

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly  
Second Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

Wednesday 11 June 1986

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



**NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly

Second Session

Speaker	Roger Michael Steele
Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy	Barry Francis Coulter
Minister for Transport and Works, Minister for Ports and Fisheries and Minister for Lands	Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Attorney-General and Minister for Education	Daryl William Manzie
Minister for Business, Technology and Communications and Minister for Tourism	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
Minister for Health and Minister for Housing	Tom Harris
Minister for Community Development, Minister for Correctional Services and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs	Donald Francis Dale
Minister for Primary Production and Minister for Conservation	Terence Robert McCarthy

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



Chairman of Committees -  
Deputy Chairmen of Committees -

Mr R.W.S. Vale  
Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr T.R. McCarthy  
Mr M.J. Palmer

**House Committee**

Mr Speaker  
Mr N.R. Bell  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Standing Orders Committee**

Mr Speaker  
Mr B. Collins  
Mr B.R. Ede  
Mr R.A. Hanrahan  
Mr T.R. McCarthy

**Publications Committee**

Mr N.R. Bell  
Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mr E.H. Poole  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Privileges Committee**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr C.C. Firmin  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr M.B. Perron  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr R.A. Setter  
Mr T.E. Smith

**Sessional Committee - Environment**

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr D.F. Dale  
Mr B.R. Ede  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich

**Sessional Committee - New Parliament House**

Mr Speaker  
Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr T.E. Smith  
Mr I.L. Tuxworth

**Select Committee - Constitutional Development**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr D.F. Dale  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr T.E. Smith

## PART I

## DEBATES

## DEBATES

Wednesday 11 June 1986

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

### TABLED PAPER

Resignation of Hon J.M. Robertson

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table a letter from Hon J.M. Robertson addressed to the Speaker resigning his seat as the member for Araluen. I received the letter on the morning of 27 March 1986.

### RETURN TO WRIT

Araluen Division

The Clerk laid on the Table the return to writ issued by His Honour the Administrator on 1 April 1986 for the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral division of Araluen, certifying the election of Eric Houguet Poole.

The new member, Eric Houguet Poole, made and subscribed oaths of allegiance and of service, and was conducted to his place.

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Proposed Resignation as Speaker

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is with regret that I advise the Assembly that, before the Assembly next meets, I will be tendering to His Honour the Administrator my resignation as Speaker. I will do this for 2 reasons. First, it has come to my attention that some members are of the opinion that, during the past weeks, I have brought the position of Speaker into the area of politics and that my actions could be construed as having compromised my position. I have too much respect for the institution of parliament to continue as Speaker if it is thought that my position has been compromised in any way. Secondly, the electorate of Elsey is in the throes of undergoing major growth with the development of Tindal. The duties of Speaker have meant that I have had to spend a great deal of time in Darwin and elsewhere. It is my intention to devote my energies towards ensuring that the electorate of Elsey is well looked after during this time of change.

I will tender my resignation to His Honour the Administrator on 16 June. This will allow the parties to choose their candidates for Speaker and will ensure a continuing administration of the Legislative Assembly in the interim. Under these circumstances, I will vacate the Chair for the remainder of the day. I thank honourable members for the support which they have given me during my time in the Chair.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the statement be noted and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the motion...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, debate has been adjourned by virtue of the fact that leave was granted.

Mr B. COLLINS: With respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, the debate was not adjourned, which is why I rise.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing orders, it was adjourned. The Leader of Government Business sought leave to continue his remarks at a later date, and leave was granted.

#### MINISTRY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, on 15 May 1986, His Honour the Administrator appointed a new ministry. The ministry is as follows: Stephen Paul Hatton - Chief Minister; Barry Francis Coulter - Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy; Nicholas Manuel Dondas - Minister for Transport and Works, Minister for Ports and Fisheries and Minister for Lands; Daryl William Manzie - Attorney-General and Minister for Education; Raymond Allan Hanrahan - Minister for Business, Technology and Communications and Minister for Tourism; Tom Harris - Minister for Health and Minister for Housing; Donald Francis Dale - Minister for Community Development, Minister for Correctional Services and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs; and Terence Robert McCarthy - Minister for Primary Production and Minister for Conservation.

On 15 May 1986 His Honour made an Administrative Arrangements Order allotting to these ministers the administration of departments and the provisions of acts, and responsibility for areas of government specified in that order. For the information of honourable members, I lay on the Table a copy of the Administrative Arrangements Order.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Coulter is Deputy Chief Minister. The honourable member for Flynn has been appointed Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Assembly and the honourable member for Ludmilla is the government Whip.

#### OPPOSITION OFFICE HOLDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the interests of providing the Northern Territory with a stable opposition at least, and in response to the advice from the Chief Minister, I wish to advise the Assembly that office bearers in the opposition are unchanged.

#### STANDING COMMITTEES

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the Minister for Community Development requesting his discharge from further attendance on the Publications Committee and the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that Mr Dale be discharged from further attendance on the Publications Committee and that Mr Poole be appointed a member of the committee in his place; and that Mr Dale be discharged from further attendance on the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and that Mr Setter be appointed a member of that committee in his place.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Impact of Fringe Benefits Tax on Northern Territory

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

(1) That this Assembly -

- . noting that the fringe benefits tax imposes a cost on employment conditions which are often entrenched and legally payable in awards and determinations of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission; and
- . noting that the tax is discriminatory against rural and remote Australia;

calls on the Commonwealth government, in particular with respect to the Northern Territory, not to proceed with the fringe benefits tax recently passed by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament because of its impact upon the Northern Territory which includes -

- (a) the consequent erosion of entrenched employment conditions in the public and private sectors of the Northern Territory;
- (b) the inequitable effect of its imposition on the Northern Territory when compared with the states;
- (c) the damage it will cause to the economy of the Northern Territory both in its public and private sectors;
- (d) the additional difficulties which will be faced by the Northern Territory government in the provision of essential services to remote localities; and
- (e) the inequitable impact of the tax on the cost of living in the Northern Territory compared with the states.

(2) That the terms of this resolution be transmitted to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this fringe benefits tax, and already the tax bureaucrats have shortened its title to the innocuous-sounding abbreviation of FBT, gives legal standing for officers of the Commonwealth Taxation Office to go abroad in the Northern Territory in the guise of highwaymen. It is a stick-up, and Territorians are the ones who are having it stuck into them. The orders of the day will be 'stand and deliver', and Territorians will be delivering more than \$45m to the Commonwealth Treasury through this Ned Kelly tax in its first 9 months of operation. That is a conservative estimate. It will probably be more than \$50m, and could even reach \$60m by the time the full ramifications of this devious and insidious tax are worked out.

The cost to the Northern Territory government will be between \$15m and \$16m. At first, the federal Treasurer's office did not agree with that, and neither did the Territory Labor opposition. 'Political representatives of the Treasury rarely tell the truth' is what the honourable Leader of the Opposition said on talk-back radio on 29 May. We did tell the truth; Mr Keating's office did otherwise. The opposition was invited to peruse Northern

Territory Treasury estimates, and the honourable member for Millner took up that invitation. After considerable discussion on the matter, he now knows the real horror story. If there has been anything to smile about in relation to this issue, it has been the discomfort of the opposition. 'We support fringe benefits tax', said the honourable Leader of the Opposition on the same talk-back radio program. He said that honourable members opposite must do so because it is the plank of the ALP platform. 'No worries', they say, 'fringe benefits tax is a tax on the employers. It will allow your glorious federal government to collect tax from the bosses so that massive income tax cuts can be passed on to the workers. Ordinary Australians will not be affected. The tax will catch all the fat cats with their Rolls Royces at Toorak. The big tax bludgers living in their high-rise, tax-deductible havens on the Gold Coast will do all the paying'. That is a sham. As always, the big tax bludgers will pay clever tax accountants and lawyers to find the loopholes which undoubtedly exist in this massive and complex legislation, and ordinary Australians will end up not with a tax cut, but with a tax uppercute.

Witness the contortions of the self-proclaimed Territory watchdog, Senator Ted Robertson. I would not like to have him tied up at my house; I do not believe that he would protect me from much at all. Talk about keeping a dog and having to bark yourself; I think you would have to do a lot more than that! He said that we have it all wrong. He said the tax would not hit the workers and, in the same breath, he said the legislation was too complex to understand. He read the bill and listened to 3 days of debate on it in the Senate, and still he did not understand it. This is the federal government's Whip in the Senate - the strategist, the man who puts it all together. Yet there he was on Morning Extra saying he did not know what the fringe benefits tax was all about. After I listened to him, I just could not believe it. I asked the interviewer: 'Did I just hear what I think I heard? Was that the federal government's Whip in the Senate telling me that he does not know what the fringe benefits tax is all about even though he has just passed the bill? Surely, that cannot be correct?'

I was to be shocked a few minutes later when a transcript was delivered to my desk. There it was in black and white. The good Senator said that he did not know what he was talking about even though he had passed the bill through the Senate. However, we should not deride Senator Robertson too much, because the federal Treasurer is obviously in the same boat. They did not realise what the impact on the Northern Territory would be and, as the member for Sanderson said, we wonder if they really cared. Senator Robertson approved the principle of the tax and said it would be up to the bureaucrats to sort out the detail. He washed his hands and walked away from the scene of the accident.

It is the detail that will do the damage. The impact will be felt by every Territorian. The cost of living will rise dramatically as the 49% cost of this tax, supposedly levelled at employers, is passed on to the community. Employment benefits will be reduced or curtailed, tax liability for employment conditions will be transferred to employees, workers will be laid off as employers struggle with extra costs and administrative liabilities. In short, it will mean higher costs, less business activity, less consumer-spending capacity, less attractive working conditions, and fewer jobs.

This is supposed to be the tax that will hit the fat cats. Here are some of the national organisations which say the fringe benefits tax will cause them severe damage: Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, the Anti-Cancer Foundation, the National Trust and the National Heart Foundation. According to the Keating logic, they must be fat cats. He says

that he has taken the tax burden off charitable organisations, but that is not quite correct. There are employees of some organisations, such as Society of St Vincent de Paul, who live on the premises. According to the Keating logic, that is now a lurk or a perk. It is no longer a condition of service, and the employee has to pay tax. Some people use vehicles for charity work, and now they will have to pay tax on them. The tax does not except charitable organisations. I am reminded of the recent Mitchell cartoon depicting 2 people, a worker and an alcoholic, sitting on a park bench. The alcoholic said, 'Thanks to the Democrats, the charitable organisations are not going to be taxed'. The worker replied, 'Thanks to the Democrats, we are going to need them'. The Democrats were not to be seen when this particular bill was being processed through the Senate. Senator Don Chipp could have been hailed as a national hero if he had thrown it out. But, what did he do? He made a deal with the federal government, and let the legislation through! Where is the Territory Democrat leader today? She is mounting a 48-hour vigil over 6 containers of yellowcake down at the wharf. When the Democrats had the opportunity to be watchdogs in the Senate, they were not there. They stood in the middle of the road and they have been run over for good. They will not recover.

Senior tax consultants estimate that employment costs Australia-wide will rise by 6.2% when the non-deductibility factor is taken into account. There are further employment costs in the pipeline, such as CPI adjustments and superannuation claims currently before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The same consultants say this tax will slash business profits in the next financial year by more than 4% and by more than 6% in the following year.

In the Territory, the effect on the public and private sectors will be of much greater magnitude. This tax strikes at the very heart of the Territory way of life - a way of life that has been built up with the assistance of the trade union movement over many years. It is a way of life designed to compensate individuals for passing up the sophistication of modern metropolitan living and to compensate them for higher prices and isolation from families and friends. This tax penalises Australians who are prepared to forgo the benefits of living in major cities in order to pioneer essential development in northern Australia.

What does the 1986 leadership of the Territory trade union movement say about this attack on the conditions of its members? Very little. Barely a peep. Mr Wharton and Mr Ellis have been dragged reluctantly into the public arena by the pursuing media. I thank the media for its efforts to find these people, to bring them into the public forum and have them stand up and say what they believe in. Both announced that they supported the fringe benefits tax. As for the cost burden the Territory will face, they had a simple answer: let the employers pay. All conditions should stand and the government and private employers should foot the bill. I have news for them. Senator Walsh has already said that it is an employee lurk and that the employee, the recipient of the benefit, should pay the tax. Eventually, that will be passed on to the consumer, and where will we be? The union response is typical of the whole ALP approach to this tax in the Territory: it shut its eyes, closed its mouth and put its hands over its ears. It did not know which was which for a while, but it got it right eventually. It does not want to know about it. Its rank and file members know full well that the cost of the tax will be passed on to them, and that their hard-won working conditions will be eroded. On 1 July, many employment conditions in the Territory, long regarded as an absolute right, will go down the chute.

I have spoken to many employers in the past couple of weeks and they regard the fringe benefits tax as the last straw. If any member opposite doubts the conviction of the Territory business community on this issue, he must have been asleep for the past fortnight. I looked for opposition members or union leaders at the public demonstration on the Darwin Oval called by the small business organisation last week. None appeared.

Other contributions to this debate from this side of the Assembly will detail the cost implications across the various arms of government. The mining industry will be savaged, the tourist industry crippled, the hotel industry will suffer, welfare organisations will be hit, municipal authorities will face skyrocketing costs, and the costs of providing essential services - such as water, electricity, telephone, education, health, law and order - to remote communities will rise steeply. It is plainly ludicrous to judge a demountable in an Aboriginal community, with iron bars on the windows, as a housing fringe benefit for a resident nurse. Yet that is the sort of thing that will happen. That example was put to the Commonwealth Treasury and to the Commonwealth Taxation Office by Northern Territory Treasury officers. There were no concessions. It is considered a fringe benefit down in Canberra, where subsidised meals are exempt from the tax. The federal government saw to that.

It has been estimated that this tax will cost every Territorian an extra \$800 a year. If costs are passed on, the price of goods and services will be much higher. Most critically, the people in remote communities will suffer. How does the federal government expect the Territory to employ doctors, nurses, teachers and police officers to work in these communities if it makes it almost impossible for us to recruit them? When the Premier of New South Wales admits to having trouble recruiting nurses for the Royal Sydney Hospital, I ask members of the opposition who represent remote areas of the Northern Territory just how they feel on these particular issues.

Recruitment costs are a fringe benefit. Relocation costs are a fringe benefit. Holiday air fares and even interstate and overseas posting air fares are fringe benefits. Subsidised accommodation in remote communities is a fringe benefit. Home garaging for a company or government car is a fringe benefit. This tax was framed by subsidised Canberra-based bureaucrats who know nothing about remote Australia, and they do not want to learn about it either.

However, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. Federal Opposition Leader, John Howard, stated clearly on 29 May that a future coalition government would repeal the fringe benefits tax immediately. That is a refreshing prospect which gives new meaning to the Queensland government's moves to impede the fringe benefits tax legislation in the High Court of Australia. I will speak about section 114 for a moment. Mr Keating was much smarter than we thought. In fact, even if the states are successful in an appeal under section 114 and a federal government cannot tax a state on its property, such as cars, houses etc, it is believed that the Northern Territory and the ACT would still have to pay. The Northern Territory government is expected to pay 50% more than New South Wales and Western Australia's extra tax bill is expected to be only \$10m as compared with the expected \$16m in the Northern Territory. I appreciate the efforts of the Premier of Western Australia, Brian Burke. In fact, he has placed it on the agenda for the Premiers Conference next Friday.

Perhaps the aspiring world's greatest treasurer, the honourable Prime Minister, might be able to fix all that tonight with his speech when he tells



us all what he intends to do to resolve all these problems. I wonder how much air play he will give to the fringe benefits tax and whether he is prepared to admit what it will do to Australia, particularly the more remote parts of Australia. It will be interesting to see just how much he is prepared to say in tonight's speech other than that the plug has been removed from the bath and most of the ALP's policies and business confidence have gone down the drain. If anybody would like to find out more about that, he has simply to attend the public meeting at the Darwin Oval on Friday to witness the business community's attitude to this particular tax. He will get the message plainly and clearly.

The Queensland Premier thinks he can hold up the the implementation of the tax for 4 years, and that is more than long enough for this present federal government to stumble out of office. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that we will have a long time to wait. I do not believe that we have that much longer to wait because we have a national deficit increasing by \$1400m a month. Australia will not stay afloat for very much longer.

The federal government is considering imposing taxes such as the gold tax. Although that was not being considered during the Western Australian elections, there was to be an inquiry. We have had 82 inquiries with this federal government. In fact, all it has done is inquire. While it was inquiring, Australia was going down the chute.

The world's greatest treasurer watches the economy turning into ashes around him. The federal government is pulling out all the tricks in the tax bag to prop up its wasteful spending policies. The fringe benefits tax will penalise the Northern Territory unduly for its developmental policies and its provision of services to remote localities. This tax will impose burdens on Territorians that do not apply to other Australians. The Leader of the Opposition said on talk-back radio on 29 May: 'Taxation has to be applied equally'. We agree with that. The Constitution demands that. We agree with that except it does not apply to us. He said: 'You cannot tax any one Australian government or Australian citizen in any way that you do not tax someone else'. That is what the Leader of the Opposition said on 29 May and we would like support for that statement. I believe that the honourable Leader of the Opposition, in his contribution to this debate, will support that. You cannot charge someone any more than you would charge anyone else. Unfortunately, the constitution does not apply to the Northern Territory. The federal government reigns supreme and, even if the states take it to the High Court and are successful, we are led to believe that the tax will still apply to the Northern Territory. It is inequitable.

The Territory has had enough of this brutal victimisation and malicious treatment at the hands of a federal government which looks no further north than Newcastle. When the federal government was trying to recruit staff to Tindal, it offered a whole range of benefits. It realises the problems of defending the north. It will be interesting to see how it goes about implementing the Dibb Report, if it ever gets around to it. It is probably a ploy on behalf of the Treasurer to make Australia less vulnerable to invasion from other countries. Who would want us at the moment with our deficits and with the mighty Australian dollar now becoming known as the South Pacific peso? It could be just a ploy to avoid invasion of any kind from anywhere. Perhaps we should give that some credence. We will develop that a little further as this debate continues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the then Chief Minister wrote to Senator Walsh when living conditions and allowances that would be made available at Tindal were

advertised. Some of those allowances were extremely good. The Chief Minister was concerned that a Commonwealth Public Service elite could be created in the Northern Territory. The package included education allowances and reimbursement of 2 air fares per annum, additional to normal remote locality provisions, for travel between Katherine and the former locality of those Tindal project staff whose immediate dependants do not accompany them. There was an extension of partial assistance with education costs for Years 9 and 10 students. There was a Tindal allowance of \$4900 for officers with eligible dependants and \$3000 per annum for officers without eligible dependants. The whole package was put together by the federal government to attract people to Tindal. There were increases of some 28.94% in district allowances for married people and 31.5% for single people. These were all additional benefits for Commonwealth public servants in the Tindal area. The federal government knows what it is like to defend the north. It knows what it is like to provide services to remote localities around Australia. But does it care about the cost burden on the Northern Territory government? The cost burden is disproportionate to that of any other government in Australia - we have 1% of Australia's population and one-sixth of Australia to administer. No, it did not care at all.

I mentioned the hotel industry before. It is one of the largest employers in Australia. Most Australians are fond of a drink every now and then. The Australian Hoteliers' Association estimates that there are 100 000 employees in Australia in 6000 hotels. The industry estimates that the accommodation factor of the fringe benefits tax will cost an extra \$40m. There are 61 hotels and roadside inns in the Territory that will be affected. In a survey conducted of 17 Territory establishments, it was established that 73 employees and 23 managers are given full board and lodging as part of their employment packages, with 12 employees paying a subsidised rental. Two roadside inns in the Kakadu region must provide accommodation to all employees as there is no other accommodation available - a total of 35 employees. FBT will make these operations risky and marginal. The fringe benefits tax will be particularly damaging to Yulara where alternative accommodation is not available. The Northern Territory government has taken the initiative to develop this magnificent tourist resort, but there will now be a considerable cost burden on its operation because the accommodation - and there is no other accommodation for employees in that vicinity - all of a sudden has become liable to the fringe benefits tax.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory government has spent a great deal of time and effort trying to indicate to Canberra what this tax burden will mean. It has been extremely difficult. After the bill was passed through both Houses, we were offered some relief in terms of the interpretation of the act; that is, we were told that it did not really mean what it said. That was the message that we received from Canberra. With that in mind, we sent officers from the Treasury down to Canberra to see just what it really did mean. We had the opportunity to speak to Treasury officials and the people who were responsible for drafting the legislation. We spoke to them for 3 days and then still walked away with nothing.

In fact, the implications of the legislation for the Northern Territory are as indicated. Our worst fears were confirmed at that meeting. Even if it did not realise just what the burden would be on the Northern Territory, it does not care what effect it will have on our lifestyle and on the mining industry and the tourist industry. Just about every aspect of industry in the Northern Territory will be taxed. It may cripple industry and business in the Northern Territory.

This is our last ditch stand to try to bring reason into this argument and to convince the federal government to examine the legislation and its impact on the Northern Territory, and to realise that we will be contributing much more than the other parts of Australia. It is interesting to note a paper which had its embargo lifted yesterday. It relates to the regional aspects of the Australian economy - the subsidies, bounties and protection that are provided to states like New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia compared to the developing parts of Australia, the parts of Australia that are creating real wealth. South Australia and Victoria, in particular, are oversubsidised compared to the rest of Australia. I would like to develop that argument in subsequent debates over the next couple of days to demonstrate the impact of the subsidies and bounties. \$1000m is supplied to run the New South Wales railway but the federal government will not even entertain the idea of developing a railway in the northern part of Australia although that has been under the scrutiny of such organisations as Canadian Pacific which said that it would run at a profit.

Once again, the federal government has institutionalised unemployment. It has given it an air of respectability by calling it CEP. It has set up its social welfare umbrella in the south. Everybody is doing just fine in the southern parts of Australia. They are not pioneering the extraction of the wealth which lies beneath Australia's soil. They are not developing the tourist industry for the rest of Australia to enjoy. They have industries that have long since become non-competitive and are now operating under subsidies, bounties etc whilst the rest of Australia is out trying to get on with the job and trying to restore Australia to the position that it once enjoyed. The federal government is now penalising the Northern Territory for its endeavours because it has been too successful. If ever there was meaning to Senator Walsh's depopulating the Northern Territory with a machine-gun, this is it. The federal government is trying to remove people from the Northern Territory because we have been so successful. It can see where our success lies and it is trying to curtail it because it looks bad for it. We have to put a stop to this. A stand must be taken. I urge all members to support the motion.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by saying that the opposition supports the motion, and has consistently recognised the disastrous impact that the fringe benefits tax will have on the Northern Territory. However, I find it quite amazing that the Chief Minister, who has done more than anyone in the recent history of the Northern Territory to reduce working conditions, has quite suddenly and dramatically become the ardent supporter of workers' conditions and entitlements. One has only to refer back to his previous occupation as Secretary of the Confederation of Industry. On behalf of the Confederation of Industry, he undertook a concerted campaign to reduce existing conditions of workers in the Northern Territory on the basis that special benefits to compensate for isolation and climate and other related matters no longer applied because of the growth of the Northern Territory economy. The Confederation of Industry, under the leadership of the now Chief Minister, took its case to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, resulting in the freezing of the district allowance.

Mr Dale: What year was that, Terry?

Mr SMITH: As well as that, Mr Deputy Speaker, the confederation ...

Mr Dale: Give us a year. Was it before self-government or after?

Mr SMITH: You can have a go later.

The confederation argued consistently and persistently for the reduction and the abolition of air fare entitlements for people in the private sector. A persistent campaign was conducted by the Confederation of Industry under the now Chief Minister.

What has happened since the Chief Minister has been part of this government? We have had the same concerted attempt to reduce the conditions of public servants. We have had an attempt to cut back their air fare entitlements and to cut back their district allowance. That has been successful to the extent that district allowance entitlements have been frozen. We have had an attempt by this government to reduce air fare entitlements from travel to any capital city to travel to Adelaide. Again, that matter is being pursued through the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. So it is a bit hypocritical at best, I would suggest, for the government to argue now that these types of benefits are essential to the attraction and maintenance of quality staff in the Northern Territory when, only 2 weeks ago, it was arguing before the Arbitration Commission that these benefits could quite easily be reduced with no adverse effect on the public service population of the Northern Territory. That is hypocritical indeed.

It is important to see what the federal government has tried to accomplish with the fringe benefits tax. It is relevant to examine the responses of people at the time the original fringe benefits tax proposals were mooted. I want to offer 2 quotations. The first is: 'There should be a consistent tax policy for people with similar incomes, regardless of source of income. The existing system has encouraged tax evasion and minimisation efforts'. It might surprise people to realise that that is a quotation from the previous Chief Minister, Ian Tuxworth, in this government's submission to the federal government shortly before the tax summit last year.

The second quotation is from Des Keegan, the economics writer for The Australian and no friend of the federal government. After the announcement of the fringe benefits tax proposals last year, he said: 'Fringe benefits come down to a massive assault on the government's reserves which was gathering momentum and could have eroded the tax base significantly. That in turn would have forced harder burdens on honest people or those trapped in the PAYE system. That includes most of us'. Certainly it includes most of us in this Assembly. As I said, these quotes are from 2 unlikely people, not known for their support of the actions of the federal government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, why those quotes are important is because those 2 people, and the whole of the Northern Territory's submission to the tax summit last year, recognised that there was a need to reform the taxation system. It was a need that had become more and more important because of the lack of guts of the previous, Liberal government to do anything about the taxation system at all. Of course, those of us who can remember past the day before yesterday will recall the pathetic attempts of the now Opposition Leader, John Howard, to have meaningful taxation reforms introduced by the Fraser government. He did not get to first base. On every occasion, the Liberals went to water. They did not have the necessary intestinal fortitude to undertake what was needed and to seek a fundamental reform of the Australian taxation system.

The essence of this fundamental reform is that people who earn similar incomes should pay much the same amount of tax, rather than the present system whereby people on similar incomes pay quite dissimilar amounts of tax. I must accept that, with the changes the federal government has introduced in the last 12 months, the discrepancy has been narrowed. But it was quite clear that a legitimate tax avoidance industry had developed in the Territory and

was playing quite extensively with the taxation rules that were in effect. The result was that 2 people on equal incomes were paying significantly different amounts of tax.

To give an example, at lunch time I was walking through the park when I met one of my constituents who happens to be a businessman. We had a discussion about the fringe benefits tax. What else would you talk to a businessman about at the moment? He said, and I think it is the position adopted by most people, that he agrees with the philosophy underlying the fringe benefits tax in its attempt to stamp out tax avoidance and spread tax more equitably. He said that, under the previous system, a person would go to his employer on the commencement of his employment and say: 'I will take this much in salary and, on top of that, I will have a car and you can pay my kids' school fees and my club membership etc'. The smart operators could reach a position where they were obtaining the majority of their reimbursement in the form of non-taxable income.

No member on this side of the Assembly will support that. We all recognised that it was inequitable and that something had to be done about it. The unfortunate aspect from some points of view is that the Liberal government let it continue for so long because it did not have the guts to take it on. The Labor party was left with the job of trying to do something about it. Who can forget the comments of one John Valder, the President of the Liberal Party of Australia, when he made his now very famous in-house video for Westpac. He said that Labor was doing a necessary job in attempting to reform the taxation system and that it was a job the Liberals could not do. He said that perhaps Labor would pay an electoral price yet the Liberals would maintain the reforms when they came into office. The President of the Liberal Party of Australia admitted that the principles that this federal government espouses in terms of redistributing the tax burden are sound and should be supported.

One of the principles in this process of tax redistribution is contained in the trilogy commitment of the federal government: in a reallocation of taxes among the different components of the Australian community, the overall sum of taxes gathered from the Australian community should not be increased. That is something that the Treasurer forgot to mention this morning. He left the very clear impression that this was another tax grab. It is quite clearly not another tax grab; it is an attempt to redistribute the tax burden in Australia more fairly within the very specific constraint that the total sum collected from all these new taxes should not be greater than the sum of taxes collected previously. That is something that this federal government has stuck to.

The other key point that has not been mentioned by members opposite is that, as a trade off for this changed mix of taxes, there was a commitment from the federal government to take the pressure off the PAYE taxpayer. This involved, firstly, a recognition that the marginal rates of tax are too high and, secondly, that the total sum of taxes would not be increased but spread more equally. Everybody agreed that the present 60% rate and 48% rate had proved to be a significant disincentive to people to work. It is the Commonwealth government's proposition that the marginal tax rate at the highest level be reduced from 60% to 55% in the first year and then to 49% and then to 48%. At the second highest level, it will be reduced from 48% to 46% in the first year and then to 40%. Of course, there will be lower decreases at the lower rates of taxation.

These concessions are quite significant. They will result in a reduction in the amount of tax that most people pay. We will receive them this year.

It may not be on 1 September, as promised by the government last year, but it will certainly be this year. The government will not proceed with this without this other mix of taxes being in place. Again, that is a question that this government has not answered. Is it proposing that we throw out the fringe benefits tax, which means that we throw out the reduction in the marginal rates of taxation? Perhaps some of the speakers to follow might like to address that question.

We have a situation where, on the figures available to me, the government had hoped to collect over \$500 from the fringe benefits tax. As I said, that will go a long way to providing tax cuts for the poor PAYE taxpayers. Without it, there is no prospect of tax cuts for individuals. The Labor Party in the Northern Territory has said consistently that, for reasons of equity, it supports the fringe benefits tax in principle. The previous Chief Minister consistently said that the Northern Territory government, for reasons of equity, supported the principle of a fringe benefits tax. I must admit that I am pretty confused at this stage as to what the present government thinks. Does it or does it not support the principle of a fringe benefits tax? It is important that this government makes its position clear on that. Our position is clear: we are supporting this motion on the basis of support for the fringe benefits tax and on the basis that its implications for the Northern Territory are horrific indeed and it needs to be revised to avoid unfair imposts on remote areas like the Northern Territory.

Benefits to remote area residents offset the unique disadvantages of living and earning in such areas which, generally, have limited community facilities, are isolated from traditional family supports and have a harsh climate. Without such benefits, it would be difficult for people to be attracted to and retained in remote communities. Again, some people may recognise those words. It is not surprising, because they are again words used by the previous Chief Minister in his submission to the tax summit. We concur. That paragraph summarises the objections that this opposition has to the fringe benefits tax. Non-cash benefits in the Northern Territory, with few exceptions, have not been designed to avoid tax, but to offset the disadvantages of living in a remote area. Subsidised housing, air fares, living away from home allowances, board or lodging in remote communities are obviously incentives to attract people to the Northern Territory and should not be subject to the tax. There are, however, one or two benefits that should be subject to tax, even in the Northern Territory. For example, I have no objections to taxing the provision of motor cars on a full-time basis to individual employees. In my view, that is quite an important personal benefit given to an employee, and there is no reason why it should not be taxed.

I want to address some remarks to particular clauses of the motion. The preamble concludes with a call to the federal government, in particular with respect to the Northern Territory, not to proceed with the fringe benefits tax recently passed by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament because of its impact upon the Northern Territory which includes - paragraph 1(a) - the consequent erosion of entrenched employment conditions in the public and private sectors of the Northern Territory.

I want to make it clear that members on this side of the Assembly have consistently held that it is necessary to offer a range of incentives to employees, both in the private and the public sector, to attract them to the Northern Territory and to keep them here. However, it is a bit rich for the government to be proposing this part of the motion when it has done more than any other body in the Northern Territory in the last 2 or 3 years to erode entrenched employment conditions. Again, I refer to the government's push to

freeze district allowances, which has been successful, and its push to reduce air fare entitlements to the equivalent of a return fare to Adelaide, which is currently a matter before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. I know from my previous employment that the Country Liberal Party government has consistently opposed employment conditions for public servants in the Northern Territory. For example, it opposed a very legitimate claim by the Teachers Federation a number of years ago to provide air fares out of isolated communities into Darwin or Alice Springs 2 or 3 times a year. Everyone, including this government, now accepts that those conditions of service are important in attracting people to remote communities, and that is good. But, let us not forget that, if it were not for the union movement in the Northern Territory, which had these conditions installed against the wishes of the government, we would not have them. As I said before, it is a bit hypocritical for the government to be standing up at this stage as the friend of the worker when it has opposed so consistently the rights of workers in the Northern Territory.

Paragraph 1(b) - the inequitable effect of its imposition on the Northern Territory when compared with the states - no one can deny. The figure of \$16m, even if it is a bit rubbery and capable of quite substantial reduction, certainly is a far higher per capita figure than any of the states face. It is a reflection of the grave deficiencies in the present bill that that has happened and we accept and deplore that. As it stands, the bill hits the Northern Territory harder than the states.

I want to make a particular point about recruitment costs and relocation. For the life of me, I cannot see how recruitment and relocation costs can be considered as fringe benefits. That is beyond my understanding and I hope that a concerted push can be made by all people involved to exclude recruitment and relocation costs from fringe benefits tax. I understand that perhaps it was not the original intention of the Commonwealth to hit that area and that, somehow or other, it has crept in. However, at present, the federal government is standing on its dignity. Certainly, it is beyond comprehension how recruitment and relocation costs could be included.

I too am concerned with the matters raised in paragraph 1(c): the damage that will be caused to the private and public sectors of the Northern Territory economy. This morning, mention was made of the impact of the tax on the Northern Territory government and big employers such as Nabalco, ERA and some of the mines around Tennant Creek. However, the impact will be felt equally by smaller employers in the Northern Territory and I suspect that many of them have less capacity to meet the requirements of this tax, both administrative and financial. It may well be that the employees of smaller businesses will prove to be the people who will miss out most. That is regrettable and, hopefully, in the review of this matter that the federal government is to undertake in the next 2 or 3 months, the needs of small employers will be reconsidered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, under paragraph 1(d) - the additional difficulties which will be faced by the Northern Territory government in the provision of essential services to remote localities - there are people on this side of the Assembly better qualified than myself to speak on those matters since they represent the interests of remote localities. I will leave that to them.

Paragraph 1(e) - the inequitable impact of the tax on the cost of living in the Northern Territory when compared with the states - was fully canvassed by the government this morning and it is a matter that we support. We are concerned at the impact that the fringe benefits tax will have on the cost of

living in the Northern Territory. We accept that we have a very high cost of living indeed, and certainly we do not want any additional pressures in that respect. However, I must say that I was concerned by the answer given by the Chief Minister who made it quite clear this morning that we shall be subject to quite a significant round of cost increases in the Territory's own taxes and charges, particularly charges. I am sure all electricity consumers in the Northern Territory were disappointed at his response that his government would not take advantage of the dramatic reduction in oil prices to institute a further freeze on electricity charges. People in the electorate may be worried about the fringe benefits tax, but they are also very concerned about electricity prices, particularly when they know that the government has made some windfall savings on its original projections this year because of the dramatic decline in oil prices. It is time that the government had a serious look at passing some of those windfall gains to the consumer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I have said, the opposition supports this motion. The opposition has maintained a consistent position of support for the principle of a fringe benefits tax because, first of all, a fringe benefits tax means that the tax burden will be shared more equally amongst taxpayers of Australia and, secondly, a fringe benefits tax is an essential element in the redistribution of taxes which will allow significant reductions in the marginal rates of tax for all Australian citizens.

I conclude by saying that it is not clear where the Territory government stands on this particular issue. On the one hand, it argued only 2 weeks ago for a reduction of conditions of service for Territory public servants. Now it has attempted to become the champion of workers in the Northern Territory. I am sure workers will see through that. More importantly, the government has to answer the following couple of questions. Does the government oppose the whole fringe benefits tax or simply those parts that refer to compensation for living in isolated areas? That is an important question because, if you oppose the lot, you oppose the benefits of the fringe benefits tax, particularly the reduction in the rates of marginal tax. Is the government prepared to oppose the tax knowing that this would probably end any prospect of relief from marginal tax rates?

Mr Perron: Half of it will go into collecting it.

Mr SMITH: Of course that is not true. I am glad that the member made that interjection because I think the ultimate ridiculousness of the fringe benefits tax in the Northern Territory situation is that the marginal rates of tax that we will profit from when they are reduced will be more than eaten up by the loss of the benefits through the imposition of the fringe benefits tax. That, as much as anything else, demonstrates to me and should demonstrate to the world that the fringe benefits tax and its application hits people in the Northern Territory harder than anywhere else in Australia and is contrary to what the federal government was intending to do with this tax. It was intending to even out the tax rates and, at the same time, to give the ordinary taxpayer a reduction in his marginal rate of tax and the total amount of tax that he pays. That will not happen in the Northern Territory. That is why the fringe benefits tax should be opposed in its application in the Northern Territory. That is why we support this motion.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, that was an amazing speech by the honourable member for Millner - absolutely amazing. One would think from his speech that the fringe benefits tax was a tax on the employee, on the people who received fringe benefits. If that were its fundamental premise, everything that the member for Millner said would be perfectly reasonable.



The problem is that the tax is not being imposed on those people. The member for Millner said that people on similar incomes should pay similar taxes. Who can dispute that? The problem is that the people who are receive those fringe benefits do not pay the tax. Employers who are required to provide those conditions to employees must pay the tax. Employers will pay twice, and that is the fundamental inequity of this fringe benefits tax.

If the honourable member for Millner wants to understand why we are so opposed to the principle of this fringe benefits tax, it is because it is a tax on the employer and adds to the costs faced by the employer, not a tax on the employee who receives the benefits of those conditions. That is a fundamentally different position to the one adopted by the honourable member for Millner. That is why his arguments have no validity in relation to the whole principle of fringe benefits. If the honourable member for Millner is serious in what he says, he will stand up here or outside and tell the world that this tax should be imposed on the employees who receive the benefits. He should be telling Northern Territory Public Servants that they should pay tax on their air fares, annual leave, home garaging of their cars, the subsidisation of their housing and their relocation expenses, although I must say he quite reasonably recognised those as a totally unrealistic target for the fringe benefits tax.

When an employer is legally obliged by a determination of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to provide certain conditions to an employee, it is not proper for the federal government to turn around and tell him that he must pay a 49% tax on what it describes as lurks and perks. If that is the logic of the federal government, it should be standing up in the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission today telling the commission that all of those conditions it regards as fringe benefits, as lurks and perks, should be deleted in every award and every determination of the commission. Would it be game to do that? Of course, it would not be game.

The honourable member for Millner made great play of the courage and the fortitude of this current Labor government in tax reform. Well, it has not had the guts to tax the people who are receiving the benefits; it is taxing the employers. Through the employers, it will indirectly hurt the employees and, in the end, consumers through prices where increases can be passed on. Where increases cannot be passed on, particularly in international export industries, it will result in loss of jobs and production and worsen our trade deficit. This tax will hit the rural sector hardest: our primary industries and our mining industries, the major wealth producers of this nation. Additional costs are being placed on these industries at a time when they are already suffering declining commodity prices and absolutely frightening international competition as a result of subsidisation of primary produce by the EEC and the USA. This tax has come about because the federal government is not prepared to take hard decisions to cut its costs. It is not an equity argument. If it were, the tax would be imposed on the employee and not the employer.

Tonight, the Prime Minister of Australia will be addressing us courtesy of every television station in the nation. If you tune to Channel 8 at 7.30 tonight, you will not get '60 Minutes' with George Negus but 7 minutes with Bob Hawke. What a production it will be! The producers will have told him how and where to sit, when to stand, where to look, what adequately conservative suit he should wear and what serious expression he should put on his face.

Mr B. Collins: You could do with a bit of that.

Mr HATTON: I understand that Mr Hawke at least has written his own script.

Mr B. Collins: Don't you believe it.

Mr HATTON: I think the Leader of the Opposition has just had a slice at the ABC, because I am about to quote from the ABC's PM program last night. The presenter said, 'What we are going to get is 7 minutes of pure Bob Hawke in his own words'. It will be interesting to hear the words of the man who led the union movement during the greatest period of industrial unrest in Australia's recent history. I only hope tonight's address does not turn out to be just another orchestrated ALP extravaganza like the national economic summit and the tax summit. I hope it will be something more than a fireside chat with good old Bob. However, I think I can make a pretty good guess at what the Prime Minister will say. Mr Hawke will tell us how his government has presided over an unprecedented period of economic growth, it has created 500 000 jobs out of thin air, and how it has single-handedly restored Australia to economic well-being. Mr Hawke will sound a bit like superman, faster than a speeding tax dodger, able to leap the new parliament house in a single bound. And then the man of steel will adopt a serious tone as he talks about the need to tighten our belts. The Prime Minister will have all the right body language on television tonight as he tells us how we have spent beyond our means. He will have all the best camera angles and all the right propaganda messages as he tells us we have to accept a cut in living standards.

All that media madness will not wash with the Australian people, because they are awake to the fact that it is the Prime Minister's own government which got us into the mess we are in today. Far from having an economy which is as sound as a bell, we have an officially declared banana republic which is heading towards a \$14 000m current account deficit this financial year. Imagine that, at the start of each month, a ship loaded with \$1200m of Australian currency sails overseas, never to return. That is what is happening at the moment. That is what a \$14 000m current account deficit means. The Australian dollar, which I described as the peso of the Pacific at the last sittings, has now slipped further into the third world league and must rapidly be approaching parity with the Biafran pound. Superman Hawke, with his sidekick Paul Keating, has chosen this time to tell Australians that we must all accept a lower standard of living, one which befits our new third world status. I do not wish to dwell for too long on the economic woes of Australia, but I must remind honourable members of the words of the member for Millner in 1984, and I quote from Hansard of 22 August 1984 at page 932: 'Mr Speaker, it is significant that the economic management of the Hawke government has led this country back on the road to prosperity'. On the very next page of Hansard, the member for Millner praised the federal government for its specific commitment to the Darwin Airport, its continuing subsidies for NTEC and a new control tower for Nhulunbuy. It built the Nhulunbuy control tower, but it is a shame it will not open it.

The member for Millner said this about the federal government: 'The Hawke government is an honourable government that fulfils its commitments. When it wants to consider changing those commitments, it gives due notice and takes into consideration the views of the other governments'. We have had plenty of recent examples of how wrong the member for Millner was. Only last Friday, we received a letter cancelling negotiations on local ownership of the Alice Springs airport.

I have warned consistently about the lunacy of the federal government's economic policies. I first spoke out against the impracticality of the so-called trilogy economic accord as early as February 1983. I made the point repeatedly - often in the face of derisive laughter from members opposite - that it just did not add up economically. The only way that it could maintain the illusory gains that it was achieving in 1983 and 1984 was by borrowing overseas and living on credit. The country is going broke because we have been living beyond our means. The federal government has been living beyond its means and propping up the economy. The price is becoming higher by the day. The longer we wait to pay the bill, the higher the interest charges will be.

The bill is coming and Territorians will be hit with more than their share of it. The federal government is doing its best to ensure that Territorians do not miss out on the advantages of living in a third world economy. We will experience a good deal of the federal government's lowered living standards because it is not content with breaking its promises and ruining the economy; it is now making an unprincipled tax attack on all Australians and, once again, the people of the Northern Territory are feeling the sharp end of the stick.

I can remember the Prime Minister talking about fairness and equity in the tax system. The member for Millner spoke about fairness and equity in the tax system. What is fair and equitable about the fringe benefits tax costing Territory employers at least \$45m? What is fair about the federal government making Territory businesses and the Territory government pay taxes on employment conditions they must provide to attract people here? What is fair about the Northern Territory government paying \$15m to \$16m in taxes when the New South Wales government is to pay about \$10m even though New South Wales has 40 times our population?

Mr B. Collins: Good question, actually.

Mr HATTON: What is fair about the Territory government having to pay tax at the rate of 49% for the privilege of having to meet the legally enforceable awards of its workers? What is fair about taxing the person who provides the benefit rather than the person who receives it? What is fair about having to pay a tax like that?

Mr Deputy Speaker, the federal government has left itself no choice but to slug Australians with this fringe benefits tax because it has become addicted to imposing more and more taxes. I believe that this federal government has become a bit like a tax junkie; it always needs another fix. Like any addict, all it can think of is that it wants more and more, and damn the consequences of its actions.

First, there was the assets test and a tax hike on lump sum superannuation payments. These were taxes on the nest eggs of people who had worked hard and looked forward to a comfortable retirement. Then there was the cute little switch with the oil levy: when oil prices went down, the tax went up. I bet it took Paul Keating a little while to work that one out. Now we have the gold tax. Ask the people at Tennant Creek what they think about that one. Then, there was the capital gains tax. Do you remember Bob Hawke saying in the 1983 election campaign quite unequivocally that there would be no new capital gains tax? The day after the fringe benefits tax was implemented, it finalised the processing of a new capital gains tax through the federal parliament. An automatically-indexed excise on alcohol is another little beauty, Mr Deputy Speaker. The government will not even have to tell you that

it will cost you more for a beer because it will just happen; every few months, the excise will rise. Not content with doping us to the eyeballs with new taxes, the Hawke government now brings us the fringe benefits tax. What next? A tax on the air we breathe? Everything else has been taxed already.

Let us have a closer look at this latest tax madness - the fringe benefits tax. We are staring recession in the face, unable to pay our way in the world, watching our currency go down the gurgler, our balance of payments crisis is worsening faster than a Chernobyl melt-down, our commodities cannot sell on the world's markets, our imports bill is rising faster and faster all the time, and the Prime Minister will tell us tonight that we have to accept a cut in living standards. At the same time, we are being hit with a new tax which will slug the developing parts of Australia hardest. It is sheer lunacy. The government of the Northern Territory will have to pay the cost of this lunacy. Every employer in the Territory will have to pay the cost of this lunacy and, one way or another, every miner, every farmer, every public servant, every shopkeeper and every consumer will have to pay.

It is a fact of life that the Territory government has to provide services to many remote communities. Members of this Assembly know them well. We also have to provide services to Darwin and Alice Springs, which are 2 of the remoter cities in Australia. All these places are a bit further than a tram stop from Collins Street and they are more than a stone's throw from Circular Quay. They are not exactly a Commonwealth ministerial car drive away from the new parliament house. When Bob Hawke and Paul Keating sit down with the ACTU to work out new taxes, they forget about all the people sweating it out in these towns in remote Australia. They forget about the people who are digging up wealth for Australia in mining towns like Gove and Tennant Creek. I am not proposing to tax these people out of their very existence, but the federal government is trying to do it! They forget about the people who are growing produce for Australia, people down on the Douglas Daly or in Katherine, and they forget about governments and businesses who provide services to people in the remotest parts of this continent. These people do not even figure in the federal government's calculations. That is why Mr Keating does not know how much the tax will cost the Territory. We know that it will conservatively cost \$45m to \$46m a year. It costs money to send a nursing sister, a teacher, a doctor, a tradesman or a miner to remote places. Employers have to provide accommodation or a vehicle or relocation expenses or air fares every couple of years. The Territory government will be taxed on all those things, and the mining companies and the farmers in remote parts of Australia will be taxed too. In the Territory, the bill will add up to \$45m a year.

I think members agree that it is a sad day when the Territory has to pay a tax penalty simply because of its remoteness from the golden triangle of Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.

Mr B. Collins: You blokes did not do spectacularly well in that area with Fraser as Prime Minister and Howard as Treasurer for 7 years.

Mr HATTON: Let us return to what the member for Millner said. The Leader of the Opposition will have his chance to speak if he can wait a moment.

Mr B. Collins: Tell your backbench. Tell the rebels on the backbench, those tired old hacks hanging around for their super.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the Leader of the Opposition and other members cease their constant cross-Chamber interjections?

Mr HATTON: This tax is inequitable because it is a tax on the employer for benefits provided to the employee. If taxes on these items are regarded as necessary, they should be imposed on the people who receive the benefits. If the opposition wants to support the principle of the fringe benefits tax, as a matter of equity it must support that tax being imposed on the people who receive the benefits. It is totally improper to impose this tax as a additional cost on the person providing the benefit. There is no equity whatsoever in that. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul and, in this current environment, it is adding to the costs of business - costs which will express themselves finally in lost jobs or increased prices. It cannot have any other result. The problem with this tax is its fundamental inequity. Because of the very nature of the things being taxed and the nature of the environment in rural Australia and the Northern Territory, it will have a major impact here whereas it may have a relatively minor impact in places like Sydney and Melbourne. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I dare say it will be up to other members of the government to articulate the Northern Territory government's actual position on the fringe benefits tax. We have yet to hear it.

There is an abundance of quotes from the past to indicate that the Chief Minister was the most single-minded advocate, in his previous occupation, of continued reduction in the so-called entrenched conditions of workers in the Northern Territory. This was in his capacity as the executive officer of the Confederation of Industry.

Mr Dale: Terry gave us 10 minutes on this, Bob.

Mr Smith: It is well worth saying again, Don.

Mr Dale: Yes, but get your act together.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will now be heard in silence.

Mr B. COLLINS: Clearly, the Chief Minister has forgotten that with great rapidity. His address illustrates the truth of the words of John Maynard Keynes who said, in a quote which is among my favourites because it is so true of politicians or people in public life:

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority who hear voices in the air are distilling their frenzy from some academic of a few years back.

That is absolutely true. The government certainly meets many of Keynes' criteria. Its members would certainly see themselves as practical men, and I think most people would believe them to be exempt from any intellectual influences. They certainly have had their share of madmen in authority, and they certainly have had their fair share of experts in fringe benefits. Alas, Lord Keynes made no reference to the big picture but, in respect of the Northern Territory government, that is about the only thing that he missed.

Today and in recent weeks, we have heard this government's attacks on the fringe benefits tax. It makes these attacks because it believes the fringe benefits tax will affect the flow of a particular resource, labour, to the Territory. It is a valid argument. It is worth distilling this argument to its simplest terms. Any government, Northern Territory or federal, which makes decisions which reduce the attractiveness of Northern Territory wage packages, will impair the flow of competent workers to the Territory and affect services in remote communities. If a government were, for example, to reduce the real level of district allowances or increase the cost of housing or reduce the monetary value of leave air fares, all these actions would have to be construed, by the government's own logic during this morning's debate, as anti-Territorian. This is no wild conjecture. I have simply distilled the elements of today's debate on the fringe benefits tax and, indeed, I have no argument with that. All of the actions I have described have been directly undertaken by this government or indirectly by its members acting in other capacities. The current Chief Minister led the charge on the Territory's district allowance by having it frozen for private sector employees in the Northern Territory. This case is now being used by the Northern Territory government in its attack on Territory allowances for public servants. So much for its consistency on so-called entrenched attractive working conditions in the Northern Territory.

This government has made direct attacks on housing benefits for Territorians, so much so that Treasury officials at the highest level are dismissive of the importance of these benefits because, under the policies of this current Northern Territory government, they will disappear progressively very soon. Further, an attack on leave air fares was initiated by the crisis-ridden Tuxworth government.

I point to the public record in respect of all of these matters - housing, district allowances and air fares - and not a single word did we hear from the Northern Territory government spokesman on recruitment about the effect of any of those measures. In fact, the government spokesman - and I remember this in terms of some of the attacks that were made by union leaders on what the government was doing - defended the reductions in entrenched working conditions in the Northern Territory and said quite positively that they would have no effect on recruitment or retention of staff in the Northern Territory. I wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker, what strange scribblings guide this government when its own attacks on fringe benefits are seen as responsible actions, but anyone else's are subject to criticism and contempt.

Many statements have been made in the last 5 weeks, and indeed again in this Assembly this morning, indicating that the fringe benefit tax reflects an extra level of taxation. I dispute that because of the one thing that was not mentioned by any government member this morning. You would not expect them to mention it. They know full well that these taxes are necessary in order to meet the trilogy which members opposite rubbished this morning as being unrealistic. A commitment was given, and has been met, not to increase that general level of taxation and it was decided to substitute fringe benefits taxation in some form. Indeed, the federal Treasurer originally wanted to go much further with consumer taxes as a substitute for personal income tax to relieve the burden on PAYE wage and salary taxpayers. Indeed, it is no secret that one of the most vociferous advocates of this system of taxation in this country was, and I believe still is, John Howard. Indeed, John Howard wanted to go much further and introduce considerable increases in both fringe benefit and consumer taxation as a direct substitute for personal PAYE income tax. In my view, that is a laudable aim.

Mr Deputy Speaker, reference was made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to John Valder. I do not hesitate to repeat it because I was one of those Australians who sat with some degree of anger and watched John Valder on that in-house, X-rated video that he prepared for the company circuit around Australia. It was a disgusting performance on his part. There is a great deal of hypocrisy in politics but we rarely have the opportunity to actually see it displayed in all its glory in public. In fact, Valder did say that the taxation system in Australia was inequitable, and that Howard tried to fix it in the way Keating is at least attempting now, but he was stymied by his own party. He could not get Cabinet to agree to the measures that he wanted in relation to a fringe benefits tax and a broadly-based consumer tax. They would not listen to him. He failed to do that and John Valder said: 'That is fine politically for all the honest men in the Liberal Party. We are happy for the Labor Party to take those brave decisions'. Indeed, it is very true. Who in this room has not seen 'Yes Minister'? 'Yes Minister' was based on the diaries of Richard Crossman. We recognise the essential truths in that program. Sir Humphrey Appleby said to his minister on numerous occasions that, when a decision is described as 'courageous', that is a euphemism for a decision that will lose you the next election.

I do not believe that that will occur with fringe benefits tax because it appears that that is not the reaction of 3 out of 4 Australians. The Northern Territory is in an unfortunate situation because of our particular problems of isolation and small population spread over a very large area of land. We will be hit by the application of this tax in a way that other Australians will not.

Much was made by the Chief Minister of the inequitable application of the tax in respect of New South Wales and the Northern Territory. If the Chief Minister had walked around Expo recently and listened to comments on the fringe benefits tax - particularly in relation to the figures published by the honourable Treasurer in the Northern Territory - from people in private industry who volunteered comments to me, he would have been less than flattered by their reaction. What else do people in the business sector rightly want to talk about now but the fringe benefits tax? I was confronted again and again at Expo with the comment: 'Did you see those figures Barry Coulter put out - the smallest public service in Australia'. It is the same tax, mind you. No one is disputing that. It is the same tax and the same conditions for its application apply in both places. The smallest public service, tiny by comparison with others in Australia, will cost \$16m and the largest public service, the one in New South Wales, will cost \$10m with the same tax applied. That says a lot, doesn't it?

Mr Finch: You're back to where you started.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I hesitate to use the word 'drongos' again, on pain of being thrown out for 7 days, so I will not. It was no effort, in an attempt to muzzle the opposition, to do it last time. As I said to those people, we have a particular problem in the Northern Territory. If members opposite had shut up for just a minute, they would have heard this. I have said it in this Assembly on many occasions because it is something that honourable members opposite should be aware of. It is a constant cry in the circles that I move in. Because of the rarified atmosphere that those honourable gentlemen operate in, perhaps they do not talk to the real people in the Northern Territory. People in the private sector are constantly complaining about what they see - and I ask members opposite to tell me that they are not aware that this is the case - as the inequitable lurks and perks enjoyed by the public sector in the Northern Territory. The criticism is

raised again and again. Live in an isolated community which, I suggest, most of those opposite have not done recently, and listen to the private employees working in those communities - as I did once - discussing freight allowances for public servants living in those same communities. Because of freight charges, they have to pay 20% or 30% more for goods from the local store, whereas the public servants benefit from freight allowances provided by the government. Why does that happen? It happens for one very simple reason: if those kinds of so-called benefits were not provided in the Northern Territory, qualified people would not work and live in those communities.

