
  - future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3824
  - overview of Commonwealth budget 3805
  - report of committee of review of legislation relating to sites of significance to Aboriginals 3953
- Provisional standing order relating to Public Accounts Committee 3706
- Reference to Privileges Committee 3472, 3473
- Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3858
- Suspension of member for Stuart 3472
- Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional Development 3813
- Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3925
- Want of confidence in the Speaker 3474

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

- Mr Bell 3450, 3941, 4003, 4006
- Mr Smith 3638

#### PETITIONS

- Amendment to Liquor Act 3450
- Animal shelter in Alice Springs 3521
- Daly River and Woolianna Roads 3449
- Government precinct plan 3589
- Regulation of building matters relating to rural land 3793
- Reinstatement of doctor at Palmerston Health Clinic 3793

#### RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR FLYNN 3449

#### STATEMENTS

- Apology by member for Stuart 3534
- Constitutional referenda 1988 3673
- Discharge of member for Katherine from parliamentary committees 3509
- Directions of Northern Territory government 3450
- Future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3818
- Letter from member for Port Darwin 3813
- Overview of Commonwealth budget 3802
- Suspension of member for Stuart 3534

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

- Defer consideration of bills relating to Aboriginal land 3978
- Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3830
- Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4018
- Presentation of Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138) 3849
- Rescission of motion to suspend member for Stuart 3483



TABLED PAPERS

- Opinion on Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4022
- Public Accounts Committee - annual report 3957
- Publications Committee - Sixth Report 4050
- Report of committee of review of legislation relating to sites of significance to Aborigines 3950
- Report of Privileges Committee on statements by member for Barkly 3510
- Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Sixth Report 3673
- 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 3793

BELL N.R

ADJOURNMENT

Imanpa school, failure of department to provide teacher 3562  
Long Tan Day ceremony at cenotaph 3671  
Member for Braiuling, letter to editor of Panorama 3789  
Publications and Films Review Board, annual report 3564  
Royal Darwin Hospital, location of Alcohol Detoxification Unit 3670  
Van Oosterzee, Penny, article in Panorama 3788  
Videos, R- and X-rated, restriction on display 3564  
Vietnam Vets, recognition 3671  
Yulara Town Advisory Board 3669

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Adult Guardianship (Serial 118) 4010  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) (Serial 133) 3844  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 4025, 4034  
Justices Amendment (Serial 103) 3627  
Magistrates Amendment (Serial 100) 3708  
Oaths Amendment (Serial 101) 3900  
Powers of Attorney Amendment (Serial 115) 4010  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 114) 3899  
Small Claims Amendment (Serial 108) 3898  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3978, 3984, 3986, 4007  
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 98) 3562

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Provision of health care for Aboriginal citizens by the NT government 3689  
Town planning in Emily Hills area 3958

MOTIONS

Noting paper, report of committee of review of legislation relating  
to sites of significance to Aboriginals 3953  
Noting statements -  
directions of Northern Territory government 3494  
future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3824  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3929  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3479

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS 3450, 3941, 4003, 4006

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3830, 3840  
Presentation of Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138) 3849, 3856  
Rescission of motion to suspend member for Stuart 3483

TABLED PAPER

Opinion on Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4023

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs, preservation of character 3581  
Animal shelter for Alice Springs, petition 3653  
Billygoat Hill, redevelopment 3580  
Criminal Code 3653  
Expo, Territory involvement 3514  
Heritage protection 3580  
Life Education Centres 4061  
Marron's newsagency, destruction 3580  
Nader, Mr Justice, comments on member for Sadadeen 3652  
Old Timers' fete in Alice Springs 3581  
Sentencing by courts, statistics 3651  
Statistics relating to convictions for slayings 3651

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 4000  
Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment (Serial 139) 3879  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 4000  
Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3557  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3541  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3758  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 4000  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 4000  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3758  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 3877  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 4000  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 4000

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
    constitutional referenda 1988 4034  
    directions of Northern Territory government 3487  
    future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3829  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3479

PETITION

Animal shelter in Alice Springs 3521

COULTER B.F.

ADJOURNMENT

Aviation museum 3643  
Long Tan Day ceremony at cenotaph 3641  
Vietnam Vets, recognition 3642

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3598  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3549  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3765, 3766  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3765, 3766

MOTIONS

Noting statement, directions of Northern Territory government 3462  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3477

PETITION

Reinstatement of doctor at Palmerston Health Clinic 3793

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Presentation of Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138) 3851  
Rescission of motion to suspend member for Stuart 3486

DALE D.F.