As I explained to those people at Expo, it is a knee-jerk reaction that people in the private sector in the Northern Territory often have. It is cause and effect. I would like honourable members opposite to deny that it has ever been put to them that this has to be paid by the private sector because of those feather-bedded public servants, pampered by government ...

Mr Finch: Otherwise we would not get them here.

Mr B. COLLINS: Certainly, whether it is CLP or Labor, but in this case it is the CLP, we are forced to pay the flow-ons. We all know the reality. We all know the difficulty of attracting qualified radiologists, dental technicians, surgeons, engineers, teachers, and police officers to work in isolated areas.

Mr Ede: Ministers, politicians.

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes, you have to pay extra to get a Chief Minister these days. Without incentives, these services would simply not be provided. That message has to be passed on to many people in the private sector in the Northern Territory as well as to people elsewhere in Australia. The reason that I make this statement is to indicate how difficult it is to get the Territory's case across to people outside the Northern Territory when it is so difficult to make the same case to people who have lived all their lives in the private sector.

I am not setting myself out to be some latterday prophet but who spoke in here - and it is on the public record for everyone to see - when I spoke about the 11.5% pay increase that was accepted with such alacrity by those opposite and caused us the most dreadful press down south? Do members remember the headlines in The Australian? 'Australia's golden politicians' appeared on the front page of the Adelaide Advertiser. It was all there and it was obvious that we would cop that when everyone else was getting 3%. It took 4 months of hounding in the Legislative Assembly before we persuaded the government to accept that argument.

The list of those perceived abuses of financial responsibility in the Northern Territory is very long. They have all occurred in the last couple of years. Indeed, as someone who has been here for 20 years, I echo the cries of many Territorians, a great many of them card-carrying members of the CLP, who have been asking just what in the hell has been happening to the Northern Territory and its government in the last 2 years. The 11.4% pay rise that I referred to, the \$11m it cost us for the casino takeovers - a totally unnecessary exercise as has now been demonstrated profoundly - \$4m per annum in lost taxes that Federal Hotels were paying, a \$20m cash grant to Yulara and \$37m on the Alice Sheraton. It is extremely difficult to make the case for the Territory and to argue the case of ordinary Territorians when their political leaders carry on like that.



Today, we heard threats and no doubt they will headline in the paper. I predict confidently what the headlines will be because I know the NT News back to front. I can read it like a book or, indeed, like a newspaper, Mr Deputy Speaker. The NT News is so predictable. The headline it will carry today will have something to do with 500 jobs lost in the Northern Territory Public Service because that was the scare line that was run this morning. The reason that makes me so angry is that, when I raised the question of the tax losses that we are incurring every year and shoving straight into the pockets of Henry and Walker and the other partners in the casino - and that Federal Hotels was paying quite happily - it was dismissed by the Minister for Education this morning as a matter of no account. What a load of rubbish! If they started to pay tax, as everyone else in the community is supposed to, 100 of those 500 jobs could be saved. That could be effected simply by renegotiating taxation for the casinos. Just 1 operation in the Northern Territory, based on the figures that Federal Hotels was paying before it left - and making a profit on, I might add - could restore 100 of those lost jobs. I do not consider that to be a matter of no account. In fact, Territorians know, as a recent poll has shown, that you cannot simply throw away \$60m without having some payment by Northern Territorians. It is a fact.

Mr Manzie: What are you talking about? You have all your facts wrong.

Mr B. COLLINS: I have not been in here for 10 years for nothing. That is all I can say.

Mr Dale: Have you read today's paper. Have a read.

Mr B. COLLINS: Pretty predictable. All I am saying is this ...

Mr Dale: What a joke! What a fair dinkum standing joke.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting when a government says that we have a fringe benefits tax which will cost us \$45m and which will have an horrendous effect on the Northern Territory. I do not argue with that; I agree with it. It is interesting because the same government advocates guarantees, horrendous deals - and the Chief Minister knows they are - into which we are locked and which will cost us a cool \$60m in just 2 budgets. They are Treasury figures, not ones we have made up. Not a word is said about that. It is said that \$45m will destroy our economy but the \$60m in direct public money that has been lost by the financial ineptitude of this administration is a matter of no account and is defended again and again. The facts are that, if Henry and Walker started paying its taxes, and just 2 casinos started paying their taxes in the way they did previously, then we could save 100 of those 500 jobs spread all over the front page of the NT News.

The fact is that the fringe benefits tax will apply across Australia, and 3 out of every 4 Australians agree with it. That is not surprising because 3 out of 4 Australians do not receive fringe benefits.

Mr Finch: They are not going to have to pay.

Mr B. COLLINS: They will not have to pay? The fact is that 3 out of 4 Australians pay the bulk of the \$970m that, thank God, supports the Northern Territory budget every year.

Mr Dondas: Who is screaming the Assembly down now?

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to that interjection, if you all shut up, I can lower my voice.

Mr Perron: Please do.

Mr Dale: Come on, you are getting excited.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am in the last 60 seconds of my address. I will be seeking an extension of time because I have had continual interjections since I started. If honourable members opposite would like to shut up for just a minute, I would not have to raise my voice but the only other option I have is to be quiet and to lose speech time in the Assembly.

Mr Dale: Tell us about Paul Keating. Are you going to ring him tonight?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence. Will other members please cease interjecting?

Mr B. COLLINS: As I have said before, there are a great many inconsistencies in the government's arguments. They are consistent inconsistencies. It always talks about the federal government not doing its job in cutting its costs but, of course, that always means cutting its costs in relation to everyone else in this country except the Northern Territory. It always talks about how iniquitous it is to have this cut and that cut and something else cut in the Northern Territory but, at the same time, the federal government is expected to cut its costs. The Chief Minister said: 'How dare the federal government suggest that we Australians, all of us, have to look in the face the possibility of taking a reduction in living standards'. Thirty seconds later, he said: 'Of course, the big problem is that we have been living beyond our means'. If you cannot see the inconsistency in that, you are not really trying.

The problem with the fringe benefits tax is very simple. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, which are settled urban communities with very few isolated areas, they simply do not have to provide the extra incentives that we in the Northern Territory have to provide. The fact is - and I started off by saying so this afternoon - that the federal government has not taken into account the particular application of this tax in the Northern Territory. That cannot be disputed.

Much criticism was made this morning of Senator Robertson. Can I say that it does not help our case either when we have only 2 federal members from the government side of the Assembly and they have been at each other's throats in public every day for the past 12 months. One of them has reached the stage where he cannot handle the other and so dislikes him that he physically moved out of the office facilities that he shared with him in Alice Springs. That does not help to put a cohesive case for the Northern Territory in Canberra either. In respect of the criticisms of Senator Robertson this morning - and I am making no comment on them; there are plenty opposite who can do that - it is incumbent, and I have said this to senior members in the CLP just recently ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The timing device has jammed and I have taken the liberty of giving the honourable member ...

Members interjecting

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will not give any more warnings. I took the liberty of granting the honourable member 2½ minutes extra time once I was notified by the Deputy Clerk that the timing device had jammed.

Debate adjourned.

#### TABLED PAPERS

##### Letter from Mrs Polly England and Family

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table a letter which has been received from Mrs Polly England and family thanking the Assembly for forwarding to them bound copies of a tribute to the memory of her late husband, Mr J.A. England.

##### Letter from Bishop Peter de Campo

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also lay on the Table a letter which has been received from Bishop Peter de Campo, Bishop of Port Pirie, thanking the Assembly for forwarding to him a bound copy of extracts from the Minutes and from the Parliamentary Debates at a special sittings of the Legislative Assembly for the late Bishop O'Loughlin on 20 November last year.

##### National Crime Authority Report - 1984-85

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I lay on the Table the report of the National Crime Authority to the intergovernmental committee for the year 1984-85.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the National Crime Authority was established on 1 July 1984 under the National Crime Authority Act 1984. During the period under review, to 30 June 1985, the authority consisted of the chairman, the Honourable Mr Justice D.G. Stewart, and 2 members, the Hon E.M. Bingham QC and Mr J.L. Dwyer QC.

The authority had an active and difficult first year. The transfer of staff and material from the Costigan Royal Commission was complex and time-consuming. In addition, the authority had to develop an effective national approach to the fight against organised crime. During this period, Mr Justice Stewart had additional responsibilities as Royal Commissioner inquiring into both the Nugan Hand group and alleged telephone interceptions. The authority is now fully operational, however, and has commenced prosecutions in several of its major investigations.

A total of 5 Commonwealth and 3 parallel state references, 2 from New South Wales and 1 from Victoria, have been issued to the authority. All of the references were requested by the authority and unanimously supported by the intergovernmental committee. The issuing of references allows the authority to use its extensive coercive powers. The authority is also conducting several investigations under its general powers, some of which will result in prosecutions, while others will form the basis of future references.

The NCA's 1984-85 Annual Report gives a very clear picture of the processes of establishment of the authority and the difficulties and issues encountered and resolved. The intergovernmental committee commends the NCA for its achievements in its first year of operation and expresses full

confidence in the authority's ability to continue to make major inroads into organised crime in Australia.

Report on the Remuneration and Allowances of  
Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly,  
Judges and Magistrates

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, on behalf of His Honour the Administrator, I table the following: the Remuneration Tribunal Report 1986 Review of the Remuneration, Allowances and Other Entitlements to be Paid to Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Judges of the Supreme Court and Magistrates; Remuneration Tribunal Recommendation No 1 of 1986 Relating to Remuneration and Allowances to be Paid to Judges of the Northern Territory Supreme Court; Remuneration Tribunal Recommendation No 2 of 1986 Relating to Remuneration and Allowances to be Paid to Magistrates of the Northern Territory Court; and, Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 Relating to the Remuneration, Allowances and Other Entitlements of Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 5 December 1985, the Remuneration Tribunal was asked to undertake this review, having regard to the national wage case and the principles involved therein. The tribunal concluded its work and forwarded its report to His Honour the Administrator on 14 February 1986.

I propose to deal first with determination No 1 of 1986 which relates to ministers and members of this Assembly. Honourable members will be aware that, in 1985, the Remuneration Tribunal Act was amended to provide for the automatic flow-on of national wage case awards to the basic salaries of members of the Legislative Assembly. No reference was made in the amendment to the additional salaries and special expenses of office allowances of office-holders of this Assembly. The general effect of the present determination, if approved, would be to increase the additional salaries and special expenses of office allowances of office-holders of this Assembly by a factor for inflation of roughly 6.5% rounded to the nearest \$50. Since the tribunal last reviewed the salaries etc of office holders of the Legislative Assembly, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission has handed down 2 national wage case decisions - 2.6% in April 1985 and 3.8% in November 1985 - which represent a cumulative increase of approximately 6.5%. It will thus be seen that, for the period under review, the tribunal's determination sets out to equate the national wage case increases to the additional salary and special expenses of office allowances to office holders of this Assembly.

However, in the current economic climate of Australia, it is imperative that government should set an example of wage restraint to the general community. There are stringent times ahead and, rather than go on television to urge others to tighten their belts, as the Prime Minister seems intent on doing tonight, we are going to take practical action. We propose that office holders should forgo the increases in salaries contained in the determination. To act in any other way would be irresponsible. The motion which I propose to move at the conclusion of this statement will therefore seek to disapprove that part of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 which provides for the increase in additional salary and special expenses of office allowances.

We look to the support of the opposition for this motion as the future of the economy is bleak and several constraints will be placed on public sector spending in the 1986-87 budget. It is time for the office-holders of this parliament to give an example to the rest of the community - an example, by

the way, that Mr Hawke's Special Minister for State and president elect of the federal Labor Party does not seem to believe is necessary. I note that Mr Young was widely reported recently as saying politicians should be paid an extra \$150 a week; that is, \$7800 a year. Unlike Mr Young, the minister responsible for the federal Remuneration Tribunal, we are aware that the country is crying out for restraint, and we are trying to do something about it.

The government notes that the determination provides that future rates of additional salary and special expenses of office allowances should be adjusted in accordance with subsequent national wage case decisions. The government has no argument with this. The government considers that members' travelling allowances, electorate allowances and entitlements, as proposed in the determination, should also remain, as they are designed to reimburse the legitimate costs of members incurred in respect of Legislative Assembly duties and in servicing their electorates.

Mr Deputy Speaker, prior to moving a motion in relation to office-holders of this Assembly, I will deal with the matter of the judges and magistrates as their remuneration etc was dealt with by the tribunal in the same review. With respect to the judges, the tribunal notes that, in the past, their salaries have been closely aligned with those of Federal Court judges. The tribunal has maintained this relationship by recommending application of the national wage case increases since the last review. However, the tribunal notes that the increase in the number of judges, the establishment of the court as a Northern Territory appointed bench and the imminent introduction of an appeal court constituted within Northern Territory Supreme Court resources, all add weight to the need for a review of the remuneration of the Chief Justice. The tribunal further notes that the relationship of the chief judge to judges in other jurisdictions disposes that a chief judge usually enjoys a differential of between 8% and 10% above a judge. The tribunal accordingly recommends such an adjustment and the government endorses the proposal.

The salary increases recommended for magistrates by the tribunal similarly apply the national wage case increases since the last review and the government also endorses this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to move the motion in relation to additional salary and special expenses of office allowances contained in Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986.

Leave granted.

#### MOTION

#### Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly disapprove clause 1.2 of Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 and the words 'specified in clause 1.2' contained in clause 11 of the same determination.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. I rise to indicate the support of the opposition for the motion. It would be surprising if I did not support it because the terms of the motion are precisely consistent with the course of action that we advocated that the government should take on this matter last year. What I said, and I remember it well, was that I saw value in the retention of the tribunal rather than a return to the old system of this parliament setting its own salaries and allowances which existed previously. Some of the older members, particularly

those burnt out old hulks that are now occupying the government's backbench ...

Mr Perron: He's only a shadow of his former self.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, you will remember the old system whereby we simply had an across-the-board division of electorates into urban or rural. It simply was not fair because the actual costs of servicing those electorates varied enormously from one to another.

The tribunal serves a useful function. I believe that Norm Campbell carries out his responsibilities very well. Members have an opportunity to place a case before him and, provided they can substantiate with evidence any claim that their costs are above the allowance, he will listen. This gives a degree of flexibility that we support.

Having said that, as I did when we attempted to disallow the 11.4% pay increase, I believe the appropriate way to operate in future would be to peg both the basic salary of members and the special allowances of office to the national wage case, and to allow flexibility for the tribunal's determinations in respect of electoral allowances. That is consistent with the motion which the Chief Minister has placed before the Assembly, and I indicate the opposition's support for it.

Motion agreed to.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following message from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to make interim provision for the appropriation of moneys out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year ended 30 June 1987.

Dated this 10th day of June 1986.

E.E. Johnston  
Administrator

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the determination of the motion for the second reading of the bill before the lapse of one month from today.

Motion agreed to.

#### SUPPLY BILL 1986-87 (Serial 189)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Authority to spend moneys under the 1985-86 Appropriation Act lapses on 30 June 1986. Therefore, legislation is necessary before that date to provide for expenditure between then and the passage of the 1986-87 Appropriation Bill. The Supply Bill provides for expenditure during the first 5 months of the financial year, with sufficient funds being provided to ensure the continuation of capital works programs, road works and normal services of government. It does not foreshadow the budget for 1986-87, although the manner of calculation of the provisions made in the Supply Bill must have regard to the estimated cost of ongoing services for the first 5 months.

The bill provides for the total expenditure of \$579.599m allocated by division and subdivision to the various departments and authorities. The significant items include: capital works sponsored by departments - \$56.1m; repairs and maintenance, including roads, highways and buildings - \$15.7m; the construction and loans programs of the Housing Commission - \$38m; education, including colleges - \$89.7m; and health - \$59.8m. In addition, the bill contains an appropriation of \$40m entitled 'Advance to Treasurer' from which the Treasurer may allocate funds for the purposes specified in the bill, including provision for the cost of inflation.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 193)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, given my previous involvement in local government, I am pleased to introduce, as my first bill, a matter relating to local government.

The Local Government Act is one of the largest pieces of legislation in existence in the Northern Territory. It contains over 300 sections and establishes the provisions by which a major sphere of government in the Northern Territory works. It allows for the proper workings of local government, providing the greatest power possible to that sphere of government, and minimum interference by the Territory government in local government affairs.

I am also pleased to be able, as minister, to complete a cycle begun when I participated in the development of the new act as an alderman on the Darwin City Council, and later continued as a backbencher commenting on the bill. Now, as minister, I have the opportunity to administer the new act and to introduce such finetuning amendments as are before the Assembly at this time. The majority of the changes and advances made in the new act have stood the test of a year of intensive scrutiny. During this last year, regulations have been prepared which will provide the administrative detail required in this area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I now bring to the attention of the Assembly some of the specific changes made by the bill. Clause 4 will be a source of considerable interest to the people of the Shire of Litchfield who have asked consistently to be allowed to call their mayor and aldermen by the titles of president and councillors, in a way similar to that which is used in shires in

some of the states. Clause 4 will allow a council to decide by resolution what it wants to call its mayor, deputy mayor and aldermen. The title selected will not affect the roles required of a mayor, deputy mayor and alderman in the act and regulations.

Clauses 5, 6, 7 and 8 make a number of changes to sections of the act relating to the conduct of elections. During the process of development of regulations, which I noted earlier, it has been found necessary to amend the act to ensure that sufficient power is provided to support regulations in close conformity with the provisions of the Northern Territory Electoral Act. Members may recall that, in introducing this bill, my predecessor mentioned the advance which was being made in the Territory through the provision of joint electoral rolls for local, Territory and federal elections. In this regard, it is clearly necessary and desirable to obtain the highest possible degree of consistency between the various electoral regulations which occur. Changes to these clauses have been found to be necessary to ensure that consistency can be carried through without risk to the validity of future council elections.

Clauses 9 and 10 deal with minor difficulties relating to the power of councils to act as trustees of reserves. In particular, clause 10 clarifies that a council may be appointed as the trustee of a reserve and exercise the powers, authorities and duties of trustees appointed pursuant to the Crown Lands Act.

Clause 11 contains the only major change in the bill in that, effectively, it curtails the power provided under section 95 of the new Local Government Act for councils to acquire property compulsorily. Mr Deputy Speaker, as minister responsible for local government, I wish to provide to councils the greatest possible power to administer the functions of government provided to them. I recognise, however, the need to ensure that the Territory government maintains a degree of control over proposals to acquire property compulsorily. The change to section 95 of the act will allow a council to apply to the minister administering the Lands Acquisition Act requesting that land specified in the application be acquired. This will ensure that councils go through that process of public hearings and consultation which any other area of the Northern Territory government is required to complete. This process leading to acquisition is similar in all Australian states and the Commonwealth.

Clause 12 provides a protection to members and officers of municipal councils in similar terms to that which is provided already in the act for members and officers of community government councils. Clause 13 simply tidies up definitions which were provided in the community government area as part VIII of the act to clarify the definition of 'resident'. The definition will be amended slightly to remove the requirement that persons live continuously in an area for 3 months. Instead, it is proposed to require that a person who ordinarily resides in an area for 3 months be considered a resident. This is considered to be a more realistic provision in that it will allow for greater flexibility and be less capable of harsh interpretation.

Clause 14 will introduce a new division of part VIII of the Local Government Act. This division will allow for the statutory incorporation of a Northern Territory community government association in similar terms to that statutory incorporation which is provided for the Northern Territory Local Government Association by section 83 in part III of the act. Members will note that, unlike the remainder of the bill, this section will commence on a date to be specified by the Administrator. The reason for this difference in



commencement is quite simply that the Northern Territory community government association does not exist. Although this device may appear strange at first sight, it is the government's very firm intention that community and municipal governments be treated completely equally as streams of local government in the Northern Territory.

Currently, the Northern Territory Local Government Association has a membership which consists only, as I understand it, of municipal bodies. I am further advised that the existing community government councils have not accepted an invitation to join the Northern Territory Local Government Association, possibly because they do not see it as necessarily the best means of representing their particular interests. It is the government's wish that the facility should be available for community government councils to achieve statutory incorporation for a community government association which can represent their interests in the range of discussions which might reasonably be brought before such a body.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I stress that it is by no means the government's intention to force or in any way coerce community government councils to join either a community government association or the Local Government Association. It is simply that I wish to ensure that the option is available and that, should community government councils opt to form their own association, that association will receive statutory incorporation equal to that currently accorded to the Northern Territory Local Government Association. I note also that the formation of such a body will dovetail into another bill, which will be introduced at the next sittings, relating to the creation of a Northern Territory grants commission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is proposed that this bill proceed through all stages and commence on 1 July 1986. This apparent haste is intended to achieve the effect of allowing the new Local Government Act 1985 to take full effect from 1 July 1986 in as workable and reasonable a form as is possible by that date. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken by the public service and local councils who have participated during the long gestation period of this new act. I consider that it would be regrettable if these relatively minor amendments were not available for insertion into the new act on its date of introduction. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn to a day and hour to be fixed by the Speaker, which day and hour shall be notified to each member in writing.

This is necessary so that, if something happens tomorrow morning and prorogation is not declared before 10 o'clock, we will not have to come back at 10 am.

Motion agreed to.

#### MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 184)

Continued from 26 March 1986.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to make a few comments in relation to this bill as the opposition spokesman on transport and works. I note that this bill introduces the concept of a pastoral vehicle permit which will be available for vehicles presently unregistered which are used on pastoral properties. It will permit their use on public streets in 3 categories. Of course, 'public street' is a technical phrase. There are not too many streets on pastoral land that will come within the ambit of the term 'public street' in the mind of the general public. It is a technical phrase in this context. This permit can be used when travelling from one part of a property to another for the purpose of management and operation of that property. It has to be specified in the permit when the vehicle or its occupants are involved in a fire management operation or an operation relating to the control of a bushfire.

We note also that a prescribed fee, plus a compensation contribution, will be payable in respect of a permit and that a permit remains in force for 12 months. A pastoral permit will be transferable to another vehicle on the payment of a transfer fee and a vehicle in respect of which a permit is issued, renewed or transferred must comply with certain approved standards. I might say, in passing, that I very much appreciated the opportunity of a briefing from departmental officers in relation to this bill. It greatly enhanced my understanding of the gestation of this bill.

We note also that the bill provides that a permit shall be issued subject to conditions set by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, that identification plates will be issued for vehicles in respect of which a permit is granted and that, of course, these must be affixed to the vehicle. The bill provides that it is an offence to affix the plates for use in any other circumstances or to drive the vehicle on public streets, other than those on which it is permitted, or contrary to the conditions of the permit. That allays one of the concerns of the opposition because, quite clearly, the permit could conceivably be abused were it not for this particular provision. I believe it is contained in clause 7 which inserts a new section 137B(13). It says that the onus is on the holder of the permit to prove that the vehicle in which an offence was committed was being driven on a public street pursuant to subsection (11). One can imagine that the legislation might be capable of abuse by a holder of a permit. He may think: 'I would like to visit Fred who lives 500 miles away. If I give this a bit of thought, I will be able to use the hitherto unregistered vehicle'. Such concerns are allayed by the clause to which I have referred. The onus will be on the holder of the pastoral vehicle permit to demonstrate that his use is a bona fide use. It is a reasonable provision. Also, it will enable appropriate insurance arrangements. I can think of a particular accident that occurred on a pastoral lease in my electorate. It is eminently sensible that permits should be issued in this way.

Given the nature of my electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker, the only other comment I have is that perhaps some consideration could be given by the honourable minister to legislating for a vehicle permit on Aboriginal land. I appreciate that this particular legislation has been the subject of representations to the government by the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association because it is a matter of concern to cattlemen. I do not offer it entirely in a risible sense but, quite clearly, vehicles that are used solely on Aboriginal land might justify some sort of similar legislative mechanism.

With those few comments, I advise the honourable minister that the opposition takes some pleasure in supporting this bill. In closing, I note one further thing. The amendment that the honourable minister circulated this morning is purely technical and is supported by the opposition.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, some 27 years ago, I was involved with the construction of a youth hall in Victor Harbour in South Australia. One of the local farmers brought his tractor to help level some ground and clear the area. To reach the area, he had to drive on the streets of the town. He and 2 or 3 others were stopped by a policeman as they were on their way home. Unfortunately, the others, being honest types, admitted that they had driven the tractor on the road. The end result for those 4 people was a total fine in the order of 100 pounds which, at a time when the basic wage was 14 or 15 pounds a week, was a considerable sum. We felt that was very unfair. They had been working to help the youth of the town and were unfairly penalised. With the wisdom of the years, one comes to appreciate the legal implications had an accident occurred. At that time in South Australia, the only way the use could have been legal was if the tractor had been registered and insured for a full 12-month period.

The same situation has been occurring in the Territory for many years. If people on a station have a public road through the property, they break the law if they cross the road, let alone ride along it, in an unregistered vehicle. I am very pleased to speak to this proposal for a pastoral vehicle permit which will enable insurance cover for vehicles on pastoral and agricultural properties. The cost of the permit will be minimal because, if it is not, the pastoralists will not bother to register the hack trucks, bulldozers, graders or the motorbikes used for rounding up cattle. This pastoral vehicle permit will enable pastoralists to obtain insurance cover for vehicles operating on their own property or on roads connecting parts of the property.

I believe the effectiveness of this legislation will depend greatly on how much is charged for the permits. If it is half the price of vehicle registration, it will obviously be much less effective than if the price is 10% of the normal registration fee. I would suggest that, in general, the risk factor in driving on or crossing these roads is pretty low, and I would support the lowest possible fee. I note, in clause 5, that the minister may vary the fee. I trust that he will keep it as low as possible in order to gain support from pastoralists. It is better to have the vehicles covered by insurance. I believe it will be a matter of persuasion rather than a matter of force.

I would note also, as a side issue, that the pastoral vehicle permit insurance does not cover vehicles which are driven off-road. I believe that is also the situation with a fully registered vehicle. If you are driving off the beaten track, your insurance does not apply. Many people are not aware of that. Once you are on private property, away from a public road as defined in the principal act, you are no longer covered.

The definition of 'fire management operation' in clause 4 is fairly broad. I would like to see some provision for meetings to determine tactics on how to combat a fire, or to plan for burnbacks and other fire prevention measures.

Clause 7 refers to a proposed new section 137B which defines in detail the pastoral vehicle permit. As the member for MacDonnell commented on this in detail, I will not repeat it. I am a little concerned, however, about subsection (6) of that proposed new section, which says:

The Registrar shall not grant or renew a pastoral vehicle permit under subsection (1), or transfer a pastoral vehicle permit under subsection (3), unless he is satisfied the motor vehicle to which it relates complies with the approved standards.

This seems to imply that the registrar must be satisfied that the vehicle has been inspected. If one reads the minister's second-reading speech, it is clear that his intention was to minimise bureaucracy and so minimise the cost of introducing this pastoral vehicle permit. A possible course of action would be to set minimum standards covering such things as brakes, lights, mudguards and so forth. In discussions with officers, I have been informed that these minimum standards are to be set in regulations applying to the various types of vehicles. Possibly, police in the respective areas could visit pastoralists seeking permits and inspect the vehicles. However, that still involves a bureaucratic cost. I would prefer that the onus be placed on the person applying for the permit. His application for a permit would state that he accepts full responsibility for maintaining the vehicle at the minimum standard at least. This would save time and cost in inspection of the vehicle. If the vehicle is not maintained at that level, and it is involved in an accident, the insurance would become void. That should be made perfectly clear to the applicant. It would keep costs to a minimum.

In subsection (11) of proposed section 137B the word 'street' is used. I found that rather amusing. Of course, if you look at the principal act, the word 'street' is defined. It includes all the roads, including little bush tracks. It is unfortunate that the term was used, but there it is.

My last point is in relation to proposed new section 137B(11)(b) which relates to a vehicle being used outside of the area to which the permit covering it applies. I have trouble with the word 'endorsed'. I do not see why a vehicle needs to be endorsed. You do not know what vehicle you will be using on a station property. You might have half a dozen that could be used for the fighting of fires. You may intend to obtain a permit endorsement for them but, lo and behold, while you are out on a motorbike rounding up cattle, you see a fire on a neighbouring property and don't do anything about it because your vehicle is not endorsed. People on stations are practical. They will not worry about the law in emergency situations. I just do not see any point in having this extra endorsement.

In an emergency, any vehicle should have the right to go off the property to attend to it, whether it be fire, accident or whatever. Insurance should cover all of those situations. If it has its PVP, let it go outside if there is an emergency. That is the practical approach and it is the way the people in the bush will operate anyway. It is the way they are doing it today. If someone cuts his hand badly with a chainsaw, will people worry about getting a registered vehicle to take him to the nearest medical attention when they have an unregistered vehicle handy? No fear. They will jump in and go. That is common sense. That is the sort of thing that people in the bush would appreciate. I believe that endorsement is totally unnecessary in that situation.

We have safeguards in the remaining part of the bill which require people to justify their use of vehicles outside of permitted areas. For bushfires, accidents and the like, common sense would dictate that it would be justified to take them out of the area covered by the permit. I suggest that the word 'endorsed' be deleted.

With those remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill. The pastoral industry has been looking for it for a long time. My colleague, the honourable member for Koolpinyah, has been talking about it for many years. I am delighted to be able to support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, in his second-reading speech on 26 March, the minister at the time stated that, under the proposed scheme, a vehicle could be utilised for fire control purposes early in the dry to minimise bushfire risk and that guidelines for this situation would be developed in consultation with the Bushfires Council. That was 3 months ago. Obviously, they would have been developed by now. I was very disappointed that they were not tabled today so that we could have a better look at how the scheme would work in practice. The minister may be able to give us an assurance that he will provide us with copies next week.

Mr Dondas: Why worry? It is only a small amendment allowing pastoral vehicles to play around on properties. The Bushfires Council is already involved.

Mr EDE: It seems as though I have stirred up a bit of a hornet's nest here. By his interjection, is the minister saying that he has not developed the guidelines? We have had a 3-month period in which it could have been done. Has nothing been done? Surely that is not the case. Surely they have been developed and surely the minister will be able to assure us that he will provide a copy of them to us next week.

I was a bit disturbed by some of the statements of the honourable member for Sadadeen. He appeared to be talking about a fairly significant broadening of what I see as the purpose behind this bill: the ability to attend planning meetings etc. I assume that most of these people have at least one registered motor vehicle on their property. I know that is the case in my electorate. As I understood it, and I hope that I am correct, this is not some sort of general exemption that is being given to the pastoral industry as a subsidy of some nature. That seems to be what the honourable member was advocating.

As I understand it, the legislation relates to specific-purpose vehicles such as water trucks, graders and 4-wheel-drive people-carriers that may be used to move people rapidly to a fire outbreak. It should not allow a bloke at Humbert River to ring up his mate at Curtin Springs and ask for permission to come down and inspect his firebreaks because he feels like having a look at Yulara. My colleague assures me that, even if we have joint ownership of properties, the people actually doing the travelling must, upon request, justify it. I will be very interested to see just how this works in practice over the next couple of years. I think that there is definitely a need for a provision of this nature. I support it.

However, it is a matter of just how far to provide the balance in this type of service. For example, it may be unnecessary for a passenger vehicle to have an endorsement which would allow it to be used for fire management programs such as the making of firebreaks. That particular endorsement would be provided only for graders or vehicles rated for that purpose.

The opposition will be keeping an eye on the operation of the scheme to ensure it is administered in a manner which is fair to the pastoral industry and in line with the spirit of the legislation which we are supporting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak today, I would like to preface my remarks by saying that everything comes to she who waits or, alternatively, patience in politics is a virtue. It has been about 6 years since I first raised this matter. I am very pleased to be speaking today in support of this legislation.

After listening to the speakers from the other side, without extending myself too much, I reckon I have forgotten more about this sort of thing than they will ever know. The shadow spokesman for transport and works really should get a little more into the spirit of the legislation.

In his second-reading speech, the minister appeared to be rather restrictive in his description of where these vehicles will be used. I hope that the minister's restrictions will not be carried out to the letter in the implementation of this legislation. I have great faith in the Bushfires Council. I hope that it will recognise the restrictions as presented and adopt a commonsense approach to what the minister has said. The minister talked about allowing vehicles on pastoral or agricultural leases. Whilst I have no argument with these vehicles being on pastoral or agricultural leases, I would like to point out that there are pastoral and agricultural freehold properties. I assume the minister knew what he was speaking about at the time, but he appeared to be rather restrictive in his description.

Members who preceded me failed to mention in any detail the matter of public roads and public streets on pastoral properties. Many years ago, I had several discussions with legal people on what constitutes a public road. There were several opinions, ranging from one extreme to the other. One opinion was that a public road could be declared when the second vehicle passes over it. That is one extreme of the definition of a 'public road'. The other extreme is that it is a public road if the public is used to travelling or it even if it is on freehold property. There are those 2 extremes, with various other definitions of a 'public road' in between.

The legislation seeks to help the pastoral and agricultural industries in the Northern Territory. The honourable member for Stuart was a bit concerned that this was another hidden subsidy to the pastoral industry. What the hell does it matter, if it is a help? Of course, it will help the pastoral industry. It will help it to get on with the work of trying to earn an honest dollar. Everybody knows that, with the present government in Canberra, that is becoming more and more difficult. It will assist in fire management on pastoral and agricultural properties. If the honourable member has ever been involved in fighting a bushfire, he would know that any help is greatly welcomed. I cannot remember how many fires we have had on our place, and ours is only a very small property.

The member for Macdonnell touched on the subject of Aboriginal land. The matter of Aboriginal land in relation to legislation such as this would certainly lead us to a Pandora's box. We all know that there appear to be 2 different laws in the Northern Territory thanks to our federal counterparts: one for Aboriginal land tenure and another for the rest of us. I have not really given much thought to fire prevention or how this legislation would affect Aboriginal land or public roads. I have considerable faith in the advice of the Bushfires Council because, over years of working actively with it, I know it to be a group of very sensible people whose fire prevention techniques are among the most advanced in Australia.

This legislation will go some way towards helping the pastoral and agricultural industries. I would like to refer to an actual example which concerned a gentleman at Adelaide River. This gentleman had a property which was divided by the Stuart Highway. Every time he took his tractor or a piece of unregistered farm machinery from one side of the highway to the other, he was supposed to obtain a permit from the local police. I think he was growing watermelons at the time. At that time, it cost him something like \$13 each time. In all probability, he did not obtain a permit every time and I would

not blame him because the poor chap had a living to make. I am very pleased that this legislation will give such people a general permit for the year to conduct agricultural or pastoral business on their properties and to drive across highways.

The member for Sadadeen expressed some concern about insurance in relation to such vehicles travelling on public roads. People who belong to volunteer bushfire brigades under the control of the Bushfires Council and the Fire Brigade have special insurance conditions applied to their volunteer status. A former Chief Minister undertook to make ex gratia payments available to such people in relation to injury to themselves or others and damage to property. The honourable member was concerned also about an endorsement on a permit. He said that, during a bushfire, a property owner might be on a motorbike and want to go to help his mate but find it too far to go back to the homestead for a vehicle. That might well be classed as an emergency. The reality of the situation is that one would be aware of a bushfire in the area through telephonic communication with neighbours or from seeing the smoke. Whilst a property owner or employee might be on a motorbike, it is more likely that he would be in a normal work vehicle equipped to help in fighting a fire. By 'equipped', I mean a 4-wheel-drive vehicle with a water tank or manual fire-fighting equipment.

In his closing remarks, the member for Stuart spoke of his concern about the extension of these pastoral permits to people-carrier vehicles in emergency fire situations. I do not know what he meant by 'people-carrier vehicles', but if he was talking about vehicles that carry anything from 14 to 27 people, it would be stretching reality a bit to believe that all those people were going to fight a fire. They might be, but I seriously doubt it. In the situations that we are talking about, fire-fighting and ordinary pastoral situations, those people-carrier vehicles would not be covered. They ought to be covered by ordinary road insurance and ordinary registration conditions.

I believe that this legislation is adequate. It is certainly a great improvement on the current situation. I believe it could go a wee bit further, but only time will tell whether that will be necessary. I am talking about the case where a vehicle with a pastoral vehicle permit is driven on a public street as a matter of necessity even though it is not registered for that purpose. I am not necessarily referring to a fire emergency, which is covered under this legislation. Bill Smith from one property can go to help his mate, Bert Brown, fight a fire on another property, despite the fact that his vehicle may not be registered to drive on a public street. There could be situations where a person on a pastoral property finds it necessary to go to another property without having his pastoral vehicle permit suitably endorsed. I am trying to think of an example. It could be where cattle have broken through fences or something of that nature. No doubt, if this situation does arise, change will be sought by the relevant primary producer organisations.

I support the legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, and hope that it does what it is intended to do: help the pastoral industry.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, as has been indicated by other speakers from the opposition, we certainly support the flexibility that this legislation will give to various people who must use public roads in the course of their work and who would not otherwise have those vehicles registered. I certainly support those provisions of the legislation.

However, my constituents and I have a peculiar problem because we all live on a lease. We must have all our vehicles registered but, because we live on a lease, none of that motor vehicle registration revenue is used to upgrade the roads in our community. Our lease is private property, and the minister has pointed this out to me on a number of occasions. We cannot have Beagle Circuit sealed because it is on private property. I would like to see flexibility introduced into the legislation so that, in cases where work needs to be done on a heavily-used section of road in Nhulunbuy, the roadwork can be done by the Northern Territory government, with a contribution from motor vehicle registration fees paid by residents of Nhulunbuy. The sad fact is that, because of the government's attitude and the fact that there are still 18 months till the next election, we will not have any roadworks done in the immediate future. No roadworks will be undertaken because Nhulunbuy is on a lease. We have to pay motor vehicle registration, which is not cheap, but we get nothing for it.

Mr Palmer: What about the access road?

Mr LEO: Yes, certainly. There is a road being developed between Nhulunbuy and Lake Evella and, optimistically, over a long period of time, it will be developed further through to Katherine. Of course that is happening. But that is nothing more than Territorians in other places get. We do not receive any funding for roadworks in and around Nhulunbuy unless, as I say, it happens to be an election promise. I would like to see flexibility built into legislation to allow my constituents to enjoy the same rights and privileges as constituents throughout the rest of the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak briefly on this essential amendment to the Motor Vehicles Act. I have been aware for some time of the difficulty many pastoralists have in carrying out management work on their properties. Of course, when they are fighting fires, they have a problem in moving around with the sorts of vehicles they have on their properties. On properties that include major or secondary roads, there is also a problem in carrying out bull catches which involve traversing those roads. That problem has been conveyed to me by many people in the bush, including farmers and police as well as pastoralists.

Police at both Timber Creek and Pine Creek have brought the problem to my notice on a number of occasions over the last couple of years. They indicated to me that pastoralists generally seek permits to traverse roads, and I would disagree with the honourable member for Koolpinyah who said they had to get a permit every time they had to cross the road. In fact, they have to get a permit to cross roads between certain hours, and that might be for a period of 24 hours or less, depending on the type of permit they obtain. That costs about \$13 but they can traverse the road on a number of occasions in that time. Most people try to obtain permits but, with communications being what they are in the bush, it is often very difficult to get to the police station. As a consequence, often as a result of frustration, they will go on the road with an unregistered vehicle.

I do not see any real problems with the amendments as proposed. I think that they fit the circumstances quite adequately. I expect that the permits will be available to all sorts of people. Certainly, in cases where Aboriginal people are on land that they use for cattle or farming purposes, they will have access to this same amended legislation.

I said before that I thought permits had been used responsibly. Of course, the onus to use the permit system responsibly has always rested with



the person seeking the permit. You can phone for a permit, obtain it by phone and pay for it even later. But the onus has always been on the person seeking the permit to ensure that he remains within the bounds of its conditions. That has not changed.

There has been a change recently. The people at Adelaide River to whom the member for Koolpinyah referred have had this problem. The responsibility of local police to issue permits was withdrawn and permits could be obtained from Darwin, Alice Springs or other major centres only. That became quite a problem because, if someone required a permit, he had to come to Darwin to get it. Often that meant coming up the day before the permit was required. That was rather inconvenient for many people.

I believe that the amendment is essential. It is certainly not out of kilter with legislation in the states. The states have very similar legislation to this to allow people to travel on roads with unregistered vehicles. The permits allow the vehicles to be covered by insurance. I commend the bill.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, under the administrative arrangements of the Hatton ministry, I advise the Assembly that I am the minister in charge of this bill. Briefly, I would like to thank honourable members for their contributions in regard to this legislation which allows for the registry to issue 12-month, renewable permits for unregistered vehicles to be used for work purposes on public roads within a pastoral or agricultural property or on roads connecting parts of the same property, and for bushfire control purposes on roads outside the property. Most honourable members have canvassed those 2 points widely during this afternoon's debate.

The honourable member for Sadadeen expressed concern about proposed section 137B(6). Under the proposed scheme, the vehicle will be required to comply with the minimum safety standards which apply to that class of vehicle. The honourable member also expressed some concern in regard to endorsements. Whilst I will take his comments into consideration, I am quite happy at some future stage to assess the legislation to see whether there is any need to reconsider it. In practice, it is most unlikely that prosecutions would be commenced in any of the legitimate situations described by members; that is, where pastoral property owners are using their vehicles in emergencies. The intention of the government to try to assist these particular people should be commended by all. There is sufficient power in other legislation, specifically the Bushfires Act, for a fire control officer and a fire warden to perform any act necessary for or incidental to controlling a bushfire or protecting life and property. That is covered under section 50 of the Bushfires Act. Provided, therefore, that the driver in charge of a vehicle is acting under the direction of such a person, a defence to a prosecution would be easily established. I think that those comments should alleviate the concern of most members.

In response to the member for Stuart, this amendment will allow an annual permit to be issued to identify unregistered vehicles and to allow those vehicles to travel on roads within a particular pastoral or agricultural property or on other roads connecting parts of the same property for work purposes. An extension of this permit or a separate permit to permit use of an unregistered vehicle on public roads for the purpose of bushfire control are subject to suitable controls as well.

More importantly, the member asked about the guidelines relating to the legislation. I am informed by my officers that we cannot finalise the

guidelines until the legislation is passed because, if the bill were amended in a drastic way, we would have to reassess the guidelines. I would be quite happy to drop him a note explaining the discussions we have had with the relevant bodies.

I have covered most of the points that honourable members raised. It is very pleasing to have the support of all honourable members for what I consider to be an innovative piece of legislation which certainly will help many people in the rural areas by providing a service to them and also to the community. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

Clause 4:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 67.1.

Basically, it relates to a printing error in proposed section 137B. '137AB(1)' should read 137B(1)'.  
'137AB(1)' should read 137B(1)'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the third reading of the bill be taken later.

Motion agreed to.

UNIT TITLES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 169)  
REAL PROPERTY (UNIT TITLES) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 170)

Continued from 26 March 1986.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make some comments in relation to this fairly complex legislation. I note that a previous draft of this legislation was tabled by the erstwhile Minister for Lands in September last year. These cognate bills were introduced during the March sittings of the Legislative Assembly. The 2 bills relate to the principle of subdivision. In passing, I would like to register my appreciation for the information given to me at a briefing by 2 senior members of the honourable minister's department. As a result of the time I spent with them, my understanding both of the legislation and its operations was greatly enhanced.

I will commence my comments by referring to some of the principles involved and my understanding of some of the difficulties that can arise as a result of subdivision. It should be recalled that subdivision per se is a common law right. I refer honourable members to a 1981 case in British Columbia, *Skewes v the Superintendent of Insurance*. These comments were made:

The right to subdivide is an incident of the right of ownership to land. The right to subdivide real property, to sell a part rather than the whole, is an ordinary incident of ownership. Various restrictions limiting this right have been established by a statute for the salutary reason that the unrestricted exercise of such a right can create hardship to other landowners and to municipal corporations. No one can question the necessity of such controls. Nevertheless, such restrictions are in derogation of common law rights and, where they are sought to be imposed by municipal bylaw, clear statutory authority must be shown. The inference with a vested right must, as was stated by Mr Justice Wilson, be authorised by clear and unequivocal language in a statute.

The circumstance here is that people have an inherent right to subdivide land that they own but they must not affect the amenity of neighbours or the people who are to live on that subdivided land. Quite obviously, particular problems can occur. For example, if somebody seeking to buy a subdivided property does not have a contract drawn up to buy a particular unit on a particular basis and finds subsequently that he did not understand or was misled about the basis on which he bought the unit, he may or may not have a legitimate grievance that may or may not be a cause for civil action. A case of that nature was the subject of litigation in the Supreme Court of Queensland - *Bassingthwaite v Bupp* in 1982.

Mr B. Collins: And Bupp.

Mr BELL: I appreciate the correction from the Leader of the Opposition. I do not pretend any great understanding of the proprieties of referring to these cases. I appreciate his efforts to re-educate me in that regard.

The basic problem was that one of the litigants entered a contract to purchase a flat. After he had negotiated the contract, he believed that his interests had been materially affected by a change in the number of flats in the development. One can imagine the circumstances under which this would be a cause for concern. If one imagined one was buying 1 of 2 units and then found out that 102 were to be built on a particular property, one could arguably say that one had been deceived. However, I can only wonder at the argument that must have been put by *Bassingthwaite* that his rights had been materially affected because the number of units built was 63 and not 62 as had been stated in the contract of sale. That is perhaps not such a clear case where one can believe the litigant was seriously affected but it is not difficult to imagine circumstances under which that may very well be the case.

A similar matter of concern can arise in the use of community property. Perhaps here we are coming a little closer to the legislation that is before us. In a case before the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1981, *Northwind Pty Ltd* and the proprietors of *Strata Plan 3143*, there was a dispute evidently about the use and enjoyment of common property created by a particular strata subdivision. It was determined that a person who is entitled to the use and enjoyment of that common property can enforce that right by Supreme Court proceedings. That is the sort of context in which this particular legislation finds itself.

I do not intend to take up an excessive amount of the Assembly's time by going through the bill clause by clause. But I think that a few general principles involved need to be raised in a second-reading debate on this particular matter. First of all, it must be pointed out that, as there are changing needs in the community in respect of strata titles, subdivisions and so on, the law has to change to reflect those particular changing needs.

One of the key changes introduced by this legislation is the staging of unit developments. These are termed in the bill by the extraordinarily unfortunate phrase 'condominium developments'. I think 'condominium' is a distinctly un-Australian term that should not be encouraged in common parlance, let alone dignified by insertion in legislation. I am quite sure my opinions in that regard are shared by others who have some interest in this legislation.

Basically, the idea of staged development is quite a new one in the Australian experience. This legislation will introduce in the Territory provisions that have applied in the states. I may be wrong, but I think most Australian states have legislation of this sort. The purpose is to enable a developer of a large project to manage the cash flow for it in such a way that he will be able to provide the development that he envisages and meet the needs of people seeking that sort of accommodation.

However, in reflecting on the New South Wales case earlier, I mentioned disputes over common property. It is easy to see that disputes are more likely to arise where a development is staged in that way because what is common property for people in the early stage of the development has to be confirmed in future stages. The same applies to future buyers in relation to previous stages. The legislative framework has to be established to enable that to happen.

One can imagine difficulties arising in these troubled financial times. A developer may run out of funds, change his mind or, for whatever reason, fail to satisfy a purchaser in the initial stage of such a development. For that reason, there are quite rigid requirements in relation to disclosure statements that must be appropriately registered by the developer in respect of such staged development to ensure that the purchasers are protected adequately against changes. It is of course possible to vary such disclosures, and the provisions in this particular bill for ensuring that the rights of an individual cannot be overridden are fairly comprehensive. There are various requirements for unanimous agreement amongst purchasers to ensure that their rights are protected.

I think I have addressed the broad issues with respect to these cognate bills. Of course, I have no hesitation in placing on the record the opposition's support for these bills. We note the necessity for the amendments and that they rectify matters that have required attention for some time. They impose greater responsibilities on developers for the protection of unit purchasers in the way I attempted to describe earlier this afternoon.

I note, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the honourable minister circulated some amendments. I am a little concerned about several aspects of these amendments unlike that contained in the previous bill which was purely of a technical nature and about which the opposition had no problem. Some more serious issues are involved in these amendments and I appreciate the offer made by the honourable minister to defer the committee stages of these bills so that more exhaustive debate on the amendments may be carried out. With those few comments, I place on record the opposition's support for this legislation.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Before the timely reminder from the member for MacDonnell of the famous Bassington and ...

Mr Bell: Bassingthwaite.

Mr PALMER: Bassingthwaite. It was a very famous case that was widely reported. Mr Deputy Speaker, my opinion of this legislation may best be paraphrased in the words of Sir Winston Churchill. With 50 pages of amendments, I cannot see that, in the course of legislative endeavour, so much has ever been done before to achieve so little for the benefit of so few. It really is amazing.

I think that it is worth looking at where the original Unit Titles Act came from. It was borrowed from the ACT act which, at that stage ...

Mr Bell: Oh no, that is apostasy, Mick.

Mr PALMER: Do you think so, indeed?

In 1976, in the Northern Territory, basically the urban land tenure system was one of leasehold, and the original legislation was framed around that leasehold tenure. Following the freeholding in 1980, I think it was, of all urban tenures apart from SPLs, it became increasingly apparent that the original legislation was inappropriate for that type of situation.

These amendments rely heavily on the innovative legislation that is in place in Queensland and New South Wales. At the moment, I suppose the major innovation in this legislation is the staged development, the condominium-type development, whereby we allow a development to proceed in stages and the owner to sell off units to maintain his cash flow so that the company undertaking the development remains much more buoyant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this legislation clarifies a number of definitions and phrases so that they will be uniform with those more commonly used in the states. That will allow easier understanding of our legislation by interstate developers and those moving into the Territory for that purpose.

The legislation allows also for the acquisition and disposal of common property, the subdivision or consolidation of existing units and or common property, and allows for the subsequent reassessment of the individual unit entitlements. It is a very necessary right for the body corporate to be able to work and dispose of property, to be able to deal in property, and to be able to trade in property. With those few short words, Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I never cease to be amazed at the eloquent humour or the humorous eloquence of the member for MacDonnell. I believed him to be a linguist, but now I learn that he is a bush lawyer as well. Nevertheless, I really enjoy the way he puts his words together from time to time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during the past 10 years, we have witnessed unprecedented growth and development in the Northern Territory. This has manifested itself in many ways, but perhaps in none more obvious than in the construction of dwellings. One only has to recall, for example, the size of Darwin prior to Cyclone Tracy and compare that to the modern city of today to confirm the staggering growth that has occurred. Also, we have witnessed a change of approach in methods of construction. Prior to Cyclone Tracy, we saw the stereotyped public service fibro dwellings on stilts and Housing Commission brick homes at ground level and, of course, the architecturally-unattractive blocks of flats to be seen in Nightcliff and Stuart Park. Aesthetically, they do not really turn me on at all because, unfortunately, many are just square blocks of flats; they are not landscaped

at all. With hindsight, I think that we could have done much more to ensure that they were developed in a more attractive manner.

However, today we see a wide range of designs and construction materials being used. As well, we have witnessed the change to freehold land, the introduction of private development, the ability to purchase strata title units, the advent of condominium developments, and a whole range of changes to the methods of property ownership. It is easy to appreciate that, with these changes, have come some difficulties due to inadequacies in the legislation currently governing such matters. The purpose of the Unit Titles Amendment Bill and the Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill is to address and rectify these problems and to bring the Northern Territory in line with similar legislation in the states. It has been apparent for some time that our legislation has not kept pace with the rapid changes and the types of property development which have been occurring. Existing legislation was designed to suit basic residential accommodation. Today, we need to cope with a multitude of circumstances ranging from domestic dwellings to large, multi-purpose developments. These changes are also necessary to ensure that we are able to attract major developers. In the case of condominium development, of course, we will be seeking to attract developers from the southern states who may wish to carry out construction in stages, as has been a common practice in Queensland and New South Wales. This type of option is available in the states and we should not restrict our potential by failing to cater for this type of development in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the bills also offer protection to purchasers by requiring the developer to obtain the consent of all members of the body corporate before any alterations can be made to the plans for a particular complex. In other words, he is not able to sign them up to purchase and, at some later stage, amend his development proposals. Because of the complexity of the amendments in these bills, it has been necessary to redefine the responsibilities of the various government departments involved. For example, the Registrar-General carries a major responsibility in this area and clause 9 of the Real Properties (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill defines the duties of that office-holder in detail. Other departments whose operations will be affected by these amendments include those of the Surveyor-General, the Valuer-General and Lands. It will be particularly important to ensure that accurate real property title records are maintained, and this will be done through the computer-based Land Information System.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these bills are the result of considerable consultation with unit owners, developers and the real estate industry as a whole. Since the draft Unit Titles Amendment Bill was tabled on 28 August 1985, a considerable amount of work has been done on addressing the issues raised by interested parties. I believe these bills will satisfy a need and will be most acceptable to the community at large. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the passage of these bills will be an important step for the Northern Territory. Some years ago, we started down the road to bring to the Northern Territory the facility of staged strata titling or staged unit titling. We referred the matter to legal officers to have the necessary legislation prepared. It did not seem too difficult a concept to allow a major development to go ahead in stages and be strata titled, thereby allowing a developer to recoup some funds from the development, in a progressive way, as he sold units so that those funds could be used for further construction. I recall that, after some considerable time, the officers reported that they were having great difficulty in coming

to grips with some of the principles involved in so far as the law was concerned. Therefore, we set about finding out what people elsewhere in Australia were doing in this regard.

I am going back some years and I cannot be specific about the time. We found that, whilst the larger states had looked at staged strata titling and, at that time, some of them had tentatively put their foot in the water, none of the legislation that had been enacted was regarded as good. None of our advisers proposed that we adopt the course followed by any of those states. Indeed, if I understood rightly, the states did not recommend that anyone adopt their legislation as being the ideal. The concept was still evolving in a manner that was yet to satisfy the government that we could be comfortable with it.

Over the years, again and again, we asked officers to reconsider legislation for staged strata titling in the Territory. Eventually, states like New South Wales - and, I think Queensland was mentioned - delved into this matter in great depth and deployed considerable government resources to determine all the problems that could arise in staged strata titling in relation to the protection of the status of the title itself. Title to property should be very secure as one could argue that it is a document that most of economic society revolves around.

Obviously, we have legislation before us now which officers and the Cabinet recognise will allow large-scale developments to proceed under staged strata titling whilst providing the necessary protections for consumers in the future. I will not be surprised to hear some rumbles occurring in the future, when disputes arise between parties that were not foreseen today. It is a matter of great complexity and it is of great interest to any person who becomes involved in purchasing a title, with all the expectations that go with such a title for a purchaser or, indeed, a resident.

I think that this legislation is a significant development in Northern Territory law even if only because it deals with a very complex matter and is treading on somewhat new ground over which even the states, with all their resources, have moved cautiously and only recently.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, under the administrative arrangements of the Hatton ministry, I advise the Assembly that I am the minister in charge of these cognate bills.

I thank honourable members for their contributions this afternoon. Most aspects of the bills have been canvassed by members. I had an opportunity to speak to the member for Macdonnell earlier today and I advised him that we would not be proceeding with the amendment schedule as circulated. I shall seek leave to defer the committee stages of the bills to a later day to allow honourable members the opportunity to examine the amendment schedule.

Mr Deputy Speaker, similar legislation has been enacted in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Most honourable members would remember that a draft copy of this legislation was tabled in August 1985. That was done in an attempt to encourage some comment from the industry, the bodies corporate and builders. Some 25 letters were sent out by the department. Unfortunately, there was not a very good response; only 7 replies were received. I think that 4 indicated satisfaction with the draft legislation and 3 made some constructive comments. However, the response was rather disappointing.

The Unit Titles Amendment Bill will allow staged development of unit title projects and, as honourable members have said this afternoon, that is very important to ensure that we are able to maintain a level of activity, especially within the building industry, in the currently poor economic climate. More importantly, it will afford legislative protection to unit title holders. Many organisations and individual unit owners will benefit by the proposed amendments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the function of Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill is to prescribe the duties of the Registrar-General upon registration of unit plans pursuant to the Unit Titles Act. Because of the proposed amendments to the Unit Titles Act, it is necessary to amend the Real Property (Unit Titles) Act to provide for the duties of the Registrar-General upon, for example, the registration of the secondary subdivision provided for in part IIIA of the Unit Titles Act and the effect of such registration. The Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill provides for this and streamlines other duties of the Registrar-General's Office to accommodate amendments to the Unit Titles Act.

Once again, I thank all members for their contributions and commend the bills.

Motion agreed to, bills read a second time.

Committee stages to be taken later.

#### TABLED PAPER

#### First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the first report of the Sessional Committee on the Environment. Mr Deputy Speaker, the report reads:

At a meeting of the Sessional Committee on the Environment on 20 March 1986, the following amended motion was passed. It read: 'that this committee report to the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly on its decision not to proceed with the previous motion to investigate the health and safety of workers in the uranium industry in the Alligator Rivers region in the Northern Territory. The member for Stuart, Mr Ede, originally raised the matter by moving the following motion:

That this committee (a) pursuant to the powers endowed upon it by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, resolve to conduct formal inquiries into all matters relating to the health and safety of workers involved in the uranium industry in the Northern Territory; (b) advertise its intention to so inquire throughout Australia and to call for submissions to receive evidence, and commission reports by expert witnesses; and (c) report on its progress at subsequent sittings of the Legislative Assembly until it delivers its final report.

This motion was defeated. In support of the motion, the member for Stuart read out a list of alleged improper health and safety occurrences at Ranger. Most of the alleged events were no more than 1 or 2 line statements containing no detail. After discussion of these incidents, Mr Ede undertook to provide committee members with a copy of his allegations.



The member for Stuart's motion was defeated for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was doubt as to the relevance of the committee's terms of reference on most of the allegations. Secondly, Mr Ede admitted the claimed infringements of health and safety practices were allegations and that the details needed investigation to enable members to give the allegations careful consideration. Thirdly, the committee was aware that the following bodies had been established to have an overview, amongst other things, of the uranium industry: the Office of the Supervising Scientist, the Department of Mines and Energy, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the combined body of the Alligator Rivers Coordinating Committee and Ranger environmental officers. The committee was therefore of the opinion that, unless it could be made aware of substantiated evidence of the lack of attention to the health and safety matters at Ranger, a fully-fledged inquiry into these matters was not warranted at this time. Lastly, section (b) of the motion would lead to considerable expense, which was felt to be unwarranted in the light of the multiple groups which already make uranium mining the most carefully monitored and most highly-regulated industry in Australia.

Your committee further felt obliged to report that the member for Stuart asked, by way of motion, to have permission to refer to the committee's deliberations in debate on a similar motion in the Assembly. Mr Ede considered that a conflict of interest had arisen between his membership of committee and his position as shadow minister for mines and energy. After debate, this motion was defeated on the grounds that the member could carry out his duties as shadow minister without reference to sessional committee business. Mr Ede saw fit orally to advise of his intention to resign from the committee, and he left the meeting without providing members with the list of health and safety allegations which he had undertaken to provide.

It was with the aforementioned points in mind that the sessional committee passed the following motion:

That this committee calls upon the shadow minister for mines and energy to supply details of allegations regarding incidents relating to industrial health and safety matters at Ranger for consideration by the committee.

This motion was passed by all members present. The committee's intention was to obtain Mr Ede's allegations in writing, to allow due consideration and permit considered decisions to be made on what action, if any, should be taken on all or any of the allegations raised. The committee made a formal request, in writing, on 2 April 1986 to the member for Stuart in accordance with the motion. A reply was received on Tuesday 10 June 1986. It contained a list of 14 complaints, in the briefest possible form.

The committee, at its meeting on 11 June 1986, has considered each complaint, and will have these appropriately investigated.

D.W.Collins,  
Chairman  
11 June 1986.

Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

My comments will be fairly brief but, I hope, to the point. The member for Stuart, as stated in the report, was requested formally by the committee, in writing, to provide it with some details of his allegations. Those details have not been provided. At about 3.30 pm yesterday, the secretary of the committee received what appeared to be a list of single-sentence complaints similar to the original list.

I will read out some of them to give members an idea of their nature: 'Acid plant operator given a choice of major sulphur dioxide release or a major acid leak; recurring problems such as issue of crane drivers' tickets and asbestos policies; dust leak from top of product bin; ongoing spillage under leach patukas; 2 people bitten by red-back spiders in the past 4 weeks - the area is still not treated'. This list of 14 complaints was given only at the very last minute, without details of dates, times, places and so forth. It makes the committee's job extremely difficult to investigate the complaints.

I know the honourable member may say he has a large electorate, but 2 April was a long time ago. At the meeting on the 18th, he had a list of problems with him. It could have been photocopied and given to us, lacking in detail though it was. My personal opinion is that the honourable member has treated the committee with less cooperation than it deserves. We are more than happy to take on board the complaints which are put to us and to have them investigated. But, when we are treated in this very offhanded manner, we cannot do our job properly and that does not reflect well on either the committee or this Assembly. We will do our best with these 14 complaints and follow them up with the various agencies that supervise the Ranger operation. But, it makes the committee look somewhat ridiculous in the eyes of those people if all it has are one-line allegations without dates, times, places or anything else. I think it was a very pathetic performance by the honourable member for Stuart. In my book, it throws into contempt any suggestion of his deep concern for the health and safety matters out there at Ranger.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the list of complaints that I gave the committee was provided in response to a request. It wished to have it before its next meeting. I complied with its request. I do not see what the member for Sadadeen's problem is. How could he carry out an investigation when the committee was not meeting? Possibly, he was hoping that I would carry out the work of the committee. I deliberately requested the committee to carry out this investigation in order to get another view on health and safety and to stir the government into action.

I admit that its task in following up all the allegations made by people at Ranger will be rather difficult. However, the reason for that has nothing whatsoever to do with me. It has much to do with actions that were taken by the Ranger management itself in selectively attempting to identify any staff who were concerned about health and safety and sacking them without providing any reason whatsoever. In the states, that action would have been prohibited through legislation. Unfortunately, we do not have that type of legislation in the Northern Territory and, therefore, it is possible for management to remove people whom it perceives to be troublemakers but whom the public generally perceives to be people doing no more than attempting to look after the health and safety of their comrades. What the company did out there was utterly disgraceful.

I commend the lone member who is staying in his house. I have told him this. In fact, only the other week, in Alice Springs, the ethnic community organised a dinner to raise funds. People contributed their own food. The purpose of the dinner was to assist the family to continue its battle for some justice. They were able to raise \$520. Some subsequent donations have been forwarded to the family.

Ranger has demonstrated that it has nothing but contempt for the health and safety of its workers and that it will do only the bare minimum as required. I had hoped that the committee would do something more than provide a 3-page report basically saying nothing. It says that it is the first report that we have had. I would have thought that, after all the years of the committee's existence, it could have come up with something a bit better than that.

There are some familiar arguments here. The committee is aware that certain other bodies are involved in overseeing aspects of the uranium industry and, therefore, it is of the opinion that, unless it is aware of substantiated evidence, there is nothing that it can do. That seems to be an extremely strange attitude from a committee of this Assembly. I deplore the fact that it does not take seriously its obligations to look at health and safety matters. It simply says: 'There are other bodies that are supposed to be doing that. There is nothing for us to do'. Why then do we have a committee? Is it simply a sham to give the impression that we are doing something when, in fact, the extent to which it is prepared to go is extremely limited?

It also talks about considerable expense which it feels is unwarranted. This is fairly typical of this government. It finds it quite simple to put money into a number of harebrained schemes and do little deals for itself and for its members. I know that quite a number of backbenchers - some of them now on the frontbench - have travelled considerably around various parts of Australia, ostensibly representing ministers or whatever. However, when it comes to something like the health and safety of workers in what everybody agrees is a dangerous industry, it suddenly decides that it has to watch the expense. What was proposed was simply that it should advertise throughout Australia its intention to inquire, call for submissions, receive evidence and commission a report by experts. Obviously, the commissioning of a report would require funds because it would be impossible for the members themselves to be able to gain sufficient expertise. They would need to obtain independent expertise to be able to do the work adequately.

I am most disappointed that the committee has only come this far. I hope that it will not now retreat into its shell and that it will have public discussions at Jabiru so that those remaining workers who have not been battered into submission by the sacking of other workers will have the courage to come forward to identify the various matters that they are concerned about. It remains an issue which the workers are discussing on a regular basis. They have not been able to take industrial action because of the company's threats. However, I can assure members that it is something which stands very high in their list of concerns. I am very disappointed that, after having appealed to this Assembly to investigate the workers' concerns, this is the best that can be done.

I am, of course, quite happy to have the report printed and will obviously be taking note of it. However, I think that there is very little to be noted in the report, except a statement tacked on the end, indicating that the committee will have the allegations appropriately investigated. I hope this

results in something more than a letter to Ranger management asking it simply to justify its actions in each instance. I hope the committee will follow matters up with the workers at Jabiru and rectify the history of disregard for health and safety matters at Ranger.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, as a past member of this committee, I feel I should make at least some brief comment on this report.

Mr EDE: You still are. It shows how interested you are.

Mr DALE: I can quite clearly understand the embarrassment of the member for Stuart. What these 3 pages tell is a very short, but nonetheless important, story of how a member of this Assembly has tried to use a committee of this Assembly for his own ends.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member knows full well that, if he wishes to make personal reflections on the character or behaviour of any member, he can do so only by way of a substantive motion. I invite him to move it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, this report tells the story of how a member of the committee went to a committee meeting and moved a motion which he thought was important enough to require that the committee, 'pursuant to the powers endowed upon it by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, resolves to conduct formal inquiries into all matters relating to the health and safety of workers involved in the uranium industry in the Northern Territory'. He thought the committee should advertise its intention to inquire throughout Australia, 'and call for submissions to receive evidence and commission reports by expert witnesses' - bring them from all around Australia apparently - and then 'report progress at subsequent sittings of the Legislative Assembly, until it delivers its final report'. He gave an undertaking to the meeting of the sessional committee that he had information that could justify such an important move.

The fact of the matter is that industrial disputation was taking place at the time, and he was endeavouring to have the committee take part in that. The committee did not see it as its role to be involved in such a disputation and the member then offered - I will not say 'threatened' - to tender his resignation if the committee did not do as he wished. Subsequently, he did not get his own way, so he spat out the proverbial dummy. He gave notice that he would resign from the committee, left the meeting, and did not provide the committee with the details that were so important that they justified the need for us to run around all over Australia seeking expert witnesses. You draw your own conclusions. I will not move any substantive motions.

Mr Ede: They were all in Hansard the next day.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the frustrations of the honourable member for Stuart after listening to that nonsense. The Sessional Committee on the Environment is a committee of this Assembly set up to do precisely what the member for Stuart asked it to do. I will read out the motion establishing the committee:

1. A committee to be known as the Sessional Committee on the Environment, comprising Mr D.W. Collins, Mr Dale, Mr Ede, Mr Lanhupuy and Mrs Pagham-Purich, be appointed.

2. The committee be empowered to inquire into and, from time to time, report upon and make recommendations on all matters relating to uranium mining and the processing activities, and their effects on the environment within the Alligators Region.

3. The committee be empowered to send for persons, papers and records ... to sit in public or in private, notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, and to adjourn from place to place, and to have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken, and make such interim recommendations as it may deem fit, and to publish information pertaining to its activities from time to time ...

Quite clearly, the committee has the power to investigate all matters relating to the environment. If people working in that place are not related to the environment, then I would like the chairman of that committee to tell me what is. I have only just realised the total frustration of the member for Stuart. He came to me at the last sittings and said: 'I am in a totally compromised position. I am going to be obliged to leave this committee. I just cannot stay there and do my job any longer'. It has not been until today that I understood the degree to which his job was compromised - when I listened to lunatics like the honourable minister who does not even know whether or not he is on the committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw those last remarks.

Mr LEO: I withdraw them unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Workers' safety in the uranium province quite correctly is a matter for this committee to consider. It has the power, given to it by the Legislative Assembly, to call for persons, papers and records. What do we get? We get a 3-page report that indicates that not a single person has been called before it, not a single paper has been acquired and not even a single record has been examined. Yet we get this nonsense thrust in front of us for the sole purpose of denigrating the member for Stuart. No wonder he left. Quite frankly, I do not blame him. The report is a disgrace. The chairman has acted poorly, if not improperly. I will read out the final paragraph:

The committee made a formal request in writing on 2 April 1986 to the honourable member for Stuart, in accordance with the motion. A reply was received on Tuesday 10 June 1986. It contained a list of 14 complaints in the briefest possible form. The committee, at its meeting on 11 June 1986, has considered each complaint and will have these appropriately investigated.

I hope the Chairman indicates in the report how well the allegations were investigated. It must be better than this report. Quite frankly, if I want to refer something to the committee, I shall do it with 2 words if I deem that that is all that is necessary. It must investigate it because that is why the committee exists. If its members do not want to do that job, then they should be replaced by people who will.

Mrs PADGHAM PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in this debate, I do not really know where to start. The report that has been presented was not intended to be an extensive one, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe by his interjections. It was not intended to be an extensive report on the activities of this committee since its

inception. It is the result of a motion passed at our second last meeting. The motion was moved that this committee report at the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly on its decision not to proceed with the previous motion to investigate the health and safety of workers in the uranium industry in the Alligator Rivers Region of the Northern Territory. That is the whole purpose of this report.

If I can digress a little, the object of the honourable member for Stuart's motion was to institute an inquiry which had the power to move around Australia. I will not read it out again; members have all read the report. Apparently he wanted carte blanche to do anything, anywhere at any time. In other words he wanted nothing short of a Royal Commission into the subject matter which he raised.

The honourable members opposite are a wee bit long on talk and short on action. If they gave any thought to the uranium industry at all, they would know that it is one of the most supervised industries in Australia. It is one of the most regulated industries in the world today. One of the honourable members opposite spoke about its being a dangerous industry

Mr B. Collins: She sleeps with the manager of Pancontinental.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Look, if you want to comment on my sleeping habits, I'll say that you sleep with somebody who is not of the same ethnic origin as you - if you really want to get into personalities. I haven't risen to the bait before.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. Collins: I believe in mixed marriages.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: So do I - between men and women.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the uranium industry is the most regulated industry in Australia today and probably in the world, except for one country - the USSR. It does not seem to be very well regulated there. We have not heard anything from the other side of the Assembly about a certain world-noted incident relating to the uranium industry in Russia today.

One of the honourable members opposite spoke about the uranium industry being a dangerous industry. Has he ever taken the time to find out how many deaths and injuries have resulted from people working in the coal industry? Has he taken the time to find out how many deaths and injuries occurred in the previous asbestos industry? I do not think they bear comparison because, with the safeguards covering the uranium industry, there are far fewer deaths and injuries in the uranium industry than in other industry in Australia.

I will not go over what other members have said and the report covers. I have said already that it is the most regulated mining industry in Australia. People are all looking over each other's shoulders. While we are looking over somebody else's shoulder making sure that he is doing something, somebody is looking over our shoulders. Talk about taking in each other people's washing! This is an extreme. The uranium industry has been subject to continual reports for at least the last 10 years. The member for Stuart wants us to further report on the uranium industry.

If the ALP has a policy, it is long on talking and short on action. It would have us form committees and councils and hold meetings and seminars on

every subject under the sun, with paid witnesses and paid travel allowances, and every other darn thing paid for, while the uranium industry would be slowly going downhill. The member was talking about some unfortunate chap at Jabiru who was given money by an ethnic group in Alice Springs. That would only be small beer compared with what would happen if these inquiries continued. If the uranium industry is regulated any further, it will close up shop and leave, like the Arabs who fold their tents and silently steal away. That is probably what the ALP wants. It wants the uranium industry to shut down completely.

I will not touch on the subject of the uranium industry and the ANPWS. During the adjournment debate, I intend to regale members further with my views on the workings of the ANPWS at Kakadu. To return to the 2 pages presented to the sessional committee by the member for Stuart, they are an insult to any committee member's intelligence. To expect a committee member or chairman to investigate a report like this is an insult to this Legislative Assembly. There are 14 notations. The pages are badly reproduced, and the submission is vague and immature. We are just presented with these notations of incidents that are alleged to have happened. There are no times given, no names given, no places given. Look at No 4, with a spot against it. It says: 'Dust leaks from top of product bin'. If our chairman went to the Department of Mines and Energy and asked ...

Mr D.W. Collins: I would look real bright, wouldn't I?

Mr B. Collins: You couldn't look real bright on your best day.

Mr D.W. Collins: Yes I could.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... about this allegation with the spot against it which says, 'Dust leak from top of product bin', he would look a right fool wouldn't he? He would look a right nana going to the Department of Mines and Energy and asking for an investigation of 'Dust leak from top of product bin'. We know it is at Ranger Uranium Mines, but where is the product bin? Which product bin is it? Where is it placed? We do not know when the incident occurred, and we do not know who may have been affected.

Look at No 6: 'Two people bitten by red-back spiders within the past 4 weeks - area still not treated'. I do not know whether the area where they were bitten was not treated or the area that was bitten, but if they have survived for 4 weeks after a red-back spider's bite, they will live a bit longer, and I know what I am talking about, having been brought up in country where red-back spiders were a hazard of living on farms. We know that 2 people were bitten. Who were they? Fred Nerk and Mary Brown? Where were they bitten? What part of their anatomy was bitten? All of that is important.

Mr B. Collins: Were they of different ethnic origins?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: There we come to it, because people of one ethnic origin will show the results of a bite more than another.

One can see the immaturity, lack of detail and the insult to our intelligence shown by this report. If the member had wanted us to do anything serious about alleged complaints, I would have expected something a little better presented. I believe that the committee is functioning in a suitable manner having regard to the other 5 groups that are also trying to regulate the uranium industry. God save us from forming more but, if the federal Labor

government has any say, no doubt we will see more organisations created to strangle the uranium industry even further. Anybody with half an eye on the other side of the Assembly would realise, if he gave it a little thought, that without the uranium mining at Ranger, which provides jobs and export income for the Territory, we would be in a lot worse state than we are.

On the subject of uranium exports, my only regret is that I was unable either yesterday and today to contribute to a demonstration down on the wharf. I have made a very big decision. I think it is time for people of my sex, age and political persuasion to join in these demonstrations because, for far too long, we have been part of the silent majority who put up with all these other people demonstrating. I think it is time the community heard the views of people of my political persuasion. The next time there is a demonstration, I believe that it is incumbent on me to demonstrate against the demonstrators. They are demonstrating against the development of the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a great sense of déjà vu in debating this disgraceful report because these issues were canvassed at some length in a previous debate on the same subject. We boxed on for several hours on these matters. The chairman of the committee, and the majority of committee members who were responsible for presenting this disgraceful report to the Assembly, have demeaned both themselves and the committee.

Mr D.W. Collins: You have 2 members there.

Mr B. COLLINS: Do you want to shut up?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will address his comments through the Chair.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would expect alternatively to be allowed to speak.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition was allowed a fair amount of freedom during the last speaker's speech, and I shall control debate from the Chair.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a former member of the committee. I served for a number of years on it with the member for Sadadeen under the chairmanship of the member for Port Darwin. This disgraceful, politicised piece of garbage, which purports to be a report of a committee of this parliament, demeans the committee, and it certainly demeans the chairman who had the hide to present it. It is simply 3 pages of a sustained personal attack on a member of the Assembly, purporting to be a serious report of a sessional committee which, when it was established in this Assembly many years ago, started off with some clear goals enunciated in its terms of reference. I am pleased to say that, under its former chairman, it pursued those goals. However, since that chairman departed, the committee has been a sham and a fraud, and that was demonstrated very conclusively indeed by the last speaker in this debate. The honourable member for Koolpinyah has a clear, unequivocal, unembarrassed and unashamed personal interest in the uranium industry.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Of course, I have. So should you have.



Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, I have that interest too which is the reason why I joined the committee in the first place. The honourable member for Sadadeen also has that interest. I am in no doubt as to the attitude of the honourable member for Port Darwin in respect of the uranium industry. I never had any personal doubt about the fact that he was an unequivocal supporter of the industry. He never made any secret about that as a member of the Assembly. But, at no time - in the inquiry that we held, which I thought was a successful exercise, in our public advertising for submissions, in the investigations we carried out into a number of complaints that were received about water seepages through dam walls and so on - did the chairman of the committee conduct himself in other than a completely and scrupulously impartial manner.

That is in stark contrast to the 2 members opposite who were also members of the committee at the time. As I said before, I had no doubt about the honourable member for Port Darwin's personal views on uranium. I said to him personally when he left the committee, and I may even have said it in this Assembly when he departed the committee upon achieving ministerial rank, that he performed completely impartially as chairman of that committee despite his own personal views. I believe that he was conscious of the necessity for a parliamentary committee to at least give the appearance of being impartial and prepared to listen to anyone's views.

In stark contrast, in the time that I was a member of the committee, you could hardly have found a more craven advocate for the uranium industry than the current chairman. In fact, a constant frustration not just to the opposition but to the government members of the committee was that, when a question was raised on our visits to the uranium province, which may have reflected in some way adversely upon the industry, it was very difficult for the mining company's representatives to be able to get a word in before the honourable member for Sadadeen jumped in with his own personal explanation. Indeed, the honourable member for Stuart raised that problem with me when he said it was impossible on his visits out there to try to shut him up. He said that the member for Sadadeen immediately leapt in and provided a story before the mining blokes had a chance to say anything. I said: 'Well, don't worry about that because that is precisely the way he behaved in the whole time I was on the committee'. So what else could we expect but that kind of report?

I do not dispute the honourable member's right to be an unashamed advocate of the uranium industry. I am interested in the honourable member for Koolpinyah's distinction between democratic uranium and communist uranium. But I share, and shared at the time, the frustrations of the honourable member for Stuart as a member of that committee. All I can say is that I support the remarks made by the honourable member for Nhulunbuy. This report does the committee no credit. Considering the terms of reference of this committee, it should have come up with something a little more auspicious than this for its first report. I share the frustrations of being a member of that committee.

An attempt was made to muzzle me when I was a member of the committee because I was also the shadow minister for the environment at the time. That of course highlights a very important and serious problem that I have debated as a delegate of the Northern Territory at the Small Countries' Conferences of the CPA. I take some pride - and it has been acknowledged in the Assembly before - in being successful in my lobbying for the inclusion of the Northern Territory's parliament, against an enormous amount of opposition, as a delegate on that small parliaments conference. I think that most people who have been to CPA conferences will concede - and certainly, at the 2 that I have been to, the same comments have been made to me by representatives of

many countries - that the most meaningful and useful part of those CPA conferences is indeed the Small Countries' Conference. I have raised the problems that are caused in trying to operate the committee system in a small parliament.

The difficulty is that, if you have a small parliament, and if you have an opposition which is even smaller in relative terms, clearly you want to appoint to the committees people who have a personal interest in doing a decent job. Inevitably, in a small parliament, they are the members whose parliamentary responsibilities are directly involved with that area. It causes a conflict in our parliament which one does not find in larger parliaments. This is a matter I intend to take up with the Chief Minister in respect of another committee. Ideally, members of the frontbench or shadow ministers should not be members of these committees. Ideally, they should be formed from backbenchers because they have no conflict of interest in performing their roles in the parliament and on the committees. Of course, we have that problem.

The reason I labour this point is that I was shadow minister for the environment when I was a member of this same committee. A question was raised concerning the difficulty that I had in being an active member of the committee and continuing to do my job as shadow minister for the environment. It was conceded at that time by the government that it would not pursue that issue. It was discussed, it was debated and it was conceded that some degree of flexibility would be allowed in recognition of the problems of running a small parliament.

That is not the only area in which we acknowledge that we have problems. In respect of your own position, Sir, we acknowledge that problems exist. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would well recall this. It is a convention, founded on very sensible footings indeed, that a Speaker should not participate in debate in the parliament. Of course, in a parliament of 19 members, as it then was, one could not expect it to stick rigidly to something like that. Therefore, allowances were made, and no objection was taken by this side of the Assembly, when the former Speaker participated in debates, as he regularly did, because he had a job to do as a representative of the electorate of Elsey at the time. Although it was not strictly according to Hoyle, we simply acknowledged the reality of having a small parliament and trying to operate effectively in it. That same problem was raised in respect of my membership of the Sessional Committee on the Environment and my role as shadow minister for the environment, which of course were like interests which is the reason why I held both positions. It was acknowledged that no exception would be taken to it. As I have raised at Small Countries' Conferences before, we all work within a traditional Westminster system of parliament but we have to acknowledge unique problems exist in trying to operate effectively a committee system in a small parliament.

I think I should be permitted some leeway to raise something at this stage because we meet so infrequently. In respect of the Committee for Constitutional Development of the Northern Territory, there is a problem developing. It became very obvious and it is highlighted in this report too: committees of the parliament are becoming highly politicised in a partisan manner. It is a fact that, in both the House of Representatives and the Senate - and I cannot speak with the same authority in respect of state parliamentary committees because I am not familiar enough with their workings - members on both sides by convention are, in the main, not always scrupulous about ensuring that their contributions to the committee system, which is so vital to the proper operation of a dynamic parliament, are

non-partisan. Of course, that means there has to be a complete distinction between committees of the parliament and the executive of the government. That is made almost impossible by the presence of ministers as members of committees. Alternatively, it applies to shadow ministers. Of course, in a small parliament, when every single member of the opposition is carrying shadow ministerial responsibilities, but clearly wants to exercise his personal interest in that regard on committees as well, it is very hard.

In respect of the constitutional committee, I intend at a future time to suggest to the Chief Minister - and he can either accept the suggestion or reject it - that a continuing concern of mine, which has been heightened recently, with the operations of our constitutional advancement committee is the continually greying area between what the government is doing properly in respect of this matter and what this parliament is doing. On reflection, it would be to the advantage of the most important work of that committee if at least both the Chief Minister and myself considered being replaced on that committee by other members of the parliament on both sides.

That is why I am quite dismayed to see as a formal report of a committee of the parliament something which only purports to be a report but in fact is nothing more nor less than an attack on the member for Stuart.

Mr D.W. Collins: Justified.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, in the view of the chairman it may be a justified attack. If I wanted ample confirmation of my allegation, I have just had it confirmed by that interjection. He says: 'Yes, it is an attack on the member for Stuart, and a justified one'.

The uranium industry is a controversial industry and will always remain so. My position on uranium is extremely clear. As a matter of fact, I think I can say with some conviction that I have been more forthright about my position on uranium here in this Chamber and my support for and views on the industry than most members of the Labor Party have been in any parliament in Australia. Indeed, I have made some very trenchant criticisms in this parliament of comments that have been made by various prominent people in other parliaments in Australia who are members of my own party. I do not think that I can be franker than that. Some extravagant claims have been made in this committee report about what the member for Stuart was demanding. The claims bear no relation whatever to the contents of this report, and cannot be sustained by it.

I suggested at the time that this committee had a unique opportunity to avoid what has now become a very serious social situation at Jabiru. No one denies that. It has come about as a result of the absolutely disgraceful behaviour of the Ranger management. I am not a consistent supporter of industrial action, as I have demonstrated here, but to single out 7 people for dismissal, some of whom were known not to have been present on the picket line and some of whom had been employed for more than 5 years at the mine, was a disgraceful action. It has utterly divided that community. This committee had an opportunity, which I pointed out in the debate, to resolve that situation. It was suggested that the committee should carry out an investigation at a Territory level, in the same manner as the committee formerly did. If that investigation had been carried out, the industrial dispute could have been resolved. If the fears of the workers were unreasonable, the committee could have actually started to earn its salt. Instead of that, the committee has been functionless, leaderless, pointless, and worthless, and it has insulted this Legislative Assembly by presenting

this disgraceful report. I would suggest that, if it is not to be disbanded - and I think that if it continues in its current role, it will serve no useful purpose - its chairman should examine the record of the previous committee under its previous chairman, and start giving some appropriate leadership.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate and to show my appreciation to the committee for the report and for its brevity.

My point is simply that we sacrifice thousands and thousands of acres of pine forests in this Assembly each year in publishing reports. I will be brief because I do not want to waste the pages of Hansard. This report is before us because of a motion by the committee that it report to the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly on its decision not to proceed with the previous motion to investigate the health and safety of workers in the uranium industry in the Alligator Rivers region. All it does is report on that particular motion. The Leader of the Opposition claims that the committee has been politicised by its government members. However, 2 of his own colleagues, the member for Arnhem and the member for MacDonnell, voted for the motion that the committee 'calls upon the shadow minister for Mines and Energy to supply details of allegations regarding incidents to industrial health and safety matters at Ranger, for consideration by the committee'. The motion was passed by all members present. The committee's intention in passing the motion was to have Mr Ede's allegations in a written form to enable due consideration to be given to them. This report results from that motion. I congratulate the committee on only taking up 3 pages because that is all the merit that it deserves. To have developed a more substantial report than this would have been a disgrace.

The uranium industry has had more reviews than the Tivoli Theatre. It seems to me miraculous that we still have Kakadu, with 80 officers of the Supervising Scientist, the ANPWS staff, the Department of Mines and Energy health inspectors, and the environmental committee, all tramping through the area protecting the environment and the health of the workers. With that much protection, it is a wonder that there is a park left. It amazes me that the environment is still in one piece. I congratulate the committee on dealing with this matter. It is now quite obvious, if you have a look at the history of events at Jabiru, what the member for Stuart's intention was. If you consider that a health committee has now been initiated to investigate health conditions at Jabiru, it is quite obvious what he was trying to achieve when he drew attention to allegations concerning safety problems. He was trying to draw the sessional committee into an industrial dispute. The committee managed to stay out of it, as it should.

I do not intend to waste Hansard paper on this particular issue. The committee has presented its recommendations in appropriate depth, and I congratulate its members on their effort.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not take up too much of the Assembly's time this evening. I simply want to place on record my answer to the suggestion that I heartily endorsed this report and was somehow at odds with the previous comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. Today's meeting of the Sessional Committee on the Environment was my first. I do not claim to be across all the issues that are supposed to come within the purview of the committee. I was happy to endorse, on the basis of previous minutes and previous correspondence, that the report, which was not tabled in this form, was a true and accurate record of the deliberations of the committee.

Since it has become the subject of debate this evening, I also wish to place on record my concern that this first report of the Sessional Committee on the Environment deals only with events that have occurred within the last 3 months. The committee has been deliberating for 2½ years. In this report, there is absolutely no mention of anything that occurred in the 2 years previous to 20 March 1986. The first paragraph says: 'At a meeting of the Sessional Committee on the Environment on 20 March 1986 ...'. I must admit that causes me considerable embarrassment as a member. I remind honourable members that a sessional committee is set up at the beginning of a new Assembly, immediately after a general election, to sit and deliberate as appropriate according to the guidelines set for it, until there is another general election. This session dates back to February 1984. More than 2 years of deliberation and consideration remain unrecorded. That is a matter of concern to me. I do not like to raise these matters unnecessarily outside the committee but let me advise all members of the committee that I intend to pursue that little lacuna at the appropriate time.

A further issue requires clarification. It is a shame that the Minister for Mines and Energy, who apparently would be interested in this particular issue, laid great store by the fact that I had been present on the committee when a particular motion was moved calling upon the shadow minister for mines and energy to supply details of allegations and so on. I would like him to be aware that I was not present at that particular meeting. Before he leaps to his feet in the Legislative Assembly and sounds forth in his most extraordinarily loud and somewhat inarticulate tones, he should at least get his facts right.

In closing, let me adumbrate my concern in this regard. Quite clearly, there are partisan feelings on these issues. I heartily endorse the efforts of my colleague, the shadow minister for mines and energy, in his prosecution of the issue of the health and safety of workers at the uranium mines. I am absolutely flabbergasted that there can be any attempt to do anything other than investigate those issues, however they may be raised, as fully as possible.

My conclusion after my first meeting was that, although there was some reluctance and some suggestion that the concerns may not have been genuine - and it is a shame that this was not commented on today by the chairman of the committee, let alone included in the report - steps were set in train by the committee to investigate these allegations more fully. I am absolutely surprised that the safety of people in what is undoubtedly one of the most potentially dangerous industries in the Northern Territory can be treated as a matter of levity. Time and time again, we hear the defence of a small parliament in the Northern Territory as being more sensitive to Territory conditions and more aware of northern Australian issues. Yet, here we have a group of people prepared to ride roughshod over the genuine concerns of ordinary workers at Jabiru. I must admit that it does not fill me with joy. It is a matter of great concern that they can treat with levity such substantive and substantial issues that have been raised by my colleague in this regard.

With those comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, I place on record my support for my colleague and express my concern about the future deliberations of the committee but trust that they will be more fruitful and of a serious nature.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, if these 14 allegations were substantial and substantive matters raised by the honourable member for Stuart without warning in his motions at the meeting on the 18th and followed

up at the meeting on the 20th, why didn't he provide at least a copy of what he had at that stage, as he promised? What he gave us was very brief. It was a nonsense. It was an insult to the committee and an attempt to frustrate the work of the committee which takes its operation seriously.

Mr B. Collins: What work? 2½ years.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: We have investigated everything which we have had put before us. Every member has the opportunity to raise whatever matters may concern him, to question, to summon witnesses and to visit Ranger. We will be going out there at the end of the August sittings so that the new members of the committee will be able to see the area at first hand. We will have advisers with us and we will be able to question anybody and everybody as we always did under the chairmanship of the member for Port Darwin.

The report that we have before us resulted from a motion from the member for Stuart who wanted to politicise the matter. If he thought we would not give reasons why we would not hold an expensive inquiry, when all he had to offer us was this, then the honourable member clearly did anything but take the matter seriously. He said that these matters of health and safety are of major concern to the people at Jabiru. I believe that. But how can we investigate when we have one-sentence complaints, without dates, times or places, and of which we could not even obtain a copy until 3.30 yesterday?

The honourable member tried to suggest that he had agreed to provide them by the time the committee next met. If he had been at all serious about his allegations, he would have provided the original short list to the committee, as he had promised to do, and he would have followed it up in the shortest possible time with details. The committee could have come back ...

Mr Ede: It is all in the Hansard report of the debate we had on it 2 days later.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: He was requested to put the point ...

Mr Ede: You did not show much interest.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: It was a request to the honourable member for Stuart. The last sentence in the letter to him was: 'Your prompt action on this matter would be appreciated'. He did not even bother to reply. I inquired of the committee secretary to see if he had received a reply from the honourable member for Stuart. He said that he had not. I asked him to make sure that the member had received the registered letter. The best we could get out of a fellow who was so concerned about the health and safety of the workers at Ranger was 14 sentences. It is disgraceful. It is contemptuous. It makes the committee's job virtually impossible. It is an attempt simply to frustrate the committee at every turn. It is purely an exercise in trying to play at politics.

We will do the best we can with these 14 sentences. We will endeavour to obtain answers where we can. But I can say, and I think the committee will forgive me for it, that we will write to the member for Stuart and ask him yet again for some details so that we have a little more to go on.

Mr Ede: Do you want me to write the report?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: The honourable member for Stuart is not a member of the committee any longer but again he shows his contempt for the committee and for the parliament by such an inane comment.

The Leader of the Opposition was high in his praise of the previous chairman of the committee, the honourable member for Port Darwin. Certainly, I agree with him. He did a great job. At no time did he try to muzzle people. Each one of us had our chance to have our say. As for the comment that the member for Sadadeen always jumped in and never let anybody have a say, that is absolute nonsense. The chairman always made sure that everybody had a say. The Leader of the Opposition never took it seriously. In the last debate, he spoke about sandwiches and a cup of coffee. That is how seriously he took the committee's role. As for saying that he is a great advocate of the uranium industry, I have it on record ...

Mr B. Collins: I did not say that.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: It was during an adjournment debate. I said his Achilles' heel would be the uranium industry. He interjected in the middle of a speech: 'I am totally unashamed to say that I am totally opposed to the uranium industry'.

Mr B. Collins: Nick Dondas said that too when he was representing the Territory in Canada.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Lo and behold, when the Parliamentary Record was published, and this really is a gem, those words were not in it. I wonder where his finger was at the particular time he was making that categorical statement.

Mr B. Collins: Is that a funny?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: It is the only possible explanation why it was not in the final record. He either had it removed - how I would not know - or perhaps the old finger was on the cut out button.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing order 62, if the honourable member wishes to accuse me of fixing Hansard, as he just did, and the record will show it, let him do so by way of a substantive motion. I invite him to move it now or to withdraw that allegation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sadadeen will withdraw those words.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I withdraw them unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think you were a member of the Assembly at the time. I think you may well recall that ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will not debate the point. The words will be withdrawn.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is quite clear why this brief report was made. It resulted from a motion moved in the committee by the then member, the member for Stuart. That is perfectly clear. It was amended to require that it report before the next sittings, which is this sittings. He moved the motion purely for political reasons to try to support his statement within the Assembly on health and safety matters at Ranger. If he thought that we would not give all the details of why we rejected his call for an investigation, he was wrong. Any member who has a look at those 14 one-line sentences would realise that it is nonsense to expect the committee to investigate those allegations on such flimsy evidence. The very action of the member in taking months to come up with them and then throwing them at the

secretary of the committee is contempt of the committee. It is designed simply to try to frustrate the operations of the committee which, despite all the nonsense we heard from the other side, we take very seriously.

Motion agreed to.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 179)

Continued from 26 March 1986.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a very simple amendment which basically permits fees chargeable under the act to be prescribed in regulations rather than in the act. As a result, fees that are set out in the first schedule of the act will now be repealed. They cover such things as registration, lodgement and search fees.

I think all members have noted on many occasions that it makes a lot of sense for fees or penalties to be prescribed by regulation rather than contained in an act. We all know it is a much simpler and easier exercise to alter regulations than it is to alter an act. It is very sensible that this be done. We support the bill.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, let me point out that the establishment of fees under regulation is a fairly normal procedure. Public interest is still protected. Through the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee, there is the opportunity to ensure that public interest is protected.

In the Northern Territory, with its very small population base, public servants are responsible in the main for recommending alterations and amendments and are very sensitive to public feeling. They are very accessible people, just as politicians are. In matters such as these, I do not feel there is any removal of parliamentary responsibility, and the rights and interests of people are protected through the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 171)

Continued from 19 March 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill deservedly should attract the attention of all members of the Assembly. Many pieces of legislation, no matter how small they may appear and no matter how many assurances of reasonable behaviour we have from the people who propose them, touch directly on the normal rights enjoyed by citizens. When those rights are suspended, as they must be sometimes in serious emergencies, legislation must be considered very closely. Such is the case with section 16 of the Essential Goods and Services Act which provides that a person cannot be convicted of failing to comply with a direction, prohibition or requisition unless it has been served on him personally or by registered post. The bill before the Assembly amends that provision so that the rider clause also applies to notices published in the NT Government Gazette. In other words,



the protection of section 16 is of no avail if the direction, prohibition or recognition has been gazetted in the gazette, which enjoys a very small readership indeed. It is no longer necessary to have been served with the notice either personally or by registered post. A notice in the gazette will now be deemed to be sufficient notification. In addition, the bill inserts a new subsection which revokes the protection of section 30 of the Criminal Code excusing the person from criminal responsibility if the relevant statutory instrument has not been published or reasonably made known to the person affected where such notice has been gazetted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, section 7 confers on the minister wide powers to give directions, prohibitions or requisitions once a declaration has been made that a shortage exists in respect of specified goods or services. It is an extremely serious offence to contravene such a notice. There is a \$1000 fine for individuals and \$10 000 for a body corporate, but section 16 protects a person who has not been notified personally or by registered post. Under this amendment, gazettal of the notice is deemed sufficient notification, and leaves any persons or corporations who contravene the notice, whether they were aware of it or not, open to prosecution. Most likely, in respect of a less than catastrophic emergency, they would not be aware of the notice.

In introducing the bill, the Chief Minister emphasised that the public interest would not be affected adversely by the amendments. He said that the existing provisions for personal service would remain and he pointed out that the amendments were necessary to reduce to a minimum the administrative burden of issuing ministerial directions at short notice during an emergency. We have no argument with that because it is a fact that 70 individual directions had to be issued, one to each company and to several service station proprietors, during the last fuel shortage in Darwin. However, the Chief Minister did not make it clear that the existing provisions for personal service could be completely overridden or ignored. In his second-reading speech, he skirted around that issue. In fact, the existing provisions for personal service can be completely overridden and ignored even though they have been kept in section 16.

The Chief Minister gave an assurance that it was proposed 'as an administrative measure to ensure that the restrictions receive adequate media coverage'. I accept that. However, he did not explain why the requirement for such a measure could not have been incorporated in the amended section; in other words, in legislation. There are requirements for public advertising in planning legislation, and an appropriate provision could have been inserted here. The opposition is well aware that, in a catastrophic emergency such as a major cyclone, quite often the normal media services are suspended. Members will recall that, in emergencies where the destruction of normal avenues of communication is not quite so severe as it was, for example, in Cyclone Tracy, the media provides an extraordinarily valuable service to the public. I must take this opportunity to commend once again the service that is provided by the 2 television channels in Darwin in respect of cyclone alerts, both in terms of advising a community desperate for information and at the same time diverting it with entertainment. We do not believe that it is beyond the capabilities of a legislative draftsman, and indeed we intend to test that ourselves by drafting an amendment to place in the legislation a requirement that available media shall be used to advertise the notice, as well in addition to its gazettal. We do not believe this is an onerous responsibility.

The government clearly does not consider it to be an onerous responsibility either, because it has acknowledged that administrative action

will be taken to ensure that this is done. Of course, we accept that, in a catastrophic emergency when these media outlets are simply not functional, this provision would not be applied. However, as we all know, most of the occasions when this kind of legislation will be required, such as during a fuel shortage, are not so severe. Given careful drafting to make it clear that it would apply only where the media were functional, we do not believe that it is beyond this government to support such an amendment. We propose to move one in the committee stage, and we hope the government will either support it or introduce its own amendment requiring that the administrative action outlined by the Chief Minister be incorporated in the legislation.

Protection of civil rights is an important issue. The wide powers that can be exercised under legislation such as this act are important in emergencies, and we support them, but they need to be conferred carefully and circumscribed wherever possible, while not obstructing the original purpose of the legislation. I believe that a requirement for reasonable media advertising would not be difficult to insert here instead of relying on media coverage that would be given voluntarily by those organisations, or administrative action that would be taken at the time. Protection of civil liberties should be more than an administrative measure and should not be subject to ministerial discretion. Prosecutions need the written authority of the minister. The then Chief Minister said they would be undertaken only in a case of blatant disregard of a direction.

We support the necessity to have legislation such as this but we believe our suggested amendment is very mild and reasonable. As has already been outlined by the original proponent of the bill, it is being implemented in any case by administrative action. We hope that the government will support our amendment. Indeed, if it wishes to introduce one itself, we will support it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief in my remarks which in no way reflect on the importance of this legislation because it is important in times of emergency in the Northern Territory.

The amendment before us in no way diminishes the powers in the principal act. It gives another option. The very nature of an emergency demands extrapardomaru procedures to cope with it. The existing legislation says that the Administrator shall declare an emergency and the appropriate minister shall take the action necessary. In times of emergency, it is necessary that law and order prevail. Law and order, in respect of the supply of services, usually rely on a form of rationing of essential goods so that everyone has an equal opportunity to avail himself of these goods if the occasion demands, and he has the wherewithall.

There was not too much confusion in respect of the 2 emergencies relating to shortages in fuel supply. I believe that was the result of community goodwill and the fact that most people realised that an emergency of sorts existed and they were prepared to do the best they could to help the government overcome the emergency.

The goodwill that prevailed before in cases of emergency regarding fuel distribution to the community may not be present on all future occasions. This legislation seeks to give the minister the option to declare an emergency and to regulate the supply of fuel and other necessary substances. This will streamline the rationing process.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the minister would declare in the gazette how fuel or other substances would be distributed in an emergency.

I think he underestimated the intelligence of the community when he said that not many people read the NT Government Gazette. I think the support of the media would be given to any such notice that appeared in the gazette. I believe that the good order of the community and the goodwill of the community would also come to the fore.

I would like to talk about the people who were living in the rural area. Everybody was prepared to comply with the directions given - the odd and even days, depending on the number plate on the vehicle. This may be quite fair on people in urban areas who travel to their place of work, a distance of about 20 miles, which gives them a round trip of about 40 miles per day. But it is not unusual for people in the rural area to travel about 80 miles a day. I would like to ask the honourable minister whether, in future emergencies relating to fuel supply, he will take cognisance of the fact that rural people need special consideration. I support the intention of this amending legislation.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would just like to place on record my disgust at this limiting of the freedom of the operators. The proposal that a simple gazettal notice is sufficient leads me to believe that this government is moving further and further into the realm of the unreal. I do not know whether it is an attempt to increase the circulation of the gazette, but it certainly seems that an amendment is required to ensure that the notice is published in newspapers and broadcast on radio and TV. This will ensure that there is wide dissemination of information in a minimum time.

In some instances - for example, a cyclone - people will anticipate an emergency. However, the last fuel emergency resulted from a ship being delayed. It is quite probable that many people did not realise the extent of the area that would be affected by that emergency. It did not cover Alice Springs. There was no information on how far down the track it extended. This is the type of detailed information which we currently obtain from the Darwin newspaper which is available in Alice Springs the day after it is published. Some formal notification is needed via the various organs of the media to ensure that people's freedoms under the Criminal Code are not eroded and that they have the opportunity to know what they are letting themselves in for.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate. In respect of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition about the notifications that will be required under the legislation, in principle they have considerable merit. As the member for Barkly, then Chief Minister, said when he introduced the legislation, it is intended that administrative arrangements be made to ensure full publication through the media of any restrictions under this legislation.

There is a concern about the practical application of that. If the Leader of the Opposition has some suggestions, I will be happy to consider them over the weekend. We propose to process this bill through all stages next week.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

STATEMENT  
Fringe Benefits Tax Motion

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, we debated at length today a motion moved by the Treasurer on the fringe benefits tax. I assumed that it would be brought on again. The terms of the motion are quite explicit that it will be communicated to the Prime Minister forthwith. We will progogue the Assembly tomorrow morning. I suggest it will be a bit hard, if the motion drops off the notice paper, to communicate it to the Prime Minister forthwith. The question has not been put.

MOTION  
Impact of Fringe Benefits Tax on Northern Territory

Continued from page 24.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to 2 facets of ANPWS management of 2 of the national parks in the Northern Territory. We all know about the land grab by the federal government in taking the management of Uluru National Park away from the control of the Northern Territory government. We all know about the land grab by the federal Labor government in taking the management of Kakadu National Park away from the Northern Territory. People with the interests of the Territory at heart have forecast the results of the Northern Territory government losing control of the 2 major national parks here. It upsets me a little to say that these results are now starting to become evident.

We all know, if not personally, through media reports, that Conservation Commission rangers no longer work at Uluru National Park. It will not be long before their lack of participation in park housekeeping becomes apparent. I am talking about mundane matters such as cleaning toilets and emptying rubbish bins and other things which nobody wants to do and everybody wants done when they visit these places. The lack of these services quickly becomes very apparent to the public.

In talking about the Conservation Commission rangers no longer working at Uluru National Park, I would also like to draw members' attention to the way Conservation Commission rangers presented themselves to the public. I could be considered rather biased on this matter because I have a high regard for our Conservation Commission rangers, not only because I was Minister for Conservation, but also because I have an active working relationship with the rangers. I am talking about the low-grade rangers as well as those highly placed in the commission. At all times, Conservation Commission rangers at Uluru presented themselves in a neat, clean, tidy, business-like manner to the public. They inspired respect for the job they did and presented the Northern Territory as it should be presented to the travelling public. The tourists from down south and overseas that we hope to attract to the Territory are managed and controlled in many places by the Conservation Commission.

Unfortunately, as Conservation Commission rangers are no longer working at Uluru National Park, that situation no longer exists. This was drawn to my

attention recently by a well-known tour operator with a long history in the Territory. He was operating here before I came to the Territory, and I am giving you his bona fides without giving his name to attest to the fact that I believe what he said without question at all. This gentleman took a group of wealthy American tourists to Uluru. They were the sort of tourists who, unfortunately, are rare in the Territory these days, to whom expense was no object at all. Half their luck. Money was no object in their enjoyment of the tourist experience. The gentleman from the tourist industry took 2 people privately to Uluru. First, they went to the kiosk and paid their admission fee. Usually, when you buy a ticket, it is marked 'admission ticket'. But these tickets were inscribed with the words 'entry permit' which immediately shows that, in the eyes of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Uluru National Park is not solely a national park for the enjoyment of the public. When you employ the term 'permit', you imply that use of the national park is not free. It implies a very formal registration procedure.

When these tourists went to the kiosk to buy their entry permits into Uluru National Park, they were not purchased from a reasonably pleasant Conservation Commission ranger in neat attire who was happy to answer all questions regarding the park. They were sold the tickets by a rather scruffy individual who said he was employed by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. For that reason, I assume that he was a ranger. He was not in a uniform. He was in a check shirt. It was a bit hard to ascertain how many days growth of beard he had, but the tour operator reckoned he had about 3 or 4 days growth of beard. I could be very generous and say he might have been growing a beard intentionally, but I doubt it. In addition, in the kiosk there was a lot of attention given by posters and brochures to the subject of Aboriginal land rights. This refers to the situation of black versus white in the Northern Territory, and the whole apartheid situation we have which, unfortunately, is becoming more and more evident as the days go by. The tourists' answer to this confrontation with a situation completely alien to them was to get to hell out of it as quickly as they could. It was not the sort of situation they had been led to expect Uluru National Park would present. If this is the situation as presented to those tourists, how many similar situations exist and are likely to exist to the detriment of the Northern Territory through the actions of the ANPWS?

To pass from Uluru to Kakadu, this same tour operator, who is very well known in the business and runs extensive operations in the Northern Territory, was taking a group of selected tourists to Nourlangie. It would be assumed that, if there were any restrictions on access, these would be notified to the tour operators well before they reach the place of interest. But this operator took his clients out to show them the blue paintings area at Nourlangie. When he arrived there, ready to show the tourists the beauty of the site and the paintings, he was presented with a sign saying 'closed'. At great expense to the tourists and great effort to himself, he arrived to find the site closed. This does not come as any surprise to me because you would have to be blind in one eye and unable to see out of the other not to know that the ANPWS will run our national parks into the ground. It seems to be carried away with the view that it is a wee bit too important to have dealings with the rest of us poor lay people in the community. Any decisions it makes are not open to question by us. It does not have the interests of the Territory and Territory development at heart. Having some knowledge of practical conservation issues, I seriously question whether it has any interest in practical conservation issues in the Northern Territory. However, that is a matter for another day.

I would now like to return to the matter of Uluru. Those of you who have been there will know that there is a very scenic area around Ayers Rock called Maggie Springs which contains water from time to time. Whilst I realise that signs may be erected regarding anticipated or desired public behaviour, I believe that these signs should be kept up to date. There is a sign near Maggie Springs which, at the moment, is dry. I was going to say, as dry as an appendage on a native fauna, but I will not because you might say it is unparliamentary. However, there is no water in Maggie Springs at the moment. There is a sign which says that swimming is prohibited. This is laughable. Swimming may be undesirable when there is water in it, but the least the Director of the ANPWS can do is to keep his signs up to date. When there is no water there, he should not give directions to the general public about swimming in the sand.

While I still have a few minutes left, I would like to reflect on the recommendations of certain public servants in the Department of Transport and Works regarding restrictions that are exercised in my electorate. I refer to recommendations by certain public servants in the Roads Division of the Department of Transport and Works regarding road closures. There is a well-known road, Strangways Road, which crosses the Stuart Highway at right angles and on the other side becomes Gulnare Road. In the interests of so-called safety and on the recommendation of these officers in the Roads Division of Transport and Works, this road was closed to prevent traffic going across it. In all my time in the rural area, and after extensive investigation with members of the police force, the Road Safety Council, and local residents of the longest standing, I have come across no evidence that this intersection is unsafe. There have been no accidents there. This is not to say that accidents may not happen in the future, but accidents can happen anywhere.

On the advice of certain public servants in Roads Division, this road was closed against the wishes, I might add, of myself, councils of the 2 schools at Humpty Doo and local people who use the road. In fact, there was only one person who was in favour of the closure of this road. It also happens to be a road whose closure will bring grave detriment, unless remedial action is taken, to the uranium industry which stores sulphur on a block owned by Ranger in Strangways Road. No doubt members of the opposition will be pleased to hear of any such restrictions being placed on the uranium industry.

The closure of this road is in contrast to another road in my electorate which has been taken over by the Department of Transport and Works in the Howard Springs area. The rural residents want it closed for reasons of safety in the bushfire season, and for reasons of convenience and health in the dry season when use of the road generates considerable dust. However, the officers of Transport and Works have not seen fit to close it to date. My only hope in this whole matter is that, when the Litchfield Shire takes control of these 2 roads, it will remedy both situations by opening the closed road and closing the open road.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk briefly about a community called Nyrripi in my electorate. Nyrripi is some 5 to 6 hours drive from Alice Springs and the people there have been attempting for many years to obtain an airstrip. They are not alone in this. There are many communities that are trying to obtain airstrips. Ti Tree is one, and so is Barrow Creek. They are considerably closer to Alice Springs than Nyrripi is. The road to Nyrripi is a very difficult one and, if there is any rain, it is completely impassable. What is different about the people at Nyrripi is that they did not simply wait. They stated that they would do much of the work themselves.

They came to Alice Springs and I was able to procure some mattocks, shovels and axe heads for them. After making the handles for these, they cleared the whole area of the strip. After a considerable amount of effort, as members may recall, I was able to have the government send out a grader to grade and roll it. Unfortunately, however, there are soft areas in the strip which make it impossible to use it. My point is that this has involved the government wasting considerable sums on something which cannot be used. In the 2 years since the work was done, all we have had is promises, promises, promises. We have been told that maybe it would be tacked on to another job, and that gravel would be placed on the soft spots. People at the community have found a local gravel deposit, and they have stated that they are quite prepared to move it themselves and to gravel the airstrip at no cost to the government in the form of wages. They will do it free of charge as a community exercise if only the government will provide them with a tractor strong enough to be able to cart the gravel, and a tip trailer. It is beyond the community's resources to purchase the tractor and trailer. As I said, they are prepared to provide their own labour as a community exercise to get that job done. I think that it is shameful that, for 2 years, they have maintained that strip, and the government still has not assisted them. It does not say much for a government that continually advocates self-help and the need for people to work for themselves. When people get out and clear an air strip themselves, and offer their labour free to get the job done, it is incredible that, after 2 years, all the people at Nyrripi have is a monument to waste.