ADJOURNMENT

Aked, Graham, health 3903  
Child abuse allegations, handling by welfare officers 3572, 3656  
Child adoption case, handling by welfare officers 3573  
Member for Koolpinyah, speech in relation to welfare officers 3572  
Member for MacDonnell, performance as shadow minister for health 3658  
Minister for Health and Community Services, remarks about member  
for Koolpinyah 3656  
Royal Darwin Hospital, location of Alcohol Detoxification Unit 3658

BILLS

Adult Guardianship (Serial 118) 4016  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3710  
Powers of Attorney Amendment (Serial 115) 4016

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Provision of health care for Aboriginal citizens by the NT government 3693

DONDAS N.M.

ADJOURNMENT

Airfreighting of perishables from Darwin to Asian markets 3585  
Deputy Speaker, visit to New Parliament House, Canberra 3910  
Federal opposition shadow minister, Mr John Sharp 3586  
Martinair Holland, advertisement for air cargo service 3585  
New Parliament House, Canberra 3910  
Primary production, access to markets 3585  
Seafood products, access to Asian markets 3586  
Visa processing, comments by federal opposition on streamlining 3586

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3738

MOTION

Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3939

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Advertisement by DIT in Asian newspaper 3923  
Building industry, effects of State Square proposal 4059  
Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3659  
Darwin International Grammar School 3574  
'Education NT', publication by Department of Education 3574  
Medical Association for the Prevention of War, letter 3574  
Mirridi outstation, water supply 3575  
New Parliament House for Northern Territory 4059  
Nuclear waste, letter from Medical Association for Prevention of War 3574  
Overseas Student Program 3921  
Silvers Secondhand Shop 3921  
Statehood for NT, possible boundaries 3660  
State Square project 3660, 4059  
St Phillip's College, Alice Springs 3574

Wicking, cartoon in NT News 3921  
Wynn's Safari, support by NT government 3790

**BILLS**

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3981, 3998  
Adult Guardianship (Serial 118) 4013  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3981, 3998  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3538, 3547  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3775, 3778  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3981, 3998  
Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3631  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3981, 3998  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 4029  
Justices Amendment (Serial 103) 3627  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3755, 3772  
Powers of Attorney Amendment (Serial 115) 4013  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3981, 3998  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3981, 3998

**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

Town planning in Emily Hills area 3966

**MOTIONS**

Noting paper, 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 3795  
Noting statements -  
    constitutional referenda 1988 3679  
    directions of Northern Territory government 3466  
    future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3826  
    overview of Commonwealth budget 3810  
Provisional standing order relating to Public Accounts Committee 3707  
Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3873  
Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional Development 3814  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3936

**STATEMENTS**

Apology to the Speaker 3534  
Constitutional referenda 1988 3679

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3835  
Presentation of Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138) 3852  
Rescission of motion to suspend member for Stuart 3486

**FINCH F.A.**

**BILLS**

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3719  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3759  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 4031  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3759

**FIRMIN C.C.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Arlington War Cemetery, Unites States 3644  
Federal Aviation Commission, air traffic control 3915  
Long Tan Day ceremony at cenotaph 3643  
Ludmilla Primary School, birthday celebration 3915  
Schoolchildren, prizes for self-government competition 3786

Vietnam Vets, recognition 3643  
Wicking, cartoon in NT News 3914

**BILL**

Small Claims Amendment (Serial 108) 3898

HARRIS T.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Advertisement by DIT in Asian newspaper 4050  
Bushfire Radio, awards for program 3666  
Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3668  
Discipline in schools 3909, 4052  
Imanpa school 3565  
Laughren, Mary, work on Aboriginal languages 4052  
National Art Award 3667  
Overseas Student Program 4050  
Preschools, air-conditioning 3667  
Sadadeen Secondary College -  
language courses 3909  
programs to assist migrant and Aboriginal students 3907  
Teachers -  
induction program 3567  
recruitment for remote areas 3568  
training for remote area work 3566  
Times Literary Award, presentation to Sadadeen students 3666  
Truancy, comments by member for Stuart 4052