The other point that upsets them also upsets me, because I see it time and again in communities where the government has established schools recently. Electricity is supplied to the school, but the community cannot draw from that source. This produces a ridiculous situation where there is a little enclave of privilege. There is electricity for the teachers and the school whereas the adjacent community does not even have a street light.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: We have to keep the teachers there. You know that.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for that interjection because it allows me to clarify my point. I am not saying that we should remove the electricity from the teachers. Far from it. I am saying that we should allow the electricity to be utilised by the community as well. It seems rather ridiculous that the community requires a separate electricity plant. As we all know, the smaller electricity plants are the more uneconomic ones. It would be far more economic to have the one unit supply the electricity to the school, supply the store so its freezers can be run and, at the very least, supply some street lighting in the community. Hopefully, when adequate housing is built, it can be connected to the houses so the people can actually have that rare privilege of electricity in their houses, which many communities do not have at the moment.

It seems pointless to supply electricity for the school and not allow the community to take advantage of it. I cannot see the rationale behind that. I ask the appropriate minister to take note of my concern and to change the policy so that the electricity provided to the school can be used also by the community.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 3 issues that I want to raise this evening. The first relates to the Ayers Rock Board of Management. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that I am a member of the board. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that the board has had its initial meeting and, in spite of the unfortunate gradual detachment of the

Northern Territory government from involvement with the management of the Rock - which essentially should be sheeted home to the unwise actions of Paul Everingham and, more recently, the unwise actions of the former Chief Minister - there are still record numbers of tourists visiting Ayers Rock and the Olgas. The new management arrangements would appear to be doing well.

Basically, I want to mention my concern that the position on the Ayers Rock Board of Management that is available for the Northern Territory government to fill should be filled as soon as possible. I have suggested the appointment of the new member for Araluen whose experience in the tourist industry undoubtedly would be of great value in the deliberations of the board and its responsibilities for one of the Territory's and the country's prime destinations. I am quite sure that his abilities and his experience would be of great value. Of course, I was a little concerned, as were many other people, by some intemperate statements he made in relation to rangers who do and do not sell photographs that they take themselves. For the benefit of honourable members, I might assert parenthetically that the sale of such photographs by ranger staff has occurred over many years. Many honourable members will know of the excellent photographs displayed in the Connellan Airport which were taken by the former senior ranger at Uluru, Mr Derek Rolf. However, I digress. Despite his rather intemperate outburst in that regard, I think that the honourable member for Araluen has a contribution to make to the board of management, and the sooner the Northern Territory government pulls its head out of the sand in that regard the better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a second issue I want to raise in the adjournment today relates to the naming of the Alice Springs High School. Central Australian members will be well aware of the history of the Alice Springs High School and its evolution from a higher elementary school. The predecessor of the Alice Springs High School gave way to that on the Anzac Hill site. Subsequently, in the 1960s, the building was moved to the new site in Milner Road in Alice Springs. However, the institution has remained the same and has been referred to as the Alice Springs High School. A second high school in the town has come to be known as the Sadadeen High School.

There is some concern that the old high school, ASHS, as it is affectionately known by many people, is to undergo a name change. Evidently, the name of Gillen High has been envisaged. Mr Deputy Speaker, I understand that there is considerable concern amongst parents, students and staff about a change of that sort and I was most relieved to hear from the Minister for Education, during a personal conversation, that that change would not necessarily go ahead, and that he was quite happy to see the old Alice Springs High School title retained. I am sure that that will be a source of some satisfaction to those parents, students and staff who have been concerned about the putative change.

The third issue I wish to raise in this adjournment debate relates once more to that rock south-west of Alice Springs. I wish to make a few comments about the Anzac Day celebrations that were conducted at Ayers Rock. It has been my practice to be involved with Anzac Day celebrations at what is becoming one of the largest centres in my electorate. Quite obviously, Anzac Day is an important occasion for all Australians. It is a celebration I have always taken particularly seriously and, if honourable members were interested in my thoughts on the subject, they would have heard them at the Anzac Day celebrations. I do not propose to expatiate on my views, thoughts and feelings about that particular celebration.



It is a celebration that has been organised at 2 sites for many years. A service was held on Sunrise Hill which has been in the news lately with the Chamberlain Inquiry, but that is another story. This year, I was thrown into the breach to a somewhat greater extent than is usually the case on this occasion. Mr Ren Kelly, who would be known to several honourable members here, has taken a key part in organising the Anzac Day celebrations there and it was of some concern that, because of illness in the family, he was unable to be present at the Rock for the Anzac Day celebrations but the hospitality provided by his establishment was nonetheless fulsome.

I was a little concerned because, as local member, I am usually called upon to make a few remarks either at the sunrise service or at the service at Yulara. I went down to the Ernest Giles Tavern at about 9.30 on the evening before to receive my riding instructions and I must admit that I was most concerned after inquiring about the order of service to be told that it was considered that I had that under control. I definitely did not and, a few hasty telephone calls to the RSL in Alice Springs and the Lutheran pastor in Alice Springs were necessary in order to find out about the niceties of these celebrations and services. I was literally thrown into the breach. However, I am sure all members would agree that, as MLAs and leaders in the community, we have a responsibility to support occasions like Anzac Day. The dawn service is held on the hill just to the east of the Rock; perhaps a view you have witnessed yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, as other members may have done. It is certainly a very moving occasion.

I suppose that one of the reasons why it is important to me is that, since there has been some contention about the title arrangements for Ayers Rock and some suggestion has been made that, because the title to Ayers Rock is now vested in black Australians - it is in the hands of black Australians - that somehow such national celebrations do not have a part. I think it is worth pointing out in the context of those celebrations that, in fact, some of those black Australians themselves have served this country in times of war and celebrations like that strike a chord in their hearts and minds. One man I have known for some considerable time, a friend of mine, always refers to Anzac Day in his own language as 'my father's time'. His father, who has passed away now, was a member of the services during the Second World War and performed duties in various parts of northern Australia during that war. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think occasions like Anzac Day are worth mentioning in the Assembly. As I say, I am a very strong supporter of Anzac Day. I would hate to see a time when celebrations like that, which are not celebrations of war but celebrations of the contributions that people have made to this country and to our national identity, should continue to be supported. It was a matter of some concern to me that relatively few people attended the service at Ayers Rock. If I were interested purely in political returns from being seen by a large number of constituents, it would have been a dead flop and a waste of time. However, I am sure that efforts in that regard will be supported by yourself and other honourable members and I shall certainly look forward to participating in the Anzac Day celebrations at Ayers Rock again next year.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs High School, name change 2776  
Anzac Day celebrations at Ayers Rock 2776  
Electricity supply to communities in Stuart electorate 2775  
Kakadu National Park 2773  
Management of NT national parks by ANPWS 2772  
Nyrripi, airstrip 2774  
Road closures in the rural area 2774  
Uluru National Park 2772, 2775

BILLS

Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 2768  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 2735  
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2737  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 179) 2768  
Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 2746  
Supply 1986-87 (Serial 189) 2734  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2746

MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR 2734

MOTIONS

Discharge of member for Wanguri from standing committees 2708  
Noting report, First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2754  
Impact of fringe benefits tax on NT 2709, 2772  
Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 2733

RETURN TO WRIT

Araluen Division 2707

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Proposed resignation as Speaker 2707

STATEMENTS

Fringe benefits tax motion 2772  
Ministry and administrative arrangements 2708  
Opposition office holders 2708

TABLED PAPERS

Letter from Bishop Peter de Campo 2731  
Letter from Polly England and family 2731  
National Crime Authority Report - 1984-85 2731  
Report on the remuneration and allowances of  
ministers and members of the Assembly, judges and magistrates 2732  
Resignation of Hon J.M. Robertson 2707  
Sessional Committee on the Environment - First Report 2752

DONDAS N.M.

BILLS

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2745  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2751

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Electricity supply to communities in Stuart electorate 2775  
Nyrripi, airstrip 2774

BILLS

Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 2771  
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2741

MOTION

Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2754

HANRAHAN R.A.

MOTION

Discharge of member for Wanguri from standing committees 2708

HATTON S.P.

BILL

Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 2771

MOTIONS

Impact of fringe benefits tax on NT 2772  
Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 2733

STATEMENT

Ministry and administrative arrangements 2708

TABLED PAPERS

National Crime Authority Report - 1984-85 2731  
Report on the remuneration and allowances of  
ministers and members of the Assembly, judges and magistrates 2732

LEO D.M.

BILL

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2743

MOTION

Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2756

MCCARTHY T.R.

BILL

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2744

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs High School, name change 2776  
Anzac Day celebrations at Ayers Rock 2776  
Uluru National Park 2775

BILLS

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2738  
Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 2746  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2746

COLLINS B.

BILL

Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 2768

MOTIONS

Impact of fringe benefits tax on NT 2725  
Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2760  
Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 1986 2733

STATEMENTS

Fringe benefits tax motion 2772  
Opposition office holders 2708

COLLINS. D.W.

BILL

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 2739

MOTION

Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2754, 2765

TABLED PAPER

Sessional Committee on the Environment - First Report 2752

COULTER B.F.

BILL

Supply 1986-87 (Serial 189) 2734

MOTIONS

Impact of fringe benefits tax on NT 2709  
Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2764

DALE D.F.

BILL

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 2735

MOTION

Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2756

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Kakadu National Park 2773  
Management of NT National parks by ANPWS 2772  
Uluru National Park 2772

BILL

Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 2770

MOTION

Noting First Report of Sessional Committee on the Environment 2757

PALMER M.J.

BILLS

Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 2748  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2748

PERRON M.B.

BILLS

Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 2750  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2750

SETTER R.A.

BILLS

Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 2749  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 2749

SMITH T.E.

BILL

Real Property Amendment (Serial 179) 2768

MOTION

Impact of fringe benefits tax on NT 2715

STEELE R.M.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Proposed resignation as Speaker 2707

**NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly  
Third Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

Tuesday 17 June 1986  
Wednesday 18 June 1986  
Thursday 19 June 1986

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

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1964

NO. 1

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1964

NO. 1

**NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
Fourth Assembly  
Third Session

Speaker	Roger William Stanley Vale
Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy	Barry Francis Coulter
Minister for Transport and Works, Minister for Ports and Fisheries and Minister for Lands	Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Attorney-General and Minister for Education	Daryl William Manzie
Minister for Business, Technology and Communications and Minister for Tourism	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
Minister for Health and Minister for Housing	Tom Harris
Minister for Community Development, Minister for Correctional Services and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs	Donald Francis Dale
Minister for Primary Production and Minister for Conservation	Terence Robert McCarthy

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

Chairman of Committees -  
Deputy Chairmen of Committees -

Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mr M.B. Perron  
Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich  
Mr R.A. Setter

**House Committee**

Mr Speaker  
Mr N.R. Bell  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Standing Orders Committee**

Mr Speaker  
Mr B. Collins  
Mr B.R. Ede  
Mr R.A. Hanrahan  
Mr T.R. McCarthy

**Publications Committee**

Mr N.R. Bell  
Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mr E.H. Poole  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Privileges Committee**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr C.C. Firmin  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr M.B. Perron  
Mr R.A. Setter

**Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr R.A. Setter  
Mr T.E. Smith

**Public Accounts Committee**

Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr M.B. Perron  
Mr T.E. Smith  
Mr I.L. Tuxworth

**Sessional Committee - Environment**

Mr N.R. Bell  
Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich  
Mr E.H. Poole

**Sessional Committee - New Parliament House**

Mr Speaker  
Mr F.A. Finch  
Mr D.M. Leo  
Mr T.E. Smith  
Mr I.L. Tuxworth

**Select Committee - Constitutional Development**

Mr B. Collins  
Mr S.P. Hatton  
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy  
Mr M.J. Palmer  
Mr T.E. Smith  
Mr I.L. Tuxworth

PART I

DEBATES

#### FOURTH ASSEMBLY - THIRD SESSION

Tuesday 17 June 1986

On Wednesday 11 June 1986, the Assembly adjourned. The Assembly was prorogued by His Honour the Administrator under the provisions of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act on 12 June 1986 until 17 June 1986.

The Assembly met at 11 am pursuant to the notice of prorogation and appointment by His Honour the Administrator.

The Clerk read the notice of prorogation and appointment.

#### RESIGNATION OF SPEAKER

The CLERK: I lay on the table a letter received from His Honour the Administrator. It reads as follows:

I desire to inform the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory that I have today received a letter from Mr Roger Michael Steele, MLA, tendering his resignation as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

E.E. JOHNSTON  
Administrator

#### ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Clerk, it is now necessary for this Assembly to elect a Speaker. I propose to the Assembly for its Speaker, the honourable member for Braitling, Mr Vale, and move that the honourable member for Braitling do take the Chair as Speaker.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): I second the motion.

Mr VALE (Braitling): I accept nomination.

The CLERK: Is there any further proposal?

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Clerk, I propose to the Assembly for its Speaker, the honourable member for Nhulunbuy, Mr Leo, and move that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy do take the Chair as Speaker.

Mr SMITH (Millner): I second the motion.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): I accept nomination.

Ballot taken.

The CLERK: Honourable members, the result of the ballot is Mr Vale 18 votes, Mr Leo 6 votes. I declare the honourable member for Braitling elected as Speaker of the Assembly in accordance with standing orders.

Mr VALE (Speaker): Honourable members, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the high honour you have conferred upon me.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, may I take this opportunity to offer you my congratulations on obtaining this high office. You have been a member of this Assembly since its inception in 1974, and have served it well. You have been Chairman of Committees for a number of years and, in my view and my government's view, you will carry out the functions of Speaker with the honour and dignity which that high office demands. You have the support of this government.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is first of all incumbent upon me, as on previous occasions, to offer my commiserations to the failed candidate. In view of the great disunity and disarray which the government is currently offering to the people of the Northern Territory, the opposition considered that it could offer some degree of continuity by putting forward its traditional candidate for Speaker. I am sorry that he has failed once again. Having said that, Mr Speaker, we wholeheartedly and unreservedly congratulate you upon your elevation to this extremely distinguished office. You have indeed served in this Assembly for a great many years. For the sake of the Northern Territory News, I will get this precisely right: in the 8 years and 10 months that I have been a member of this parliament, I have had no difficulty working with you on any occasion. In your former capacity as Chairman of Committees, you acquitted yourself professionally and in a non-partisan manner, and I have no doubt that we will be able to cooperate with and assist you to conduct the business of this Assembly with the decorum that it demands. On behalf of the opposition, I congratulate you on your elevation to this position.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I rise with a great deal of pride today. We have known each other since 1974. I can remember our first meeting. I was told how, when you heard that a young Greek lad had been selected by the Country Liberal Party to contest the seat of Casuarina, you asked a former member of the House of Representatives, Sam Calder, 'Does he speak English?' I heard that story at our first encounter.

Over the last 12 years, the member for Braitling has served in this Assembly in many capacities. He has been government Whip, Deputy Chairman of Committees, Chairman of Committees, and now he is Speaker. Roger, if I can use his name in breach of standing orders, has followed in the distinguished footsteps of his father, the late Monty Vale, who served in the Victorian parliament for a number of years. More importantly, Roger has been renowned in this Assembly since 1974 for his electorate work. He has had several electorates because of redistributions and boundary changes. However, almost 80% of his constituents vote for him. That certainly shows he has the respect of the community, and it gives him the respect of this Assembly too.

Roger is a Centralian through and through. I can remember being on a radio breakfast program about 7 years ago which was broadcast live to Alice Springs. The announcer asked me what I thought of Alice Springs, and I said, 'It is a beautiful place, but if it were not for Darwin, it would not exist'. The deluge of telexes, letters and phone calls I received during the next 48 hours certainly put me back in my place!

Roger has been involved in many community organisations. He is President of the Ghan Preservation Society, which is one of his babies. He has worked very hard to achieve the society's goals of preserving the history of the railways in central Australia, and I believe that the Ghan Preservation Society would not exist today without Roger's enthusiasm over the years. He has also been involved with the Alice Springs to Pimba Road Organisation which has brought many benefits to central Australia. He is on the Centralian Beat

Promotion Committee, the North Australian Development Committee and the Bicentennial Committee.

He and I collect parliamentary momentos. We had a tie collecting competition over a number of years, and I beat him by about 10 to 1. He knew he could not win so he started a hat collection in which he now beats me 10 to 1. I have developed a very good friendship with him, and I know that he will carry out his duties as Speaker with impartiality, as the Leader of the Opposition said. Mr Speaker, I offer you my congratulations.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, regardless of the way I cast my votes in central Australia, I want to place my congratulations on record today. We have crossed swords in various capacities, both in Darwin and central Australia, but I would hate that to be interpreted by yourself, or anybody else, as indicating that I do anything but wish you very well. I offer you my heartiest congratulations on your election as Speaker of this Assembly.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to extend my congratulations to you. I do so as a fellow member of the class of '74, a fellow Centralian, and a friend of yours long before either of us became politicians. You would recall that we first met when you were the member for Magellan and I was the member for soft drinks, before we both became members of this Assembly. Your service to the community is unquestioned. You have become a legend in your own lifetime for your electorate work. You are also well known for the way you have served this parliament, and I have no doubt that you will go down in history as one of the great Speakers of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. I wish you well, I give you my support and I congratulate you again.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I have made speeches like this before. As the Leader of the Opposition said, I am the opposition's traditional candidate. However, I have worked with you before in your capacity as government Whip. When I first came here in 1980, I had absolutely no experience of parliamentary procedure, and it certainly was edifying to work with you then. I am sure that it will be equally edifying to work with you as Speaker, and I congratulate you.

Mr SPEAKER: I take this opportunity of thanking members for their speeches of congratulation and support, and of advising that I will attempt at all times to rule with a degree of firmness and fairness.

#### PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER TO ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am informed that it is the intention of His Honour the Administrator to attend in the lounge of the Assembly, and I propose to present myself to him there as the choice of the Assembly as Speaker. I invite honourable members to accompany me to present myself to His Honour the Administrator. The sitting of the Assembly is suspended until the ringing of the bells.

#### AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER OATHS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that, accompanied by honourable members, I have presented myself to His Honour the Administrator as the choice of the Assembly for its Speaker, and His Honour was pleased to congratulate me. I inform honourable members that I have received from His Honour the Administrator an authorisation to administer to honourable members the oaths or affirmations of allegiance of office. I table the authorisation.

The Clerk read the authorisation.

#### ATTENDANCE OF ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Administrator intends to attend the Assembly immediately to declare the causes of his calling the Assembly together.

Serjeant-at-Arms, please inform His Honour that the Assembly is ready to receive him

His Honour the Administrator took the Chair.

#### ADDRESS BY HIS HONOUR THE ADMINISTRATOR

HIS HONOUR the ADMINISTRATOR: Mr Speaker, honourable members, I have called you together at this time for the dispatch of business and to outline the balance of my government's legislative program for the ensuing period.

The Northern Territory's overriding priority since self-government has been to establish the much-needed social and economic infrastructure upon which future development depends. It was evident in 1978 that our lack of population and services, exacerbated by our remoteness, would pose the principal barrier to growth. At self-government, the Territory lacked the essential services long taken for granted by other Australians.

Territorians will recall that roads were poor and power supplies, water distribution and housing were inadequate. Port facilities were primitive, and we had to contend with inadequate health and educational services. Little attention had been paid to the pressing needs of Aboriginal communities in housing, education, health and other essential services. Even Darwin was then characterised by an essentially transient population, a low level of home ownership and very little support industry. The Northern Territory had a narrow economic base and was almost totally reliant on mining and pastoral activities. It was immediately recognised by the new Territory government that the development of other industries and the diversification of products and markets for existing industries were crucial to the Territory's future. The pressing task for the Territory government over the past 8 years has been to build the infrastructure required to promote, facilitate and encourage this wider economic development.

Since self-government, roads, bridges, wharves, houses, schools, health services and community and recreational facilities have been provided. A large proportion of government budgets has been devoted to the funding of capital works. The development, in particular, of the transportation infrastructure has enabled Territory businesses to achieve a greater measure of competitiveness and readier access to markets.

Two areas graphically illustrate the strategy. In the tourist industry, the government has built for Territorians a basis for growth and employment through the underwriting of major projects such as the Yulara Village and the Sheraton Hotels. In the energy sector, the 1500 km, \$380m Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline due for completion at the end of this year will provide power for future industrial development at competitive tariffs.

Our commitment to growth is generating its rewards. Australians from southern states are migrating northwards to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the Territory, encouraged by the knowledge that



decent services and facilities are now in place. On attainment of self-government, there were only 110 000 Territorians. By the end of 1985, the population had risen to 146 600. Our annual rate of population growth continues to be 3 times that of the national rate. This rapid population increase has been accompanied by job growth. It has engendered the expansion of entrepreneurial skills, has been responsible for the flourishing of small businesses and has attracted investment to the Territory.

The premise of my government's pursuit of economic expansion is its understanding that the satisfaction of our social objectives depends fundamentally on continued economic growth. The only way we can continue to improve our standard of living and quality of life, the only way we can afford to provide for the needy and disadvantaged, the only way we can furnish a wider range of community services and facilities, is by expanding, strengthening and diversifying our economy. Steady economic development and sustained growth are essential for the security of future generations of Territorians. My government is motivated by the knowledge that every new worker who comes to a new job in the Territory creates additional employment opportunities in all those industries and businesses which support the community. A larger population generates a greater market for goods and services. And as the Northern Territory's population grows, so will our tax base expand. We will then gain a greater ability to determine our future through the application of our own resources to meet our own priorities.

Current economic indicators show the remarkable rate of development in the Northern Territory. Employment continues its steady growth. Private sector employment increased from 27 900 to 32 500 in the last year alone. In the public sector, the government has been successful in stabilising the number of public service employees.

My government will continue its commitment to the expansion of Territory industry through coordinated promotion and development. Our future efforts will be targeted more specifically on the marketing of Territory industries. Despite the difficult economic climate confronting us, it is essential that we maintain the momentum of economic growth. The Northern Territory must outgrow its history of dependence and establish its true potential as a contributor to national growth and development. In devising programs and priorities for the future, my government will confer with and involve the community as an equal partner. It will not act in isolation, but will seek community participation so that policy continues to be responsive to community needs. The government intends to work together with Territorians, local businesses and industries to establish our future direction.

In tourism, fishing, primary production and manufacturing, the government's major emphasis will be on the marketing of Territory industries. Tourism will continue to be a prime focus for my government. The thrust, however, will now shift from the development of infrastructure to coordinated and effective marketing. The last 12 months have heralded new job opportunities in the industry. The Alice Springs Sheraton and the Darwin Beaufort hotels have created some 400 new jobs. In July, a further 200 positions will be added with the opening of the Darwin Sheraton. Alice Springs has experienced a boom in tourist numbers and in the stock of tourist accommodation. My government will concentrate its energy on maximising existing room and site occupancy through marketing efforts.

My government is committed to promote the development of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. Fishing is a significant contributor to the economy. Fish landings increased from 1.8 million tonnes in 1984 to 2.1

million tonnes in 1985, an increase of 18.9%. In the same period the prawn catch increased by 50.7%, rising from 2.2 million tonnes to 3.2 million tonnes, suggesting that the industry is recovering from the loss of the Northern Research Prawn Fleet. The government is already improving on-shore facilities. It is consulting with the industry on catching methods and marketing effectiveness.

Primary production has long been recognised as a vital sector of the Territory's economy, and its potential to contribute to our economic diversification is now more clearly appreciated. Industry advisory committees have been established in relation to field crops, horticulture, northern cattle and buffalo, and the southern region pastoral industry. These committees will help to develop strategies aimed at raising the productivity of the agricultural and pastoral industries. This will be a major objective of my government over the next few years. Additionally, there will be a greater focusing on the diversification of primary produce and expansion of existing markets. In particular, marketing and infrastructure support will be given to those specific areas which show great promise: horticulture, nursery production and the cut-flower industry. We will continue to promote the development and diversification of our field crop industries.

The manufacturing industry continues to decline nationally, but in the Northern Territory our rapid population growth and the development of our transportation, communications and energy infrastructure has given new impetus to this sector. The expansion of our industrial base depends, of course, on the existence of an infrastructure which will enable the Northern Territory to become internationally competitive. Roads and ports facilities are in place, the gas pipeline is nearing completion, and the Trade Development Zone, a key element in achieving our objective, has been established. More remains to be done. My government accepts the need for the north-south railway as an essential element of our national infrastructure. As such, we are working to establish the means by which this important national project can be achieved. My government will continue its efforts to have the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports upgraded, projects which are vital to the continued growth of our tourist industry.

Recently, the Northern Territory joined with the states and the Commonwealth government in a national agreement to improve information advisory services to Australian industry. Information will be made available to the private sector on such matters as new technology for industry, export requirements, economic data and marketing skills.

The provision of an integrated telecommunications infrastructure throughout the Northern Territory is a government priority. Some 25 000 Territorians continue to have inadequate or non-existent access to telephone services. It is the aim of my government to ensure that telephone, data and broadcast reception capabilities are provided wherever possible, utilising the latest communications technology. The potential of the telecommunications network to enhance the delivery of many government services, especially in the fields of health and education, will have significant impact on the community in both economic and social terms.

One quarter of the Northern Territory's population is Aboriginal. Many of our Aboriginal citizens are among the most disadvantaged members of the community. My government is concerned with their needs and aspirations. Of particular concern is employment. My government will work with Aborigines to further develop businesses and education in Aboriginal communities. Our goal is to provide Aborigines with a full and equal role in the social and economic

fabric of the Northern Territory. In April of this year, a bulk intake trainee program was introduced in the public service, designed to equip Aborigines to enter into the mainstream of the Northern Territory Public Service by providing a foundation for entry and access to permanent employment and career development. The program, which is the largest initiative of its kind in Australia, aims to place Aboriginal people in permanent public sector employment. It has been accepted by the Commonwealth as the model for all future programs in the Australian states.

For some years now, my government has had in place arrangements to ensure the more effective involvement of Territory women in formulating policy and implementing decisions on all issues including, but not limited to, those which particularly affect them. These arrangements will continue, as will the government's overall thrust towards the genuine implementation of equal opportunity principles. The Women's Advisory Council has been functioning for some time to keep my government informed on matters of concern to women throughout the Territory. Women will be represented on important decision-making bodies. Women of talent in the public service are benefiting from the policy of involving more women in positions of executive responsibility.

Significant progress is being achieved in the field of education. In 1987, for the first time, prospective students will have direct access to all 3 sectors of post-secondary education in the Territory. Courses at the University College in Darwin will commence in 1987. The financial and intellectual drain, which has so long plagued the Territory and caused the dislocation of Territory families, will be mitigated. Strategies are currently being considered to bring the benefits of satellite technology to remote primary, secondary and tertiary students in the Northern Territory as part of my government's ongoing commitment to quality services for the community. Since self-government, the school and post-school education systems in the Territory have been developed. This has been achieved through the introduction of core curricula, the establishment of secondary colleges, substantial broadening of course offerings in post-secondary education and, from 1987, the start of a university college. In developing this system, my government will consolidate and maximise the benefits of its past initiatives.

My government is determined to strengthen links with our Asian neighbours, not only in trade and economic matters but across a wide range of areas of mutual interest. Further encouragement for the teaching of Asian languages will be provided through the implementation of a Japanese/Northern Territory teacher exchange program.

My government recognises the importance of providing housing for the Territory and is working positively towards this goal. Investment in housing is an investment in people. Poorly-housed people suffer more social, psychological and health problems.

In the field of health, my government has initiated several programs to counter the abuse of drugs, which is one the Territory's major health problems. Allied to this is concern about the consumption of alcohol, and a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of restricted areas provisions of the Liquor Act is under way.

Freedom of choice is a vital ingredient of democracy. For Territorians, choice of medical treatment is now an imminent reality as negotiations with developers over Darwin's private hospital reach an exciting stage.

My government is aware of the need in the community for greater and wide-ranging psychiatric services, and is committed to providing them.

In line with national agreements, the Food Bill and the Therapeutic Goods and Cosmetics Bill will be introduced to safeguard food hygiene and the distribution of therapeutic goods.

Among other legislative initiatives to be brought before this Assembly for consideration will be a bill to introduce a new superannuation scheme for public service and statutory authorities' employees.

The proposed new Occupational Health and Safety (Rehabilitation and Compensation) Act will also be brought before this Assembly. The development of comprehensive legislation to improve the system of worker's compensation, and to tie it to rehabilitation and occupational safety, is an important initiative and one which has been the subject of extensive consultations with interested business, labour and community organisations.

My government accepts the need for financial efficiency and accountability in its own affairs. As an important element of its commitment in this area, a review of the government's tendering and purchasing procedures has been announced. In addition, a Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Assembly will be established as a matter of priority. Terms of reference for the committee will be submitted to the Assembly shortly.

My government aspires to further constitutional development, with the ultimate objective of achieving full and equal status for Territorians with other Australians at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Speaker, honourable members, my government is determined to promote an effective working relationship with the federal government. This is essential if we are to make continued progress in achieving our social, economic and constitutional objectives. We need to develop a relationship which is based on a proper acknowledgement and understanding of legitimate roles and interests, and which reflects an appropriate sense of partnership. Beyond this, my government accepts without reservation the need to work in liaison with all sections of the Territory community to achieve our common goals and to overcome obstacles to those goals.

It is appropriate that my government use the balance of its term to further consolidate its economic, social and constitutional achievements, and to set in place those further initiatives and programs which will ensure that progress is sustained. My government will continue to foster development and investment, since the future of the Northern Territory and the legitimate aspirations of the community can be secured only through population growth, a thriving private sector, and a commitment to work together.

Mr Speaker, honourable members, I will now leave you to your important deliberations.

His Honour was led from the Chamber by the Serjeant-at-Arms.

Mr Speaker Vale resumed the Chair.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 191)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the second reading of the bill be made an order of the day for a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

#### ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the office of Chairman of Committees is now vacant. Therefore, it is necessary for the Assembly to appoint a member to be its Chairman of Committees.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I propose to the Assembly for its Chairman of Committees the honourable member for Wagaman, Mr Finch, and move that the honourable member for Wagaman be appointed Chairman of Committees of this Assembly.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I second the motion.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I accept nomination.

Mr SPEAKER: Is there any further proposal?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I propose to the Assembly for its Chairman of Committees the member for Arnhem, Mr Lanhupuy, and move that the honourable member for Arnhem be appointed Chairman of Committees of this Assembly.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I second the motion.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I accept the nomination.

Ballot taken.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the result of the ballot is Mr Finch 18 votes, Mr Lanhupuy 6 votes. I declare the honourable member for Wagaman, Mr Finch, appointed as Chairman of Committees in accordance with standing orders, and offer him my congratulations.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Honourable members, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the high honour you have conferred upon me.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I cannot let the opportunity go by without offering my congratulations to the honourable member for Wagaman. Like myself, he is in his first Assembly, having been elected in 1983. Since then, he has served on a number of committees of this Assembly and has performed the task of Deputy Chairman of Committees on many occasions. Without doubt, he will perform this role with full support from our side of the Assembly.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Good on you, Fred, you finally got somewhere.

Mr Speaker, the opposition wishes to congratulate the honourable member for Wagaman. I recently moved from his electorate into the electorate of the member for Port Darwin, but I can assure him that it is absolutely no reflection on his capacity as a local member. The opposition looks forward to working with the honourable member in his new capacity and we congratulate him on his election.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their kind words and can assure them of my dedication to the duties associated with the job of Chairman of Committees.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from His Honour the Administrator, a copy of his speech.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the following address in reply be agreed to:

May it please Your Honour, we the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, in parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Honour for the speech which you have been pleased to address to this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

Sitting suspended until 2.30 pm.

Mr Speaker Vale resumed the Chair at 2.30 pm.

#### SESSIONAL ORDER

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that, during the present session of the Assembly, Mr Speaker may, at his discretion and notwithstanding any previous resolution of the Assembly, appoint a day and/or time for the holding of the sitting of the Assembly, which day and/or time shall be notified to each member in writing.

Motion agreed to.

#### MOTION

##### Leave of Absence for Members

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that, unless otherwise ordered, if on any occasion during this session of the Assembly, the interval between the termination of 1 sitting day and the commencement of the next sitting day is 2 months or more, all members shall be deemed to have been granted leave of absence for such interval between the sitting days.

Motion agreed to.

#### SESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that during the present session of the Assembly:

- 1) a committee to be known as the Sessional Committee on the Environment be appointed comprising, unless otherwise ordered, Mr D.W. Collins, Mr Bell, Mr Lanhupuy, Mrs Padgham-Purich and Mr Poole be appointed;
- 2) the committee be empowered, unless otherwise ordered, to inquire into and from time to time report upon and make recommendations

on all matters relating to uranium mining and processing activities and their effects on the environment within the Alligator Rivers region;

- 3) the committee be empowered to send for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and make such interim recommendations as it may deem fit, and to publish information pertaining to its activities from time to time;
- 4) the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public;
- 5) the committee be empowered to consider the minutes of proceedings, evidence taken and records of similar committees appointed in previous sessions and assemblies; and
- 6) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are consistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Motion agreed to.

#### NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE COMMITTEE

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that during the present session of the Assembly:

- 1) a committee to be known as the New Parliament House Committee be appointed comprising, unless otherwise ordered, Mr Speaker, Mr Finch, Mr Leo, Mr Smith and Mr Tuxworth be appointed;
- 2) the committee be appointed to act for and represent the Legislative Assembly, as the client for the new parliament house, in all matters concerned with the planning, design and construction of the new parliament house and all matters incidental thereto;
- 3) the committee reconsider and, as necessary, amend the parliament house competition brief which, when revised, shall be used as the basis for the design and construction of the new parliament house, unless otherwise ordered by the Assembly or unless the committee resolves to reconsider any section of the revised brief;
- 4) the committee also consider and report on any matter relating to the planning, design and construction of the new parliament house and matters incidental thereto as may be referred to it by -
  - A) The Minister for Transport and Works; or
  - B) Resolution of the Legislative Assembly;

- 5) the committee be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to employ necessary staff and be provided with such facilities and resources as it may from time to time require;
- 6) the committee report and make recommendations to the Assembly on these matters from time to time;
- 7) the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session, notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place, and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and such interim recommendations as it may deem fit;
- 8) the committee be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public;
- 9) the committee be empowered to consider the minutes of proceedings, evidence taken and records of similar committees established in previous sessions and assemblies; and
- 10) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Motion agreed to.

#### SELECT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Whereas this Assembly is of the opinion that when the Northern Territory of Australia becomes a new state it should do so as a member of the Federation on terms resulting in equality with the other states with its people having the same constitutional rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the people of the existing states;

and whereas in so far as it is constitutionally possible the equality should apply as on the date of the grant of statehood to the new state,

- 1) A select committee be established to inquire into, report and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on:
  - (A) The constitutional issues arising between the Northern Territory of Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Northern Territory of Australia and the states of Australia concerning the entry of the Northern Territory of Australia into the Federation as a new state including but without limiting the generality of the foregoing:
    - (I) the representation of the new state in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament;



- (II) legislative power;
  - (III) executive powers; and
  - (IV) judicial powers;
- (B) The framework of a new state constitution and the principles upon which it should be drawn;
  - (C) The method to be adopted to have a draft new state constitution approved by or on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory of Australia; and
  - (D) The steps required or desirable to be taken by the Northern Territory of Australia, the Commonwealth and the states for the grant of statehood to the Northern Territory of Australia as a new state within the federation.
- 2) Unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lanhupuy, Mr Palmer, Mr Smith and Mr Tuxworth.
  - 3) In the unavoidable absence of the Chief Minister, a member of the government nominated by the Chief Minister may attend any meeting of the committee and participate in its proceedings as a member of the committee.
  - 4) The chairman of the committee may, from time to time, appoint a member of the committee to be the deputy chairman of the committee, and that the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee, at any time when there is no chairman or when the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee.
  - 5) In the event of an equality of voting, the chairman, or the deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a casting vote.
  - 6) The committee have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.
  - 7) Four members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee and two members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of the subcommittee.
  - 8) The committee or any subcommittee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly.
  - 9) The committee shall be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it. Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard shall be published of such proceedings of the committee as take place in public.
  - 10) The committee have leave to report from time to time, and that any member have power to add a protest or dissent to any report.

- 11) The committee report to the Assembly twelve months from the date of this resolution.
- 12) Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, all documents received by the committee during its inquiry shall remain in the custody of the Assembly: provided that, on the application of a department or person, any document, if not likely to be further required, may, in the Speaker's discretion, be returned to the department or person from whom it was obtained.
- 13) Members of the public and representatives of the news media may attend and report any public session of the committee unless otherwise ordered by the committee.
- 14) The committee may authorise the televising of public hearings of the committee under such rules as it considers appropriate.
- 15) The committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee.
- 16) Nothing in these terms of reference or in the standing orders shall be taken to limit or control the duties, powers or functions of any minister of the Territory who is also a member of the select committee.
- 17) The committee be empowered to consider the minutes of proceedings, evidence taken and records of a similar committee established in the previous session of the Assembly.
- 18) The foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that paragraph 2 of the motion be amended by deleting the words 'the Leader of the Opposition' and inserting the words 'the member for Stuart, Mr Ede'.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister) (by leave): I move:

1. that the following provisional standing order, to operate on a trial basis as a Sessional Order, be agreed to:

#### 21(A) PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

- 1) A Standing Committee of Public Accounts to consist of five members shall be appointed at the commencement of each Assembly.
- 2) The duties of the committee shall be -

- (a) to examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory and each statement and report transmitted to the Legislative Assembly by the Auditor-General, pursuant to the Financial Administration and Audit Act;
  - (b) to report to the Legislative Assembly with such comments as it thinks fit, any items or matters in or arising in connection with those accounts, statements or reports, or in connection with the receipt or disbursement of the moneys to which they relate, to which the committee is of the opinion that the attention of parliament should be drawn;
  - (c) to report to the Legislative Assembly any alteration which the committee thinks desirable in the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them in or in the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys;
  - (d) to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any question in connection with the public accounts of the Territory -
    - (i) which is referred to it by a resolution of the Assembly; or
    - (ii) which is referred to it by the Administrator or a minister; and
  - (e) to examine the reports of the Auditor-General laid before the Legislative Assembly with the accounts of a public authority of the Northern Territory (including any documents annexed or appended to those reports).
- 3) The committee shall examine only those accounts of receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory and reports of the Auditor-General for financial years commencing after 30 June 1986: provided that this shall not prevent the consideration by the committee of matters included in reports of the Auditor-General for the year ending 30 June 1986 which have or may have a continuing effect on the form of the public accounts; or the method of keeping them; or the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys.
- 4) Prior to determining whether to undertake an inquiry into any matter which may have arisen in connection with the public accounts of the Territory, pursuant to paragraph (2(a) and (e), with the concurrence of the committee, the chairman is empowered to write to the chief executive officer of the relevant department or public authority for a report on the matter.
- 5) The committee shall take care not to inquire into any matters which are being examined by a Select Committee of the Assembly especially appointed to inquire into such matters and any question arising in connection therewith may be referred to the Assembly for determination.

- 6) The committee shall elect a government member as chairman.
- 7) The chairman of the committee may, from time to time, appoint a member of the committee to be the deputy chairman of the committee, and the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee at any time when there is no chairman or when the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee.
- 8) In the event of an equality of voting, the chairman, or the deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a casting vote.
- 9) The committee shall have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.
- 10) Three members of the committee shall constitute a quorum of the committee and two members of a subcommittee shall constitute a quorum of the subcommittee.
- 11) The committee or any subcommittee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly.
- 12) The committee shall be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it. Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard shall be published of such proceedings of the committee as take place in public.
- 13) The committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that all members have not been appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy.
- 14) The committee shall have leave to report from time to time and to report its proceedings and evidence taken; and any member of the committee shall have power to add a protest or dissent to any report.
- 15) Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, all documents received by the committee during its inquiry shall remain in the custody of the Assembly: provided that, on the application of a department or person, any document, if not likely to be further required, may, in the Speaker's discretion, be returned to the department or person from whom it was obtained.
- 16) The committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee.
- 17) The foregoing provisions of this resolution so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

2. That, unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of Mr Perron, Mr Tuxworth, Mr Palmer, Mr Smith and Mr Leo.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

#### DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to the provisions of standing order No 12, I lay on the Table my warrant nominating members to be Deputy Chairmen of Committees. I hereby nominate Mr D.W. Collins, Mr W.W. Lanhupuy, Mrs C.N. Padgham-Purich, Mr M.B. Perron and Mr R.A. Setter to act as Deputy Chairman of Committees when requested to do so by the Chairman of Committees. All previous warrants nominating Deputy Chairman of Committees are hereby revoked. Given under my hand this 17th day of June 1986.

#### RESTORATION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS TO NOTICE PAPER

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the following bills be restored to the Notice Paper and consideration resumed at the stage it had reached in the last session: Supply Bill 1986-87 (Serial 189); National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory Provisions) Bill (Serial 176); Companies (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 181); Securities Industry (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 177); Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Applications of Laws) Bill (Serial 176); Companies and Securities (Interpretation of Miscellaneous Provisions) (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 175); Companies (Administration) Bill (Serial 173); Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) Bill (Serial 180); Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill (Serial 184); Unit Titles Amendment Bill (Serial 169); Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill (Serial 170); Real Property Amendment Bill (Serial 179); Local Government Amendment Bill (Serial 193); and the Essential Goods and Services Bill (Serial 171).

Motion agreed to.

#### RESTORATION OF STATEMENTS TO NOTICE PAPER

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the following be restored to the Notice Paper: the Correctional Services Review 1984; the ministerial statement on the 2-airline policy; the Draft Bill on Work Health; and the Auditor-General's Report.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, we have no objection to the reinstatement of the majority of those statements. The Work Health Bill will be reintroduced in its revised form on Thursday.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that my motion be amended by deleting the words 'Draft Bill on Work Health'.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### RESTORATION OF GENERAL BUSINESS TO NOTICE PAPER

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the following bills be restored to the Notice Paper, and consideration of both

resumed at the stage they had reached in the last session: Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment Bill (Serial 156); and Electoral Amendment Bill (Serial 178).

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
Member for Elsey

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this week's sittings of the Assembly be granted to the member for Elsey on account of parliamentary business interstate.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I assure members that I do not seek in any way to be obstructive in respect of this matter. As all members know, these motions are rarely debated although Hansard will in fact demonstrate they have been debated with some heat on past occasions.

I am in some confusion over this. I seek some elucidation from the government on the matter because, not surprisingly under the circumstances, I noted the absence from the Assembly this morning of the former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I inquired as to why the member for Elsey was absent and I was informed, not by 1 but by 2 government members, that the honourable member - and I extend to him my very best wishes and congratulations - is being married and that that is the reason for his absence. It may not be true.

I am not seeking to be obstructive but, obviously, requests for leave are matters that have to be treated seriously. The members who spoke to me are nodding their heads. As I say, I am not seeking to be obstructive. I inquired as to the cause of his absence and was informed that the member - and good luck to him - was getting married. I simply ask if the government can advise me of the nature of the parliamentary business that the member is attending to interstate.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, the former Speaker, the member for Elsey, is attending the Presiding Officers' Conference in Melbourne this week as we have a paper before that conference.

Mr B. Collins: The Presiding Officers' Conference?

Mr HANRAHAN: Yes, because he was the Presiding Officer when the conference was called and is attending the conference as a representative of this Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPERS

Annual Report of the Commissioner  
of Motor Vehicle Dealers

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers for the year ended 31 December 1985, and I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Annual Report of Commissioner  
for Consumer Affairs

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs for the year ended 30 June 1985, and I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Transformation and Tradition

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table a report entitled 'Transformation and Tradition', a report on Aboriginal development in the Northern Territory of Australia.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Report of Professor Turner on Aboriginal Development  
in the Northern Territory

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I have great pleasure in tabling the report entitled 'Transformation and Tradition' by Professor David Turner. As indicated by its subtitle, it concerns Aboriginal development in the Northern Territory of Australia. Professor Turner has been employed by the government as a consultant to work in the important and developing area of community government. Honourable members may be aware that the professor worked previously with the Aboriginal people at Groote Eylandt and is actually there now. I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

It is appropriate at this point that I express my thanks to Professor Turner. He has made a valuable contribution to the ongoing evaluation of government policy. His report will be of value to honourable members and to other parties. David Turner is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto, Canada. He has had research experience amongst the Aboriginal people on Groote Eylandt and holds the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Western Australia. He combines an extensive background in anthropology in Aboriginal studies with personal and practical experience of local democratic government in provincial Canada as well as research experience in relation to local government in the west riding of Yorkshire.

The report 'Transformation and Tradition' is the result of a 6-month consultancy in an important and sensitive area of Territory life. The report involves an understanding of the significance of Aboriginal culture, an appreciation of the tradition of local government in a democratic society, and an awareness of the on-the-ground situation in the Territory today. Members will be aware of the initiatives taken by my predecessors, and by the Department of Community Development, in developing community government in the Territory. Professor Turner has made important contributions in this area, building on earlier departmental initiatives. The report gives details and background information on the community government models at: Angurugu on Groote Eylandt; Barunga - Wugula, near Katherine; Yuendumu, north-west of Alice Springs; Elliott; Mataranka; Alice Springs; Hermannsburg; and Wallace Rock Hole.

Mr Speaker, to quote from Professor Turner's report, 'Community government is a means of resolving much of the disruption Aboriginal people are experiencing in their traditional culture as a result of European contact'. The inherent flexibility of the Community Government Scheme has made it very attractive, not only to the Aboriginal communities in the Territory but to

several smaller communities such as Elliott, Mataranka, and Pine Creek. Again I use Professor Turner's words: 'Community government is a means for Aborigines to step into Australian society on their terms' and, 'not just for Aboriginal people, although it is specially suited to their needs'.

The background for community government is the policies of self-determination and self-management seen against community development in its broadest sense. These aspects are enshrined in what the Department of Community Development has established in its strategic planning as its purpose and goal. The departmental purpose is: to promote and protect the social wellbeing of communities, families and individuals in the Northern Territory and advise the Minister for Community Development on strategies for the social development of the Northern Territory; to foster self-sufficiency amongst the Northern Territory population; and to provide services which are equitable, effective and efficient. The department's goal is to facilitate a process of community, family and individual development whereby people of the community define their own common and individual needs, organise themselves for planning and development, and execute their plans with maximum reliance upon community resources; and to provide, where necessary, service and other forms of assistance designed to alleviate identified needs.

Honourable members will recall the important initiatives that have been taken by the government in Aboriginal programs. I refer members to the Chief Minister's 1985 budget speech when, in relation to the transfer of Aboriginal essential service functions to the Department of Community Development, he said:

This is a major area of thrust in this year's budget. It has been decided to lay the groundwork for Aboriginal communities to take much greater responsibility for identification of their needs and for design, construction and management of all essential services on their communities.

Under current arrangements, there is a mix of responsibilities between Transport and Works, Community Development and the communities themselves. It is now proposed firstly to place in the Department of Community Development full responsibility for the flow of funds to Aboriginal communities. This department will then be the single focus for all government expenditure in essential services in these communities. This change is reflected in the budget documents.

The second element of the changed administrative arrangements, which is not yet finalised, is for the communities themselves to accept far greater responsibility for the construction of assets and the management of the services.

Mr Speaker, as would be expected, the report is strong in its anthropology and in its presentation of Aboriginal culture. The report stresses that Aboriginal culture and traditions should be taken seriously and are relevant in modern Australian society. An important part of the development of community government is the right of each community to determine important aspects of its own scheme. The report indicates that the question of boundaries is an important issue. It is something that excited Aboriginal people. Professor Turner stated in his report: 'Meetings came alive when discussions of community government shifted to the issues of boundaries and representation'. The strength of the Community Government Scheme is that it allows a community to determine its own boundaries and to determine who shall stand for office and who shall vote. Professor Turner sees the issue of



boundaries and representations as 'the point of contact between municipal culture and Aboriginal culture'.

The report also deals with aspects of departmental organisation. Professor Turner recommends the creation of the position of Director of Aboriginal Affairs. The current Department of Community Development arrangements provide for a Director of Aboriginal Development. Rather than follow the recommendation of the Turner Report, I have gone beyond it and agreed to organisational changes which allow for Aboriginal affairs, as an expression of community affairs, to be included in the concept of community government. Such measures will strengthen our relationship with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I have also approved the formation of a new division of Local Government and Community Affairs. This will provide for administration of both local government and community government as well as Aboriginal affairs and Aboriginal programs, including policy development. It will have responsibility for intergovernmental business and interdepartmental issues through the Northern Territory Coordination of Aboriginal Programs Committee. I believe this arrangement will allow efficient policy and program development, consistent with overall departmental and governmental objectives. In his report, Professor Turner calls for a stronger government presence on the ground with particular emphasis on training. The reorganisation I have referred to will allow more staff to work in the Aboriginal programs area to provide for consultation, monitoring, follow-through and training.

As I have said, the report's recommendations are strong on anthropology. It is no reflection on Professor Turner that he was not, as a short-term consultant, fully aware of Northern Territory Public Service administrative arrangements. It is important that members are aware of these arrangements, which maximise departmental resources in the context of current economic constraints, and allow the Department of Community Development to interface well with other departments to influence and achieve the best policy. These administrative changes go beyond the vision and recommendations of Professor Turner.

Significant gains have been achieved in Aboriginal affairs by effectively influencing and persuading the Commonwealth Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Local Government. This is apparent in the recommendations of the Self inquiry into local government, where new funding arrangements for major communities are provided through personal income tax sharing; that is, community government has been recognised by the Commonwealth through the provision of personal income tax. As a result of this recognition, I will be moving during this session to establish a Northern Territory Grants Commission. Members will recall that, in my second-reading speech on the Local Government Amendment Act, details were given of my intention to provide for the option of the creation of a Community Government Association. These initiatives, together with the transfer of management of essential services to the Department of Community Development, indicate the government's commitment to providing a greater level of independence to local government bodies and commitment to self-management for Aboriginal people.

The report suggests that areas such as education, health, law enforcement, housing and outstations could come within the responsibility of community government. These suggestions approach the issue from the point of view of the local community and arise from the fragmentation of agencies and organisations working with Aboriginal communities. The report indicates the very clear need for change at this level. The Territory government has already responded to such pressures at a different level by establishing the Northern Territory Coordination of Aboriginal Programs Committee which

involves major Territory agencies and coordinates their activities in delivering services to Aboriginal communities.

Members should note that Professor Turner's consultancy dealt with more than community government. The terms of reference also referred to the problems of Aboriginal crime and delinquency, new directions for Aboriginal economic development, and the effective delivery of essential services and government programs to Aboriginal communities. The report concludes with a series of recommendations in the following areas: community government, delivery of services, economic enterprise, crime and delinquency. The reader is cautioned against considering the recommendations outside the context of the total report. Some of the recommendations have been implemented in the course of consultancy whilst others will require more detailed consideration and coordination across other areas of government such as Correctional Services, Youth Sport and Recreation, and Business, Technology and Communications. I give an undertaking that officers of my department will commence appropriate discussions as soon as possible.

My portfolio of community development carries the responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and, later this month, I will be attending a meeting of the Australian Council of Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs in Cairns. Land rights is an issue of crucial importance in Aboriginal affairs, and the issue is not absent from the report. Members may be aware that there was some opposition to community government from the Central Land Council, which engaged Mr Martin Mowbray as a consultant.

There is no point in going over the details of the criticisms. Community government is proceeding, and the government has agreed that, when community government schemes are being drafted, the traditional owners of the areas involved will be consulted. It is interesting to note that, quite independently of the Central Land Council, the traditional owners of Barunga, the Jarwoyn people, were intimately involved in the development of the Barunga-Wugula scheme and its successful development was due to the attitude of the traditional owners. Professor Turner has commented that: 'The community government scheme reflects the generosity of the Landeroidj-Jawoyn people in relation to other people living on their land. The other language groups, though resident in the reserve area, in Aboriginal terms, are merely guests'.

The principle behind the overall direction of the report is 'equality in interdependence for all segments of the Territory's population as situated within local government authorities of their own making'. Members will note that the report requires the insertion of 2 draft community government schemes, for Yuendumu and Barunga. It is not possible to insert these schemes until they are finally approved by the communities. Negotiations are at a sensitive and delicate stage. When finalised, the details of the 2 schemes will be provided for the information of members.

The report requires some basic editing that is yet to be finalised with Professor Turner. Members have the report as it was presented to me. The Department of Community Development supports the thrust of the report. The consultant had total independence in writing the report, although the consultancy built on an already developed departmental initiative. One of the more significant aspects of the report is the focus on Aboriginal tradition and the consequent stress on the potential community government provides for Aboriginal people to retain those traditions while seeking a greater place in Australian society. Such an approach is consistent with the department's purpose and goal statements.

Mr Speaker, as I said in my opening remarks, Professor Turner's report is a valuable contribution to the ongoing evaluation and development of my government's policy in community affairs matters. It is with pride that I believe that, in the Northern Territory, we have the most advanced and integrated policies and programs now in place. This achievement is more noteworthy when account is taken of the problems being seen across Australia with policies such as land rights. It is my government's strong view that our policy, based on community government and self-management, is more attractive, realistic and achievable for Aboriginal communities. Increasingly, we are seeing recognition of our efforts, not only from within the Territory but also from the Commonwealth, state governments and independent reviews such as the Self Inquiry. Accordingly, I have no doubt there will be considerable interest shown in Professor Turner's report. I commend the report to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUPPLY BILL  
(Serial 189)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, this is a normal measure proposed by the government at this time of the year to ensure the continuing flow of government funds to government departments and of course the opposition supports it.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 184)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

UNIT TITLES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 169)  
REAL PROPERTY (UNIT TITLES) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 170)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

In committee:

Unit Titles Amendment Bill (Serial 169):

Clauses 1 to 19 agreed to.

Clause 20:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 68.1.

It was originally proposed that, to be eligible for condominium development, unit title developments should comprise 40 or more units in a minimum of 2 stages of 20 units each. This was to prevent frivolous application from developers to stage the construction of small groups of units. It was considered a developer of less than 40 units should have the capacity to complete the project as a single stage development.

Since the proposed legislation was tabled for public comment in August 1985, the industry has examined this provision. It has been suggested, and the government has agreed, that a minimum development of 40 units is excessive to qualify for staged development in Territory conditions. This number has now been reduced so that the minimum number of units for a completed condominium development must be at least 24. This has been accepted by major unit developers and the Master Builders' Association. Details of the number of units in each stage shall be examined by the appropriate authority under the Planning Act when the disclosure statement is submitted by an intending developer under new sections 26B and 26C.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I appreciate the minister's comments made in respect of the proposed amendments to clause 20. I think he said the minimum was 40 units. In fact, the bill says that the minimum is 20 units. I was aware, from the briefing kindly offered by the minister in respect of this bill, that the figure of 24 was chosen because it fitted in with current pricing structures. My recollection is that, at current prices, 24 units cost approximately \$1m to construct, and that was the figure that was chosen. I may be incorrect about that, but it is my recollection of the information the minister's department gave me. I have no problem with it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 33 agreed to.

Clause 34:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 68.2.

The reference to 'prescribed amount' in the bill was a drafting oversight. It was never intended that members of a corporation should be bound to pay prescribed sums; that is, amounts of money set by legislation. Section 36(1) of the principal act refers to moneys contributed by corporation members for expenditure such as maintenance, contract wages, rates and insurance.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I appreciate that this particular amendment means that the allowable expenditure will have a ceiling equivalent to the contributions determined by the body corporate. I would appreciate some explanation of that. The provision in the bill introduced a more objective measure, namely the 'prescribed amount' referred to by the minister, which could be overridden by a special resolution. My recollection is that it was a unanimous resolution. The amendment does not help the individual unit holder. Some of the provisions in this bill are particularly important in that regard because we are legislating to provide a framework within which unit holders will agree with each other as much as possible, and a minimum of legal problems will be occasioned. I would appreciate some further explanation from the minister in that regard. This amendment does not help the individual unit holder although the ultimate result may be the same - to govern the overriding power of the special resolution.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I was under the impression that the amendment was self-explanatory. The main reason for the amendment was that the prescribed sum should be an amount determined by the board and not by government through legislation. If that is not clear enough, the only thing I can add is that the amendment clarifies the further appointments of members.

Mr B. Collins: You are not on top of it, Nick.

Mr DONDAS: No. I am not going to delay it, Mr Chairman. I was hoping that, during the second reading, the member would have given me some indication of his concerns. I do not want to thrust it down his throat and use our numbers in the Assembly to force it through. If he had raised his concerns earlier, I would be in a better position to answer them. Under the present circumstances, I will have to stick to my guns and say that the bill's reference to 'prescribed amount' was never intended. Furthermore, there will be fees for board members and corporate members, and those people can set them themselves.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Quite seriously, I was not suggesting that the Assembly determine those prescribed fees by way of regulation. That would be an absolute nonsense. I am concerned however. The minister suggested that I could have raised my concerns in my second-reading speech. I point out to the minister that these amendments were tabled only last Wednesday. There was scarcely time for me to give them due consideration when I had to make a second-reading speech in respect of the bill at the same time.

I think it would be appropriate if further consideration in committee could be deferred so that some consideration could be given to these matters. I was not expecting the committee stage of this bill to be taken now. I was hoping to have an opportunity to discuss it further.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, as I have said, I intend to hold hard to my guns on this matter. I do not think that the member's question warrants holding up the committee stage. The amendment refers to the powers of the committee. In the original bill, the fees as prescribed were to be determined by the government through legislation. The amendment simply makes it clear that the government will not set the fees. They will be set by the committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 68.3.

This is a technical amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 34, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 35 and 36 agreed to.

Clause 37:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 68.4.

Since the tabling of the draft bill, it has been determined that 28 days provides insufficient time for purchasers and developers of units to organise and complete purchase transactions.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, it is a matter of some concern that the current Unit Titles Act lays down a 6-month period. For very specific reasons, I understand, this was to be shortened to a 28-day period. As the minister may be aware, there is a problem with the holding of the initial annual general meeting of the body corporate in the case of a unit development of this sort. The problem is that, if the first annual general meeting is delayed too long, it is quite possible for an initial occupier to move in and put polka dot blinds directly opposite the lounge room of another unit holder, without the existence of an appropriate mechanism for such concerns to be considered. I am therefore rather surprised to see that this amendment to the principal act, in which the period for completion of purchase agreements is to be amended from 6 months to 28 days, now proposes that a period of 3 months should apply. There was clearly a logical reason for reducing the amount of time before the first annual general meeting could be held.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the amendment must be viewed in the entire context of proposed section 59 which outlines to the corporate members what needs to be done. I do not know whether the honourable member opposite would like me to canvass all the things that happen at the annual general meeting. We are talking about the registration of the unit plans relating to the second or a subsequently completed stage of the condominium development. By proposed section 59(2), a meeting convened under subsection (1) shall decide whether insurance effected by the corporation should be confirmed, varied or extended. We are not talking about polka dot blind shades. We are talking about insurances which will affect the corporation.

Proposed section 59(2)(b) reads: 'determine the amounts necessary in its opinion to be raised by way of contribution for the purpose of meeting its actual or expected liabilities incurred or to be incurred for the proper maintenance of the common property and personal property...'. There are another 7 or 8 subsections which direct the committee what it is able to do at its annual general meeting.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 68.5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 37, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 38:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clause 38.

Re-examination of the bill has disclosed that this proposed new section would not achieve the purpose originally envisaged. A developer of existing unit projects has the right to use his own rights over unsold units at a general meeting and the lack of complaints about this provision indicates that the power is acceptable. If the proposed new section 64A were to be inserted, on occasions, depending on the ratio of developer-owned units and other unit holders, the right to exercise a special resolution would be denied. The reasons for the amendment are no longer valid and there is no reason to restrict the voting rights of a developer in a condominium development.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, in all fairness, I really do not think I can be expected to instantly absorb the minister's explanation. My concern is that, as the minister said, clause 38 would have restricted the developer's vote to

one at a general meeting. Quite clearly, there is a concern that, in the early stages of a development where not all the units have been sold, a developer would have an unreasonable overriding voting power at a general meeting. Quite clearly, that clause was inserted originally to guard against the rights of some people being overridden in that respect.

I would have considered that, instead of the minister reading out these explanations word for word, it would have been more appropriate if he had mentioned them in his summing up during the second reading and I could have examined them over the weekend. We have not opposed the strictly technical aspects of the legislation. I do not believe I am nitpicking because there are distinct matters of principle involved. I do not think the legislature has been given due respect in this matter. As I said in relation to an earlier amendment, I think that it would be appropriate to report progress on this bill. I mean no criticism of the minister or anybody else but we need to sort these things out to the satisfaction of all members, including myself.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I respect what the member for MacDonnell has said. To pick up the argument, does he suggest that a person who owns 10 units in a development should have only 1 vote? I do not think that is what he meant. I think we need to look at the proposed new section that will be inserted.

Clause 38 was adapted from the ACT legislation which was commenced in October 1976. An error was made when we were transcribing the provisions of section 67 of the principal act and it was not detected until recently. The polls should be able to be demanded on any motion, as is the case in Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and the ACT but, because of the way in which section 67 was worded, a poll was restricted to the 2 types of resolutions. The amendment will implement the original intention and has been agreed to by the Department of Law.

I do not know if the member for MacDonnell wants to defer the committee stage because of an error in transcription. No other explanation will be offered by me because I have been advised that this is the right way to go. If we defer the committee stage, we will only come back to it tomorrow. All the Department of Law will say is that that is the best way to do it.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the short answer to that is that I would like the minister to report progress so that it can be studied. We have a fairly onerous and thankless task on this side of the Assembly. As an opposition, it is our job to invigilate legislation. I believe that I am doing so conscientiously. I have raised these concerns and I believe they are genuine. If the situation is as the minister has said, and there was a technical drafting problem that occurred when the ACT legislation was adopted for the Northern Territory, I would appreciate the opportunity to see that at first hand.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the whole reason for the amendment is to protect the consumer.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I really do not think that the honourable minister can suggest in any way that my intention is to do anything other than protect the consumer. I could be rather rude in that respect, but I will resist the temptation. What I seek to comment on is the conduct of the Assembly's business in this way.

Once again, I place on record what I said earlier. The draft of the Unit Titles Bill was presented in this Assembly in September last year. I and some opposition staff did some work on it last year. The then Minister for Lands, now the Chief Minister, presented the bill in March, and further work was done on it by myself and the opposition staff. I very much appreciated the informative briefing given by the minister's department. However, I am vain enough to suggest that, during the second-reading debate on Wednesday last, I made reasoned comment about the principles involved in this legislation.

Unfortunately, on that very day, the amendment schedule we are now debating was tabled. As I have said, I was not in a position to comment comprehensively as to whether the amendments are purely technical - as the minister is trying to suggest - or whether they are matters of principle as undoubtedly some of them are. Quite clearly, the developer is most unlikely to be a subsequent tenant. His rights, vis-a-vis the rights of prospective unit holders, whose domiciles we are talking about, whose very hearth and home we are seeking to protect in this legislation, are very different. I think those are important issues of principle, and I really do not think it is good enough for the minister to chastise me by saying that I could have raised these matters last week. My recollection is that the summing up by the minister in the second-reading debate made absolutely no reference to the technical aspects of these amendments, nor to any of the issues of principle which I have attempted to elucidate this afternoon.

Clause 38 negatived.

New clause 38A:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move that new clause 38A be inserted.

As I said a few moments ago, the reason for this new clause is the wording of the previous section 67. This amendment achieves the original purpose agreed to by the Department of Law. In summing up later, I will pick up a point that was made by the honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the issue of concern here is that the effect of clause 38A is to omit subsection (1) from section 67 of the principal act. Section 67(1) in the principal act reads at present: 'Where a unanimous poll or special resolution is required, a poll may be demanded by any person present and entitled to vote'. Clause 38A substitutes the following: 'Where a resolution, including a special or unanimous resolution, is required, a poll may be demanded by any person present and entitled to vote'. My concern is that that alteration to section 67(1) will remove the right to a proxy vote at a general meeting, and I would appreciate some explanation from the minister in that regard.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, at present, section 67(1) reads: 'Where a unanimous poll or special resolution is required, a poll may be determined by any person present and entitled to vote'. We are seeking to substitute: 'Where a resolution, including a special or unanimous resolution, is required, a poll may be demanded by any person present and entitled to vote'. As we said earlier, the Unit Titles Act was adapted from ACT legislation. Unfortunately, as far as I can see, it does not relate to proxy voting.

Mr BELL: Isn't it covered in your briefing notes?

Mr DONDAS: No, it is not.



Mr BELL: I believe I may inadvertently have misled the honourable minister in that regard. I am not convinced that the effect of clause 38A would be as I suggested before.

New clause 38A agreed to.

New clause 38B:

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I move that new clause 38B be inserted.

This results from a previously undetected typing error in the principal act.

New clause 38B agreed to.

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

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, I would like to comment on a couple of points raised by the member for MacDonnell. He spoke about a lack of time to consider the amendments. I was under the impression that, when it responds in a second-reading debate, the opposition gives some indication of aspects about which it has severe concerns. I had a quick look at what the member for MacDonnell had to say during the second-reading and, whilst he made some very relevant points, he did not indicate aspects of particular concern. The amendments were circulated last week and I would have been only too pleased to provide a further briefing for the member. This legislation will protect the consumer.

Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill (Serial 170):

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bills reported; reports adopted.

Bills read a third time.

#### REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 179)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Local Government Amendment Bill (Serial 193) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 193)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I would like to indicate the opposition's support for this legislation. However, I would ask the minister to delay its final passage until tomorrow or the next day. Opposition members want to comment on the bill and its ramifications but time and other commitments have not enabled them to make a full study of the bill. Having said that, I thank the minister for the excellent briefing which he provided to us and also for the tabling of the Turner Report. I and 3 of my colleagues attended the briefing yesterday and it is clear that the department has put a great deal of work into this legislation.

Broadly, the bill will enable communities to establish a form of local government which will be much more suited to their needs. They will have certain legislative powers which are normally extended to community or local governments throughout the Territory.

The other major aspect of the legislation is that it has been developed in close liaison with the Commonwealth Minister for Local Government. I am assured by people within the local government section of the Department of Community Development that communities that elect to have community governments will have bodies which have similar powers to local governments.

Mr Speaker, this is an auspicious piece of legislation. It will require amendment from time to time. The queries that I had about it were answered by the department. However, all the ramifications of such legislation cannot be fully foreseen. No doubt, amendments will be suggested when communities have had a chance to work under the legislation for some time. We will be obliged to review this legislation and its implications because it will have very marked effects on people living in isolated Aboriginal communities.

I conclude, by asking the minister to indicate whether he is prepared to adjourn the debate on this bill so that my colleagues can make some contribution at a later time.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I say at the outset that I am pleased that the current and previous Ministers for Community Development have introduced amendments to the Local Government Act which will affect the Litchfield Shire in the rural area. There is one main clause in the bill which people in the rural area find very important. There is another regulation-making provision which will affect people living in the Litchfield Shire.

Proposed section 14A relates to the titles of members on local government councils. To many honourable members, that may not appear to be of much consequence. However, this and another matter are of great importance to the people in the rural area, particularly in view of the fact that very few people there wanted local government. We have local government whether we like it or not. If people have something that they do not really care for, the less money paid from their pockets for it, the better. If money has to be paid, it should be spent on useful things. One of the ways in which the budget can be kept to a minimum is by giving sensible titles to the elected people of the shire - in this case, the Litchfield Shire. The people in the rural area did not want a mayor and aldermen because they believe that a mayor and aldermen cost money. A mayor and aldermen involve expensive civic centres, mayoral robes, gold chains and Rolls Royces. Whether this is true or not is open to argument, but this is the way the people in the rural area felt. There are no wealthy people in the rural area and their dollars have to go as far as possible. They are wealthy in terms of their quality of life, which far exceeds that of the people who live in town, but in actual dollars and cents, they are not wealthy.

The title of clause 9 is, 'Things growing or erected on or affixed to roads'. This appears to be a procedural amendment. However, I would like to mention signs on roadside verges or adjacent to carriageways of roads in the rural area. I am engaged in a running battle with the Department of Transport and Works Roads Division regarding its views about signs on roads in the rural area. That department appears to think that it has a divine right to erect numerous road signs to make us drive in a more thoughtful and responsible manner. However, it does not appreciate the erection of small commercial signs which, to people who have small business, are an important means of advertising. I believe a stage has been reached where the signs erected by the Roads Division are more dangerous to the travelling public than helpful. There are so many signs that we tend to ignore them, to the detriment of many drivers. I believe this contributes in some way to the high death toll on our roads. There are so many signs that people often ignore them and accidents result.

I am very pleased that section 95 of the principal act is to be repealed and replaced by the amendment in the bill which relates to the compulsory acquisition of land by councils and the manner in which it shall be done. If my memory serves me correctly, the principal act gave powers to councils and local governments to acquire land if they wished to. This amendment will enable the Minister for Lands to put a brake on the wishes of local governments. I do not think that the Litchfield Shire Council has grandiose plans to acquire compulsorily a great deal of land in the rural area. I could say, and it would agree with me, that it would only do so once and that would be enough. But, other councils might have thought about acquiring large areas of land, perhaps to the detriment of people living privately within the council boundaries. This amendment will give the minister control in that applications for acquisitions of land will go to him first. I am not saying that councils are not sensibly aware of the results of their actions when they acquire land compulsorily but the more brakes there are on compulsory acquisition, the better. I have spoken on this subject many times before in this Assembly because I was a victim of such acquisition in 1973 under a federal Labor government.

I agree with the clause relating to the protection of members and officers of local government in the performance of their duties under this act. I said that the people in the rural area wanted 2 things. One related to the nomenclature written into this amendment to the Local Government Bill. With regard to the second matter, I hope sincerely that the previous minister and the current minister have the wishes of the residents of Litchfield Shire at heart when the wording is determined. I believe section 156 of the Local Government Act refers to the rate that the council will strike. Section 84 gives the Administrator the power to say what form of rating will occur there.

Mr Speaker, at innumerable meetings it was made clear to the previous Minister for Community Development, who then administered the Local Government Act, that the people of the current Litchfield Shire did not want a form of unimproved capital value rating: they wanted a form of flat rating which was to vary between RL1 and RL2 areas, which some people have called a differential, flat-rating system. The previous Minister for Community Development said that a certain sum of money had to be raised by rating in the rural area. If my memory serves me correctly, it was the Darwin River-Berry Springs Progress Association that did the sums and said that, if a rate of approximately \$105 was paid in RL1 areas and \$55 in RL2 areas, the necessary sum would be forthcoming.

I have expressed a grave concern repeatedly and have been reassured repeatedly by the previous minister and the present minister. My concern is that, somewhere along the line, the term 'UCV rating' may creep in. I have been shown a form of words which was mutually agreed on by the Minister for Community Development and Litchfield Shire officers which mentioned the rate proposals I have outlined for RL1 and RL2 areas. However, having been a member of this Assembly for close to 9 years I have become pretty cynical. I am not questioning the Minister for Community Development or the officers of his department. Heaven forbid! I would not query them at all. However, I would like to see the wording that is to be presented to the Administrator for his signature because I still have fears that, somewhere along the line, a phrase will creep in stating that the rating shall be approximately \$105 in the RL1 area, representing \$X UCV rating, and the rating in the RL2 area of approximately \$55 will also be stated in terms of an \$X UCV rate. That would be the thin edge of the wedge. UCV rating would have its foot in the door and we do not want it in the rural area. I do not care if it goes against what every other council wants or has in the Northern Territory and most of Australia. We do not want UCV rating in the rural area.

Mr Bell: Hear, hear!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I thank the member for MacDonnell for his applause.

Mr Speaker, I know that there is many a slip twixt cup and lip but I hope no slip will occur between the flat rating cup and the lip of UCV rating. If by any chance UCV crept into a rating system in the Darwin rural area, any previous demonstration in Australia would look like a tiny tot's birthday party.

I believe it important that this amending legislation relates to the incorporation of a community government association for community governments throughout the Territory. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, to date, community governments in the Northern Territory have not shown any interest in joining the Local Government Association. As most honourable members know, practically all community governments are Aboriginal local governments rather than local governments in the form of city councils and councils in shires.

Mr Speaker, what must not creep in is any inequality between the Local Government Association which currently exists, and any community government association which may be formed in the future. All these local and community governments must be considered on an equal footing.

I support the bill, and I am very pleased that it will be taking effect from 1 July. I am not in favour of paying any more than I have to, but I do concede, as do most sensible people in the rural area, that a rating system had to be implemented to pay for services. What people in the rural area must realise is that, if they pay low rates, they cannot expect the world in the way of services. They must be very sensible in their demands on government to provide services.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will confine my comments to the proposed section 14 of this bill, that being the area which is of interest to me in my shadow portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs.

I have noted that the powers and functions of the Community Government Association as constituted in this bill are the same as the powers and functions of the current Local Government Association which is set up to

service municipal councils. The initial members of the Community Government Association will be the current community governments. Fortunately, there are not many of those. However, I hope that the constitution will permit membership of other bodies which perform a local government function, even though they may not be set up under the Local Government Act of 1985.

According to the recent briefing I received, the Grants Commission will have the power to provide PITS funding to bodies other than local government bodies set up under this act. There will be a gazettal of bodies which will be deemed to be local government bodies. Such bodies should be approached early to see if they would be interested in becoming members of this association.

I hope that, when the association is operational, it performs a number of functions. One such function is the handling of proceedings before the Arbitration Commission on behalf of bodies of a local government type. I note that the Confederation of Industry has been ostensibly acting on behalf of community governments and bodies of the local government type in award negotiations for workers on those communities. Unfortunately, I have been told by people on communities that they sometimes found it very difficult to work out where the confederation finished and Department of Community Development began. However, I think that a body such as this, which is made up of members of the actual local government bodies, will be able to reflect more accurately the desires of the community in the very necessary negotiations that must be carried out to find a form of award which is appropriate to conditions on those communities.

Another area where the association could act is in making representation regarding incongruous service charges, such as those which were passed by this Assembly last year. This exercise by the government, which dumped on local government bodies an obligation to collect funds, burdened them with a task which was practically impossible for them to carry out, and quite possibly illegal. The opposition pointed this out repeatedly. It is quite possible that, if there had been a community government association operational at that time, it may have been able to put this view to the government.

It will also be necessary for this Community Government Association to have the expertise to ensure that the councils' interests are maintained before the Grants Commission. This relates to a bill that we will be discussing tomorrow. I think that all members will acknowledge that, unless there is a body of expertise capable of presenting the particular situation of those local government bodies to that Grants Commission and to the government, there is a danger that a good idea could come unstuck. I hope that means are found to employ staff of a calibre which will facilitate that occurring.

When I reflect on this legislation, I am sorry that the history of community government, in the 8 years since the Community Government Act was passed, has not been better. There are a number of reasons for that. The fundamental one is that the government is working on what could be described as a dirty blackboard. Here we have what I believe is basically a very good idea coming from a government whose history is such that people find it very hard to accept its intentions at face value. This is because other actions taken by the government have cost people very dearly in their attempts to develop their own communities. Therefore, in the case of this one good idea, people are looking for holes, to see whether they are being tricked as they have been tricked before.

One example which you may have heard of, Mr Speaker, is that people are concerned that community government confers many revenue-raising powers, and that this may be a prelude to the government cutting back on the funds it provides. This would force the communities into unreasonable revenue-raising efforts, compared with the effort-neutral principle which is embodied in our own dealings, and those of the states, with the Grants Commission.

I previously gave service charges as an instance of this. It is not the only one. Another problem has been brought to my attention. I have discussed it with departmental officers, and I would like to bring it to the attention of members of the Assembly. I do not intend to move an amendment. At this stage, I think it better if I just mention it. The government may then wish to take further action. It relates to the dissolution of community governments.

In considering my words, I would like members to reflect on the current position of local government bodies in the Northern Territory which are not incorporated under this act. These bodies, which are incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act, have a form of incorporation and an act which bears no relationship to the actual functions they carry out. It is an inappropriate piece of legislation. It does, however, give these bodies one particular attribute: they are virtually independent of the minister, except when it comes to funding. The minister has no power to abolish or to sack the members of these local government bodies. That is an attribute which they are asked to give up when they go into community government. As I said, we are working on a dirty blackboard, and people are quite suspicious. They say: 'The government pushed us into this. They will dissolve us. They will put in a manager. We are back to superintendent days'.

Members may see that as being totally unrealistic, but I venture to say that there is not a single member on the other side of the Assembly who has lived under a superintendent, with one possible exception. It may be that that member, who is now a minister, will be able to explain to his Cabinet colleagues that living under a superintendent was at times a fairly difficult effort. There were a number of very authoritarian superintendents who tended to have their own particular views, not just on how the community should operate, but about how everybody in it should conduct the very smallest detail of their lives. If people suspect they may be going back to something like that, in spite of the other gains local government has made for them, they will resist community government strenuously.

One possible way of overcoming these misgivings concerning the process of dissolution of a community government would be to provide a capacity for the courts to judge whether the dissolution was an appropriate course of action. I doubt very much whether the minister will accept the courts being placed over him as a watchdog. However, there is another possibility. Where the community government has been dissolved, the people could have an ability to decide that they wish to have new elections, that they wish to come out of the management phase.

At the moment, there is a requirement on the minister to consult with the residents of a community government area to determine whether a majority are in favour of an election being held. The minister is not to appoint a date if he is satisfied that the majority of the residents are not in favour of an election being held. However, if the majority of residents are in favour of an election, the act only states that the minister 'may' decide to hold an election. Perhaps this is the mandatory 'may', and should be read as 'shall'. However, if clause 302 were reworded slightly, it could give the minister the

responsibility of holding an election in the event where, after the sacking of a council and a period under a manager, the majority of residents wanted an election. I believe that that would remove many fears. People would not perceive themselves to be superintended or under the control of the minister's manager, as they were in the old settlement days.

Mr BELL: Held in thrall.

Mr EDE: Held in thrall, under a very powerful act controlled by a manager appointed from outside. I think that would remove that fear and probably it would enhance considerably the rate of incorporation of new community governments. It would facilitate what is desired by the opposition and, from what we heard this morning, is now the policy on the other side of the Assembly - the evolution of self-management and its distribution throughout the community in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members. I believe the amendment I am responsible for to be a good one and that it will be successful. I know that people in my area have talked of setting up a form of community or local government association there. I think that, if negotiations are conducted with those groups in a manner which allows them to see that what they were attempting to achieve through their own meetings is capable of being achieved through this Community Government Association, we shall see the various groups come together.

We shall see the first indication of whether that is the case or not in the development of the constitution. I request the minister to ensure that the groups involved in discussions over that constitution are drawn from a broad enough area to ensure that the various points of view are taken into account, and that it actually is the association of the communities, working for their interests, through discussions with government, rather than an association taking the government's interests and trying to convince the communities.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I extend my congratulations to the Minister for Community Development. The bill is very innovative and, whilst the previous minister spent considerable time on it, he did not progress it as far as the new minister has in a very short time. I offer my sincere congratulations to him on that.

I would also like to thank sincerely the officers of the Department of Community Development who have worked extremely hard on this bill. I understand it is the largest or second largest piece of legislation to have come before this Assembly. I think the Criminal Code may have been a page or 2 longer.

This legislation is very complex. The bill has evolved over a period of some 6 to 7 years, and it is good to see it here. Certainly, the officers of the department put considerable time into the development of this and, of course, the Town Clerks from the Alice Springs Town Council and the Darwin City Council have also acted in a most responsive and cooperative way to ensure its development. In addition, considerable work has been carried out or is being carried out on the development of the bylaws. Forms have been devised to enable simple introduction of bylaws and they are now more pertinent. There was reference in the old bylaws or the act to the size of ladies' hat pins or something. References to trivia of that kind have been removed.

I thank the departmental officers and the Town Clerks, in particular, who developed the bill to its present stage. The community government section of the bill has prompted considerable comment here this afternoon. I will reserve most of my comments on community government to my response to the Turner Report which was circulated to members today and which largely talks about community government. However, I would not like to let pass some of the comments that were made, particularly some of those from the member for Stuart. He spoke about community government and trickery that had occurred, and some of the uncertainty that Aboriginal communities faced as a result of government actions.

I guess one of the tricks he referred to was, in fact, the handing back of Ayers Rock. Indeed, in his own electorate, I was told before I arrived at the community of Ali Curung, that they would not proceed with community government because the Northern Territory government had handed back Ayers Rock. When we arrived there and sat down with the people, I asked them if that was a problem and they said it was absolute nonsense and that that was not the case at all. I wondered then who the people were who were visiting the communities and spreading lies and rumours of that kind to the people. The people in many of those communities gave some of those organisations, in particular the Central Land Council, a message that they were interested in community government.

In reference to the member for Stuart's point about the 'back to superintendent days', one of the comments at a meeting there was that, if the people accepted community government, 'they will treat you like dogs and they will push your face into the dirt'. Quite a number of emotional statements were delivered during the period when we were actively seeking to promote and develop community government in that area.

As I said, we have come a long way in the development of the community government section of the Local Government Act. The association mentioned in the bill is just one of the innovative ideas which the Northern Territory government has come up with. Formula funding, the Grants Commission approach to communities, is also a very good step in the right direction, so much so that people from Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia are visiting the Territory this year to examine local government as it pertains to Aboriginal communities here. In fact, the federal member responsible for local government, Hon Tom Uren, has remarked on the Local Government Act, particularly the community government section, at state conferences in Brisbane. He applauded the efforts by the Northern Territory to develop local government in Aboriginal communities and has tried actively to promote the concept in other states around Australia. Officers of the Department of Community Development accompanied Mr Uren to Milikapiti on Bathurst Island recently to let him see at first hand how community government can work. He was most impressed. He was very supportive when the Self Inquiry was conducted last year. Professor Self, who toured the Northern Territory, was also impressed by the efforts the Northern Territory was making to introduce local government across the board.

The introduction of local government to places like Litchfield Shire is another achievement of the last 12 months or so. We talked about it for 6 or 7 years and it was introduced there last year. As the member for Koolpinyah said, it has not been easy. There have been concerns and one was with the title to apply to the head of the local authority there. Some people might ask: 'What is in a name?' Well, I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that it was a very hot issue in the rural area. Residents elected to have their head of local government known as the president and that has been accommodated in this particular bill. That will appease people in the Litchfield Shire and,



of course, give us the opportunity to introduce shires in other parts of the Northern Territory. An investigation is now under way into the potential development of local government in the rural area surrounding Alice Springs, and honourable members from that town will be well aware of the committee which is being developed in relation to that.

The member for Stuart said that the people there do not want a manager or anybody superintending, so to speak. Many councils have been sacked throughout Australia. Some recent ones of note have been the Sunshine Council in Victoria and the Lilydale Council in Tasmania. It happens right across Australia, where there is believed to be mismanagement or fraud on the part of members of councils. It is a fact of life where councils depend on money from other sources. There has to be a high degree of accountability. The amount of money that is being given to Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory to provide for town maintenance and essential services is now approaching some \$43m to \$50m, plus the supply of \$6.6m worth of fuel. We are not talking about small amounts of money. It is quite a large amount, and people have to be responsible for it. There has to be accountability in the management of those funds. I applaud the degree of financial control, management and revenue-raising in some communities with local government. Anurugu and Milikapiti are good examples of communities which are generating large amounts of cash flow. We have to get away from the concept of a social welfare umbrella which has been developed and promoted by some people in the Northern Territory over a long period. Indeed, Professor Turner speaks about that, pointing out the advantages of community government in ensuring that there is a decent effort at revenue raising. The development of the association will provide a number of avenues for people in those communities to make representation on how money is spent and what their needs are, just like any other local government association in Australia. I believe that it will be a very interesting forum, and I agree with the member for Stuart that it will need to contain people who can lead and show just what can be done.

We also had the opportunity last year to implement local government at places like Elliott. At last count we had some 13 or 15 applications for local governments in various communities throughout the Territory. It is not easy to process those applications in a short period of time. It takes time for people to become used to the idea of self-management. The process has not been helped by rumour-mongers in the communities who are spreading misinformation in many cases.

The amendment to remove compulsory acquisition raised considerable comment. It is being withdrawn. There were mixed feelings about that particular section of the act and it has now been decided to withdraw it. It is part of the process of finetuning. This particular act is a very large one which has taken over 6 years to develop, and there is a need to ensure that it works.

In the development of this act, the Northern Territory has set the pace for the rest of Australia. It allows communities to develop, and I foresee a time when, as in northern Queensland and Western Australia, shire boundaries can be drawn up and people can be more directly responsible for their own areas. The founding fathers of these future shires or municipalities will be the people who will be prepared to develop their particular regions. Some shires in northern Queensland maintain simply a grader driver and a water tank operator, but even those people need services to provide fuel, spare parts, tyres and so on. This helps to develop local communities which are regionally based and do not have to rely so heavily on outside contractors. I foresee a time in the not-too-distant future when the whole of the Northern

Territory could be divided up into shires and municipalities, and I hope that we have the courage of our convictions to implement policies which will encourage this. We can only benefit from it, and we now have a very powerful act which will ensure that such a scheme can develop.

Places like Larrimah, Barunga, Beswick, Bamyili and, currently, Borroloola, are looking at local government. Some of their efforts are very encouraging indeed. There is now a framework, constitutions are now developed, and there are models which people can look at, to see what is appropriate. People can compare examples of community government and consider whether it will work for them.

The act is extremely flexible. There was a stage, while I had passage of the Local Government Act, when I considered an option to throw out the entire act and just have part XX of the previous Local Government Act or part VIII of the new Local Government Act apply throughout the Territory. Its flexibility allows people to meet their own local needs, and this is what makes it so excellent. As I said, it has set the pace for Australia. People from all over the country have been made aware of it and are visiting the Northern Territory this year to just see how it works.

It is interesting to note that Lajamanu, whose annual report was tabled in this Assembly recently, was the first community government in the Northern Territory. It was closely followed by Anurugu and Milikapiti. They exemplify the meaningful devolution of powers back to local government organisations. I believe that this bill, with the amendments, is a further step to ensure that local government throughout the Northern Territory, the third tier of government and the one closest to the people, will be more meaningful to those concerned.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in relation to this particular bill.

I will commence by rebutting a few of the comments made by the previous speaker, even though I broadly agree with the thrust of his comments and the thrust of this legislation. As distasteful as it might be to the Minister for Community Development, I am going to have to give him another lesson in history. The member for Berrimah railed against persons unknown, whom I suspect were the dreaded white advisers. He alleges that they have inspired the inhabitants of Ali Curung to oppose the idea of community government because, to quote his words: 'the Northern Territory government had given back Ayers Rock'. I think if the minister checks his comments in the Hansard, he will find that that was in fact what he said. I presume what he meant was that the people at Ali Curung were encouraged not to have anything to do with the Northern Territory government or officers of Northern Territory government departments because the Northern Territory government had opposed the granting of title to Aboriginal traditional owners of Ayers Rock. I do not think that would be an unreasonable position for people to adopt. I can imagine that the member for Berrimah, the Deputy Chief Minister, would be concerned about that. I imagine he would feel somewhat miffed. The fact of the matter is, however, that, given the Country Liberal Party government's efforts to oppose legitimate Aboriginal aspirations, it really cannot whinge when it meets a degree of distrust in return. It does not really matter how distasteful, embarrassing or uncomfortable that distrust may be to the people who are the objects of it. It is a simple fact of life that we all tend to operate on the basis of doing to others as they do unto us.

I can only say that the Deputy Chief Minister has copped exactly that. I can imagine he feels a little bit concerned because he was not the architect of those particular CLP government policies, and I am even prepared to accept that he would have disowned them had he been in a position to do so. I hasten to add that it is not only the granting of title to Ayers Rock which has been the subject of unrelenting opposition by the CLP government. It would be impossible to believe that its general policies would have no effect on the thinking of traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people in communities like Ali Curung. The Deputy Chief Minister might wish to say to me, 'Fair go, Ali Curung is pretty close to 500 road miles from Ayers Rock'. However, I think that, as a former conscientious Minister for Community Development, he would be well aware that the Walpiri people, who are amongst those living at Ali Curung, are in fact very closely related to and intermarried with families who would count amongst their number traditional owners at Ayers Rock. I really think the sort of conspiracy theories that the Deputy Chief Minister was trying to put forward do not further the debate.

It is fairly difficult for the opposition to take the Hatton government seriously given that the member for Nightcliff is the third Chief Minister that we have had in this Fourth Legislative Assembly. However, one of the indications of the Hatton administration is a more open, honest recognition of Aboriginal aspirations. I would suggest that that may very well be the harbinger of improvement, not only in race relations but in terms of the development of Aboriginal communities and the finding of a more just place for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I mention the Northern Territory government's unrelenting opposition to the granting of title at Ayers Rock. I echo the comments of my colleague, the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, who mentioned the debacle of the service charges that were raised on Aboriginal communities as a result of the May mini-budget last year. I do not propose to rehearse that particular debate but I think it is worth mentioning as another source of distrust that has been engendered between Aboriginal communities, certainly in my electorate, and ...

Mr Coulter: Do you object to people paying their light bills?

Mr BELL: I hear the former Minister for Community Development interjecting. All I have to say to him is that the across-the-board, flat-rate service charges that were instituted by him in May last year were quite unjust. Since the Deputy Chief Minister wants to raise this subject, I will take him on and he is most welcome to contribute further if he wants. The plain fact was that there was no justification for flat-rate service charges. It is entirely intolerable that Aboriginal communities should have been asked to raise service charges under circumstances in which they would not have been asked of citizens of Alice Springs or Darwin or Tennant Creek or Katherine. Flat-rate service charges, not service charges per se, were a source of considerable discontent, discontent within communities, between families, and within councils. Councils were forced to raise these flat-rate service charges.

I hear fat cat ministers belly-aching that the service charges were relatively small amounts. That may very well be the case, but the fact is that there was no equitable way of deciding how those service charges should be raised. At no stage did the opposition oppose in principle the raising of service charges commensurate with people's capacity to pay.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL: Goodness me, I did not realise that I could be quite so persuasive. In a mere 2 or 3 minutes, I seem to have turned the Deputy Chief Minister around from opposing my views in that regard to wholehearted support. I do not think that I have ever accused the Deputy Chief Minister of being mentally inflexible. I will save that insult up for some later time.

I think I have explained quite adequately exactly why communities in my electorate treat the Northern Territory government with distrust. I have mentioned 2 particular examples and I do not believe I would be doing my job as a member representing communities such as those if I did not raise their concerns. I know the Deputy Chief Minister and perhaps our neophyte Minister for Community Development may very well share views that the communities in my electorate would embrace with zeal the initiatives of the Northern Territory government if it were not for the dreaded white advisers, the dreadful characters employed by organisations like the Central Land Council, who interpose themselves between these open-handed, open-hearted, open-minded ministers of this government and those communities in isolated parts of the Territory whose interests lie deeply at the heart of those very same ministers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think that that scenario stands up to investigation. Those very communities are in a difficult situation as far as their relationship with wider Australian society and, within the purview of this Assembly, with wider Territory society. Their ability to come to terms with what is proposed in this very bill is highly problematic. If I have one thing to say in the context of this debate, it is that the sort of distrust ministers and members of this government direct towards white advisers is unwarranted in 99% of cases.

Mr Dondas: What about McArthur River?

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the Minister for Transport and Works, McArthur River is a fair way from the MacDonnell electorate.

If the minister is genuine in his interest in improving the quality of local government, if he is interested in involving Aboriginal people in the processes of local government and in the processes of government in the Northern Territory, he would do well to pay heed to those sources of discontent which are not stirred up by white advisers as so frequently alleged. It is frequently alleged that white advisers mislead or misinterpret or whatever. I suggest that the minister pay some heed to the sort of history that has given rise to that view and I suggest, with due respect, that it is not a productive one.

Mr Coulter: You tell Mr Mowbray that.

Mr BELL: The Deputy Chief Minister interjects in ways that really do not further progress this matter. Cheap jibes at individuals who are unable to stand up in this Assembly and answer for themselves really do little for a debate on the general range of issues involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a further point I wanted to make was in relation to the development of this particular part of the Local Government Act. Having been a member of this Assembly for 5 years and almost 2 months, I view with some interest further amendment to this part of the Local Government Act which deals with community government. I might even have been shadow minister for community development when that particular part of the Local Government Act was enacted. I do not have any community councils within my electorate that

are incorporated under that particular section. I hasten to add that I would hate any government members to interpret that as meaning that I have attempted to thwart any interest in community government councils in my electorate. It is a simple fact that none of them has chosen to become incorporated in that way. The communities in my electorate, for a variety of reasons, have higher priorities than the means of incorporating their community councils. However important such incorporation might be to lawmakers, it is not necessarily a matter of the highest priority to people in the communities.

I have no hesitation in supporting the formation of this Community Government Association, with those specific reservations I have detailed this afternoon. I hope that the minister will have been made aware that there is some history which pertains to this matter. My colleague, the member for Stuart and shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, used a colourful metaphor. He said that the Northern Territory government is now writing on a dirty blackboard. I have endeavoured to show why that is the case. I certainly hope that the development of community relations in the Northern Territory will be such that it will be possible to take Aboriginal aspirations into consideration. I trust that this amendment will assist in that process.

With those comments, I commend the bill and look forward to reaction to it from the various quarters of the Aboriginal community in the Territory.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will confine my remarks to the Local Government Amendment Bill (Serial 193) and will therefore be much shorter than the previous speaker.

The bill has been through a gestation period of some 6 years. With the amendment bill now before us, I took the liberty of inviting the Leader of the Opposition and every member of the opposition, to an in-depth briefing on the amendments, so that they would be able to come here today in a positive frame of mind. As this is the first bill that I have had carriage of in the Assembly as a new minister, I thought we might be able to start on a bright, positive note. I felt the opposition could operate in an area which is dear to it, turn from the negativity which has been its trademark since self-government, and find a new frame of mind - a positive one. But no matter how much trouble we go to, we cannot arrive at that rather happy position. It would be a particularly happy one for the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. Even though the opposition supports the bill, it cannot help being negative. The one fear I have as the minister responsible for the carriage of this bill is that members of the opposition will move among Aboriginal people and create a negative situation whereby communities will be hesitant to accept initiatives that have been conceded by members of the opposition as being probably the greatest initiatives ever for the Aboriginal people of Australia.

I will try to address my further comments to some of the points made by speakers who got around to discussing the bill. The member for Stuart touched on section 302, where he talked about changing a 'may' to a 'shall' at the end of subsection (2). The amendment would have the effect of requiring the minister to carry out an action which the following subsection might preclude him from doing. This would introduce a possibility of conflict and is therefore just not on. The fact is that the minister will appoint a date for an election when he is satisfied that the majority of residents agree.

The member for Koolpinyah raised her concerns about what will happen with the rating system in the Litchfield Shire area. In order to keep people well and truly informed of my intentions, I went to a meeting with members of that particular shire council a couple of weeks ago. I invited it to pass a

resolution at its next meeting supporting a proposal put to the people of that area by my predecessor, prior to the election of the council; that was, that there would be a fixed rate for a period of 3 years of \$105 in the RL1 zone and \$55 in the RL2 zone. I am certainly looking forward to the passing of that resolution at the council meeting, which I believe is tomorrow night or perhaps tonight.

The Community Government Association may provide for bodies other than strict community governments to be members of the association. The Community Government Association will have the opportunity to represent all the views of community governments so the member for Stuart can rest assured on that point. I have undertaken to give increased impetus to the development of community governments but, of course, the acceptance of community government is up to each community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the initiatives that have been taken by my predecessors and members of the department in introducing this new bill are in the best interests of Aboriginal people in small communities within the Northern Territory. The Grants Commission Bill that I will be putting through all stages tomorrow also reflects our intention to act in the best interests of Aboriginal people.

In closing, I say once again, as a minister of this Northern Territory government, I for one challenge the opposition to take a positive view for the first time in its existence. We have had to make a great many decisions. Unlike us, the opposition has yet to make one, and most people in the Northern Territory would say, 'Thank goodness for that'.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr DALE (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, as I indicated when I spoke, I had hoped that this bill would pass with a degree of decorum. Unfortunately, in his reply, the minister indicated that there is a perception amongst government members that somehow or other opposition members manipulate their constituencies. I do not know whether the minister knows many Aboriginal people but, quite certainly, I respond to their requirements; they do not respond to mine. I have never taken any view to Aboriginal people which anybody could perceive as negative and if this carping windbag, who calls himself a minister, wants to come here and insult people who represent their constituencies, then he may do so, but not, Mr Deputy Speaker, with my consent.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 171)

Continued from 11 June 1986.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 77.1.

This is a terrific amendment and I am sure that the government will support it. In fact, I know government members will because they told me so. When the bill was introduced, the government indicated that all necessary steps would be taken to publicise this matter by way of administrative action. The bill deals with the very sensitive area of civil rights, which always needs to be treated with some respect, and the government agrees with that. The amendment, as it is drafted, ensures that, in a catastrophic emergency such as a major cyclone where the normal output of newspapers and television stations may be disrupted, that will not be a problem. It simply requires the minister to take whatever steps he considers reasonable to ensure that a prohibition or requisition is brought to the notice of the public. I believe this is particularly important in the case of a non-catastrophic emergency. If a major cyclone struck Darwin and you were standing up to your ears in bricks, it is probable that you would be aware that there was a problem. In that circumstance, if someone from the government called at what used to be your door, you would not question the fact that a state of emergency had been declared.

However, the sort of situation where this could be a problem could be, for example, as I said in the second-reading debate, a fuel emergency. Because it has a very limited readership, a notice in the Northern Territory Government Gazette would not be appropriate in terms of the government's ability to make such a declaration known to the community. This amendment seeks to cover that kind of situation.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Chairman, the government supports this amendment, as I outlined in closing the debate during the second reading of this bill when the Leader of the Opposition foreshadowed an amendment to incorporate a provision that went beyond the requirement to publish a notice in the Northern Territory Government Gazette. There is the possibility of people being prosecuted. As the Leader of the Opposition said, quite rightly, this is not appropriate if the notice is not required to be published other than in the gazette. It certainly does not have a wide readership, particularly in the private sector, except when tenders are being issued.

Mr B. COLLINS: I remember one copy which had a very wide readership.

Mr HATTON: I think it tends then to get a wide coverage.

However, as was said in the second-reading speech, the government intends to use the media, wherever possible, to publicise directions that are issued, to ensure that people are made aware of them. This amendment merely provides a recognition of that within the legislation and, as I indicated when closing the second-reading debate, the government has no objection to this type of amendment if it does not create other problems, and we are satisfied now that it will not.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, over the last couple of weeks, I had cause to telephone the schools in my electorate over a matter of some mutual interest. I particularly wanted to speak to the principals, only to find on most occasions that they were absent and would not be available for a number of days. When I inquired why this was so, I was told that they were involved heavily in teacher evaluation for promotion purposes, which is indeed an important process.

However, I was struck by the number of complaints coming from different groups in the community. I dare say the first came from ancillary staff who commented that it was a disruptive process. There was a real bottleneck in administration. They were faced with a backlog of matters which required decisions from the principals. When one principal was not available, I was told that a deputy was present and I spoke to him. He complained of disruption to classes and the need to arrange for teachers to stand in for others who were absent as a result of the evaluation program. I know that funds are not flush anywhere at present and the government cannot afford to supply relief teachers. Even if it could, there is no substitute in a child's education for a regular teacher providing continuity. No matter how good a substitute teacher may be, he cannot pick up the threads and carry on. It is disruptive for the children.

Last Friday night, I had the honour to represent the minister at a meeting in Alice Springs between principals and Education Advisory Council delegates. I had the opportunity there to discuss the situation with principals who had been involved, and with the Secretary of the Department of Education, Mr Spring. Some ideas were expressed by the principals as to how the situation could be improved. I was grateful to Mr Spring for giving me an explanation of the new process which has replaced the peer assessment and eligibility practice, with which I was very familiar. That also was quite time-consuming and disruptive to the schools. I agree with Mr Spring that the new system is better than peer assessment where a group of 3 people were required to assess the person applying for eligibility and he had to write a report on himself. I know some people in this world are pretty good at blowing in their own bags, but that did not apply to all teachers. Many felt that their job was to teach, and the children came first. Over the years, others spent many hours writing about how wonderful they were. Their reports on themselves and the reports of the group of 3 peers and a chairman of a higher rank went to a nebulous group which tried to make some judgments. That group might never have met the teachers concerned.

If you were successful, you had eligibility which meant you could apply for a promotion position if one arose. As Mr Spring pointed out, from the department's view, to be informed that a person was eligible conveyed very little about the person. The new process has the advantage of building up a profile on the applicant. It gives the department a far better capacity to judge what a person is really like. Knowing what the school in question is like, the department can judge which teacher will best fit into the school. That does not necessarily mean that the person will fit in happily. A certain school may need its discipline improved, and someone who is fairly firm would best suit that school. These profiles are a great improvement, particularly as an Education Advisory Council meeting in Alice Springs has drawn attention to the fact that people elsewhere in Australia are saying that they want to have local input in relation to the appointment of the school principals. That may not be easy, but I know delegates to the Education Advisory Council realise that the principal's leadership often makes or breaks a school. In that context, the new process has considerable advantages. It is carried out over a 7 or 8 week period. This is better than the longer time span which



applied under previous arrangements and gave rather nebulous results. I am fully aware also, as a parent with children at school, that even the 7 to 8 week period disrupts the school, and I am sure that a better process can be worked out.

Careful evaluation of our teachers is important. People who gain promotion become leaders within schools, and it needs to be a fair process. Although within a particular school the most likely candidates for promotion stand out fairly clearly, there are wider considerations that need to be taken into account. We need some moderation between one school and another. Teachers have a pretty good idea of the situation in their school, but possibly no idea of what is happening in other schools.

I would suggest that a moderating group of experienced teachers be established, comprising about 3 people who are not actually engaged in classroom teaching for a specific period and can travel widely. I believe they should visit the schools at least 3 times a year. Our system is small enough for that to be quite within the realms of possibility. They should be able to meet the candidates, to observe them and to evaluate and make comparisons between schools. That would provide an element of fairness. At the school, the moderating group would work with the principal, who is obviously a key person, and senior staff, particularly subject staff in secondary schools, to help assess those who are seeking evaluation. One good point is that the teaching staff would remain within the school and that would be of advantage to the children. The moderating team would gain considerable experience and expertise in evaluating teachers.

My own teaching days began in the days of inspectors. I was first inspected by someone whose subject was English. As a science man, I felt that was pretty rough but, as the years went by, I came to the conclusion that the experienced teacher, no matter what his subject, can work out whether the person being assessed has what is required in the teaching game. 10 minutes listening from outside the classroom will provide a tremendous amount of information, although that is not the point I am making. We need some moderation between schools and we need, above all, some method by which our children's education is minimally disrupted. I am sure such a process can be found. I know that the people at the Education Advisory Conference took note of this because I mentioned it in my address to them. They were looking for ways and means of improving the process, and I wish them all the best because it is important. Our kids' education is suffering with the present process.

Tonight, I also want to give a pat on the back to a voluntary group, namely the Ti Tree Progress Association. This body was galvanised into action by the former member for Stuart, our Speaker. Several years ago many good people in Ti Tree, particularly a policeman called Dennis Fields, entered the Territory Tidy Towns competition. They won category A, the category relating to communities of less than 600, and they deserved to. That led to the Ti Tree Progress Association, which has achieved a great deal. Its latest project has been the construction of an emergency airfield. The airfield is visible from the cockpit of the Ansett and TAA planes which fly on the Omega system, about 90-95 nautical miles from Alice Springs.

Local people constructed it using their own equipment, and it is about 6000 feet long. The locals have been involved in such menial tasks as stick-picking, with the kids from the local school lending a hand. Stick-picking is no great joy but it is an essential job when you bulldoze an airstrip out of the bush. The Department of Transport and Works was pleased to lend watering carts and rollers to compact the surface. That support is

greatly appreciated by the local people. The Royal Flying Doctor Service also made contributions. Recently, successful night landing tests were conducted, using flares. I am told that the Department of Transport Air Group has described it as one of the best dirt airstrips in the area. I have also been told that emergency evacuations have taken place in the last couple of days. It is this sort of community that deserves the hearty congratulations of members of this Assembly. The work is voluntary, people enjoy doing it, and they really put their shoulders to the wheel to make things happen. This is Ti Tree.

Another matter concerning Ti Tree Progress Association relates to an accident that happened a few weeks ago. A gentleman from the south was travelling with his daughter in a car about 150 km north of Alice Springs. It was in the late afternoon and apparently he fell asleep at the wheel, colliding with a truck. He was very badly hurt and the vehicle was quite a mess. In fact, jaws of life had to be brought from Alice Springs to rescue him and it took 2½ hours before he could be cut free. That was no doubt a rather horrendous experience for him. The Ti Tree Progress Association has asked me to put a suggestion to the government. The association would be happy to raise \$5000 towards the cost of its acquiring its own jaws of life set. The latest model costs about \$10 000. The apparatus could be kept at the police station.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I want to speak about a few matters connected with tourism.

The first concerns the somewhat belated appearance of the 1983-84 Tourist Commission Annual Report. I want to touch tonight on a number of matters arising from that document. It is difficult to know which minister is responsible for the answer which I received to written question No 77. It was one of a series of questions, and it asked: 'On what date did the Auditor-General report to the minister, as required under section 68(2) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, on the financial statements of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission for the year 1983-84, and on what date did the minister receive a copy of the report on the operations of the Tourist Commission and a copy of its financial statements for the year 1983-84, as required under section 68(3) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act?' The answer to the first question was: '3 June 1985'. That is, the Auditor-General, as required, reported to the minister on 3 June 1985 on the content of the financial statement for the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. The answer to the second question, concerning the date on which the minister received a copy of the report on the operations of the Tourist Commission was: 'February 1986'. The interesting thing is the comment attached to the answers. I quote:

The commission's 1983-84 draft annual report was initially submitted to the minister's office on 3 June 1985 for approval pending receipt of the Auditor-General's report, prior to the report's tabling at the June 1985 sittings of the Legislative Assembly. The Auditor-General's report was subsequently received by the commission on 1 July 1985. However, due to an administrative oversight, the report was not attached to the commission's annual report. This error was not identified until February 1986, when action was immediately taken to correct the situation.

We therefore have a situation where the Tourist Commission was 9 or 10 months late in getting its report together. We have a further situation where, through what is called an 'administrative error' - which

might be more aptly termed a breach of legislative requirements - the report lay in the Tourist Commission for a further 6 or 7 months. I note that the comment attached to the question on notice is inaccurate. This is because, under the requirements of section 68(2), the Auditor-General is required to report directly to the minister with his comments on the financial statements of the Tourist Commission. Section 68(2) is quite specific: 'The Auditor-General shall, within 3 months of the receipt of each financial statement or within such further period as the Administrator of the Northern Territory allows, report to the minister'. I am advised that that is in fact the general practice of the Auditor-General: to give one copy of his report directly to the minister and to give the second copy of his report to the department - in this case, the Tourist Commission.

It is clear that the person who prepared this answer on behalf of the minister responsible at the time did not know what he or she was talking about. In fact, the Assembly has been misled on this issue. The whole saga of the Tourist Commission annual reports has been very messy indeed. One can only hope that the incoming Minister for Tourism and the incoming head of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission have a greater regard for the proprieties and the legal requirements of their positions than the previous 2 incumbents.

I will conclude by briefly going through the layout of the 1983-84 Tourist Commission Report. We must remember that the commission had 19 months to get it together and put it in some sort of reasonable order. What do we find? We have an undated letter to the previous minister as the frontispiece, as we should have. We then have details of the government tourist bureau network, with some very pleasing figures. Next comes the annual report for the operations division and, after another 10 or 15 pages, we finally come to what actually should be page 2: 'The Northern Territory Tourist Commission Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1984'. The chairman's report and a copy of the commission's organisational changes are 2 pages in front of that, and in the middle of the whole document the report of the Auditor-General appears. It is a complete and utter mess! Now that it has been acknowledged that this document took 19 months to compile, it is clear that somebody in the Tourist Commission has been very slack indeed. It is not good enough. I would hope that the 1984-85 report, which we have not seen yet, and which the previous minister ...

Mr Hanrahan: Tomorrow.

Mr SMITH: If we are to see it tomorrow, I hope that the present minister checks that its presentation is a bit more logical because this is an absolute disgrace.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has issued a very interesting paper on the recreational travel habits of Northern Territory residents. It has received some publicity following an address I gave to the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association last week. The statistics are interesting and I think they deserve to be placed on the record. The bureau found, and this may not surprise people, that Territory residents are spending more time on holidays in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia than they are in the Northern Territory. In fact, out of the total of time spent by Territory residents on holidays, only 8.6% is spent in the Northern Territory. In fact, 125 000 nights are spent on holidays in the Territory whereas the total time spent by Territory residents on holidays is 1.45 million nights.

This brings me to a point I have been making quite consistently: we have tended to neglect the domestic tourist market. Previously, I have defined the domestic market broadly, in terms of the Australian market, but I think the evidence suggests that we could quite profitably spend more time encouraging our Territory residents to visit other places in the Territory. We all know people who never even think about the possibility of spending a holiday in the Territory. They take advantage of their air fare entitlements every 2 years. They cannot use them for travel within the Territory, and I think that is an option which perhaps could be examined. It does not cross the minds of such people that there are places here which can be visited in years when they do not receive air fares. That is something that tourist operators and perhaps the Tourist Commission itself can take up. It would not require a massive expenditure of money.

The third point arising from my visit to Alice Springs is in the form of a question to the government: 'What is happening about Kings Canyon?' My understanding is that the proposed project partners - Jennings, Bill King and the Central Land Council - have presented a pretty firm proposal to the Northern Territory government. They have the necessary money for the development to take place and they are waiting for the government to commit itself and to make a decision. As I understand it, the government announced some time ago that it expected to make a decision in May. People are becoming a bit edgy about the government's lack of action on this matter. I would appreciate a statement from the minister on the government's attitude to Kings Canyon.