**BILL**

Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 3972

**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

Provision of health care for Aboriginal citizens by the NT government 3700

**MOTIONS**

Noting paper, 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 3793  
Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional Development 3815

**TABLED PAPER**

'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 3793

HATTON S.P.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3649  
New Parliament House for Northern Territory 3650  
Ringers, low-cost accommodation in towns 3648  
State Square project 3650

**BILLS**

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3933  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3933  
Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3558  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3543  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3748  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3933  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3933  
Justices Amendment (Serial 103) 3628  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3748, 3773

Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3933  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3933

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
directions of Northern Territory government 3498  
overview of Commonwealth budget 3808  
Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3874  
Select Committee on Constitutional Development 3816  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3932

LANHUPUY W.W.

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3992  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3992  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3992  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3992  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3992  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3992

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Provision of health care for Aboriginal citizens by the NT government 3696

LEO D.M.

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3994  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3735  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3994  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3750, 3777  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3994  
Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3634  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3994  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3750, 3771  
Soccer Football Pools Amendment (Serial 97) 3561  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3994  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3994

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Public Accounts Committee - Third and Fourth Reports 3882  
Noting statement, directions of Northern Territory government 3450  
Provisional standing order relating to Public Accounts Committee 3706  
Reference to Privileges Committee 3472  
Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3869  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3934  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3474

PETITION

Amendment to Liquor Act 3450

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4019

McCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal -

employment and training 4058

health workers 3570

'Arriving and Surviving in the Northern Territory', booklet 4057

Brock John, book on Top End native plants 3571

BTEC 4058

Buffalo, government eradication program 4058

Northern Land Council, comments by Director in Sunday Territorian 4058

Religious education, petition 3570

Sykes, Bill 4058

Timber Creek -

growth centre 4057

Races 4057

'Top End Native Plants' by John Brock 3571

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3995

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3611

Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3995

Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3995

Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3995

Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 3888

Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 3887

Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3995

Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3995

Work Health Amendment (Serial 128) 3893

MOTION

Noting statement, constitutional referenda 1988 4035

PETITION

Daly River and Woolianna Roads 3449

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3836

MANZIE D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Commonwealth parliamentary committee into classification of videos 3571

Criminal Code 3662

Ghan Preservation Society 3780

Publications and Films Review Board, annual report 3571

Sentencing by courts, statistics 3661

Statistics relating to convictions for slayings 3662

Videos, R- and X-rated, restriction on display 3571

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3981, 4003, 4009

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3730

Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3981, 4003, 4009

Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3981, 4003, 4009

Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3981, 4003, 4009

Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 4032, 4033

Justices Amendment (Serial 103) 3630

Justices Amendment (Serial 122) 3894



Magistrates Amendment (Serial 100) 3709  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 3537  
Oaths Amendment (Serial 101) 3902  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 114) 3899  
Statute Law Revision (Serial 130) 3895  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3981, 4003, 4009  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3981, 4003, 4009  
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 98) 3562  
Trustee Amendment (Serial 123) 3896

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Town planning in Emily Hills area 3962

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
    constitutional referenda 1988 4042  
    future development of parks and reserves in the Northern  
    Territory 3824, 3829  
    report of committee of review of legislation relating to  
    sites of significance to Aboriginals 3953  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3944  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3481

STATEMENT

Future development of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory 3818

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3831  
Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4018, 4020

TABLED PAPERS

Opinion on Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4022  
Report of committee of review of legislation relating to  
    sites of significance to Aboriginals 3950

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

BTEC 4054  
Buffalo, government eradication program 4054  
Building industry, effects of State Square proposal 3647  
Cemeteries, preservation 3568  
Child abuse allegations, handling by welfare officers 3516, 3645  
Child adoption case, handling by welfare officers 3517  
DNA identification system 3569  
Doctor's Gully, land use 3569  
Gilbert, Bob and Jeanette 3917  
Heritage protection 3567  
Minister for Health and Community Services, remarks about member  
    for Koolpinyah 3645  
New Parliament House for Northern Territory 3646  
Power and Water Authority, high-voltage line to Katherine 3787  
Silvers Secondhand Shop 3917  
Southport Cemetery 3568  
Tertiary education, support for non-Aboriginal students 4053  
Welfare officers, handling of cases 3515

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3989  
Adult Guardianship (Serial 118) 4012  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3726  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3989  
Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3555  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3989  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3989  
Powers of Attorney Amendment (Serial 115) 4012  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3989  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3989

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
constitutional referenda 1988 4040  
directions of Northern Territory government 3490

PETITIONS

Government precinct plan 3589  
Regulation of building matters relating to rural land 3793

PALMER M.J.