Mr Speaker, I was somewhat amazed that the first press statement issued by the new Minister for Tourism made it fairly clear that he would take off on overseas trips with his wife. I would have expected him to have other priorities. I would not have thought it necessary to spell it out so precisely in his first press release that it was his intention to go overseas with his wife. For the record, the opposition has never opposed necessary overseas travel by either ministers or their spouses. What we have been critical of is unnecessary trips. I warn the honourable the minister that, if he intends to make a welter of overseas trips, either accompanied or unaccompanied, he can expect criticism from the opposition, because we think overseas trips should be used sparingly and only for the benefit of the Northern Territory.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Bob Doyle on his appointment as head of the Tourist Commission. I have not had the privilege of meeting him yet but I understand that he is held in extremely high regard by people in the industry. Certainly, the announcement that he has been given the job was enthusiastically greeted by people at the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association meeting which I attended. He has a big job ahead of him and one can only wish him the best of luck.

I conclude by congratulating the Alice Springs Regional Tourist Association on the way that it conducts its affairs. In my view, it is a couple of streets ahead of the other regional tourist associations in the Northern Territory. I was lucky enough to be present at a meeting where it was attempting to come to grips with a very thorny local issue in Alice Springs concerning the rights of access of an individual operator to the tourist association stand at the airport. I say 'lucky enough' because, as I said at the time, it was an encouraging sign that the association itself was prepared to take on the task of self-regulation. I certainly was not going to enter into the debate on who was right and who was wrong. However, it was a healthy sign that a controversial matter of concern to a particular member was being discussed in a reasonably positive manner.

As I said at the meeting in Alice Springs, it is necessary for the industry to take an increasingly active role in self-regulation. If it does not, Territory governments of whatever political persuasion will have to initiate regulatory action as the industry grows. I do not believe that governments should be involved in such matters and I am sure that members opposite do not either. Governments should become involved only as a last resort. In the past, the industry often has not been prepared to regulate itself. I thought it was extremely encouraging to see that the Alice Springs group was prepared to tackle its own thorny local issues. I hope that it is not scarred in the process but sees it as a step towards self-regulation.

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief. I wish to refer to a few questions that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has directed to me and to clear the air.

I am aware of some of the shortcomings of the 1983-84 annual report. I assure the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that I have spent considerable time delving into the reasons for them and ensuring that everything possible is done to avoid a repeat performance. All I can say is that those systems will be finalised this coming Saturday at a meeting of the Tourist Commission which I will be attending. The 1984-85 report should be tabled tomorrow. It is substantially different in content and I hope that its presentation will be acceptable to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Except in one respect, the Kings Canyon project has the full confidence of the government. It requires an injection of approximately \$9.5m of government funds for roads, power, water and so on. It is not correct to say that the equity group is in a position to go ahead with a \$10.5m injection of private capital to carry out that aspect of the project. We are carrying out a re-evaluation and assessment of funding, and the project possibly may be affected. Surely everybody realises that, in the current economic climate, limited resources will be available to the Territory. The re-assessment could result in a revised development plan for Kings Canyon. However, the government is still proceeding with the plan of management for the park, the facilities required for rangers, and upgrading of facilities for the leases within the park.

Mr Speaker, I did say in a press release, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that, where necessary, I would travel overseas with my wife. I stand by that statement because there are instances, certainly in Asia, where protocol dictates that it is beneficial to have one's partner travelling with one. I can assure the honourable member that, because of the age of my young family, I have no chance at all of taking my wife overseas regularly, or interstate for that matter.

The appointment of Bob Doyle certainly has been praised far and wide throughout the Australian and Northern Territory tourist industry. He has had some 16 years involvement with tourism in the Northern Territory and, prior to that, 4 years in Victoria. I am sure that, if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition makes an approach to Bob Doyle, he will be more than happy to assist him in whatever inquiries he may wish to make.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say a few words about, and perhaps take issue with, some comments made recently by Senator Robertson in an address to the recent ALP Conference in Darwin. I wonder if, at some convenient time, one of the honourable members opposite who is heavy on ideology might enlighten me. In his address on 'Equity in Australian Society', the senator spoke about Labor Party objectives. I became

a little intrigued and frightened because it was stated that, in working towards improving Australia's economic situation, the government has the capacity ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fannie Bay will resume his seat for a moment. We have slipped up on a small matter of procedure. I ask the Chief Minister to assist by seeking leave that further adjournment debate be undertaken by leave. The Leader of Government Business has spoken, closing formal debate.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly for the adjournment debate to continue.

Leave granted.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was referring to the ALP policy to redistribute income progressively in favour of the poorest segment in our society. I am sure all governments and all humane people are concerned, and should continue to be concerned, about the poorest section of society. However, what intrigues and frightens me a little is the very word 'redistribution'. It does not seem to be a policy based on government assistance for the poor but of taking off the rich or the haves and giving to the have-nots. I find that almost frightening as the policy of a political party. I would really like to know what members opposite have to say about it in due course. There are all sorts of ways that governments can gain revenue by means of duties and taxes, but this policy involves redistribution of income. This notion suggests that a Labor government is opposed to the guys who are getting a quid and will take it off them and give it to the poor. It does not intend to encourage them to create more wealth, which will provide more taxes with which to assist the poor. Perhaps I can be enlightened on that matter in due course.

The honourable senator made one obvious statement, which perhaps is typical of him. He said that unemployment is recognised as the single most important cause of poverty in Australia. On reflection, one may have thought that perhaps gambling, or droughts affecting the farmers, or bankruptcy, could be the biggest cause of poverty in Australia. However, at the moment, the government recognises that unemployment is the biggest cause of poverty in Australia. I did not think it would require too much study to reach that conclusion. If you do not have a job and rely on the dole, you will experience some poverty.

Later in his speech, Senator Robertson said that the federal government continued to be generous in its funding to the Northern Territory government, with the Territory receiving \$15m more in the budget compared to the previous year's allocation. In dollar terms, the Territory did receive \$15m more than in the previous year but what the senator conveniently forgot, or did not want to mention, was that the year he was using for comparison was the year we had the mini-budget cuts. That was the year that \$59m was taken from us. Thus, we received \$15m more, but only in comparison with a year in which we received \$59m less than we were expecting.

I thought I would mention that for the record. Part of the \$59m cut related to a halving of the electricity subsidy. As honourable members know, the subsidy is extended for a couple of years. \$38m of the \$59m cut related to a reduction and deferral of the electricity subsidy. That was the occasion when the Leader of the Opposition made his infamous remark that Territory electricity consumers do not have too much to complain about. I am sure he will live to regret the day that he said that.

Of course, the Darwin Airport rated a mention in Senator Robertson's speech. We can all picture how the party faithful would have soaked up the gripping words from the man who spends each day in the halls of power with his colleagues in Canberra. I would like to quote 2 paragraphs from his report to the ALP conference:

The construction of the Tindal RAAF Base and the large scale allocation for road construction in the Territory are 2 of many positive programs funded by the federal government in the Northern Territory. However, it would be remiss of me if I did not mention the action - or should I say lack of action - by the federal government which has created a sense of widespread frustration among Territorians; namely, its failure to announce a decision on the Darwin Airport.

During this year and last, I have pressed the minister, Peter Morris, for an urgent decision on the project but the only response has been that he is waiting for all the facts and recommendations to be presented to him before a decision can be announced. The wait we are experiencing in regard to this decision is unreasonable and damaging to the party in the Territory and I have told the minister this on several occasions. I will continue to press the federal government and Peter Morris to urgently announce a decision for the sake of Territorians regarding the Darwin Airport project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with a dynamo like that in Canberra, it is no wonder that a new airport terminal is not being constructed in Darwin, that the Alice Springs Airport has just had the chop, that we do not have the promised railway or the Kakadu tourist facilities or the changes to the Land Rights Act, that the superannuation agreement was torn up about 18 months ago, and that we are still paying sales tax on the freight component of the price of goods. The good senator says that he has pressed the minister and will continue to press the minister for a decision on the airport. He does not even say that he wants a positive decision; he is just pressing for a decision. Have you ever heard such a cringing - I will not say it, Mr Deputy Speaker, because I will only have to withdraw it.

In August 1983, the federal government told Territorians that the new Darwin Airport terminal would commence construction in the 1983-84 financial year. The Leader of the Opposition, who thought he could smell a winner, told this Assembly a few months before that the Minister for Transport, Mr Morris, was okay. He said: 'Peter Morris impresses me as one minister who is well and truly on top of his job'. It is in Hansard, Mr Deputy Speaker. That was good news for us at the time. The federal Labor government had been in power for some months so there was no massive, unforeseen deficit to be blamed for cancelling projects. It was all clear sailing. We had the world's greatest treasurer at the helm and a minister who impressed the Leader of the Opposition as being on top of his job. Nothing could possibly go wrong with our airport.

The Leader of the Opposition climbed in and gave the Assembly a sneak preview of the coming federal budget during the adjournment debate on 23 August 1983. He said: 'I am confident that, despite this scaremongering of the government' - that is this government, Mr Deputy Speaker - 'there will be no gold tax introduced to the detriment of Tennant Creek. I am confident that the electricity subsidy for Darwin will be maintained by the federal government and I am confident that this budget will contain a start to the Darwin Airport'. I think he was wrong on all 3 counts but we are only talking about the airport at the moment.

We had to wait for a year - although the federal budget was announced just a few days later - until August 1984, before the impressive federal minister announced that money would be available to start construction. Less than 6 months later, after the commencement of construction in April 1985, work was halted for a 6-month review. The Leader of the Opposition should have smelled a rat straight away. Why would a minister who is on top of his job need 6 months to undertake a review when this \$96m project had already run the gauntlet of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee, with all the information collection that entails? A review of options could have been done very quickly. At the time, the Leader of the Opposition said in regard to the 6-month time frame: 'It appears that the minister is treating the matter urgently because departmental meetings have been convened already in Canberra to discuss the reappraisal'. This was within a couple of days of the reappraisal being announced.

I think it was February this year, some 11 months after the work was stopped, that the Opposition Leader was parading around Australia on his Chamberlain campaign. He took time out in Sydney to visit the minister who impressed him so much, to find out when the air terminal would recommence. This happened amid great publicity. He wanted the minister to tell him when it would start, so he could pass the good news on to us and pick up a bit of kudos for apparently having persuaded the minister. We waited with bated breath but, alas, when he emerged from the meeting, we were told that 11 months after it had started, the review was still in progress. We were told that more engineering data was needed before a decision could be made. That was in February 1986, 11 months after the work stopped. It is now 14 months since work stopped, and the good Labor senator tells us that the minister is waiting for all the facts and recommendations before he makes a decision. This excuse comes from the minister who is well and truly on top of his job.

Maybe that is so. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely correct. The honourable Peter Morris may be a very competent and capable minister whose job, in this instance, is not to construct a new airport terminal, but to procrastinate and delay as long as possible and to get out of the commitment to spend so many federal dollars in the politically insignificant Northern Territory. 'Put a coat of paint on the existing terminal, that will do those fellows up north'. That is the hint that is coming through now. It is more than a hint: I think it has almost been announced that we will have an upgrading and, no doubt, the new airport will be deferred again and again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's judgment of impressive ministers is about as good as his judgment of the Territory electorate.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, that very moving speech by the member for Fannie Bay requires at least some comment. I was in another place when he started and I listened with some interest to his view of the world and the way it operates.

I think his opening comments were developed around a fear he has of this concept of the redistribution of income or wealth. I am not an economist and anyway I think they are probably the worst people to give anybody advice. I am afraid I have very little time for them. Basically, as I understand it, there is a national estate. Australia has so much money and that money should be redistributed. The Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act was all about the redistribution of wealth to the north; that was the whole point of it. The redistribution of wealth from wealthy to poorer people is much the same thing. Part of the national estate has moved from one section of the



Australian community to another. That is very much the business of government as I understand it. It does not seem too remarkable.

The money raised from taxes, be they import duties or dog registrations, will be distributed to somebody. As the member for Fannie Bay said, it is one of those things that all governments aspire to. Obviously, they seek to assist the people on the bottom rung of the ladder, and that is what redistribution of income and wealth is all about. It does not seem to me to be a particularly remarkable concept.

I am not too sure why the member has so much difficulty in understanding it. I have always assumed that it is what most governments are about. I had assumed that all governments had the same aspiration: to assist the majority of people within their constituencies. Ours is the Northern Territory. Obviously, not all of our people are wealthy. Clearly, we raise taxes from various sources.

Mr Perron: But not all from personal taxes.

Mr LEO: Personal taxes? I happen to enjoy a cool beer on a warm afternoon and, as far as I am concerned, that is a personal tax. I have no real difficulty with that.

To continue with the honourable member's litany of sins committed by the Northern Territory's Labor senator, Senator Robertson. I appreciate that persons in other places act in a manner which we find difficult to understand and accept, but I suppose that that could be extended to all persons in other places who represent us ...

Mr Palmer: He is representing the Territory, not another place.

Mr LEO: Yes, in another place. He represents the Territory in the Commonwealth parliament. I would have hoped that, in the interest of fairness, the member for Fannie Bay could have commented on our only representative in the House of Representatives, Hon Paul Everingham. That person does not even reside here any longer, but that probably does not bear comment. Sending him to Canberra was supposed to have given Canberra a message, but it certainly does not appear to have saved our souls. I would have expected the member for Fannie Bay to be as disappointed in the performance of our federal member in the House of Representatives in this regard as he would be in that of our 2 senators' efforts. However, I am afraid I did not hear a word from him on that.

In addition, we can all remember the great self-government pledge by Paul Everingham: that self-government would not cost each of us any more than 1 beer a week. I am afraid that I am dying of thirst, Mr Deputy Speaker. The cost of self-government is now a little more than 1 beer a week. All these political campaigns and pledges have to be taken for what they are. People assuming that there is any dignity attached to campaign pledges are drawing a very long bow. The CLP, the ALP, or whatever, can all be accused very readily of failing to honour commitments across the board. I ask the member for Fannie Bay to examine the record of his own good organisation - the Country Liberal Party - in relation to commitments. Quite certainly, self-government has cost the Northern Territory's residents more than 1 beer a week.

The member for Fannie Bay indicated that he had some frustration in his dealings with Canberra. Canberra is a long way away and it is full of bureaucrats who enjoy pushing pencils around and frustrating people in remote

areas. I had occasion to deal with them in relation to the control tower in Nhulunbuy and it was an extremely frustrating experience. We managed to obtain the facility but we cannot get anybody to man it. It was an example of how difficult it is to communicate with those people in distant places who have so much control over our lives.

However, I must tell the Assembly that residents of Nhulunbuy experience equal frustration in dealing with the bureaucracy in Darwin. It is a long way away, and who really cares about a place in the sticks called Nhulunbuy? It is very difficult to convey the problems of a community like Nhulunbuy, situated in the middle of a land rights claim, where 2 completely different cultures mix socially on an hourly basis, to members of this Assembly, to bureaucrats, and to the ministers who control them. An extremely pertinent example occurred less than 4 months after my election, in the very important area of Aboriginal education. One of the few institutions which was achieving anything in east Arnhem Land was Dhupuma College. It was closed unceremoniously because it suited a pencil-pusher, or a particular minister, to decide that the establishment was no longer worthwhile or financially viable, or that it did not fit into his scheme of things. Of course, no reference was made to the people in my electorate who were affected by the decision.

We all experience difficulties when dealing with remote bureaucracies and, as I say, my constituency has just as much difficulty in dealing with the remote bureaucracy in Darwin as Darwin residents undoubtedly have in dealing with the remote bureaucracy of Canberra.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, it seems appropriate to respond in adjournment debates, and I am delighted to respond to the member for Nhulunbuy, who seems to have great difficulty in differentiating between redistribution of wealth and utilisation of what he refers to as the national estate. I am not really sure what he means by a national estate, but I assume that he means a share in this nation's wealth. The member for Fannie Bay asked simply whether the ALP's policy is one of pure socialism, to take from the rich and redistribute to the poor, or whether it simply aims to use this nation's wealth by encouraging private enterprise to utilise resources to create an economy which will allow us to look after those people who, for reasons beyond their own control, are suffering through lack of income or facilities. The member for Nhulunbuy made some very interesting comments about the Self-Government Act, indicating that it related to a redistribution of wealth. Members of the Assembly and all Territorians know that the Self-Government Act was a long-overdue commitment in which the people of the Northern Territory were to be provided with facilities and infrastructure denied them for some 60 years by a neglectful central government.

The Self-Government Act was not a strange form of socialism, as the member for Nhulunbuy would have us believe. It was simply a matter of correcting all the wrongs that Territorians had suffered over the years. As we all know, Territorians have contributed more per capita to this nation's wealth than has the average Australian. It is not a matter of our receiving something that we are not entitled to. It is a matter of our obtaining our fair share of this nation's wealth so we can enjoy the same benefits and facilities as people interstate. More importantly, and I think it is important for us to think about this, we must provide Territorians with the opportunity to help drag this nation out of its current economic demise at the hands of the ALP socialist government.

We have also had some quaint comments from the member for Nhulunbuy about the activities of the member for the Northern Territory, Mr Everingham. We have heard some rubbish about him not being a resident of the Territory. If we compare his performance with that of Senator Ted Robertson, we can see they are not even on the same planet. We have a senator who, in his duties on behalf of the Northern Territory in Canberra, can do no better than sleep in the corridors of the federal parliament. He not only neglects the interests of the Northern Territory, but those of his own party. Senator Ted Robertson has been a non-performer since day 1.

If the member for McDonnell would like to open his mind just for a fraction of a second, which I realise would strain his capabilities, I will enlighten him a little. When the federal cutbacks were mooted last year, I recall that Senator Robertson made front page, or maybe page 3, of the NT News, by saying that Territorians would not suffer any more than other Australians. I forget his exact words, but they implied that we would cop only our fair share of cutbacks in federal expenditure. We soon saw what really happened. 1% of the nation's population copped 10% of the cutbacks. We have seen it again recently. Where was the senator in the last 12 months, to ensure that we got a reasonable share in Canberra at the Premiers Conference last week? Once again, the cutbacks had a disproportionate effect on Territorians. So much for his influence and performance.

When I pointed out early last year that there was something amiss with the airport project, and that there would be a significant cutback in expenditure on it, Senator Robertson tried to assure Territorians that no such action was envisaged. Where else in Australia was there a major project cutback? The member for Fannie Bay has enumerated the series of reviews, reviews of reviews and absolute nonsense that the federal Minister for Aviation, Peter Morris, has thrust upon us. His latest effort was the brush-off at the Beaufort Hotel, when he turned up an hour and a half late for an address to the Federal Association of Aero Clubs. That brush-off was quite typical of his arrogant and rude nature. He wanted to put local people down. The most he offered to one of the reporters was that we would have a decision within 2 months. Now, 2 months later, he is to have another fortnight. I will be delighted when he makes a decision, regardless of what it is, because it will give us the opportunity to find out, through the Freedom of Information Act, about the sort of vindictive prevarication this federal government is inflicting on the Territory.

I need not address these remarks to the members opposite, because they are only too well aware of the contempt in which they are held by their federal colleagues. The member for Nhulunbuy referred to the Gove control tower, whose opening showed clearly just how contemptuously the federal ALP treats Territory ALP politicians. The member for Nhulunbuy was snubbed by the Minister for Science, Barry Jones. You would think that the member would have learned from that. How difficult must it be for Territory ALP politicians to know that not only ordinary Territorians, but they themselves, have been cast aside by the federal ALP socialists?

We have seen and heard enough about promises. We have heard the ridiculous claim that the Country Liberal Party does not fulfil its promises. The member opposite was challenged to name just one promise that this government has not fulfilled, and he could not come up with one. I challenge him to think about it for the next day or 2. He will get another 2 opportunities to elaborate on some of these marvellous promises that he suggests the Country Liberal Party has not fulfilled. On the other hand, the member for Fannie Bay, even without notes, could rattle off 6 or 7 publicly

announced major commitments which have been broken by the federal government. These commitments were not only in the interests of the Northern Territory, but also in the interests of the nation. They would help to get us out of the economic demise that has been caused by the ridiculously poor decisions of the socialist government in Canberra.

If we could just get half a go, one tiny bit of encouragement, we would not only provide great amenities and facilities and hundreds of jobs for Territorians and their children, we would help this country to get itself off its knees. That is what we need: more outgoing, free enterprise, productive policies from the federal government, instead of the inward-looking socialistic attitudes we have seen time and time again.

Members opposite will have plenty of opportunity in the next day or 2, to try and to counter the challenge put to them by the member for Fannie Bay. I look forward with interest to hearing their arguments.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the start of my contribution to this adjournment debate, I would like to comment on what I consider a gross omission from the guest list at our official opening this morning. I noted that the guest list included important people from both the public and the private sectors. There was, however, one gross omission which became apparent to me when I saw Darwin's Deputy Lord Mayor, the Mayor of Palmerston, and the Mayor of Katherine among the guests. I did not see the President of Litchfield Shire. I was told at lunch time yesterday that he did not receive an invitation. I would hope that this oversight does not take place on future occasions. As far as the city of Darwin is concerned, the Litchfield Shire may seem a long way out. However, having regard to the fact that the Litchfield Shire starts from MacMillans Road, which is a wee bit closer to Darwin than Katherine or Palmerston, I would like to see the omission rectified at the next official function of the Legislative Assembly.

I would like to comment this afternoon on some interesting irregularities in the supply of electricity to the rural area. It has actually gone past the stage of being interesting, and has become dangerous in some cases. As the member for MacDonnell says, it is definitely shocking. Reports have reached me from all outer parts of my electorate, from the Coastal Plains Research Station, from the Bees Creek area, from the 19-mile area, from the Livingstone Road area, from the Elizabeth Valley Road area, from Humpty Doo, from McMinns Lagoon, Gulgore Road and the vicinity of Hughes Airstrip. Most of these places are on the outskirts of my electorate. However, that does not mean they should have a lower standard of electricity supply than people living closer to town or in town.

Most people, especially in the rural area, are pretty tolerant. They have become accustomed to interruptions to the electricity supply, despite assurances from NTEC a couple of years ago that we would not have these outages. I have previously mentioned how galling it is to see Palmerston lit up like a Christmas tree while the rural area does not have any power. That is what used to happen. The present level of outages in the rural area is definitely not normal. I do not know whether you would call it abnormal or subnormal but it is verging on the surreal and, to the people who have been the victims of it, it is not unlike phenomena which might occur in outer space. For example, people see large, bright orange glows under the powerlines. They see blue flashes around the poles, accompanied by bangs. They also see definite arcing between the ground and the electrical wiring. Computer use in the Humpty Doo High School has been interrupted and motors have stopped. Telephones are ringing, and when people go to answer them there

is nobody there. The telephone situation is becoming very dangerous because on several occasions people have received electrical shocks when they picked up the receiver to answer. Fridges and other items of electrical equipment have developed rather disconcerting rattles, and all of these things taken together imply that the explanations put forward by NTEC may be correct up to a point but do not contain the whole story.

NTEC tells me that all of these problems are caused by flying foxes. These poor flying foxes; they have to carry a load out in the rural area. I can understand that flying foxes in the mango season reach great numbers in the rural area. But where are the mangoes now? There is not much fruit growing now. I said to NTEC that I will believe flying foxes are responsible when I see the bodies. NTEC officers say they have some bodies, but they also stretch my credulity by adding that lightning strikes are also responsible. I think they are stretching it when they tell residents in the rural area that it is not only the flying foxes that contribute to these irregularities in the electricity supply but also lightning strikes. I ask, Mr Deputy Speaker, how many lightning storms and lightning strikes have you seen in the Top End at this time of the year? I will concede that flying foxes may be around in some numbers if NTEC has the bodies. I know the woolly butts and stringy-barks are in blossom. I am not certain of the eating habits of flying foxes but I believe they feed on those trees and they could be around now.

Whilst this sounded amusing to me at the time, I believe it was quite serious and the constituent who rang me was very concerned and frightened. She happened to be alone at home with some young children because her husband was working out bush. She does not receive her electricity supply from NTEC. She has a 12-volt supply. She was watching a late night movie on TV, a horror movie. She became aware of an orange glow through the window which became more and more intense. Whilst she was engaged with the creepy movie and observing the orange glow, the telephone started to ring. These rather unusual conditions made her feel a little upset, worried and frightened. She answered the telephone and there was nobody there. She became really concerned and went to a neighbour's place which was linked to the electricity supply. They told her that they had seen an orange glow too, and it was coming from the powerlines. Their telephone had rung too. This comforted the lady because she knew then that no one had telephoned her. Whether we like it or not, sometimes people are the victims of hoax telephone calls and they can be rather frightening.

If NTEC is right and flying foxes are causing these outages and strange phenomena, I believe that somebody must have given these little animals watches, and they are probably all in Actors Equity by now, because this show is put on in the Bees Creek Road, Elizabeth Valley Road and Livingstone Road area between 1.30 am and 2 am. If it is caused by flying fox activity, we all know that they usually work, feed, fly and do other things at night. Not many flying foxes are active at 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning though. However, this is the time when people in Humpty Doo have problems. It is the time when their telephones ring and there is nobody there and when they receive minor electric shocks upon lifting the receiver. That is dangerous.

The situation is such that people living in the Livingstone Road area and Elizabeth Valley Road take advantage of the show provided by NTEC. When the TV finishes at night, they sit out on their front verandahs and watch the NTEC show, and it is free. They observe the orange glows, the blue lights, the flashes, the bangs and the arcing. They turn off their house power so the refrigerator will not rattle or the telephone ring.

Mr Ede: The killjoys will probably stop it now!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, they will probably charge for it. One of my colleagues said today that the trouble is that we are receiving too much electricity there because, when all the power is turned off in Darwin, it drains to the rural area. He is probably coming the raw prawn but it made a good story at the time.

I will conclude by saying that, whilst officers of NTEC have told me that they have the bodies of flying foxes that have caused these irregularities - and I believe them - this is not the whole answer. I know the matter is under consideration and that NTEC is working with Telecom to relieve this dangerous situation, but a solution is required urgently. If this situation is allowed to continue, it could contribute to the problems of electricity reticulation.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to respond to a couple of remarks made by the member for Fannie Bay because I think that some members have missed the point of what he said. He stated that he was worried about the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.

Mr Perron: Redistribution of income.

Mr EDE: The redistribution of income from the rich to the poor. It fits the same principle. It seemed to me that he was saying that he is quite happy with those forms of taxation which have the same impact on rich and poor people. He gave the example of customs duties and, no doubt, he would be quite happy about sales tax. However, if I understood him correctly, he was in fact complaining about the graduated system of taxation on income. It taxes high income earners at a higher rate and utilises the tax to give disproportionate benefits through the social security system to the unemployed, the most poverty-stricken section of the community. I think that sheds some light on what he was probably talking about.

It is interesting to note that, now he is on the backbench, he has joined the flat-rate tax brigade. This sheds light on quite a number of other things that have been happening. We all know who is the champion of the flat-tax brigade - Hon Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the Premier of Queensland, who is also the leading light in fostering the National Party throughout Australia. There we have the connection with other happenings.

First came what some would call the rather surprising movement of the former minister to the backbench. We have had reported sightings of rather senior National Party people in Alice Springs - you may have heard of these yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have heard statements from various people in Katherine about the imminent setting up of a National Party in the Northern Territory. It would seem to me that, if we put the honourable member's comments in this context, we would realise that, in fact, he is making a bid for improving his approval rating with Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He is advocating flat-rate tax so that he can make his move in the National Party when it gets off the ground in the Northern Territory. His remarks had us all rather confused for a while, but I think that puts them into context.

Mr Coulter: You would support a flat-rate tax, wouldn't you?

Mr EDE: No, I would not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on a couple of other matters. The first of them relates to a community in my electorate that I spoke about during the last adjournment debate. I spoke about the lack of an airstrip, despite the enormous amount of voluntary work that the community had done to clear the area without any assistance from the government, and the failure of the grading program to have the strip operational. I also spoke about the problem with the government putting in electricity supply for the school but not connecting it to the community.

Another matter was raised with me over the weekend. That community has been trying for some time to obtain a shed so that it could securely store community property such as tractors, workshop materials and so on. The contractor, who actually completed the shed and part of the fence, locked his own gear inside and disappeared. He has not been seen for 2 months. The community has said that it has the equipment to finish the job but has been told by the department that its people cannot do the job themselves because it is the contractor's responsibility. If that is correct, nobody has been able to get the contractor to come back to complete the job. I certainly hope that a penalty clause was inserted so that it can be utilised to ensure that the contractor returns. The Nyirripi community always has a potential petrol sniffing problem. The community is very concerned about having petrol locked away so that temptation is removed from the at-risk group. It is also concerned about the assets of the budding community council.

Another problem at Nyirripi, given that there is no airstrip, is the lack of any community vehicle. I feel that the government ought to give consideration to providing very isolated communities, such as Nyirripi, with some form of community vehicle for health reasons. There are many old people in those areas who are at risk. Sometimes, there is no vehicle available in cases of emergency. If Alice Springs is contacted by radio, it has to contact Yuendumu to send a vehicle to Nyirripi. This can cause delays that may have serious consequences for ill people.

I would like to mention a training program which was reported in November 1985. It was stated that young Aborigines living in remote communities would benefit from a new \$1m education pilot program. I was advised that this program would enhance employment opportunities of Aborigines living in remote areas and focus on woodwork, metalwork and manual arts. A mobile resource unit was to be established initially to cover the Barkly and Alice Springs areas. My understanding was that Senator Ryan had written to the previous minister asking for a detailed indication of what the Northern Territory's needs were. The preliminary federal costing was \$320 000. I merely ask the new minister to advise me of the current status of that program. I understand that all states showed a reasonable interest in the program. Since we received a third of the total budget, I would be interested to know what we were able to do with that money during that financial year. I understand also that AUSSAT offered to give some free time and to undertake some consultancy work for the program. Obviously, the program has some interesting aspects. It is not the be-all and end-all solution to all the problems, but many people would benefit from increased skills.

The other problem that I would like to raise relates to standby bores on remote communities. I raised this with the previous Minister for Community Development who simply stated it would be too expensive and that the Department of Transport and Works was carrying out routine maintenance.

Mr Finch: We have 2 standby bores on the other side.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, this may be a matter of mirth to some members on the government side who sit in the comfort of their northern suburbs homes at night deciding whether the shower water will be a little hotter or colder, after they have finished choosing between the various channels they are able to watch on TV. However, the reality on the outstations that I am talking about is somewhat different. We know that ...

Mr Setter: They choose to live there.

Mr EDE: The choosing, for your information, was made some 40 000 years ago, which is some time before your ancestors made a decision to come to this country. I am very thankful that my ancestors made that decision, but I have never used it as a basis for saying that people were unable to benefit from government.

Mr Coulter: Who was the water driller 40 000 years ago?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will ignore that ridiculous remark. The problems that I am referring to relate to very isolated communities that have no alternative source of water and are basically reliant on hand pumps. Even where there is a windmill, there is often the problem of a wind drought. Anningie again provides a good example. The community's only source of water is a hand pump on a sphere pump which goes into the soakage in the creek. With this type of hand pump, installed many years ago, it took me some 40 minutes to half fill a bucket with water. It is completely inappropriate. I have been saying this about Nyirripi since 1979, when I first discussed it in the Water Needs Committee in central Australia. We attempted then to get an agreement for a Mexican dam to be constructed so that the water could be channelled into a well built in the creek sand, with a solar pump to obtain water for people. I will be referring to the Anningie situation again during these sittings, because it is one community which has been left betwixt and between for years by various departments. I see many people from Anningie in Alice Springs. They are sick. They have sick children, suffering from gastroenteritis and other water-related diseases. Many old men have gone completely blind over the last few years because of the ravages of trachoma.

Mr Harris: The Health Department has a number of good programs.

Mr EDE: I think the best program is to stop people getting sick in the first place. We could do that if we had an adequate water supply at Anningie. It seems stupid to me not to go ahead with a relatively cheap program like this one, but to quite happily pick up \$100 a day in hospital costs for sick people.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I am spurred on to speak tonight as a result of listening to the member for Fannie Bay and his comments about the Labor senator for the Northern Territory, Ted Robertson, who is also the government Whip in the Senate.

I was in Canberra last Friday, and I picked up the Sydney Morning Herald on the Saturday morning, 14 June. I read a very good article in that paper, which referred to Senator Robertson and his performance. Previously, Senator Robertson stated in his newsletter, 'Territory Watchdog', that he does not see it as his role to comment publicly on the poor performance of the federal government. In fact, he said that it was simply not acceptable for him, as a member of the federal government, to attack it in public. That was in relation to the fringe benefits tax. I now know why he does not attack the government in public. According to the article in the Sydney Morning Herald



he is not in parliament very often. He certainly was not there when they needed him on Thursday evening.

For the benefit of members, I will tell the story as it unfolded. The heading on the article is: 'Senator's Slumber Cost Government the Numbers'. The article says:

There was a slanging match between 2 Tasmanian senators: the Minister for Community Services, Senator Grimes, and the Liberal Senator, Shirley Walters, late on Thursday night which led to the government being defeated in a vote to have Senator Walters suspended, when 14 Labor senators did not make the division.

The incident began when Senator Walters sought to protect a fellow Tasmanian Liberal, Senator Jocelyn Newman, who was being given a hard time by Senator Grimes. For her trouble, Senator Walters was called a stupid twit and a drunk by Senator Grimes and, in turn, she described him as a disgrace. Senator Rosemary Crowley from South Australia came to Senator Grimes' assistance, despite him asking her to let it ride, and demanded that the President of the Senate, Senator McClelland, make her withdraw the remark. Senator Walters refused and, although Senator Grimes kept insisting that he did not want the withdrawal, the President named Senator Walters. After further argument, it was left to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Evans, to move that Senator Walters be suspended. It was then that the government suffered the embarrassment of losing the vote 20-18, because 14 of its senators had already left.

The final word was left to Senator Walters who apologised to Senator McClelland for causing him the embarrassment. 'At the time that I refused to withdraw, I had no idea that we would have the numbers', Senator Walters said.

That is the sort of action that our Labor senators are providing at the moment. I think that the government Whip in the Senate, Hon Ted Robertson, is doing an excellent job by allowing the opposition to get on with the job. I just wonder if he would like to develop that philosophy a little bit more. The article says: 'The Labor Whip in the Senate, Senator Ted Robertson, NT, who was one of those who missed the vote yesterday, described the incident as unfortunate'.

I will tell you what is unfortunate. It is the fact that he is even in Canberra. That is what is unfortunate, because he has let down the Northern Territory people time and time again. The fringe benefits tax was one example and this is just another one. The good senator, the Whip, the tactician, the person responsible for controlling the government numbers, was not in the House when he was needed. When he was asked for a comment, he said: 'It is unfortunate'. Unfortunate! As I said, it is unfortunate that he is in the Senate at all. However, if the government continues not to turn up for government business, I have no problems. That is what helps the coalition, the Liberal and the National Party senators, to get on with the job.

There are a couple of other things that I would like to mention. The last speaker, the member for Stuart, talked about salaries. I was down in that hallowed golden triangle recently, in that Sydney-Melbourne-Adelaide-Canberra zone, and all the good Labor states were well represented. They wanted maintenance payable to separated people also to become income based. In other words, if you received \$20 000 a year, you would have to contribute so much

and, if you received \$100 000, you would contribute more. A proportion of salary would have to be contributed. The actual cost of the maintenance was not included. They simply said, 'We will take 20% off your salary'.

Mr Ede: Maintenance for what?

Mr COULTER: Child maintenance.

Mr Ede: You would object to that?

Mr COULTER: Certainly I would object to that. It does not cost any more to bring up a child if you are poor or rich. There is a cost and that cost must be borne, but to relate it to people's endeavour and to base it on their salaries, which are their reward for getting somewhere, that is the type of philosophy ...

Mr Ede: Would you object to that?

Mr COULTER: Would I object to that, the member for Stuart asks? It is not the principle I object to. It is the fact that it singles out anybody who does well. It is not only the Labor Party in the Northern Territory which does this; it is the federal Labor Party as well. They believe we should all be a nice shade of grey. They want to pull everybody back to the same level.

I will tell you what the problem with this particular Labor Party is, Mr Speaker. The member for Wagaman spoke about it earlier. What we are about is not cutting up the cake into nice, thin slices so that it is shared between everybody. The difference between the Labor Party and the Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory is this: we will make more cakes so there are more slices to go around. That is the only way to do it. The imposition of capital gains tax, fringe benefits tax and all these other taxes is not the answer. We do not want to turn everyone that nice shade of grey which our comrades opposite so like to see. We want to get out there and develop. We must get on with the job and build bigger and better cakes, and that is the difference. It is the difference the electorate wants and appreciates and that is why the Leader of the Opposition now has a perfect record of total electorate defeat. People will not wear those types of policies.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart went on to talk about water. I stand to be corrected on this, but our total expenditure on water last year was something like \$4m. We spent that amount on water in one way or another. We had to pump water over considerable distances for some communities and there was one place where it would have cost \$600 000 to supply water. One of the things that worries me is that many of the people in the desert country around Kintore and Well 33, out towards Western Australia, were brought into places like Papunya by Jeremy Long and others in 1964. At that stage, there was a 6-year drought and there was not too much water around in those areas. Many of those people were brought in so that they could be near a water source. Kintore is a good example. It started off with a hand pump and now it has a diesel engine. I do not know what it cost. Thousands of dollars have been spent on water throughout the Northern Territory. What worries me, especially around the central Alice Springs area, is that if we have another 6-year drought - and it is quite possible, may God protect us from it - all these bores and wells that we hear about will go dry again. In such a circumstance, the people we have established in these areas will have to come in again. I pray that it will not happen, but if it does we will be in trouble.

As the outstation movement gains momentum and people move to those places, we are expected to follow them with wheelbarrows full of generators and solar bore pumps and so on. The problem is simply this: they are going into areas that have a known history of poor water supply. We cannot reticulate water through the whole of the Northern Territory because it would cost millions of dollars. It is a plain fact that, wherever a community has developed in the world, it has been built where water is available. Water is an essential ingredient for man's survival, and that is a simple fact. In some of these places, there is no water and it is therefore very expensive to supply it and to maintain services related to it. That is why I asked for the name of a drilling contractor 40 000 years ago. These people lived where there was water. What is happening now is: 'Move out, mate, she'll be right. They will come along and drill us a bore. It will be nice here, nice view out over there, bit of a hill and a rock. I will put my house over there and that mob will be out later and put in a bore for us'. Well, in some cases, it just will not happen. It is as simple as that.

To turn to a different subject, I would like to talk about a recent census, conducted on 17 March this year. It showed that 25% of the population of Palmerston is under 9 years of age. In fact, some 15% to 16% is under 4 years of age, which is many times more than the Territory average and the Australian average. Mr Deputy Speaker, it augurs well for the Northern Territory that our population increased by some 3.9% last year, while some places in Australia have reached zero population growth. It shows that people still want to get away from the ravages of the socialist governments in the south and come to the security of the Northern Territory. That is fine and we welcome those people, desperate as they are to escape from the clutches of this tax-grabbing federal Labor government.

As I have said to the member for MacDonnell several times, those Labor governments are true socialists who believe everything is free. It is not true. Things must be paid for. People who are prepared to come to the Northern Territory to involve themselves with the development opportunities available here are most welcome. However, the figures indicate that the population in new suburban areas such as Palmerston will be very young indeed. The government has to be aware of that and provide facilities for those young people. It is my intention to ensure that the needs of this young population are catered for, and I shall do all in my power to ensure that the Labor Party does not obtain any controlling influence in the Territory or become the government. It will not happen.

As I said, the Leader of the Opposition now has a perfect record of total electoral defeat and that is the message that the people have given to this Northern Territory Labor Party and its members. I believe it will continue that way for some time to come.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few points in the adjournment debate this evening.

Firstly, I suggest that the member for Berrimah rereads what he had to say today, just in case he is concerned that he is attempting to rewrite history. When he starts asking which bores existed 40 000 years ago, he is trivialising the very harsh existence people had. If he wants to look at what has happened in those areas in terms of economic history, he ought to pause just once in a while and remember that for 150 000 people to live in the Northern Territory these days, provided with a range of government and private sector services, an 80% input from the southern taxpayer is required.

Mr Coulter: It is 83%.

Mr BELL: Okay. It is rather higher than I thought. The increased figure actually adds to my argument. The plain fact of the matter is that these people, whom the member for Berrimah chooses to deride as simply a drain on the Australian taxpayer ...

Mr Coulter: I did not say that.

Mr BELL: I think that was the clear implication of what he said. It should give him some pause for thought, that the people he talks about survived for 40 000 years without a cent of southern taxpayers' money. Certainly, a lot of them perished. Many perished in those dry times, and people still sit around and tell the stories of those who died in droughts. I really get sick and tired of the smug nonsense that is talked about how government virtuously provides for communities whose way of life has been so disturbed. Why did anybody contact those people 20 years ago? Was it because some clerk in Canberra or some member of the Legislative Council in the Northern Territory thought, 'It is pretty dry out there. We had better check out how that mob is out there'. No, of course that was not the reason. The reason for mounting those patrols was the weapons testing occurring then at the Woomera base. The member knows that. I know that. All members know that. If he is not aware of it, and he pretends to understand what is happening in northern Australia, I again suggest he go back to his history books.

My next subject relates to the provision of television services which has been a matter of considerable interest in different places around the Northern Territory. It is of no less interest in my electorate. I want to draw attention to the provision of the translator service at Santa Teresa, and some of the difficulties that have been experienced with that service. For the benefit of members, the translator service at Santa Teresa commenced in November 1983. In 1981, the Santa Teresa Sporting and Social Club, acting for the community, took steps to obtain a licence to operate a TV translator which would receive and transmit TV programs from ABC Channel 7 in Alice Springs, and to arrange for the purchase and setting up of this particular station. The licence was granted in 1982 and the Sporting and Social Club chose a FUBA model translator supplied by a Sydney company called EDS. The translator came into operation in November 1983. The company ASCOM of Alice Springs was the electronic consultant and also the contractor for the FUBA translator. Unfortunately, for the next 2 years, there was a sad litany of failure to adequately operate the translator and to obtain any sort of adequate service. There were considerable difficulties with the signal.

The original application was made, and assistance was given in eradicating the problems, by Brother Cletus Reid, a Marist Brother at Santa Teresa who may be known to other members. Some of the difficulties that were experienced were really quite extraordinary, and they raised considerable problems of consumer protection. During the translator's first year of operation, a number of problems were experienced. Firstly, the signal content of the output was originally too low to give a satisfactory picture. The preamplification system had to be redesigned, and the preamplifier purchased and installed. Secondly, after some months of operation, the output began to weaken and the quality of reception fell away.

Eventually, the system broke down completely. ASCOM diagnosed breakdown of the pressure contacts at the back of the modules which form part of the DC circuitry. The fault was rectified by modifying the design and substituting

soldered connecting wires in place of the pressure contacts. Thirdly, after these 2 faults were remedied, reception was consistently satisfactory, but it was obvious from the behaviour of the output meter that the equipment was not operating in a satisfactory manner and that the delicate electronic circuits were taking a beating. There was wide variation in the output gearing every 24 hours, ranging from about 30 microamps to 50 microamps. During some periods, the meter needle would flicker constantly and from time to time make minor impulsive sweeps through an arc of 5 microamps or more. At other times, the needle would flicker and make major impulsive sweeps through arcs covering 15 to 20 microamps, which at times took the needle beyond the limit of the scale.

That was one range of problems experienced. There were subsequent problems which I do not think are worth recording. I have a detailed account here, Mr Deputy Speaker. Neither the consultants in Alice Springs nor the supplying company were able, in the relatively short time one would expect with goods of that sort, to eradicate the problems experienced. Brother Cletus Reid made representations to me because he was concerned not only about the problems experienced at Santa Teresa, but also that, with the operation of the domestic satellite, similar problems might be experienced by other people in the outback. He felt that his difficulties and the difficulties of the sporting and social club at Santa Teresa might help other people to head off problems.

He mentioned the considerable bureaucratic requirements which had to be fulfilled before they were able to obtain the licence to operate the translator. Details of the particular design had to be submitted for approval. The design was done by ASCOM of Alice Springs in consultation with EDS of Sydney. The details had to be submitted to the Department of Communications and the consultant engineers from the Department of Communications and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, which approved the designs. Quite obviously, in central Australia, which has a very dusty environment and a large diurnal temperature range, the climate will be tougher on equipment than might be the case in other areas.

Brother Cletus is to be encouraged for bringing attention to this particular problem. I raised the matter with the federal Minister for Communications. Lest I be accused of allowing collegiate sympathies to blur my judgment in these matters, I must admit that, having provided the minister with an extensive report of the difficulties experienced by the sporting and social club at Santa Teresa, his response was, to say the least, somewhat perfunctory. I will be pursuing the matter with the Minister for Communications. Since consulting engineers from his department were involved, I believe that they should be keeping some watching brief in this regard.

The honourable minister replied to me: 'I am unable to be of assistance to you in this matter as my department's responsibility is to ensure that the radiated signal meets the designated technical specifications appropriate to a particular granted licence. The quality of equipment purchased is the responsibility of the licensee'. That effort would have done Pontius Pilate proud. As a resident of northern Australia, it causes me considerable concern that the federal government is unable adequately to take into consideration the difficult circumstances that are experienced in the north. Where national budgetary requirements permit, there should be an equal level of service right around Australia. I am concerned that so little regard is being paid to this.

In closing, Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to commend the Darwin Performing Arts Centre, the Darwin Chorale and the Bougainvillea Festival Committee on

the fine performance of HMS Pinafore. I was fortunate enough to be able to enjoy it on Friday night.

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

NORTHERN TERRITORY TOURIST COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 202)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Primarily, this bill will update the Tourist Commission Act to reflect changed administrative arrangements directly affecting the commission and will remove existing administrative anomalies and expand the commission's executive structure to provide the necessary degree of management expertise and professionalism.

Firstly, the amended bill allows for the creation of a new position of Chief Executive Officer who will be charged with carrying out the decisions of the commission and will not automatically be appointed as chairman of the commission, but will sit on the commission as a full-time member with voting rights. Secondly, the commission shall consist of the Chief Executive Officer and not more than 4 other members. At any meeting of the commission, 3 members will constitute a quorum. Thirdly, the amended act corrects an anomaly that was found when the chairman's position was vacated recently. The minister may appoint a person to act, from time to time, as the Chief Executive Officer during the absence from duty or from the Territory of that officer, or a vacancy in that office. Under the original act, it was not possible to appoint an acting chairman who was not a public servant. These proposed amendments will provide the necessary degree of flexibility in the day-to-day executive management of the commission, and will remove existing unforeseen administrative anomalies. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 194)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill will update the act, extend the entitlements of beneficiaries in order to reflect changing community needs since the act was first introduced in 1979, and improve the administration of the act.

Firstly, the bill removes from section 4 of the act the definition of 'head of a household', which will become redundant with the amendments introduced by this bill. The concepts of head of household and dependent spouse are currently used in calculating the benefits payable to the surviving spouse following the death of a Territorian in a motor vehicle accident. With the amendments in this bill, there will no longer be a need to define the head of a household, because the distinction between the head of household and a dependent spouse will be removed from the act.

The definition of 'Territory motor vehicle' has been amended also. At present, in relation to a motor vehicle accident occurring outside the Territory, the definition excludes a vehicle which, at the time of the

accident, was a non-registered vehicle within the meaning of the motor vehicle registration laws in the state where the accident occurred. This means that an ex-Territorian, who still had a current Northern Territory registration, would not be indemnified in relation to his common law liability if he had not registered his vehicle in his new home state within 3 months or such other period as allowed by the law of that state. At present, the act allows for indemnity only while the ex-resident is not in breach of the laws governing reregistration in the state concerned. This could lead to a situation where an ex-resident was not covered at all. It is out of step with the practice followed by the states. Therefore, this bill deletes reference to the breaching of reregistration laws in other states, and will provide indemnity to ex-residents for the remaining period of current Northern Territory registrations.

The next area dealt with by the bill relates to section 13, which provides for weekly benefits for persons who are injured as a result of a vehicle accident and who are unable, or have a reduced capacity, to earn an income. Currently, such an injured person would receive up to 85% of the average weekly earnings in the Territory, less tax, for a person of the same sex as the claimant. In effect, this means that injured males receive a higher weekly benefit than that received by injured females. When the act was first introduced, such an approach was viewed as equitable. This distinction between the earning potential of males and females is out of kilter with the current view that the earning capacities of females are no different from that of their male counterparts. This distinction will be removed and recipients of weekly benefits, in comparable circumstances, will henceforth receive similar amounts based on average weekly earnings for all persons in the Northern Territory regardless of whether the injured person is male or female.

Since it would be inequitable for males currently receiving benefits under section 13 to suffer a reduction as a result of this change, transitional arrangements have been provided in the bill which will hold the male benefit at its present level until such time as the section 13 weekly benefits, calculated on the new basis, exceed the current male benefits.

This bill also introduces major changes in the motor accident death benefits available under the act and the criteria by which those payments are calculated. Section 22 of the current act provides that, where a head of household dies, a dependent spouse is to be paid 3 times the annual income of the deceased up to a limit of \$45 000, plus a prescribed weekly amount for each child, presently \$15 per week. However, section 23 provides that in the reverse situation, where a dependent spouse dies, the head of household will receive a lump sum of \$6000 or 3 times the income of the deceased, if the latter had been earning more than 25% of the income of the head of the household. No weekly payment for any children is allowed.

As this formula was intended to provide financial compensation based on degrees of financial dependency, it relied on the concepts of 'head of household' and 'dependent spouse' and on the actual cash earnings of a person prior to death. In practice, it is not always easy to establish who is the head of a household and who is a dependant. Pre-accident earnings can be difficult to establish, particularly where business partnerships are involved. Structural and economic changes have occurred in the traditional family unit since the act was first introduced. Arrangements can be seen as discriminatory in that the death of a dependent spouse results in a lower payment to the surviving spouse than the death of a head of a household, and does not recognise the non-cash contribution that a non-working spouse makes to a family unit.



The proposed amendments will replace existing sections 22 and 23. They will remove the distinction between head of household and dependent spouse and discontinue the link with pre-accident earnings. In future, the same lump sum payment will be made to a surviving spouse, whether male or female, and regardless of the level of pre-accident earnings. In addition to the lump sum benefit, a prescribed weekly benefit will be made in respect of each dependent child in all cases. Once the amendments take effect, the regulations will be changed to raise the prescribed lump sum payment from \$45 000 to \$55 000 and the prescribed weekly benefit for dependent children from \$15 per week to \$40 per week. These provisions will simplify the calculation of death benefits and will provide either surviving spouse with the same level of benefits as well as ensuring that Territorians continue to be compensated adequately under the scheme.

The bill also introduces amendments to sections 24 and 25 of the act, which will repeal the existing provision for weekly benefits and replace them with lump sum benefits. The regulations will be amended after the act commences to enable dependent parents, and each dependent child with no surviving parent, to receive a payment of \$15 000 instead of a weekly payment. This will provide for greater financial flexibility for such dependants. Benefit payments to dependent children will continue to be paid through a trustee or custodian.

The foregoing amendments to benefits will be able to be made within existing contribution rates. This is possible because of a continuing improvement in the financial performance of the scheme. Honourable members will recall that the Territory Insurance Office, which administers the scheme on behalf of the government, reported a profit of \$2.4m on the scheme's operations for 1984-85. The Territory Insurance Office expects to be able to report a further improvement in this trend for 1985-86. On the basis of that expectation, and following consultation with its actuaries, the office has advised that the present amendments can be implemented without any increase in costs to Territory motorists.

Several other amendments will be made to improve administration of the scheme. Section 27 of the act sets down various time limits within which the General Manager and the board must make decisions on claims before they are referred automatically to the Appeals Tribunal. The act has proven inadequate in ensuring that the decision-making process operates as was originally intended, and it does not provide for a claimant to supply all the information required to determine a claim. This deficiency has been used to push cases through to the tribunal without the TIO or its board being able to consider all the facts. The bill introduces amendments to section 27 to remedy this deficiency. The documentation required is to be prescribed in the regulations, and the time limits on the General Manager will not commence until this documentation is received. The General Manager and the board will now also be able to call compulsory conferences with affected parties to speed up the decision-making process on claims. This amendment also requires the General Manager and the board to take heed of the prescribed information when considering a claim.

This bill also introduces a new section 30A which enables the Appeals Tribunal to bring a charge of contempt. At present, the power to make tribunal rules is provided in the act. However, concern has been expressed that, in the absence of a specific contempt provision in the principal act, the tribunal could be unable to deal with such a situation. In order to ensure that a judge, when sitting as the Appeal Tribunal, has the same powers in the other court, it is necessary to provide for contempt proceedings in the act itself.

The final matter amended by this bill relates to the treatment of a death benefit in a situation of multiple spouses of Aborigines. Section 37 of the existing act contains reference to a minimum payment of \$6000 under section 23, upon the death of a spouse of an Aboriginal who has more than one spouse. With the repeal of section 23, a consequential amendment is necessary to section 37. A new subsection (2) has been introduced to preserve the entitlements of Aborigines with multiple spouses.

Mr Speaker, these amendments will help to maintain a viable and equitable motor accident compensation scheme for Territory motorists. For some years now, the Territory has been ahead of the states in this area of legislation and it is only now that they are beginning to catch up as their own schemes accumulate mounting losses. Victoria announced recently that it will move in the direction that the Territory has taken and I confidently expect that, before much longer, other states will follow. It is not hard to understand why, when one considers that Victoria has an accumulated debt of \$1600m. The Territory government is determined to maintain a scheme which is fair and equitable while being financially self-supporting. This is now being achieved. To maintain this desirable position, however, it is anticipated that further amendments will be needed from time to time in order to meet changed circumstances and changes in community expectations. The government will therefore continue to keep the scheme under review. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### CREDIT UNIONS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 187)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill essentially seeks to do 2 things. Clause 4 seeks to enable a minister to consent to the words 'credit union, credit unions or credit society' appearing in the name of a body corporate other than a credit union. This amendment is considered necessary to enable organisations such as Credit Unions Financial Services of Australia Limited, commonly known as CUFSA, which is owned by the Australian Federation of Credit Unions, to be registered in the Territory as a foreign company. CUFSA is a national financing facility for credit unions, which acts as an industry central clearing agent for cheque and credit card operations and which also provides investment and liquidity support for its member credit unions. Liquidity support involves making commercial loans to member credit unions in the situation where a credit union has a run on its funds or, more commonly, where a credit union has insufficient funds to meet loan demands. Registration of CUFSA would enable the local credit unions to avail themselves of the services offered. With deregulation of the financial system and the increased competition that has resulted from such action, CUFSA facilities would be beneficial for the local industries. The body has already sought registration. Such registration is a necessary precondition to its operation.

Clauses 5 and 6 are aimed at providing further controls on foreign credit unions in the Territory. These clauses allow certain conditions and obligations, at the minister's discretion, to be placed on the foreign credit unions that are already operating here and on any which establish themselves in the future. Currently, the Registrar of Credit Unions and the Northern

Territory government have very little control over foreign credit unions. The only form of stringent control is exercised by their home state and, of course, that varies between states. On the other hand, the local credit unions are strictly controlled through prudential controls and reporting requirements. The intention is not to prevent foreign credit unions from operating in the Northern Territory, but to provide a mechanism to place them on the same footing as local credit unions so that all credit unions operating in the Territory do so under similar conditions.