BILL

Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3635

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Public Accounts Committee - annual report 3957  
Provisional standing order relating to Public Accounts Committee 3706  
Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3863

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

Manolas, George, death 3510

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS 3449

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3981  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3521  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3981  
Business Franchise Amendment (Serial 129) 3705  
Disasters Amendment (Serial 121) 3882  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3981  
Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3635  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3981  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 126) 4028  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 132) 3704  
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 124) 3703  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3981  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3981  
Taxation Administration Amendment (Serial 125) 3883

MOTIONS

- Adoption of report of Privileges Committee on statements by member for Barkly 3510
- Noting statements -
  - constitutional referenda 1988 3679
  - directions of Northern Territory government 3454, 3503
  - overview of Commonwealth budget 3805
- Provisional standing order relating to Public Accounts Committee 3706, 3707
- Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3870
- Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional Development 3813, 3817
- Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3942

STATEMENTS

- Constitutional referenda 1988 3673
- Directions of Northern Territory government 3450
- Overview of Commonwealth budget 3802

TABLED PAPER

- Opinion on Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 126) 4024

POOLE E.H.

BILLS

- Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3607
- Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 3885
- Soccer Football Pools Amendment (Serial 97) 3562
- Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 3885

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

- Town planning in Emily Hills area 3969

MOTION

- Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3935

REED M.A.

BILLS

- Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3617
- Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3560

SETTER R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

- Australian Study of Parliament Conference in Perth 3517
- Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3655
- Indonesia, trade working party 3582
- Preschools, air-conditioning 3653
- South-east Asia, development of trade with 3582

BILLS

- Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3982, 3987
- Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3982, 3987
- Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3753
- Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3982, 3987
- Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3982, 3987
- Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3753
- Soccer Football Pools Amendment (Serial 97) 3561
- Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3982, 3987
- Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3982, 3987

MOTIONS

Noting statement, constitutional referenda 1988 4046  
Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional  
Development 3816

SMITH T.E.

ADJOURNMENT

Gilbert, Bob and Jeanette 3905  
Northern Territory, debt and liabilities 3511  
Nuclear fuel industry, report by Opposition Leader 3905  
Silvers Secondhand Shop 3905  
Wicking, cartoon in NT News 3905

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3589  
Business Franchise Amendment (Serial 129) 3977  
Dairies Supervision Repeal (Serial 99) 3554  
Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3552  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3743  
Financial Administration and Audit Amendment (Serial 117) 3631  
Payroll Tax Amendment (Serial 132) 3976  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3743, 3774  
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 124) 3976

MOTIONS

Noting statements -  
directions of Northern Territory government 3454  
overview of Commonwealth budget 3805  
Select Committee into Northern Territory Financial Accounts 3858, 3874  
Terms of reference of Select Committee on Constitutional  
Development 3813  
Want of confidence in Minister for Tourism 3925, 3946  
Want of confidence in the Speaker 3475

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 3638

TIPILOURA S.G.

BILLS

Aboriginal Land Amendment (Serial 90) 3997  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 3716  
Bushfires Amendment (Serial 93) 3997  
Fences Amendment (Serial 94) 3997  
Interpretation Amendment (Serial 104) 3997  
Stock Diseases Amendment (Serial 92) 3997  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 91) 3997

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADJOURNMENT

Aked, Graham, health 3783, 3912  
Constitutional Development Committee, activities 3664  
Land council for Warumungu people, comments by Justice Maurice 3577  
McAskill, Malcolm, treatment by Central Land Council 3578  
Privileges Committee, report on remarks by member for Barkly 3913  
Warumungu Land Claim, report of Justice Maurice 3577

BILLS

Electoral Amendment (Serial 112) 3540, 3551  
Electricity Amendment (Serial 120) 3761, 3779  
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 3875  
Oaths Amendment (Serial 101) 3902  
Power and Water Authority Amendment (Serial 119) 3761, 3775

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements) Bill (Serial 133) 3838  
Presentation of Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 138) 3854

VALE R.W.S.

MESSAGE FROM COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION 3509

STATEMENT

Suspension of member for Stuart 3534