Clause 5 requires a foreign credit union to apply to the minister for his consent to be registered, and specifies the information that is required for that purpose. Clause 6 covers the registration procedure to be followed once the minister has given his consent to a foreign credit union being registered. It also allows the application of those obligations and conditions considered appropriate to existing as well as new foreign credit unions.

The bill provides for it to be a matter of ministerial discretion although, normally, advice from the registrar would be obtained before the decision was made. By implementing this procedure, all factors can be taken into account, such as the desirability of a particular society establishing itself in the Territory and the effect of registration on other institutions presently operating here. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 201)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, you will no doubt be aware of a recent article in the press which indicated that there were problems with the Traffic Act in relation to siting of random breath-testing stations. The situation arose as a result of 2 recent cases where magistrates ruled that the breath-testing stations were not set up on the carriageway as required by the act. In neither case was there any argument that the defendants did not have a alcohol level above that prescribed, but merely that the police breath-testing stations were not properly located in the strict terms of the act. In one of these cases, valid grounds were seen for appeal but not for the other. The fact that the police had located the breath-testing station off a carriageway to ensure maximum safety was considered sufficient ground, under the current provisions, to have the case dismissed.

The amendments to the act will remove this problem and another possible technical loophole relating to the vehicle having to be correctly parked. These amendments will allow the police to continue to operate random breath-testing stations as previously, with public safety being a prime concern. It was this concern for the safety of motorists that resulted in some of the testing stations being located contrary to the details set out in the act. The public is aware of the problems in the community caused by drinking drivers and most have accepted that random breath-testing is an essential part in controlling that problem. It is also clear from research work in the states that RBT is extremely cost-effective in reducing the road toll, especially when conducted on an intensive basis. To have the intention of the legislation obstructed by a technicality cannot be tolerated, and these amendments are needed urgently to prevent this type of defence.

Mr Speaker, I give notice that I will be seeking at the appropriate time a suspension of so much of standing orders that would prevent the passage of a bill through all stages at these sittings. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 192)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and works): Mr Speaker, I move the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, this bill proposes several changes to the Motor Vehicles Act in relation to provisions for public hire cars. The bill removes a number of impediments to the granting and control of public hire-car licences. It will allow ministerial discretion in granting or transferring hire-car licences to persons presently excluded by the mandatory requirements that they not be permitted to obtain a licence by virtue of a prior conviction or an offence punishable by imprisonment over 6 months. This provision takes no account of the court's finding on the seriousness of the actual offence. For example, the court may have proceeded to conviction but imposed either no penalty or a minor penalty.

Significant provisions of the bill include the allowing of taxi fares and charges to be set by instrument in the NT Government Gazette rather than by regulation. This will provide a more flexible and responsible approach towards fare setting, which is seen to be in the interests of the industry and the public.

The bill will also remove the distinctions between an A and Z class licence, by introducing one class of licence. The bill will reduce the period a licensee must hold a licence before being permitted to dispose of it from 5 and 3 years to 12 months and also reduce the period a person must wait before being eligible to obtain a licence after having disposed of one from 5 years to 12 months with the minister having discretion for periods of less than 12 months.

These impediments are a carryover from Commonwealth days. They no longer reflect the needs of the industry or today's commercial realities. Their retention creates administrative inconvenience and associated difficulties for the industry, which is seeking more flexibility and a greater degree of operator responsibility in providing public transport services. These new provisions have been structured in such a way as to reduce the involvement of the regulatory authority in the commercial aspects of operating a licence.

The bill also repeals the Motor Vehicles Amendment Acts No 6 of 1978 and No 21 of 1979. That legislation was intended to resolve problems then facing the industry. A Supreme Court decision after the legislation was enacted indicated that it did not solve the major problem, and it was not commenced. A further act, No 24 of 1979, which took account of the court's decision, was passed and commenced in March of 1979. Because of these events and other developments, the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act No 6 of 1978 and No 21 of 1979 are considered redundant.

Mr Speaker, the bill also includes a validation clause to correct what was a technically invalid issue of a licence in 1982 due to a misinterpretation of what constituted the transfer of a licence. The licensee, within the preceding 5 years, had transferred the title of the licence to a family company, technically making that person ineligible for the next licence. While the government could have insisted that the licence be cancelled and the fees paid be refunded to the applicant, that would have served no useful purpose and would have prevented the use of one taxi licence until it could be reissued after tender. The government therefore proposed validation of that licence and any others which may have been incorrectly issued in similar circumstances.

While there are ongoing and intermittent complaints about taxis, I believe there has been a progressive improvement by both drivers and industry management in performance and attitude. More recently, this has been highlighted by the industry starting the Taxi Council for the Northern Territory and being prepared to adopt a more self-regulatory role. The government is anxious to see this process continue.

Before closing, I might add that a further matter of interest to honourable members and to the industry is that investigations are currently under way which will enable future provisions to be made which will allow taxi licences to be used as security for a loan. Unfortunately, due to legal complexities, it is not practical to introduce such measures at this stage. Should the issue be resolved in the near future, I will propose such an amendment at the committee stage. The proposed changes to the provisions of the act have been confined to simple changes that are readily achievable at this stage. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 188)

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, section 25 of the Supreme Court Act in its present form limits the jurisdiction of the Master to interlocutory proceedings. There are, however, many matters which, although interlocutory in nature, can quite adequately be dealt with by the Master and are dealt with by the Master in other Australian jurisdictions, thereby leaving judges available to deal with trials and more complex issues.

This bill removes the present limitation on the Master's jurisdiction and provides that the Master shall exercise such jurisdiction as is imposed on him by the court. Earlier this year, Rules of Court were made conferring the Master with jurisdiction. Because of the limitation in section 25 of the Supreme Court Act, the rules limited the Master's jurisdiction to interlocutory proceedings.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the House. We do not have a quorum despite the comments made by government members this morning about the importance of remaining in the Assembly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ring the bells.

Mr MANZIE: The bill saves those Rules of Court which have already been made.

In view of the proposed company rules that will be in the Companies (Northern Territory) Code on 1 July 1986, there is a need for urgency in relation to this bill. I give notice that I shall be moving tomorrow for an appropriate suspension of standing orders. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW (REGULATORY OFFENCES) BILL  
(Serial 190)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Some honourable members may recall that, with the introduction of the Criminal Code in the Northern Territory on 1 January 1984, the concept of regulatory offences was also introduced. Section 3 of the Criminal Code categorises criminal offences in 3 areas: crime, simple offences and regulatory offences. For an offence to be a crime, apart from the presumption as set out in the Interpretation Act, legislation must state that the offence is a crime. For an offence to be a regulatory offence, the legislation must provide that the offence is a regulatory offence. An offence not otherwise designated to be a crime or a regulatory offence is a simple offence.

In simple terms, regulatory offences are offences of strict liability; that is, the usual rules of criminal responsibility do not apply. For example, there is no necessity for the prosecution to prove intent. Offences of strict liability are not new. Such offences existed well before the introduction of the Criminal Code. The effect of the code, however, was to remove from the courts the burden of deciding whether an offence was to be determined to be a regulatory or strict liability, and to place that obligation on the legislature. I consider it proper that such an obligation be placed on the legislature.

Honourable members will recall that, with the introduction of the Criminal Code, the Criminal Law (Regulatory Offences) Act was also enacted. The effect of that act was to make certain offences and various acts regulatory offences. Certain offences in the Motor Vehicles Act and the Traffic Act and regulations were made regulatory offences. At the time of the introduction of the Criminal Code, a considerable degree of caution was taken so as to ensure that offences that were not considered to be strict liability offences prior to the introduction of the code were not made regulatory upon the introduction of the code.

In relation to the Motor Vehicles Act and the Traffic Act and regulations, there seems to have been an overabundance of caution. Certain offences were or would have been considered by the courts to be strict liability offences before the introduction of the Criminal Code. Consistent with the practice which operated prior to the introduction of the code, they should have been considered to be regulatory or strict liability offences upon introduction of the code.

This bill regularises the situation by making regulatory those offences which should have been made regulatory on 1 January 1984. The fact that these offences have not until now been made regulatory has not caused any great difficulty. From time to time, however, the issue arises in the courts and it is now considered necessary to address the problem.

Turning to the bill itself, clause 2 provides for the repeal of section 117A of the Motor Vehicles Act and introduces a new section 117A. The new section sets out those offences that are considered to be regulatory. Honourable members will note that also included in the new section 117A are certain offences which were previously made regulatory on 1 January 1984.

By reference to the substantive acts, it will be noted that inbuilt in a number of the offences declared to be regulatory are certain statutory defences. Such offences still apply and are not affected by these amendments.

Clauses 3 and 4 of the act respectively repeal section 55A of the Traffic Act and regulation 46A of the Traffic regulations and introduce a new section 55A in the act and a new regulation 46A in the regulations. The clauses are expressed in terms similar to the amendments provided for in clause 2; that is, they provide that certain offences in the Traffic Act and regulations be regulatory. Again, certain offences made regulatory on 1 January 1984 are necessarily included in a new section. Honourable members will note that certain statutory defences provided for in the various sections of the Traffic Act are now made regulatory. Those defences will still apply. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CORONERS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 185)

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, the aim of this bill is to amend the Coroners Act to enable coronial matters to be dealt with more efficiently. During the course of 1984, concern was expressed by the former Attorney-General that coronial matters were not being dealt with as efficiently and effectively as they might. Considerable delays were experienced in finalising matters for various reasons. One major factor was that no one person had responsibility for supervising coronial files. Coroners have also been required to personally attend to documentation of an administrative character - work which could be undertaken by the Clerk of Courts. Also, coroners court proceedings require personal attendance and evidence on oath in situations where affidavit evidence would have been satisfactory.

These are but some of the factors. A departmental review of the act and its administration has been undertaken and has resulted in a number of proposed amendments. Amendments along the lines I shall indicate are desirable for 2 reasons. Firstly, the act in some areas requires clarification so that those who administer it can do so with greater confidence. Secondly, coronial files will be able to be dealt with more expediently and with greater efficiency under the amendments proposed.

The first 6 clauses of the bill are taken up with technical matters, the most important of which is the definition of 'spouse' to include traditional Aboriginal marriages and de facto spouses and the delegation of some duties by the coroner. An amendment to permit the coroner to delegate certain powers and functions to the clerk of the coroner's court is proposed in clause 7, which adds a new section 7A to the act. Such delegation would be in writing and may include such powers as the power to dispose of dead bodies and to issue notices and subpoenas pursuant to the act. It is considered that these powers are matters which clerks of courts can adequately deal with as no judicial discretion is required.

Clauses 9 and 10 clarify and update the reference to the coroner's jurisdiction. Clause 8 provides for discretionary appointment to this office to be made by the minister. In the absence of such an appointment, the role would be filled by the clerk of the local court. Creation of such a position would ensure that an officer is responsible for the smooth day-to-day running of coronial matters. At present, there is no such person. By clause 8, the clerk has custody of court records.

Currently, all fires should be reported to the coroner for investigation. This puts unnecessary pressure on the coroner's office. Clause 13 amends the act to provide that a coroner's jurisdiction to inquire into a fire only arises where the police report that fire to the coroner. This will eliminate the necessity for the coroner to inquire into small fires; for instance, those that occur in backyards.

There is no provision in the Coroners Act at present whereby a medical practitioner who may be implicated in any way in the death of a person is prohibited from performing a post-mortem. This is added in clause 14. Difficulty arose some time ago when a medical practitioner failed to supply the coroner with post-mortem reports. There were a number of reports outstanding for many months and coronial matters remained uncompleted for much longer than was necessary. Clause 15 amends section 22 to require a medical practitioner to provide the coroner with a post-mortem report within 2 months. The Department of Health and the police consider that this is a satisfactory period.

Evidence at an inquest at present must be given under oath by the witnesses attending court. In many instances, the same evidence could be given in affidavit form. Clause 17 proposes to add a provision to allow evidence in affidavit form as well as or in lieu of oral evidence which would facilitate the early conclusion of most matters as affidavit evidence could be obtained almost immediately after the death of the relevant witness.

Clause 18 makes it clear that the common law protection against self-incrimination applies to coroners' proceedings.

There is no provision in the Coroners Act for a coroner to order persons other than witnesses from the court. There is also no provision prohibiting publication of proceedings in the media. Clearly, there are circumstances where lurid publication of the details of gruesome deaths could prejudice subsequent criminal proceedings. Such provisions are added by clauses 19 and 20 based on those in New South Wales and Western Australia, allowing the coroner a discretion to order prohibition of publication of proceedings.

There are anomalies between the Coroners Act and the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act. The provision requiring the coroner to



inquire into matters and to provide information as required by the the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages within 14 days from the termination of an inquest is added by clause 21 and, as a consequence, existing section 52 is repealed.

There are a number of minor amendments increasing various penalties to \$100 or \$500; for example, for the offence of removing remains from the Territory without the coroner's written approval.

Debate adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS COMMISSION BILL  
(Serial 199)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, this bill represents a further step towards achievement of the government's policy of providing a greater level of independence to local governing bodies throughout the Territory. The bill can be seen as a direct result of the Territory submission to the Self Inquiry into local government finance established by the Commonwealth Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services, Hon Tom Uren. The Northern Territory government's submission to that inquiry made considerable effort in recommending that community government councils established pursuant to part VIII of the Local Government Act and some association councils - those councils incorporated under other acts - should be included for the purposes of the distribution of the funds pursuant to Commonwealth legislation to replace the Local Government (Personal Income Tax Sharing) Act. The Self Inquiry accepted the majority of the Northern Territory government's submission in this regard. As a result, the Commonwealth government in the Local Government Financial Assistance Act 1986, which passed through the Commonwealth Parliament on 13 June this year, provides mechanisms by which the Northern Territory government will be deemed to be a state and be treated in a state-like manner. As one instance, the Territory will now receive a proportion of available moneys assessed on the basis of the total population of the Territory and not on the 1978 population of incorporated areas only. This means Commonwealth assistance is expected to increase from \$2.56m in 1985-86 to some \$5.5m in the next financial year.

Unfortunately, this change in Commonwealth policy does not signal a windfall in terms of funds to the Northern Territory. It is accepted that, while more money will flow in tied Commonwealth financial assistance payments to local governing bodies in the Territory, a consequent reduction will be made in general purpose payments to the Territory. The distribution of this Commonwealth money on a Grants Commission recommendation will be, however, of distinct advantage to local governing bodies in providing them with an assessable and reasonably reliable source of untied money. The bill will provide a mechanism for distribution of that money according to equalisation principles which will be agreed between the Northern Territory and the relevant Commonwealth minister.

The Commonwealth act requires that Commonwealth funds be distributed in accordance with the recommendation of an independent statutory body and, as a direct consequence, the Northern Territory must now establish a statutory body, a Northern Territory grants commission which, in line with the grants

commissions which are in place in all states, will be able to distribute Commonwealth financial assistance money according to the agreed principles.

It is the agreed Commonwealth Territory intention that people should receive the same standard of local government services across Australia regardless of where they live. This concept is particularly important in the Territory to ensure that smaller communities receive the same opportunities for development as the more populous centres.

Mr Speaker, the bill follows similar legislation in the states. However, we have achieved a major change in Commonwealth policy. Funding will now be provided to our community government councils and to those other declared bodies incorporated under other acts. This declaration process could and should provide a major impetus towards the establishment of community government throughout the Territory. I note that this will be consistent with the recommendations of the Turner Report which was tabled in the Assembly during these sittings.

As I noted earlier, in consequence of the increased amount coming to the Territory for distribution by the Grants Commission to local government, there will be a consequent reduction in general purpose payments to the Territory. This is more than one hand giving what the other hand takes. This will provide to local governing bodies in the Territory a degree of certainty and a level of guaranteed funds according to an agreed set of principles. I believe this situation to be preferable to that which combines local government funding, particularly local government income tax sharing funding, which is the money represented here, with general purpose grants which, of course, must be divided amongst the many services which are provided by the Northern Territory government.

The passage of this legislation will remove the need for 2 formal committees, 1 of which has operated over the last 5 years. The other was intended to commence operations for the 1986-87 financial year. The Local Government Grants Committee, which was established in 1981, will be abolished. The community government grants committee, which the government intended to establish to distribute money for 1986-87 to community government and association councils, will no longer be required. Mr Speaker, I turn now to the major provisions of the bill to explain its philosophy in more detail.

In clause 3, the major definition is that of 'local governing body', which includes municipal councils established under section 11 of the Local Government Act, community government councils established under part VIII of the Local Government Act or - and very importantly - a body declared by the minister to be a local governing body. This definition, and the operative provision contained in clause 19, will provide the opportunity to have money distributed directly to those current associations and councils which are declared.

Part II of the bill deals with the formal establishment of the commission. It will be established as a statutory authority and consist of 7 members. There will be an independent chairman, 2 members capable of representing the interests of the municipal councils, and 2 members capable of representing the interests of community government councils. Before making appointments in these areas, the minister will be required to consult with bodies which represent the interests of councils and community government councils. The remaining 2 members will be the departmental heads of Treasury and the Department of Community Development.

Under clause 9, it will be possible for the minister to appoint persons to be deputies of members appointed, and for people to be appointed to deputise for those secretaries of departments who will be on the commission. This is designed to provide the degree of flexibility necessary, and to allow the commission to utilise, wherever possible, the appropriate expertise for particular areas in which consideration is required.

Mr Speaker, under clause 13, the commission will have wide powers to ensure that it is able to do the job that is required by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments. Its primary function will be to make recommendations to the minister. These recommendations will deal with the distribution of moneys provided to the Territory under the Commonwealth act. The commission will also be able to make recommendations on such other matters, related to the finances of local government bodies, as the minister may refer to it.

As set out in subclause 12(2), in making such recommendations, the commission will be required to ensure that the total of all of the grants recommended in a financial year is equal to the amount of money provided to the Territory under the Commonwealth act. As far as possible, the amount of a grant recommended to a local government body will be required to be sufficient to enable it to function at a standard not appreciably below that of other local governing bodies. In respect of moneys which are not provided to the Territory under the Commonwealth act, the commission will be able to take into account special needs and disabilities, and such principles as are provided to the commission from time to time by the minister.

An important feature of this bill is contained in clause 14 which will allow the commission to operate in committees. This feature will increase flexibility in the operation of the commission. It is intended that the commission, at least initially, will create 2 committees; one will deal with the distribution of moneys, for example to municipal governments, and another might be charged with a responsibility to make recommendations on the distribution of moneys to the community government councils and to those other bodies which are declared. Of course, the recommendations of these committees would need to be referred back to the full commission in order to be dealt with and to proceed as recommendations of the commission to the minister.

Mr Speaker, the committees should be capable of obtaining the information necessary to allow a proper distribution of funds to be made through the various sorts of local governing bodies that exist in the Northern Territory today. This flexibility is highly desirable, if not imperative. The difference in roles, functions, perceptions and expertise which exist in the established urban areas, developing mining and tourist towns, and in the various types of community councils which exist in other parts of the Territory, must be taken into account.

Clause 15 will provide the commission with wide powers for the conduct of inquiries. The commission will have the powers of a board appointed pursuant to the Inquiries Act. Those powers are consistent with those provided to similar commissions in the states and is necessary to ensure that the commission is able to make recommendations to government which take into account all relevant material. Clause 16 will require the commission to furnish to the minister on or before 30 September each year a report which sets out its recommendations, a summary of its methodology and details of all inquiries and investigations which it has held.

Clause 17 will provide that recommendations of the commission be forwarded to the minister who will then either approve those recommendations or refer them back to the commission with a request for reconsideration. Where the minister refers a recommendation back to the commission, and where that recommendation relates to the distribution of Commonwealth Financial Assistance Act moneys, the minister shall be required to adopt the recommendations of the commission which he then receives.

Under clause 20, it will be possible for the minister to have the commission make recommendations with respect to the distribution of funds, other than those that the Commonwealth provides under its act. This facility is seen as a necessary and useful means of distributing money on an equitable and reasonable basis to all local government bodies. Its eventual aim is to provide, as far as possible, for reasonably equal services for reasonably equal effort consistent with the overall policy of the government in the provision of funding for local government services.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I stress again that the Local Government Grants Commission Bill is a necessary and desirable step towards the provision of greater independence to local governing bodies in the Northern Territory. It will afford the means by which remote communities may be able to see real advantage in a move to effective local government. This is totally consistent with the government's policy for development of our community. In this bill, for the first time as far as I know, in terms of Commonwealth legislation relating to finance, we are being treated completely as a state. We will no longer be required to argue from our previous position where at times we have been forced to be carried on the coat-tails of the states.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of work done by staff of the Department of Community Development and of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office in the development of this bill. Points of significance have been negotiated within the Northern Territory government and with the Commonwealth, and we have before us a clearly-drafted bill dealing with a quite difficult subject which has been prepared in a very short time. Of course, the Commonwealth act was only passed last Friday. I trust that the members of the Assembly will see this bill as a step towards the devolution of independence, responsibility and power to local governing bodies of all types in the Territory.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Continued from 17 June 1986.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in his address to this Assembly, His Honour the Administrator outlined a program to which the government is fully committed. In his speech, His Honour indicated some of the areas where changes will occur. It is appropriate for me to review the outstanding record of CLP governments and to elaborate on new directions.

Previous CLP governments have been accused of placing too much emphasis on economic development. We make no apology for this and I will endeavour to explain the rationale for the government's policy. In 1978, the CLP inherited a Canberra outpost called the Northern Territory. Until then we had what was described as a boom-and-bust economy. Principally, this was because our

economy was based on a very narrow base of cattle and the mining of only a few metals. Much of the remainder of the economy was tertiary industry and the public service and both relied heavily on the post-Tracy spending of the federal government. The CLP government set out to diversify and expand the Territory's economy to make it larger and more stable. As a first step, we built a major tourist industry virtually from scratch to broaden the economy and reduce reliance on government as the initiator of economic growth in the Territory.

Another essential ingredient of our economic strategy was the need to build up the local tax base. The options to effect this were to extract more tax from the existing population or expand the numbers of people contributing to the taxation pool. The Territory's population has grown to 146 000 and the government has been able to maintain reasonable levels of local taxation. Even today, Territorians do not pay land or petrol taxes which are imposts throughout other parts of Australia. Our Territory's growth rate has been sustained against a backdrop of steadily decreasing financial dependence on the Commonwealth. In 1978, with 110 000 people, we were virtually 100% funded from federal coffers. In the 1983-84 financial year, 85% of the Territory's revenue came from the Commonwealth, and the revenue received from Canberra this financial year has been reduced to 81.4%.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to stimulate our economy with the aim of eventually reducing our reliance on Commonwealth funding to a level equal to that of the states, and that averages 67% funding from the Commonwealth. On those statistics, we are not doing too badly and are moving towards our goal. After 8 years of self-government, we have moved from an economy dominated almost totally by public sector employment to one in which 60% of our work force is privately employed. I would point out that only 22.6% of the Territory work force is employed by the Northern Territory government, which is roughly in line with the average in the states.

We intend to continue our record of promoting an expanded Territory economic base so that our financial dependence on the Commonwealth reflects the position of the states. Eventually, Territorians will cease to be seen as mendicants, and will be seen as equal partners and contributors to the common wealth of Australia.

I think it is important to look at why governments levy taxes at all. Very simply, without revenue, governments cannot provide the facilities and services that the community demands. As I said earlier, there are 2 options for government to gain the finances to provide community facilities and services: impose more tax on the existing population or obtain more taxpayers and build up the tax base through economic growth and diversification. The government has led the development of the Territory economy to a position where we are now strong net contributors to Australia's international trade, and Territorians are amongst the highest exporters per capita in Australia, if not the highest. Through a diversified economy and a broader tax base, the Northern Territory government has been able to build education facilities, construct wharves and roads, and put people into homes. We have been able to expand health services to meet the needs of this sparsely-settled population. We have provided facilities for arts, culture and heritage. We have built up a tourist industry that has enormous potential. We have schemes to make life easier for the older people in our community, and we have supported Territorians in a variety of programs in respect of youth, sport and recreation. We were able to do all this because we generated growth in the Territory private sector, thereby creating jobs and expanding the tax base, without overburdening the population with exorbitant taxes. We have achieved

much that we have aimed for and we will maintain this basic thrust, because it works.

In saying that, I am well aware of the need for expenditure restraint by governments, given Australia's present economic plight. The offerings from the Premiers Conference, so aptly held on Black Friday, have given the Northern Territory government no choice but to exercise restraint. Despite having \$40m cut from our allocation for general purpose capital funds at the Premiers Conference, I have asked the Treasurer to examine ways in which next year's capital works program can be maintained, albeit at the expense of some recurrent programs. The reality remains that we have no choice but to take a long, hard, rational look at government spending, and cuts in programs and activities will have to be made. We will do all we can to cushion these unwelcome consequences by demanding efficiency in the administration and implementation of government programs, but some cuts will be necessary.

His Honour the Administrator outlined to this Assembly some broad directions for the government. It is appropriate for me to indicate how these directions will be developed over the balance of this parliamentary term.

There can be no more important task for government, in the present economic circumstances, than to ensure that new employment opportunities continue to be available for our growing population. In the past, the CLP government has carried out its responsibilities in this area more than adequately. I note in passing that the May unemployment in the Territory has risen by 5600 in the past year and that unemployment has fallen from 7.4% to 6.6%. In other words, we are finding more jobs for our increasing population.

In the past, the government's industry support policies have emphasised specific assistance, including direct financial assistance to private developments and projects. Whilst, in some areas, governments will still need to act as a support and catalyst to kick-start industries, we now believe our major emphasis should be on marketing Territory products and attracting investment to Territory business so that Territory business can take full advantage of the opportunities provided by economic growth. The government is developing a policy aimed at reducing establishment costs for new industries, without impossible cash outlays by government. In addition, the government will support research into manufacturing technology to identify the obstacles to establishing an integrated secondary industry base in the Territory. Members will note that the government will focus increasingly on assisting the development and marketing of new industries, as opposed to supporting individuals within an industry.

This will make a more effective contribution to the government's second major objective of maximising job creation in a coordinated manner. There is no better example of this than in the establishment of the Trade Development Zone. The nation's first trade development zone has generated great interest amongst Australian and overseas investors. The zone will provide for its investors a duty-free environment for assembly and manufacture for the export market. As well, the government is working to encourage Territory-based secondary industry to become export oriented. Our small domestic market and our distance from major Australian markets makes this imperative. Our promotion of Territory products in South-east Asia will be intensified. Considerable success has been gained already in the export of goods to Brunei and Singapore, because of the government's initiatives to date in this area.

As an essential part of our overall economic strategy, the government is committed to the expansion and diversification of our manufacturing base. In particular, we are keen to encourage new sunrise industrial developments in the hi-tech field. We recognise the ASEAN region's importance as a potential market for innovative trade in high technology goods and services. The strategic placement of technology and communications in the new Department of Business, Technology and Communications is designed to foster the opportunities for entrepreneurs in that area. In this regard, we look forward to the positive impact on the business community and of a comprehensive Territory-wide telecommunications network. The Minister for Business, Technology and Communications will go into more detail on these industry-related matters shortly.

All members will be aware of this government's commitment to this employment-intensive tourist industry. We can be and should be proud of our achievements in this area. The government's vision and drive over the years has played a major role in building this industry for the Territory. However, we must now reassess our priorities. The infrastructure is in place now and it is not our intention to direct our future priorities towards lending for major projects or underwriting profits. The government's future efforts will focus on strategies for national and overseas marketing of the Territory as a tourist destination. We will concentrate on maximising sales of existing services and facilities rather than underwriting the construction of new developments. The benefits to the Territory economy are in the spin-offs to restaurants, tour operators and local businesses that will result from these marketing drives. Room occupancy and site occupancy will be maximised and, as a result, more jobs will be created. Later, the Minister for Tourism will inform members of the growth in tourism, and the enormous potential it has to attract new settlers to the Territory, as well as providing jobs, security and economic growth for people already living here.

Development of our enormous mineral deposits and our oil and gas reserves provides the greatest contribution of any industry to the Territory economy. The government recognises the particular importance of resource development in the future growth of the Northern Territory. Mining contributes some \$800m to our economy, and represents some 4000 jobs. This occurs despite severe restrictions imposed by a variety of Commonwealth policies, taxes and attitudes, and notwithstanding depressed world markets. The Territory has vast mineral resources but, as we are all aware, they are too frequently resources to which industry and the Territory government are denied access. With imaginative and perceptive planning, the Commonwealth has decided that the time is right to consider yet another impost, this time on gold, which is one of the few performers in the resource field.

This proposed tax may well stop the production of \$435m worth of gold in the Territory, and accelerate the decay of the rural and outback infrastructure. The government believes that, even though most metal markets and oil prices are depressed, the industry should be encouraged to increase exploration for gold, diamonds and hydrocarbons in view of the long lead time for their development. We will be giving detailed consideration to a range of possible avenues of assistance to industries in these areas. My government intends to streamline its procedures so that miners can get on with the job of earning income for Australia. Greater emphasis will be placed on industry self-regulation, supplemented by government auditing and with a minimum of regulatory burden. The Minister for Mines and Energy will spell out the government's plans in greater detail shortly.

Honourable members will not need to be told that water is a critical element for most developments in the Northern Territory. Increasingly, the water resources activities of the government will be focused on assisting and meeting a variety of developmental needs in the Territory. Importantly, the role of the private sector in this process will be strengthened. An assessment is currently being made of the potential for greater participation by private enterprise in our water resources and drilling programs.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the primary industry sector, our great pastoral industry and the new and expanding horticultural and field cropping industries. All are industries in which the government will be assisting Territory development. For too long now, this vital primary sector of our economy has contributed less than its full potential to the total Territory economy. For too long, people outside the Territory often have been the principal beneficiaries. The right course is for us to promote expansion and diversification of our primary base in a way which maximises benefits for Territorians.

A major initiative being undertaken at present in relation to primary production is the pastoral industry study. The purpose of this inquiry will be to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing industry and to provide guidelines for the future development of the pastoral industry into the 21st century. In addition, I believe honourable members will agree that the time is now ripe for the pastoral industry to have greater security of tenure on the land which forms the very basis of that industry.

The government is working at the moment with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association towards a policy which will enable the eventual freeholding of pastoral properties in the Northern Territory.

The government will be assisting the horticulture and nursery industries to further expand their interstate and overseas markets. We are determined to respond quickly and positively to private development initiatives requiring rural land release to ensure that the potential for these industries is not frustrated and that moneys can be put into the industry in a way that gets land into production as soon as possible.

This government's commitment to the expansion of the fishing industry centres on coordinated development and the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure. A major study to develop a structured approach to fishing industry expansion is in its final phase. The goal is to define a master plan for the staged development in the longer term of a dedicated fishing port in accordance with industry needs. We are already expanding infrastructure support for the industry with the construction of a protected mooring basin in Frances Bay and this will encourage the basing of fishing fleets in Darwin and expand vessel repair facilities in the Territory.

In the pursuit of economic goals, it is essential that we not lose sight of the social needs of the community. In the Territory, we have a young population in comparison with the rest of Australia but, increasingly, it is a more stable and committed population. It is now not unusual to have 3 generations of a family resident in the Northern Territory. This change is important and welcome both for social and economic reasons and the government must continue to look at the needs of the community to improve the quality of life for its citizens.

In relation to education, the Territory now has a level of service which more than matches the states, and our children are no longer disadvantaged in



the way they once were. Self-sufficiency in teacher education must now become an important objective. Our capacity to increase the pool of locally-trained teachers has become even more critical in view of the extra burden that the fringe benefits tax will place on the already high cost of importing teachers to the Territory. The provision of education in remote areas is receiving attention, as are programs aimed at providing training for the employment of Aboriginal people. The Minister for Education will outline these in more detail later.

The commencement of courses at the University College of the Northern Territory in January 1987 will be a major step forward for the whole community. Families will no longer need to face disruption as young people are forced to move away from home and the brain drain out of the Territory will be abated and, I believe, reversed in the longer term. Just as the Menzies School of Health Research has developed a record for high-quality research into major health problems in the Territory, we are confident that the university college will stimulate research into social, scientific and economic issues relevant to the Northern Territory and the adjacent South-east Asian region.

The government has received expressions of interest from developers and operators who wish to finance and operate a private hospital in Darwin. Territorians in years ahead can look forward to the option of selecting a private hospital for treatment.

Much has been done to provide facilities and infrastructure for youth, sport and recreation purposes in the Northern Territory. That task has been substantially completed. Our real task now is to address the standards of coaching and training facilities available to our sports people. In relation to youth, sport and recreation, we will be developing an integrated program of coaching to improve the performance levels of Territorians and provide state coaches to the various sports in the Northern Territory.

As Chief Minister, I have decided that the position of ministerial adviser for women's affairs will report directly to me. This will ensure that the government is provided with an overview of women's interests and there is coordination of the policies and practices we have initiated to enhance the status of women in the Territory.

The government respects the particular needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the Territory. Our record has been successful where we have been able to work directly with the Aboriginal people. For example, our system of Aboriginal health delivery, which is acknowledged as the finest in this country, involves a comprehensive network of health centres in Aboriginal communities managed by Aboriginal health workers.

The bilingual program in education and the Aboriginal teacher training program have meant that Aboriginal children are taught by their own people in a culturally-relevant manner. The Northern Territory's efforts to foster community government and the transfer of responsibilities for essential services to Aboriginal communities have proved to be effective. Meanwhile, we have successfully negotiated a range of pastoral land excisions with the Aboriginal people.

In those areas where we have been less successful, the explanation is often to be found in the interference of others in the process, particularly interference by the federal government and the land councils where they extend beyond their legitimate functions. It should be clear to everyone by now

that, if functions such as Aboriginal land rights are left vested in the federal parliament, there will continue to be political conflict which will work against the satisfactory resolution of views acceptable to all parties. We must work together towards a solution of how we can live together as Territorians.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the machinery of government and the continued maintenance of good government in the Northern Territory. The government now spends more than \$1000m of public moneys each year. We have a responsibility to ensure that we do so in an efficient and effective manner and the community demands no less from us than that. There is a need for government to prune functions and tighten public expenditure and make the most effective use of taxpayers' dollars. My government will not shirk its responsibility in this area. Indeed, we are already well advanced along the road to returning new priorities for government expenditure.

Our commitment to this goal will become clear when the Treasurer brings down the 1986-87 budget in August. Our cost cutting exercise will aim to remove any wasteful overlap in government investment. The government is committed not only to levels of efficiency, but also to greater accountability in its affairs.

A Public Accounts Committee will be established to monitor government expenditure. A resolution has been placed before the Assembly and will be debated later during these sittings. As a further initiative in this direction, I have announced already a review of the government's tendering and purchasing procedures. As part of this review, members of the public will be invited to make submissions outlining suggested changes. Not only will any new system of tendering aim at obtaining value for the taxpayers' dollar, it will take into consideration the ability of tenderers to perform and, most importantly, obtain maximum benefit for the whole community from government purchasing.

Since 1978, Northern Territory governments have been engaged in building the infrastructure required to create the environment for private enterprise to play an ongoing role in developing the potential of the Territory, a potential which we all acknowledge. The hallmark of this government has been its adherence to the belief that the government's key economic role should be to provide the basic infrastructure and environment needed to encourage private investment. The Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline is an outstanding example of this approach. Yulara is another. The Northern Territory government has played its role in encouraging private enterprise but we must continue our battles to convince Canberra of the national need to do the same. This means the Commonwealth has a responsibility to provide decent airports to support the hundreds of millions of dollars of private capital which has been invested in the future of this part of Australia. Another piece of Territory infrastructure, the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, still remains to be built. The government is conducting detailed studies to prove the viability of the railway and to establish the means by which it can be constructed. I will be making a further statement on this subject later in these sittings.

Projects such as the gas pipeline are not just pipe dreams, and neither are Yulara, the airports, the railways, and the untapped uranium deposits. There are essential elements in the mosaic of trade, enterprise and investment in the Territory. I reiterate that private investors have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into projects in the Territory in an expectation that the facilities that are normally supplied by government will be put in place. The

Territory government has honoured its commitment to investors, but we cannot expect to provide infrastructure and services which are the responsibility of the Commonwealth. I find it ironic that, whilst the federal government's economic policies continue to disadvantage the people of the Northern Territory through the grossly inequitable fringe benefit tax, and broken promises about the railway and the Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek airports, a major review of Australian defence, the Dibb Report, again reminds Australians that they must look to the north for reasons of national security.

The history of relations between Canberra and the Territory since self-government has been a story of lost opportunities for all Australians, and a lack of consultation with the Territory before decisions are made. My government will continue - and strengthen - our earlier efforts to develop a working relationship with the federal government, based on mutual recognition of our respective obligations and responsibilities. This relationship needs to reflect financial, administrative and constitutional issues, and the continuing need for the Territory to have the resources to provide its citizens with all the opportunities available elsewhere in the country. After all, the Territory does form one-sixth of the Australian land mass, and Territorians have a right to equal status with other Australians.

Finally, I would like to touch on the matter of constitutional development. The government remains committed to statehood. Statehood is essential if we are to take our place as equal Australians. Statehood alone will ensure that we have the same rights, privileges, responsibilities and entitlements as other Australians. We have a right to the same degree of self-determination enjoyed by other Australians as a matter of course in relation to matters such as the control of national parks within our borders, the control of offshore resources, and the ability to make our own arrangements, together with our Aboriginal people, over land. I do not believe we should set up any timetable for statehood. The issues are complex, and the cooperation and goodwill of governments around Australia will be required. However, we will work steadily and consistently towards the achievement of this goal. This government and all people of the Territory will be involved and consulted. I will make further reports to the Assembly as appropriate.

In conclusion and in summary, this government is committed to the economic, social and constitutional growth of the Northern Territory. We will continue to support private enterprise and development and we will continue to create jobs for our young people. In its own affairs, the government will strive for greater financial efficiency and effectiveness and a tighter bureaucracy. Over time, we will review all government functions to ensure that government priorities are clear. In providing community services, my government will minimise duplication and promote cost effectiveness in delivery. In the past 8 years, successive CLP governments have demonstrated that they have had the policy, the drive and the determination for the advancement of the Northern Territory in the best interests of the people of the Northern Territory. This so-called new broom will not sweep away those attributes which have served the Territory so well for so long.

I am reminded of the British statesman and orator, Edmund Burke, who once said that government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. My government is in its infancy, but it has already shown a capacity for good judgment, and it is already making new policies to meet the wants of Territorians. As it matures, I am sure it will build upon its early strengths and, at the end of its long and fruitful life, I believe it will be remembered for its wisdom and its ability to work, in partnership with its people, to

create a better society in which to live. There have been many catcalls across the floor of the Assembly today about new policies. We are facing difficult economic times in Australia and, had I announced hundreds of millions of dollars worth of new initiatives, I have no doubt the Leader of the Opposition would have stood up and ...

Mr B. Collins: You did not announce anything. Ian Tuxworth did it better.

Mr HATTON: ... cried 'economic irresponsibility'. My government will continue the strengths of previous governments. There are new directions and new styles ...

Mr B. Collins: Tell us.

Mr HATTON: ... but I cannot help it if the member is so thick he cannot hear it.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I second the motion and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, His Honour the Administrator and the Chief Minister spoke of the Territory's future direction. They indicated that much of our strength will depend on marketing the entire range of Territory goods and services and the development of new industries. I wish to expand on the record of initiatives we have achieved to date, and the objectives we have set for the future.

The government recognises that small business is the backbone of the Northern Territory economy. It is in this area that employment is created and community wealth is generated. Enterprise backed by sound infrastructure is the recipe for success in any society, and it is a recipe particularly vital in a region such as the Territory. We have been able to expand our socio-economic base through an aggressive strategy of development, trade and marketing. Our achievements in a relatively short time have been the result of government support and private sector entrepreneurial skill and determination. What we are seeing today is a diversification of industry and commerce as our markets expand and more business is attracted to the unquestionable potential of our region. Nowhere has this been more prominent than in our tourist industry and, as in any industry, it is small business which plays a vital role.

Since its establishment in 1980, the Small Business Service has responded to 7750 inquiries. 50% of those inquiries have come from persons wishing to establish in business, the majority from Darwin. One-third of the interviews related to the retail sector and the balance related to entertainment, business services, construction and manufacturing. Recent government initiatives have seen an expansion of the level and range of services provided. The service now includes a library of video films, literature, audio cassettes and an information data bank. The Small Business Service has also improved the number and variety of training workshops conducted.

The government, through this service, has assisted the establishment of the very successful NT Enterprise Workshop Program. A patent advisory service was recently added which is available to inventors and manufacturers, and includes advice on copyright, design and trademarks. A computer demonstration

centre is about to be established at Enterprise House, and appointment of field officers will enable the service to be taken to small business operators throughout the Territory.

The next 18 months will be a very crucial period in the establishment of the Trade Development Zone. It will be marked by expanding marketing efforts in Australia and South-east Asia, the construction and official opening of the zone in November-December, the establishment of efficient operating procedures and, last but not least, the entry of companies in their first year of operation. The establishment of the zone was announced in August 1984. Much of the groundwork has now been done, and this has included the passage of legislation to establish the Trade Development Zone in June 1985, the appointment of the first board of the authority in September 1985, the appointment of project managers to oversee the \$13m stage 1 construction program in December 1985, the establishment of the zone authority and temporary premises on site at the zone in January 1986, the commencement of construction in April 1986 and, to date, confirmed agreement with 9 export manufacturing companies to invest in the zone. One of the major initiatives is the establishment of a one-stop shop in the zone, whereby all necessary government approvals are granted directly by the authority, or pursued on behalf of the manufacturer by the zone authority. The concept of the one-stop shop is to free up the manufacturer's time to concentrate on business activities, to eliminate red tape and bureaucracy, and to provide priority processing of applications.

The high degree of coordination and cooperation between the zone authority and departments will eventually ensure the success and efficient operation of this concept. Another major initiative taken by the zone authority, in conjunction with the one-stop shop, is the establishment of bonded warehouse operations in the zone. The successful tenderer will also provide a total package of services including tariff advice, customs agency and freight forwarding. This warehouse space and range of services will provide a strong impetus to zone operations as well as significant benefits to local industry.

The Department of Business, Technology and Communications recently has reorganised the functions relating to industry training and skills identification and development into a Division of Employment and Training. Manpower and skills forecasting with policy development and the assessment of industry training needs will be encompassed by this division. Also, it will have responsibility for the operation and supervision of apprentices and trainees employed within the new Australian traineeship system. A joint Commonwealth and Northern Territory secretariat, to oversee the development and implementation of traineeships, and a community employment program are housed in this division. This will enable a more efficient and appropriate response to industry training needs by government.

The government has also moved to establish the Industry Employment Training Advisory Council under the new Industry and Employment Training Act. Industry commitment to training is highlighted by the fact that apprenticeships have remained steady in 1986. Preliminary figures for April 1986 show a total of 1301 apprentices in training in the Northern Territory. This represents an increase of 2% on the April 1985 figure of 1275. In addition, the first private sector traineeships commenced at the Beaufort Hotel on 30 April, and 10 young people are receiving training in hospitality skills. Traineeship programs for local government, building and construction, and the Northern Territory Public Service are being developed. The Northern Territory government welcomes the fact that the Australian Public Service commenced a traineeship program for 17 young Territorians in April.

The Northern Territory government has made available 13 scholarships to Northern Territory school leavers in 1986 who wish to undertake full-time tertiary level study leading to middle-management careers in the Northern Territory tourism and hospitality industry. The average value is \$3500.

Mr Speaker, in addition, since the beginning of 1986, the Northern Territory government has provided \$12 000 to the Northern Territory Tourism Training Committee to provide training for 105 Territorians to enable employment at the Beaufort Hotel. Funding of \$11 000 has been provided to the Manufacturing and Engineering Industry Training Committee, Alice Springs, to provide training for school leavers in relation to customer services, and \$12 000 has been provided to assist the Northern Territory Tourism Industry Training Committee with the employment of a training officer to be based in Alice Springs. Finally, the NT Building and Construction Industry Training Committee has received \$10 000 to assist with the development of a training officer.

Mr Speaker, the tourism industry is the key to the Territory's future. It cannot be viewed in isolation because it has a direct bearing not only on our socio-economic base but also on industry and commerce, the recruitment of employees and the migration of people wanting to settle in the Territory. In recent years, tourism has had an enormous impact on the Northern Territory. The number of people holidaying in the Territory, and the amount of money they spend here, have increased dramatically. Our industry is outstripping the national average by a factor of 2. With the newest facilities coming on line, we are now able to consolidate our position in regional tourism and concentrate on marketing the industry on a national and international scale.

Members will be aware that, during late 1984 and early 1985, the Tourist Commission established 5 overseas offices in key market areas. These represent a major policy initiative designed to ensure that the Northern Territory's international identity is firmly established and to ensure that the Northern Territory is included to the maximum possible extent in international Australian tour programs. I was interested to learn from our United States office that newspaper reports concerning the impact of terrorist activities in Europe, which have deterred Americans from travelling this year and have caused up to 80% cancellations for some destinations, are correct.

As a result, each of the American states and Mexico and Canada have mounted vigorous marketing campaigns in an attempt to take full advantage of this situation. We have set in place campaigns to ensure tourists discouraged from travelling in volatile times to well-worn destinations know of our attractions. While the Australian Tourist Commission has unquestionably made a big impact in the United States through its Paul Hogan advertisements, it seems it has neither the resources nor the determination to reinforce that message. We are fortunate that, later this year, the Paul Hogan movie 'Crocodile Dundee' will be released in America at which time it is anticipated up to 15 million people will be exposed to some of the Territory's most identifiable tourist attractions. The Tourist Commission has arranged major promotions to coincide with the film's release.

Significantly, and almost without exception, in conversations I have had with each of the regional directors now on their annual visit to the Territory, they expressed concern at the adverse impact of our high domestic air fare structure which penalises the Territory so severely. We intend to continue to press our case until the federal government, and indeed the 2 major domestic carriers, are persuaded to adopt a more equitable and rational policy.

Despite the glaring inadequacies of the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports, the Northern Territory has actively sought to encourage international airlines currently holding landing rights to Darwin to utilise those rights and to provide the Territory with direct access to its international markets. Thai International will begin its first flights to Darwin hopefully early next year.

Having said that, we are naturally maintaining our high profile in the domestic market which currently comprises in excess of 80% of our total visitation. The commission has been extremely active in this area and has undertaken major programs, including the computerisation of its national bureau network. Each bureau is now equipped with computerised sales and information systems to which an automatic ticketing facility will be added soon. This initiative will enable travel consultants to be progressively released from time-consuming clerical work and enable them to devote the majority of their time to their essential sales functions.

During the first month of its Australian release, 1.4 million Australians saw 'Crocodile Dundee' which has grossed more in a week than any other film screened in Australia. The Tourist Commission was there, taking full advantage of the promotional opportunities the film provided. Apart from window displays in all of its bureaus and promotions at capital city cinemas, the commission held functions for up to 400 travel agents at a time during the first week of the film's release.

The commission has intensified its promotion of the Territory as Australia's premier convention destination. In March this year, it undertook a major campaign in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney when it contacted 1000 potential convention clients. The success of that launch is already being realised with successful bids being achieved for 4 conventions involving approximately 3000 delegates.

The commission's major emphasis during 1986-87 will be on the motoring market. Most members will be aware that the sealing of the South Australia section of the Stuart Highway unfortunately has been delayed beyond the initial November-December completion date and that has been revised to March 1987. The major road linking the Northern Territory with Western Australia is progressively being sealed to the point where only 30 km of unsealed road between Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing remains. It is expected this will be completed later this year providing an all-weather sealed access from Perth to Darwin. In Queensland, only a small stretch of the Landsborough Highway remains unsealed but is also expected to be sealed completely by late 1986.

Currently, only some 30% of visitors to the Northern Territory use the private vehicle as their main transport mode. This compares unfavourably with the national average of approximately 83%. The Tourist Commission is currently working closely with the South Australian Department of Tourism and national motoring organisations to ensure this imbalance is rectified and the Territory gains the full benefit from the sealing of the highways I have mentioned.

From research conducted by the Northern Territory Development Corporation and the Tourist Commission, it is obvious that facilities along these routes need to be improved to a standard capable of adequately catering for the anticipated 60 000 additional visitors per annum. Based on current interstate visitor expenditure trends, a growth scenario of this proportion could reasonably provide a financial return to the Northern Territory of as much

as \$40m per annum. The job opportunities created as a result will be enormous but, significantly, this impact will also be extended to our more remote areas and not simply confined to the major centres. A Roadside Inn Review Committee, under the auspices of the Northern Territory Development Corporation, has recently completed an inspection of facilities of the Territory's major highways. The committee's recommendations arising from that review will be centred on a strategy designed to improve existing facilities.

Mr Speaker, it is well recognised that Aboriginal culture constitutes an integral part of the Territory's tourism industry. Encouragement of Aboriginal participation by individuals and communities within the industry has been a continuing major government initiative since it was launched during 1983. Its success has been acknowledged by the report arising from the federal government sponsored Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs released on 27 August 1985. The momentum already achieved will be maintained during 1986-87 and the Tourist Commission will be seeking to conduct tourism seminars involving Aboriginal community leaders.

It will also take a promotional interest in the National Aboriginal Art Award to ensure the award enjoys a status similar to other art awards. To this end, I understand organisers of the National Aboriginal Art Award are currently seeking to upgrade the awards prize money from its present level of \$3000 to \$10 000. This is commensurate with other major Australian art prizes and will ensure the National Aboriginal Art Award is successful in attracting significant interest from southern states.

It is also the commission's intention to produce a tourism awareness video as an educational medium for Aboriginal people. This will be used to help explain the various aspects of tourism and indeed tourists and will present parallels within traditional Aboriginal society.

Since the establishment of the Tourist Commission in January 1980, it has achieved an extremely high and successful profile. While this was certainly the original intention, it is disturbing that a number of local tour operators apparently perceive the commission to be responsible for the marketing of their own product. Clearly, this is not and cannot be the case. The commission's marketing and promotional activities are directed to the Territory generally. It rarely, if ever, promotes a specific establishment or product apart, of course, from Yulara. It is essential for each operator to be aware of and respond to his own specific responsibilities in this regard and not rely exclusively or predominantly on the activities of the Tourist Commission. In an attempt to overcome this deficiency and to assist operators appreciate their own obligations, the Tourist Commission is planning a series of small pragmatic marketing training seminars throughout the major centres during 1986-87. These will be conducted in conjunction with advisers from the Small Business Division of the Department of Business Technology and Communications and the Tourism Industry Training Council.

The performance yardstick of the success of the Tourist Commission's activities is, of course, the growth in visitor numbers. In that regard, there can be little doubt that the commission has been demonstrably successful. Visitation has increased from 350 000 in 1980-81 to almost 600 000 in 1984-85. I understand preliminary estimates from the commission's 1985-86 visitor survey indicate that this growth trend is continuing and will reach 700 000 this year.

With the measures I have outlined, I believe we have every reason to be confident in the future of Territory tourism. Nevertheless, in an industry



where the current national annual turnover is \$16 000m, it is patently obvious we have much to do and certainly cannot afford to rest on our laurels. It is not this government's intention to do so, and we will continue to support tourism to the fullest possible extent.

The Territory Insurance Office over the past 7 years has increased its property investment in the Northern Territory to over \$420m. Investments include property in Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek. Construction work on the Palmerston property is almost complete, and work is also well under way on a building at Tennant Creek, which we will purchase, on completion, from the developer. Further extensions to the Katherine office are planned for the future.

The TIO's objective for the longer term is to have a presence in each major urban centre in the Northern Territory and agencies in the smaller centres. In achieving this objective, the TIO also seeks to maximise the benefits to Territorians by favouring, whenever commercially practical, the purchase of real estate developments from local owners who are more likely to reinvest in the Territory.

Last year, the office made a profit of \$373 000 on general insurance and \$2.4m on the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme. The Motor Accidents Compensation Act was introduced in the Northern Territory in 1979 as a comprehensive no-fault accident scheme covering NT residents. The scheme is administered by the TIO on behalf of the government, and provides for coverage of medical and rehabilitation expenses, compensation for loss of earning capacity, and payment of death benefits for those involved in motor vehicle accidents. Dissatisfied claimants have the right of appeal to the Motor Accidents Compensation Appeal Tribunal which consists of a judge of the Supreme Court.

A review committee consisting of representatives from the TIO, Northern Territory Treasury and the Departments of Law and Community Development has been established to keep the act under review, and to recommend amendments to the act to ensure that it remains adequate and effective. The Northern Territory scheme is the only scheme in Australia which does not presently incur huge losses. Victoria, for example, recently has announced debts of \$1600m under its Motor Accidents Scheme. The Northern Territory government has announced its proposed amendments to the act and I gave a summary of them this morning when presenting the bill. Continued improvements in the scheme's viability will be reflected in the benefits available to Territorians.

In 1979, the Northern Territory Development Corporation announced its policies and guidelines to stimulate the Territory's then limited economic base. Abundant natural resources existed, but inadequate infrastructure inhibited opportunities to capitalise on those resources. At that time, major capital works programs were aimed at roads, communications, water supplies, wharf facilities, schools, and housing. By 1983, a change in economic environment caused government to rethink future directions. A review resulted in a statement by the then Chief Minister, on 23 March 1983, titled 'New Direction and Procedures for the Northern Territory Development Corporation'. The corporation moved away from its role as lender of last resort to an entrepreneurial role attracting investments through creative incentive packages. Industries with the greatest growth potential were identified and targeted for development in the Territory.

Tourism, agriculture, fishing and horticulture, previously underdeveloped or non-existent, have emerged in the last few years, due to the NTDC's

persistent efforts in attracting investors and providing flexible incentive packages. Industry assistance programs administered by the NTDC have helped local firms to market their products both within Australia and overseas and have helped to develop new and existing industries, creating employment for our growing population. Further, through involvement with Expo and the Territory Enterprise Award, the corporation creates an awareness of the products and services available in the Territory.

The government has recently transferred the functions of the Office of Technology and Communications to the new Department of Business, Technology and Communications. This is to ensure a coordinated approach to development, by placing related functions under the one minister. The new division will make recommendations and coordinate an appropriate telecommunications strategy for the Northern Territory. It is essential, if the government's productivity goals are to be met, that the most efficient communications network possible be put in place. Extensive research on the best system for the Territory has been completed, and the way is now open to actively pursue the implementation of new technology, Telecom willing.

Other government policies in this area, which will not only improve business and government efficiency but also the quality of life for all Territorians, include efforts to establish a central zone remote commercial television service, ABC radio services to remote areas, remote banking services, and video congressing in the Northern Territory.

Tomorrow, the government will be introducing the Work Health Bill which will replace the existing Workers Compensation Act. The bill will bring to fruition more than 2 years of consultative policy development which began with the Doody Inquiry into the Northern Territory worker's compensation system. It will provide umbrella occupational health and safety legislation, with emphasis on the importance of rehabilitation. The bill will provide mechanisms to collect Territory-wide statistics on industrial accidents for the first time, and to monitor the system's performance.

That adequately covers the areas of my responsibility.

Debate adjourned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
Member for Arnhem

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today be granted to the member for Arnhem who is presently in his electorate attending a function.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Lack of Adequate Heritage Legislation

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

Dear Mr Speaker, I wish to propose under standing order 94 that the Assembly discuss this morning as a definite matter of public importance, the following: the lack of appropriate laws in the Northern Territory which would ensure that such buildings as the recently demolished Turner House, and other important features of Territory heritage, are adequately protected.

Yours sincerely,  
Neil Bell  
Member for MacDonnell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, at 4 am on Sunday 25 May, in contravention of the Building Act, one more vestige of Alice Springs' glorious past was lost to future generations. Bulldozers move in, and local residents were aroused from their sleep by the noise of the demolition of a fine residence and a fine restaurant. A trace of Alice Springs' past is now lost. Mr Speaker, I am quite sure that this struck you as it struck me, and as it struck all decent-minded members of this Assembly and decent citizens of the Northern Territory, as a profanity in every respect. During this debate, the opposition will establish that, in view of the recent demolition of Turner House, the Northern Territory government should enact legislation which will ensure that such buildings and other important features of Territory heritage are adequately protected in future. There can be no doubt that the lack of appropriate laws in the Northern Territory to ensure that important features of Territory heritage are adequately protected is a definite matter of public importance.

Mr Speaker, it is my intention to outline the circumstances of the destruction of Turner House and the ramifications thereof. The shadow minister for community development, the member for Nhulunbuy, will outline the legislative initiatives brought to the government's attention several years ago and yet to be acted upon. Honourable members, however, should not think that this issue is of concern only in central Australia. Of course it is not. Turner House just happens to be the most recent episode in a saga of neglect.

The demolition of Turner House was more of a shock in view of the newspaper reports that had been available to central Australians in the previous week. The Centralian Advocate, which discussed Turner House less than a week before it was actually demolished, raised the possibility of such demolition. It said: 'The future of Turner House is clouded in uncertainty and reports indicate that it may close in July'. How wrong they were. Little did they know that it was to close in less than a week. What an extraordinary deceit on the part of the people who removed it from the enjoyment of present and future generations of diners and citizens. There was no indication from the owner of that building or anyone associated with it that the building would come down. Turner House was situated adjacent to the office shared by myself and the member for Stuart. A once fine building was reduced to a pile of rubble and is now merely a bare patch of dirt.

The establishment was referred to in the article in the Centralian Advocate as 'one of Alice Springs' best restaurants'. Turner House, the article went on to say, 'has maintained an excellent reputation over the 6 years of its operation'. Continuing to eulogise, the article said: 'It is perhaps best known and loved for its atmosphere and charm. Candlelight, lace and excellent food and wine are its hallmarks where the essence of romance ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I see that a number of members who represent electorates north of the Berrimah line are somewhat less than enthusiastic about my comments in this regard, Mr Speaker. I am sure that your cynicism at their interjection will only be paralleled by mine.

In case honourable members imagine that this is merely the one-eyed glorification of some hometown scribbler, let me refer to some other sources. The joys of Turner House have been brought to the attention of various people, and aficionados of The Bulletin will recall having seen in yesterday's edition an article entitled 'A Mall Like Alice' by that wonderful writer and cartoonist, Victoria Roberts. She discussed her experiences in the town. Let me share with you her experience of Turner House:

Turner House is a house and our dining room is in somebody else's once upon a time lounge room. The soup of the day is potato and pumpkin. We are home safe. There is a mirror and dried banksias above the fireplace and toothpicks on the table in a liqueur glass. Old photographs in black and white and floral curtains adorn the dining room. The waitresses wear different versions of black skirt and white cotton blouse uniform. The service is elegant but casual. The sugar bowl is already on the table. If you spill your food on the lace tablecloth, nobody will be angry. It was nice to leave my hotel and find Turner House a bit of home and I would have felt comfortable dining there on my own in its pearl grey rooms.

Mr Speaker, that is not from a hometown scribbler. That is from a writer from the dreaded south and that is her experience of Alice Springs. She is one of the people who are coming to Alice Springs that the Minister for Tourism was talking about - one of the people who is contributing the \$16m worth of turnover in the tourist industry.

Lest honourable members in their jocose mood suggest that Victoria Roberts was the only person who might be concerned, I wish to bring the issue a little closer to home. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of this brochure which is called 'Australia's Northern Territory for the Independent Traveller 1986-87'. The tourist bureau was unable to provide me with a copy because the brochure has not yet been distributed. I was fortunate to obtain a copy from Mr Bill King, who is well known to most Australians. Unfortunately, the photocopier does not bring up the colours. Suffice it to say that it is resplendent in orange hues and the colours of the centre which, Mr Speaker, are well known and well loved by us both.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, 'Australia's Northern Territory for the Independent Traveller', intended as an up-market publication for people with dollars in their pockets to spend on up-market holidays, is now vitiated. Page 22 in its section on 'Alice Springs and the Red Centre' has a rundown on various places of interest around the Centre; for example, the Flying Doctor Service, the School of the Air, Chateau Hornsby, John Flynn Church, Adelaide House, and so on. Amongst the restaurants it lists Turner House. 'Turner House in Hartley Street is for people, as they say, who prefer dining to eating. It is an old, historic home with charming decor, an excellent menu and a range of Australian wines'. Of course, Mr Speaker, that should read now: 'Turner House in Hartley Street was for people, as they say, who prefer dining to eating. It was an old, historic home with charming decor, an excellent menu and a range of fine Australian wines'. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will be concerned, as will Mr Bill King and other people who advertise their wares in that brochure, to find that Turner House no longer exists.

Let us turn for a moment to the history and some of the associations of Turner House. It was owned by the Turner family from 1929 till 1978. The family also owned the Garden Station, north-east of Alice Springs, and the Hartley Street property was the family's town house. A member of the family was concerned and was reported as saying, on hearing of the destruction, that

the house held a warm place in the hearts of many long-term residents of the town. 'I will be sad to lose the house because it is the family home', she said. 'But I think the townspeople will be sorry, because there is not much left of Alice Springs as it was'. Mr Speaker, how true. What were the reactions? Let us consider a few of the people who were concerned about this: not radicals, not socialists, not dreaded white advisers.

Mr Dale: You didn't know any of them?

Mr BELL: I trust the honourable minister will be able to comment on this because he has his fears in that regard. I do not think Rev Tom Fleming, the Chairman of the MacDonnell Stuart Branch of the National Trust, is a well-known radical, in spite of the interjections of the honourable minister. For the benefit of honourable members for whom the Berrimah line is an impenetrable psychological barrier, let me reassure them that the name of this branch of the National Trust, the MacDonnell Stuart Branch, while it indicates very good taste, betokens no association with myself or my colleague, the honourable member for Stuart.

Rev Tom Fleming said: 'The trust is extremely concerned about the demolition and, until such time as the Northern Territory government recognises heritage sites as precious commodities, all we can do is wring our hands and regret that another building that belonged to the past is no more'. 'Quite a number of old timers', he said, 'are very upset about it'. Editorial reaction from local papers was very interesting. The Centralian Advocate, a journal that ...

Mr D.W. Collins: Has a left-wing bias.

Mr BELL: Indeed yes, as the member for Sadadeen interjected, it has a distinct left-wing bias. I am sure that Mr Watt will be interested to hear that. The Centralian Advocate editorial said:

Where is our town heading? Shock, and a feeling of betrayal, have been the main reactions to the demolition of Turner House. Of course, no one ever made any promises; we just believed this piece of old Alice was not under immediate threat. There were rumours that the property might be bought by a developer, but we were told Turner House would operate as a restaurant until at least July. While we really did not know the legal position, we had heard all about preserving heritage buildings, and naively believed the National Trust could do something. After all, there would be an enormous public outcry if there was talk of demolishing Turner House. Well, we were wrong on all counts. It was all done rather cleverly, if you admire that sort of cleverness. The heavy machinery rolled in during the early hours of Sunday morning in an assault reminiscent of the demolition of the Bellevue Hotel in Brisbane, which also virtually disappeared overnight. We should not blame those who misled us about the restaurant's ...

Mr Firmin: I cannot read this.

Mr Dale: Do you want me to hold it over here?

Mr BELL: The writing is too small. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will finish with the last paragraph:

We can lay some blame on the Northern Territory government for its evident failure to upgrade legislation so that heritage buildings also can be effectively protected. The government should now move to give this legislation some teeth.

And I say: 'Hear, hear!' to that.

The Northern Territory News was somewhat less fulsome in its expression of concern over the demolition of Turner House. Having its establishment some 1000 miles further north, perhaps its scribblers were prepared to take a slightly more gung-ho attitude to planning constraints and the conservation of heritage values. However, even their support for this sort of rapacity was qualified in the last paragraph of their editorial. They wrote: 'In cases like this, the community should be given the opportunity to have a say whether the building should be preserved'.

Turning to further reaction, the member for Sadadeen, in whose electorate Turner House stood, was reported as being concerned about it. I do not think he recommended the offenders be whipped but he did say that action should be taken, and I hope he will contribute to this debate.

When offences against the Building Act were drawn to the attention of the Minister for Lands, he told us, according to the ABC News, that the matter would not be ignored. I am sure that honourable members will recognise that that was hardly a concession considering that Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all had their attention focused on Turner House at that stage, and it would have been fairly difficult to ignore it. He did go on to say: 'I am quite sure that the officers of the department, if they are aware of the infringement, will take the necessary action against the particular person who was responsible for that demolition order'. As the honourable minister would now be aware, there was no demolition order.

Let us have a look at the matter of the contravention of the Building Act. I would be very interested to receive a report from the Minister for Lands about progress in that regard, and I hope he will contribute to this debate. For the benefit of the honourable minister, the relevant sections are sections 4, 27, 28 and 49. I have these questions for the minister: firstly, has the department identified the vandals responsible for the destruction of Turner House; secondly, has the department commenced proceedings against them; thirdly, bearing in mind that those who purchased Turner House, shortly before its destruction, were members of the Country Liberal Party, when did he become aware of the proposed destruction? I hope that he will have the courage to answer those questions.

To turn away from the Minister for Lands to the honourable neophyte member and Minister for Community Development, he was even more cautious than his seasoned colleague. He said that: 'Northern Territory laws may be strengthened to prevent the destruction of historic landmarks'. 'May be strengthened' - that could hardly be described as a commitment on the part of the minister, and I hope he is able to offer us something a little more substantial today. The same report from the honourable minister went on to say that he admitted that there was no legislation that could have stopped the razing of Turner House. What he did not say, and this is the nub of what my colleague will address, was that the government had had advice years ago that Territory legislation was defective in that regard. Of more concern was the attitude of the minister who, unlike the member for Sadadeen, said he had no opinion on the demolition of the house. Was that because the demolishers were known to him personally and were party colleagues? A reasonable question.

However, to show that he was not entirely ungracious, the minister conceded he had been there once and he had quite enjoyed the meal. I am sure central Australians will take great heart from this confession of gustatory indulgence.

In closing, let me make a couple of points. Firstly, I have mentioned the crucial importance of the potential impact on tourism of destroying such vestiges of the past. One very good reason for retaining buildings like Turner House is that they attract tourists who bring dollars to the Territory. The second point is that, when Alice Springs has become a town of glass, concrete and bitumen and nobody wants to visit it anymore, it will be too late. Without the verandahs, Marron's Newsagency, Adelaide House in the Mall and similar buildings, Alice Springs would start to look pretty tacky. The success of the tourist industry depends on places such as Turner House. Visitors and residents require physical reminders of where they have come from so that they know where they are going to.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I sincerely thank the member for MacDonnell for raising this matter of public importance today because, quite frankly, I think it is one of the most important matters of public importance to be raised in this Assembly. It is most important because it clearly illustrates to the people of the Northern Territory how absolutely pathetic this opposition is. They are not pathetic because of their small numbers - thank God there are not 13 of them - but pathetic because of their inability to come to terms with matters that are in fact of importance to this Northern Territory.

Alice Springs certainly has lost Turner House and that is the basis of this matter of public importance. The Country Liberal Party recently lost 30% of its best asset and Jenny has a lot to answer for for that. I have illustrated recently that the government has provided an open door to the opposition so that we can educate it in what is going on, particularly in relation to my departments.

Mr B. Collins: Well get on with it.

Mr DALE: If the opposition had taken up the opportunity of knocking on the door once again, it would have been able to establish that there is a working party which will report to me soon on the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act.

Mr B. Collins: We know about that.

Mr DALE: You know about that?

Amendments will also be introduced at the next sittings to the National Trust Act. The opposition has simply shown that its interest in what is happening in this Territory does not really relate to needs of the people. There has to be a balance in any legislation that refers to heritage or the National Trust. The rights of the private owners taken into consideration as well as the need to protect items that are rightfully of importance to our heritage.

I do not believe that Turner House fitted into that category at all. Whilst it was a wonderful restaurant, the building itself had little significance in so far as heritage is concerned. It had undergone several alterations and there is nothing to suggest that heritage legislation anywhere in Australia could protect a building of that kind. The protection of

buildings or locations in the Northern Territory requires legislation that relates specifically to items in the Northern Territory. It is no good relating them to national legislation. For example, a building that might require protection in Sydney because it is some 200 years old certainly would not have a counterpart in the Northern Territory. In recent years, we have had the cyclone and in the past the bombing of Darwin. These put paid to a great number of our old buildings in the Top End.

Mr Speaker, I will table a list of heritage properties that the government has looked after. Museums, art galleries, National Trust buildings and other properties have received grants assistance. If we protected places like Turner House, we may have to cease funding areas like the Hermannsburg village. There has to be a rationalisation right across the board in relation to any legislation on this matter. A review is now under way. In the short time I have been a minister, I have discussed the matter at length with the National Trust people. They have given me some advice that will be considered along with the advice from the working party.

Mr Speaker, this matter before us now is quite pathetic. The information that the opposition is seeking by way of the motion today was readily available through my office and through my department. This is yet another exercise of simply wasting the time of this Legislative Assembly and it ought to be treated with contempt.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, judging from the minister's comments, obviously he has no grip on his portfolio. I certainly will not waste the Assembly's time by commenting on what he said. I will devote my time to matters raised by the member for MacDonnell. The government has had the benefit of a comprehensive report on Northern Territory heritage legislation since November 1979. Despite expenditure of many thousands of dollars on the compilation of the report, nothing has been done to protect the Northern Territory heritage, as has been evidenced by the demolition and complete removal of Turner House.

For the education of members, particularly the minister, I would like to spend some time on the observations and recommendations of Mr James, who was responsible for the 1979 report. The first paragraph of Mr James' preface to the report reads:

I have been asked to advise the Department of Community Development, through the Northern Territory Heritage Committee, on certain matters pertaining to the protection of the National Estate in the Northern Territory. Such matters have been set out in summary 1 of this report.

The terms of reference on the next page are very comprehensive. I will read some of the more pertinent parts of this report, which is extremely long. Its terms of reference were to review the law of the Northern Territory and its relevance to the Northern Territory heritage with the object of:

- A. Ascertaining and assessing implementation of existing relevant legislation.
- B. Determining its adequacy for identifying and preserving regions, sites, buildings and objects of artistic, historical, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations, as well as the present community of the Northern Territory.



- C. Identifying duplications, omissions and overlapping of such legislation.
- D. Assessing complementary and conflicting provisions in relation to Commonwealth legislation in the field.
- E. Ascertaining how appropriate existing provisions are for preventing where possible, and punishing where detected, vandalism at sites or buildings or thefts of objects, subject to relevant legislation.

Given these terms of reference, I would have thought that Turner House would have been protected instead of being demolished. In commenting on the various legislation affecting heritage protection in the Northern Territory, Mr James noted that there are several acts to be considered. These include the Building Act, the Criminal Law Consolidation Act, which has since been superseded, the Crown Lands Act, the Fish and Fisheries Act, the Forestry Act, the Litter Act, the Local Government Act, the Mining Act, the Museums and Art Galleries Act, the National Trust (Northern Territory) Act, the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act, the Observance of Law Act, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act, the Planning Act, the Police Administration Act, the Social Welfare Ordinance, the Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act, and the Special Purposes Lease Ordinance. I will quote again from the report, to highlight Mr James' observations on all those acts:

Whilst there are and will appear certain provisions for individual acts and regulations which will assist in the conservation of the Northern Territory's heritage in certain circumstances, the fact that these provisions are contained within different acts, each having a different primary purpose, means that no overall control can be exercised and such control as may be available will be fragmented and exercisable by different authorities and by different ministers. These provisions, while worthy of noting, do not of themselves enable a satisfactory program of conservation of the Territory's heritage to be implemented. It is not considered that an act which merely took into account the various existing controls and endeavoured to tie them together would be satisfactory. For example, controls imposed under the Mining Act are applicable only to mining areas and mining sites. Controls under the Building Act are applicable only to those areas to which the Building Act applies. Controls under the Crown Lands Act apply only to lands held by or for the Crown under that act. There will be little achieved by trying to make one existing set of controls suit another situation. It is better to start afresh.

I remind all members of the Assembly that this was said in 1979.

Therefore, the recommendation is that a separate Heritage Act should be passed by the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, an act which can stand on its own feet and be administered over all places within the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory government.

Once again, those are precisely the sentiments of the Northern Territory opposition and, once again, they were expressed in 1979.

It would not be a very difficult or comprehensive task to prepare such an act. Indeed, the drafting instructions and a draft act were supplied within that report. I will go through a few of the drafting instructions.

The general purpose of the act is to enable the minister to take the necessary action to ensure the conservation of the National Estate within the Northern Territory. This is to be achieved, wherever possible, by agreement with and assistance to the property owner rather than by acquisition by the minister. In addition, the procedures for listing and registration have been kept as simple as possible, while still providing maximum protection. There seems no need to provide the variety of forms of protection orders as have been provided elsewhere in Australia.

Quite certainly, the forms and controls exercised in New South Wales, as the minister said, are not appropriate in the Northern Territory. Those matters need not be pursued here. It could be a relatively simple matter. The Heritage Committee already established by the government should be formally constituted, and the new body should be known as the Heritage Council. The functions of the council would be, to quote Mr Jones:

- A. To recommend the inclusion, by the minister, of places of artistic, historical, scientific or social interest in the Register.
- B. To recommend to the minister, the taking of action to protect such places, to restore such places in rare circumstances and, in rare circumstances, their acquisition.
- C. To maintain a register of places referred to in the preceding paragraph.
- D. To recommend to the minister other measures to encourage the conservation of the National Estate in the Northern Territory.

These are very laudable and quite logical steps. As I said before, the report provides a draft act and therefore the minister will not have to stretch his brain too much. I imagine that information would be very necessary for this particular minister. However, instead of addressing this matter in some positive way, we have the minister accusing the opposition of not taking the time to seek advice from his department. Frankly, until the minister addressed himself to the matter of the demolition of Turner House a short time ago, I was unaware that there was a committee reviewing the Northern Territory's heritage. I was unaware that he was proposing legislative changes, and I can only assume that the people responsible for the vandalism which occurred to Turner House must have been aware that some changes were under way, which explains why they acted so quickly. For all I know, the minister may have been responsible.

I have no personal knowledge of Turner House. I am afraid I have been there on very rare occasions. Its historical value has been related to me second-hand. I am not a resident of Alice Springs. However, its historical value as related to me was clearly sufficient for it to be included in any listing of worthwhile buildings in the Northern Territory. Even if Turner House would not have qualified for such listing, there is still no heritage legislation in the Northern Territory. The value of Turner House itself can be debated ad infinitum, and I imagine the next speaker will in some way address its value as a historical building. The member for MacDonnell certainly addressed that matter, and I would imagine that those things are best left in the hands of experts. However, the underlying problem in this entire debate is that there is no comprehensive heritage legislation in the Northern Territory, despite the existence of recommendations which, although they are 8 years old, are still very relevant.

To try to gauge some idea of the relevant minister's attitude towards these matters, one can only rely upon his public statements to date, and what he has said so far in the Legislative Assembly. On 6 June, the minister is quoted as saying that he has no views on what the proposed review of legislation should accomplish. If the minister does not know what it should accomplish, how can he possibly make any recommendations to any review committee? How can he make any recommendations to the draftspersons who are to compile this legislation? I would suggest that the minister read this report compiled by Mr Jones, after which he may be able to form some view about what legislation could achieve. I am afraid that the present Minister for Community Development has demonstrated that he is about as relevant to the conservation of the Northern Territory's heritage as Dracula is to blood collection.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Speaker, having listened to both gentlemen opposite, I would say that this was classic case of 'doutopaedics' because they have both put their foot in it.

I listened with a tremendous amount of interest to the member for MacDonnell when he made his emotive speech about Turner House and what a fine restaurant it was. I agree. It was a nice restaurant. I have eaten there many times. It had a good reputation; not an excellent reputation, but a good reputation. However, there are plenty of fine places in Alice Springs and other parts of the Northern Territory that cater for the tourist industry and, as I understand, very few tourists went to Turner House. I have spoken to the owners on many occasions when I was the Minister for Tourism, and I know it was mostly local Alice Springs people who dined there, because it was not a very cheap place.

However, let us talk about development a little, before we talk about heritage problems. If Alice Springs is to develop, it can only develop laterally. It cannot go upwards because the same people have limited the development of Alice Springs buildings to 3 storeys.

Mr B. Collins: Who?

Mr DONDAS: The same people who are making all the noises now.

Mr Bell: I think you will find the member for Braitling had something to say about that too.

Mr DONDAS: If members opposite are saying that the Northern Territory government has no concern about heritage matters, why don't they talk to the National Trust? The National Trust is happy with the Northern Territory government as far as I am aware because we have given it the titles on the Kahlin triangle. The Minister for Community Development has circulated a list of all the places that we consider to have significance for our heritage.

Where the members opposite put their foot in it was in saying that there are no controls in relation to heritage matters. There are controls. The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments both have legislation in place. The Commonwealth legislation includes the Australian Heritage Commission Act, the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage (Interim Protection) Act. The Northern Territory has the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the Planning Act, the Crown Lands Act, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act.

Under the Australian Heritage Commission Act, anybody can nominate any place, including private property, as being worthy of protection. Such nominated places, and this includes buildings and their contents, are first placed on an interim list. If found suitable after advertising and investigation, they are placed on the Register of the National Estate. The register relates only to buildings that are more than 90 or 100 years old. As we all know, Turner House was built in 1929. We do not have many buildings that are over 100 years old. In fact, I doubt whether any buildings in Alice Springs are over 100 years old.

I express some concern about that but I am not sure about protection by way of a Heritage Bill. Maybe we can relate the matter to the Planning Act because there are already provisions within that act which could provide such protection. The people in Alice Springs knew that Turner House would not be placed on the Register of the National Estate. Why didn't they apply to the Town Planning Authority to have it preserved under the Planning Act? They did not and members opposite sit there in stunned silence.

Members opposite spoke about the CLP owning it and bulldozing it at night. What a load of rubbish! The owner of that property was D.D. Smith's son. D.D. Smith was a member of the Legislative Assembly here.

Mr Bell: Not when it was knocked down.

Mr DONDAS: That is where your information is wrong. The owner of the property demolished it. The developer bought a clean block of land. For members' information, it was the son of a former Labor member of this Assembly who demolished Turner House. The honourable member always says the CLP does this and the CLP does that. What a load of rubbish!

When a site is listed either on an interim list or a register, Commonwealth departments and authorities are restrained from taking any action that would adversely affect the site unless they have no alternative. The World Heritage Properties Conservation Act applies to properties which have been nominated by the Commonwealth government to the World Heritage List or proclaimed as a world heritage property by the Governor-General. Action on any property so listed or proclaimed can be taken only with the approval of the relevant government minister. Other than the Sacred Sites Protection Act, the Territory has no specific legislation covering heritage sites on private land.

The honourable member has made a point, but this is not necessarily a matter of public importance. As a local member for the Alice Springs region, I would have expected him to raise it in the grievance debate or to have discussed it with ministers to try to work out a compromise. I would be happy to see if something could be done via the Planning Act. However, we must remember that Alice Springs can only develop laterally.

The member for MacDonnell also referred to infringements of the Building Code. No demolition permit was obtained under the Building Code. Whilst this failure constitutes a breach of the Building Act, the primary reason for requiring demolition permits is to ensure that demolition occurs safely. I know that the honourable member will climb out of his tree when I read out this note:

As the demolition has been completed safely and could not have been refused on the grounds that the building had historic value, no further action is warranted. However, under the Plumbing Code,

clause 67 requires the owner of land upon which buildings are to be demolished to apply for disconnection of the sewerage service and water supply. No application had been made, and the prescribed penalty for such failure is \$2000. The matter is being pursued by the Department of Crown Law.

I will be happy to provide the honourable member with information at a later date regarding the outcome of that.

Mr Speaker, I know that many people in Alice Springs were very disappointed at the way it was done. There was a parallel in Queensland in the way that an old building was demolished there. As far as I am aware, the old Turner House property will be part of the Ford Plaza development. I would have thought that any person in Alice Springs would be proud of such a development that will take Alice Springs into the 21st century.

Mr Bell: I did not mention that.

Mr DONDAS: You did not mention what?

Mr Bell: The Ford Plaza is excellent.

Mr DONDAS: I was under the impression that that was the reason why the developers wanted the Turner House property. Maybe I have been misinformed. The important thing is that there are provisions in the Planning Act which can offer effective control.

#### BIOLOGICAL CONTROL BILL (Serial 186)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to establish procedures for assessing and, where appropriate, authorising biological control programs in the Territory. Complementary legislation has been or will be passed by the state and Commonwealth parliaments to establish a uniform system applying throughout Australia which will ensure that biological control programs that are identified as being in the public interest can proceed in accordance with law, and without interruption by litigation.

The need for this bill was recognised in June 1983 when an injunction was obtained which prevented the release of insects to control *Echium*, a plant commonly known as Paterson's Curse or Salvation Jane. *Echium* has long been perceived as a noxious weed in south-eastern Australia and is commonly declared as such. Its control by biological means was considered desirable by the agencies which have responsibility for these matters and whose integrity and expertise had never before been questioned. Two beekeepers and two graziers, who believed the plant had beneficial qualities, obtained the injunction on the grounds of the common law of private nuisance, which is concerned more with the rights of the individual than with the question of public interest. It became clear that there were 2 related problems. First, there was no provision in existing legislation which authorised the release of control agents, such as insects or rust, into the environment. Secondly, it was clear that there was no equitable means of resolving a conflict of interest concerning biological control programs with a view to establishing

public benefit. In developing legislation to resolve the legal status of biological control, it has been necessary to address both of these problems. Before I advert to specific features of the bill, I would like to make a few general points about biological control and the purposes of the bill.

Biological control has had a long history in Australia. In addition to its well-known successes in controlling rabbits and prickly pear, biological control is also helping to account for numerous agricultural pests, for environmentally unacceptable plants such as water weeds, and for vectors of disease such as mosquitoes. Biological control is particularly important in the Territory as it offers the best prospects for economically and efficiently controlling many widespread pests. Programs are under way or planned for: the weeds mimosa, parkinsonia, hyptis, disa, dalvinia, and noogoora burr; plant and animal insect pests such as palm leaf beetle, heliothis, leaf miner, buffalo and bush flies; conservation pests like cane toads and rabbits; and human disease vectors such as mosquitoes.

The bill will not affect the existing basic scientific, technical or safety procedures and standards applying to biological control. It does not in any way reduce the effect of existing acts. The bill is not directed against any particular weed or pest, but rather provides a means of deciding whether or not the biological control of individual weeds or pests would be in the public interest. There is no requirement for all proposed biological control programs to be submitted for consideration in terms of the bill. The great majority are not a potential source of controversy and agencies may prefer to proceed independently. However, where an agency wishes to pursue an independent course of action, it will remain subject to existing legislation, standards and procedures and, of course, will be subject to litigation on a common law basis.

This bill will be complemented by legislation in the states and the Commonwealth. The targets of biological control, and the agents which control the targets, are not familiar with political boundaries. As the majority of biological control programs are directed at agricultural pests or weeds, the bill provides that the Australian Agricultural Council will have primary responsibility for taking the actions and making the decisions referred to in the bill. Where appropriate, the council will seek the advice and assistance of relevant bodies, such as the Australian Forestry Council and the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers.

The proposed role of the Australian Agricultural Council is appropriate in that it represents all states, the NT and the Commonwealth. It is concerned with agriculture and is a vehicle by which most biological control proposals are presently considered. In order to create a legal entity for the purposes of the act, there is provision for the establishment of a biological control authority in the Territory. This will be the Minister for Primary Production. At the first meeting of the AAC each year, the Commonwealth minister, in consultation with state ministers, shall designate the Commonwealth minister or 1 of the state ministers as a Commonwealth biological control authority.

The provisions of the bill may be broken down into a few essential elements: firstly, public opinion concerning the proposed biological control activity will be widely canvassed; secondly, depending on the nature of any public comment, an inquiry may be held; and, finally, based on the information available, including the report of a public inquiry in the event of one being held, the program may be declared in terms of the act and biological control agents may then be released. A declared program will protect those authorised to conduct it from any legal action or damages and will preclude the

opportunity to halt the program by means of a common law injunction. This is important when programs may take 10 years and millions of dollars to develop.

Turning to the procedural aspects of the bill, it obliges all proposed targets to be advertised, but there is a discretion as to whether the proposed agents should be advertised. The target is a weed or a pest and there is no difficulty for a lay member of the public to express a view as to whether he perceives the target to be undesirable or beneficial. Once a target is declared, the basis on which an agent such as an insect capable of controlling the target is selected is essentially technical. It is subject to the Commonwealth Quarantine Act and is less amenable to judgment by lay persons. Where the agent has been deemed safe in terms of the Quarantine Act, there are grounds for assuming that a public inquiry is unnecessary. Nevertheless, an inquiry as to the desirability of a proposed agent still remains an option under this bill.

The bill provides that a target must have been declared as such before agents to control that target can be declared or released. However, the bill will also allow the nomination and resolution of proposed targets and their respective agents, and public hearings, to proceed simultaneously. The basis of, and options for, a public inquiry are essentially the same for target and agent proposals. The Biological Control Authority, after considering the information available and consulting the council, may order an inquiry if it considers a person or the environment will be adversely affected. The bill provides for different forms of inquiry, which reflects the fact that biological control may have different social, economic or environmental consequences.

Declaration of a target or agent is the final step in the process of consultation and public decision-making for which the bill provides. The declaration is made when the authority is satisfied that the control of a target would be to the public benefit and unanimous agreement has been received from the council. Once a target and the relevant agent or agents have been declared, the agent may be released subject to any condition specified. As I have already indicated, the bill provides that no legal proceedings shall be instituted where the release of agents is in accordance with the act. In clearly specified emergency conditions, the bill provides that the authority may declare target or agent organisms as such without first observing the requirements concerning public comment or inquiry which I have outlined.

A number of biological control programs exist in Australia and these may be declared in terms of the bill. This simply reflects that the existence of a successful biological control program is a fact of life. In the absence of any previous legal challenge, it must be assumed that they are sanctioned by the public. Nevertheless, the bill provides that any developments in existing programs, such as the introduction of a new sort of biological control agent, may be subject to its provisions. There are several provisions in the bill which enable the complementary Commonwealth, state and Territory legislation to operate efficiently. These are directed at ensuring that, where all the provisions of a Commonwealth or state act have been fulfilled, a declaration in terms of these acts applies in all the states and the Northern Territory. This will avoid duplication of applications, advertisements and inquiries.

It is not possible to quantify the financial impact of the bill accurately. Effective biological control is accepted as a highly cost-effective means of regulating weeds and pests and has the capacity to save millions of dollars for rural industries. This is particularly the case

in the Territory where low intensity of land use and management often precludes conventional controls. Direct costs are associated with the cost of advertisements and public inquiries which the Commonwealth has undertaken to fund, but the frequency and nature of these costs will be determined largely by events that arise on an irregular basis. If past experience may be used as a guide, biological control very rarely causes controversy, and it could be expected that public inquiries would therefore also be rare. However, provision for public comment may lead to increased awareness of biological control programs and hence to more inquiries.

The bill institutes a number of additional administrative requirements. These may involve indirect costs to various existing committees or organisations concerned with biological control. There has been considerable pressure, from the rural sector in particular, to resolve equitably conflict concerning any biological control program on the basis of public benefit.

Mr Speaker, I draw the attention of honourable members to recent events in Victoria. Biological control of blackberries in that state, in New South Wales and Tasmania, has long been a subject of controversy but there was no means of resolving that controversy. In the end, someone illegally introduced a rust capable of controlling blackberries. This action not only contravened the Quarantine Act but it was done without the necessary safeguards to protect other plants.

Mr Speaker, this bill does not seek to meddle with existing scientific or quarantine measures, nor to impose priorities. It provides what should be a publicly acceptable and equitable means of determining whether a proposed biological control program is in the public interest. Once public benefit is established, then a program can proceed in the full knowledge that it will benefit the community without imposing unacceptable consequences on the economy or the environment. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
Member for Flynn

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for the remainder of these sittings of the Assembly be granted to the member for Flynn to enable him to attend the Tourism Ministers' Conference in Hobart.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, ensuring the building of the railway line from Alice Springs to Darwin has been a matter of high priority for successive governments in the Northern Territory. The people of the Territory need no convincing of the need for, and the benefits of, the line. I rise today to assure the Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory that this project remains a high priority for my government and to take the opportunity to report on progress that has been made towards achieving that goal. The Northern Territory government has pursued this project actively since self-government. I would remind honourable members that the Commonwealth accepted a legislative obligation to build the line back in 1911, when responsibility for the administration of the Northern Territory passed from South Australia to the Commonwealth. That obligation was



confirmed in 1949 when Commonwealth legislation made it clear that the Commonwealth was committed to build, and pay for, the line. The initial thrust of the Territory government was therefore to insist that this commitment by the Commonwealth be honoured. It is the only commitment accepted by the Commonwealth under the 1911 legislation that has not been met. Initial results of our efforts convinced the Fraser government that the line should be built and a commitment to that effect was made by the Prime Minister prior to the 1983 federal election. The federal government of the day pledged to complete the line by 1988 and preliminary work was started. The federal ALP, in opposition under the leadership of Mr Hawke, made an unequivocal pledge that it would build the line and, indeed, ALP spokesmen went so far as to say that only a Labor government could be trusted to build the line. Subsequent events have shown what it means to trust a Labor government.

Under Mr Hawke as Prime Minister, the federal ALP immediately repudiated that pledge and came back with an offer which required the Northern Territory to find 40% of the total cost of the line. The Chief Minister at the time pointed out the impossibility for the Territory to accept such a burden and that offer was firmly, and quite correctly, rejected. The Territory government continued to press the Commonwealth to meet its obligations and the Commonwealth then walked away completely.

I will not dwell again on the farce of the Hill Inquiry; all honourable members will remember only too well that appalling episode which demonstrated the cynicism of the federal ALP government, and its total lack of concern for the people of the Territory.

Faced with an unreasonable and intransigent attitude by the Commonwealth, it became necessary for the Northern Territory to consider alternative ways of getting on with the task of building the railway. Canadian Pacific Consulting Services were commissioned to report on the project. Its interim report concluded that the line would be of net economic benefit to Australia as a whole, not a drain on the nation as the Hill Inquiry alleged. The final report by Canadian Pacific, following detailed investigation and assessment of the technical options for the railway, concluded that the line was a viable project and economically justified.

Armed with this advice, the Territory government, under my predecessor, began to pursue a private enterprise alternative to the railway. Discussions were initiated with a number of companies which would have an interest in such a project. These companies included those in transport, construction, freight-forwarding and finance areas. Considerable interest has been shown by various companies in the railway and particularly in the concept of a privately-owned and operated railway. We are proceeding to build on this interest and to develop an arrangement which will work. Honourable members will appreciate that putting together a project of this magnitude with maximum private sector participation is extremely complex, and the extent to which governments, including the Territory, Commonwealth and possibly South Australian governments will need to be involved in an ongoing way, remains to be worked out.

Mr Speaker, it is relevant to note at this point the implications of the Dibb Report on Australian defence. I will be making a separate statement on the Dibb Report during these sittings. However, the case for enhanced northern defence developed in that report is incontrovertible and lends strong support to the case for the railway. The report says that, 'in a threat situation, convoy by sea might be used for critical civil or military cargoes but Australian defence strategy could not rely on coastal shipping to support

operations in the north. Alternative means of transport, less susceptible to interdiction, including road and rail transport, should be used to minimise the defence force being drawn into convoy and other defensive shipping operations at disproportionate cost and to the detriment of other strategic options'. The report also explicitly acknowledges the value of the railway in the defence context.

Returning to the steps now being followed to put the project together, in March this year, the Northern Territory government, inspired by the outstanding success achieved in putting together the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline project, established the Railway Executive Group. Comprising a small number of expert and dedicated Northern Territory officers and headed by a former Northern Territory Under-Treasurer, the group has been working hard over the past 3 months bringing together the information required to establish what sort of a railway we need, where it should run, how much it is likely to cost, what earnings can be projected and, most importantly, how it can be financed.

Some of the material required to assist in those decisions already exists; for example, a considerable amount of survey and design work completed by Australian National Railways before the project was totally shelved by the federal government and which, with the approval of the Prime Minister, is now in our hands. In other areas such as the projection of freight tonnages likely to be carried and the freight charges that might be expected to be commercial and competitive, a deal of work in checking remains to be done. This is expected to take the Railway Executive Group up to another 3 months to complete. Notwithstanding the amount of work that remains to be done in pulling the pieces of the project together and assembling them in a form which will enable confident decisions to be made, it is clear to the Railway Executive Group at this stage that the loan will be possible only under certain conditions.

Firstly, to preserve the viability of the project, the rail service should be for freight only. Long distance passenger services are not profitable. They are not profitable in Australia and, by and large, they are not profitable overseas. Neither the Ghan nor the Indian Pacific makes a profit on passenger services. If we are genuine in our approach, we must accept this fact. If people subsequently demand a passenger service, they, not the freight forwarders, must pay for it.

Secondly, the track structure should be designed and built to the levels required to carry freight level of the early 1990s. Progressive upgradings should be planned and budgeted for as traffic grows. Put simply, the project cannot afford a track design to carry far more freight than is likely to be available for many years. It simply adds too much to the upfront costs.

Thirdly, an important way to achieve savings will be to use the old North Australian Railway alignment for part of the route between Katherine and Darwin. This will mean some operating and maintenance penalties which will need to be budgeted for but, again, there are important capital savings.

Fourthly, we will also need to seriously consider a range of other cost-saving options, such as the acquisition of used steel rail, secondhand locomotives and rolling stock, the use of steel or timber sleepers instead of concrete, and timber trestle bridges as a medium-term alternative to steel and concrete structures with the aim of reducing the upfront costs of the line to the maximum extent consistent with safe and reliable commercial operation. There are significant savings available in these areas although honourable

members will appreciate that the use of secondhand or imported inputs limits employment opportunities within Australia. This is an area where common sense will need to prevail if we are to attain our major goal of a cost-effective and efficient railway.

Fifthly, the equipment acquired or leased for the line must be compatible with Australian National Railways equipment to ensure that the line is able to operate as an integral part of the national rail network. I emphasise that, in the pursuit of cost savings and efficiency, we are planning for a safe, modern link which will operate with the equipment used throughout Australia and without unacceptable operational constraints.

Sixthly, it continues to be our view that private sector participation in the financing, construction, ownership and operation of the line should be maximised and, at the very least, that majority ownership of the corporation owning the line should be in private not public sector hands.

In arriving at its preliminary conclusions, the Railway Executive Group has sought the advice and assistance of a range of people and organisations expert in various areas. Amongst the consultants retained for the task are: Mr Des Smith, until October last year the Chief Civil Engineer for Australian National and the man responsible for organising the project until its removal from AN's hands by the Commonwealth in 1984; Canadian Pacific Consulting Services, the highly professional consulting arm of the private sector organisation that runs one of the few profitable rail services in the world - Canadian Pacific has an international reputation as a railway operator and has developed construction and operation expertise in a number of countries around the world, and under a range of conditions; Australian National itself, responsible for the operation of the existing, albeit incomplete, standard gauge interstate system, as well as for the building of the Alice Springs to Tarcoola section and the rebuilding of the transcontinental line to Perth; the engineering consultants, Cameron McNamara, on the bridges, and Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey on the overall cost estimates for the line; John Standingford and Associates Pty Ltd, a South Australian consulting firm with particular economic expertise and a company which has been associated in a very significant way with the Northern Territory's efforts to secure the railway since the preparation of material for the Hill Inquiry; the firm of Smith, Curry and Partners, accountants and lawyers specialising in taxation matters, who have been engaged to advise on the most tax-effective ways of achieving a successful and viable railway - they also played a major role in providing similar advice for the gas pipeline; and, in due course, financial advisers will be appointed to assist in the development of specific financing options.

Mr Speaker, the objective is to ensure that we have available the best possible information and advice on the engineering, financial and operational issues which will need to be carefully and comprehensively weighed by the government when the time for decisions on specific commitment by the NT government is reached. I am confident that the advice we receive from these experts on the construction and operation of the line, supplemented by the considerable local expertise we have in our own departments, will be the best advice obtainable and will provide a secure base from which the project can be planned in detail. To that end, a team from the Railway Executive Group comprising the Director, Mr Des Smith, and the Director of the Northern Territory Roads Division spent the first week of May in Montreal with the Canadian Pacific organisation, resolving a number of key technical issues regarding the line and its likely cost.

Let me hasten to add that the government has made no firm decisions on any of the matters I have referred to. Not only would that be premature, since there is a deal of work yet to be done by the Railway Executive Group and its consultants, but also inappropriate in circumstances where commercial decision-making is likely to play a major role. The charter we have given our group proceeds from the point that the Northern Territory government wishes to sponsor and facilitate the construction of a commercially viable railway, built as economically as possible. Private ownership and operation appears to offer the best environment for that to happen, and it is important that future commercial decisions not be pre-empted or inhibited by the government.

There are, however, a number of aspects where the Railway Executive Group is assembling and assessing information which will provide the eventual owners and operators with a flying start on the project. The Railway Executive Group is planning to have available by September a package of materials which eliminates or minimises for potential private sector participants as many of the uncertainties as possible regarding the preferred route, including critical elements of the physical ground survey, ballast sources, water supplies, land and sacred sites, feasible economic construction standards for that route with cost estimates in June 1986 prices, the condition of bridges and formation for any section of the route following the old alignment, together with estimated upgrading and strengthening costs and estimates of capital equipment, including rolling stock and communications, required to operate and maintain the line for a nominated level of traffic, and the likely availability and supply rate of steel and concrete products tracklaying machinery etc, both new and used.

The package will also contain material which will be relevant to the railway company's decisions including a developed tax-effective financing structure, staffing and industrial relations aspects, likely interstate rolling stock and revenue-sharing arrangements, and similar matters which ultimately will be for the company or companies to settle on commercial grounds.

I have asked the Railways Executive Group to report again in time to allow me to make a further progress report to the Assembly during the October sittings. By that time, I expect to have had sufficient information placed before the government to enable a considered decision on the nature and extent of the Northern Territory government's participation in the project. That participation may be in the form of a significant shareholding in the railway company or through the provision of land or through a take-or-pay contract for the carriage of government stores and equipment or some other means or combination thereof. Indeed, it may be none of these means if the project does not survive the rigorous proving up it is now undergoing.

Can I also add that continuing support for the project and the Territory government's approach to it can be expected from the federal opposition parties on their return to government. There have been a series of discussions with the shadow minister for transport, members of the coalition transport committee and the Territory's CLP federal member. They have accepted the approach which I have outlined to the Assembly today and the shadow minister has indicated he will be supporting the railway project and the framework for its achievement which I have described and that he will be presenting and advocating the position through the coalition's policy review procedures. The shadow minister has conveyed to me his confidence that the project and our approach will be endorsed and supported by the joint parties and will be reflected in the coalition's transport policy at the federal level.

Mr Speaker, there should be no mistake about the Northern Territory government's position. The Northern Territory government, of which I am Chief Minister, is determined that the Alice Springs to Darwin railway will be built. It is taking every possible step open to it to ensure that it will be. It is not prepared to write an open cheque but it is prepared to make a significant investment in the project on behalf of all Territorians and, indeed, on behalf of all Australians provided that investment is expected to yield significant returns in the long run. At the October sittings, I hope to be in a position to inform honourable members of further progress.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I criticised the Chief Minister this morning in respect of his address-in-reply to the Administrator for proposing no new initiatives for the Northern Territory. I am glad that today has not expired before a new initiative has been announced. The Chief Minister has just advised the Assembly that he had spoken to the Northern Territory's Country Liberal Party's federal member and asked him to cooperate. That certainly is a new initiative for the Northern Territory government.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will speak in this debate tomorrow and will tackle it from his perspective as opposition economic spokesman. Because this is a matter which has been canvassed ad nauseam in the Legislative Assembly over the past few years, I want to make a few responses to it now.

During the last sittings of the Assembly, the opposition raised the prospect that this railway was being considered as a freight-only railway. It was in response to the concerns raised by the opposition that the government finally was forced to reveal that that was in fact the case. We raised that, not because we were questioning the obvious financial fact that there is not a passenger service in this world which pays its way, but to advise the people of the Northern Territory that their expectations and hopes for this railway had been raised to ridiculous heights. This came about through the usual silly statements made by members opposite about proposed developments for the Northern Territory. As past debates have shown, we have had proposals for a \$1200m nuclear power-station to be built in Darwin, aluminium smelters, and Concords landing at Yulara. When such proposals are put forward in the Legislative Assembly, no matter how absurd, anyone who questions them is immediately targeted and called a knocker, a whinger and an opponent of Territory development.

I mention this because this statement is a useful one indeed. It at least brings some degree of rationality to the debate about the railway. It has to be acknowledged by the government, as I am sure it is by the Chief Minister, that this statement will come as a very severe dose of cold water to many Territorians. They have held a vision of the railway far different from the one painted in this statement. We pointed out some time ago that it was likely to be a freight-only railway, and the government acknowledged that. I do not have to remind members. I am sure we all remember the grandiose pictures that were painted of the railroad, the enormous contribution it would make to the Territory's tourist industry and the hordes of tourists who would be climbing on board and travelling up and down the track. That is why we raised the fact that the government was looking at a proposal which would not include passengers at all.

Having read the statement, a further bucket of cold water has now unquestionably been thrown on the provision of this railroad. Not only has it been made clear that it will not carry passengers, and I have no argument with

this, but we are also told that the options under consideration include the use of second-hand railway lines, second-hand rolling stock, and second-hand locomotives. There is probably one at the old Fannie Bay jail which could be pressed into use. The government is also contemplating the use of wooden sleepers and wooden bridges. I find it interesting that, in the same statement, there is a commitment by the Chief Minister that we will eventually have 'a safe, modern railway'. I suggest that there is an apparent contradiction in that, on the one hand, we are told it will be a safe modern railway and, on the other hand, that it will have second-hand engines, second-hand rolling stock, second-hand railway lines, wooden sleepers and wooden bridges.

It should be obvious even to those opposite that I am pleased this statement is before the Legislative Assembly, because it has, for the first time, painted an accurate picture of what the railway line may look like if it is economically viable. We have been pointing this out for some time and I am glad that we finally have a government which is prepared to acknowledge it. If you are interested in the railway line for the Northern Territory, as I am, you would be prepared to do your homework on it. If members opposite actually went to the trouble of reading all the reports that have been prepared, instead of just talking about them in here as so often happens, it would be very clear to them, both from the Hill Report and the Canadian Pacific Report, that this railway will be a marginal economic proposition if it is ever constructed. I have no problem with that. It is obvious that economies will be needed to make this railway viable. It will be line ball, and the grandiose visions that were painted, and which were believed, will have to be laid to rest.

Let me inform members that people in Darwin have talked to me about how great it would be, with a return air fare to Alice Springs now costing about \$400, to be able to jump on the train and whip down to Alice and back for the weekend. I told them how unlikely that was. I travelled for laughs on the old railway, on a number of occasions, from Darwin to Larrimah. You could only do it for laughs. Because of the condition of the line between Darwin and Katherine, you could very easily get out and run faster than the train. The alignment was very difficult, particularly through the hills around Adelaide River and the Snake Creek area. It was a very slow train indeed. I was interested to discover that one of the economies being proposed is to use the old alignment. It is obvious that, if we are talking about the old alignment, using second-hand rolling stock, second-hand railway lines, second-hand engines, wooden sleepers and wooden bridges, as the report acknowledges, we are no longer looking at the employment projections which were proposed originally. I am pleased to see that has been acknowledged. I will be supporting this investigation. I have already indicated as much in discussions I have had with the people involved in the investigation. I am interested in the outcome. I ask people in the Northern Territory to read this statement. It is important, because people will have to revise radically their vision of the railway resulting from past statements made about it by government members in this Assembly.

When I was lobbying very hard for this railway line to be built, and for the federal government to honour the commitments on which it had reneged, I went to the plant in Port Augusta which manufactures railway lines. I talked to both management and unions in South Australia and to the Premier of South Australia, and was enthused. As you would all remember, the Australian steel industry was then in a very sorry state. It is almost difficult to remember now, but it did face the real possibility of closure.

Of course, one of the great disadvantages of being in politics is that people tend to ask what has been done for them recently. They have short memories. If there were one significant achievement that could be laid at the door of the current federal government, and certainly at the door of Senator Button in particular, which has almost been forgotten now, it was the restructuring of the Australian steel industry because it faced imminent closure. One of the key points in pushing for the railway was the very significant boost it would give to the production of new steel rails and sleepers. Clearly, that is a prospective argument - and I concede that it is acknowledged in this statement - that is no longer valid. The same applies to the provision of new rolling stock, engines, and so on. We have to readjust our thinking on the railway line.

On a Territory level, I think that the biggest readjustment that needs to be made in the thinking of Territorians on this issue is obviously in respect of the tourist potential of the railway line. I have said in the Assembly that I am an unashamed railway buff; I love travelling by train. The opportunities to do it in the Northern Territory are extremely limited. I am determined that one day I shall travel back to the Northern Territory on the Sydney to Alice Springs train. I have promised myself that and the only reason I have not been able to do it is ...

Mr Coulter: There is no line from Sydney to Alice Springs, or not direct.

Mr B. COLLINS: What? Oh dear, oh dear, the Deputy Chief Minister says there is no railway line from Sydney to Alice Springs! I am determined to make the Sydney to Alice Springs railway journey which has proven to be an enormous success for Territory tourism. It takes 6 months to obtain a seat on it. I might add that it does not make any money even though every berth on it is full and it charges first class fares. Mr Speaker, do not think that it is cheaper to travel from Sydney to Alice Springs on the train than it is to fly, because it is not. The only thing that prevents me making the journey is that I simply have not been able to afford the time it takes to travel from Sydney to Alice Springs, but I will make time one of these days.

Mr Speaker, I was one of those Territorians who was genuinely enthused about the great potential of this railway. It would have been terrific to have had a passenger line travelling north and south as well as east and west. Obviously I am disappointed in acknowledging the financial reality that it is simply not on because it will lose a poultice; there is no question about that. I believe that is what Territorians will have most difficulty in adjusting to in terms of supporting this railway. I canvassed this issue with Dr Conn when I spoke to him. When people found out a few months ago that the railway would not carry passengers, the obvious question emerged: 'What is the use of it?' Of course, that is still a very crucial question, because of the balance between road freight rates and the potential freight rates to be charged on the railway line.

It is obvious that, if the railway line is to be viable financially, it will have to secure a virtual monopoly on freight into and - what little there is - out of the Northern Territory. I know it is anticipated that it can be done but it can only be effected by making the freight rates attractive, and that is where you get down to the realities of the trucking business. I know something about the trucking business because members of my family are involved in it. Everyone in the trucking business cries poor and, in many cases, that is absolutely valid. One reason is the preponderance of owner-drivers in the trucking business. It is a very good business to get into for someone who wants to be his own boss. Indeed, Mr Speaker, I had a

relative who owned an enormous and successful trucking business. He was making a great deal of money, but dying on his feet doing it. He sold it all off voluntarily and kept 1 truck to drive himself so that he would not have to pay worker's compensation insurance, payroll tax ...

Mr Tuxworth: Holiday pay?

Mr B. COLLINS: That is right, all of that ...

Mr Manzie: Fringe benefits tax?

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, whatever. It was not around then, but it might apply now. What made up his mind was that he had employed a new driver, put him in a new Volvo and, on the first day out, he dropped a \$10 000 gearbox on the road. That was the finish. He said: 'Fine, I will see you later. I will stop having ulcers. I will make a tenth of what I made before and drive my own truck'. Plenty of people in the trucking business do that. The significance is that there are no overheads. It is not necessary to maintain an office and meet all the related overhead expenses. This particular bloke was a mechanic and able to maintain his own truck. A person running his trucking business that way is able to reduce his freight rates dramatically.

I see that as posing a potential problem which will need to be addressed. I know that it will be assessed very carefully indeed, because the group that investigates the viability of this railway will be forced to do so on the data and information provided to it by the transport industry. Obviously, as a result of those projections, we will build the railway and set an attractive freight rate. To take a figure out of the air, let us say 20%, and I hope the government does not propose that the rate be set compulsorily or by legislation. We will seek by this means to attract people to convey their freight on the railway. What will happen? Inevitably, the road transport companies which operate on what is now a very good stretch of road will reduce their rates as far as they are able to. Many of them will be prepared to reduce their rates to the point where the operation is only just viable in an effort to survive the railway.

I raise this as a genuine concern in terms of assessing the viability of the railway. Road companies are operating on what, in the main, are modern roads which are improving all the time. The sealing of the south road is now in sight. If they are able to compete - and they have told me that they will give it their best shot - successfully with the railroad in terms of freight rates then the commercial viability of the railway will be under a considerable cloud. The only way the railway can succeed is if it holds a monopoly on freight and is able to maintain that monopoly by offering extremely attractive freight rates - and without government subsidies - so that people will simply stop using road freight. I have examined the question carefully. I have looked at all the facts and figures. I have spoken to people in the industry. I have talked to the truckies. Unless the railway obtains a monopoly on freight, it will not succeed and will lose money. It has to be one or the other. The truckies tell me they do not intend to roll over and die. If the railway eventuates, the truckies will make every effort to offer freight rates that are more attractive than those offered by the railway in order to remain in business. I shall be interested in the ongoing work of this committee to see that important subject is addressed - and I know it will be - in terms of assessing the financial viability of the railway line.



One of my early concerns about the private railway that was announced previously was that anticipated construction costs were in the order of \$400m to \$500m. The federal government subsidy that was considered necessary to build the private railway was \$200m - half of the total amount. I agree that that was only 1 of the options canvassed. From memory, the \$200m was to be a \$20m subsidy over a period of 10 years.

That brings me to another part of this statement which interests me. It is the first time that I have heard this one and it appears on page 13 of the statement. Maybe I will be corrected, but there is a reference to participation of government in the railway in the form of significant shareholding - fine - provision of land, or through a take-or-pay contract for the carriage of government stores and equipment. That interests me because my understanding of the term 'take-or-pay' is that basically it is the same arrangement as was reached with the gas in Western Australia: a firm booking for freight space on the railway is made and paid for whether it is used or not. A contract would be entered into with the railway company to book a certain number of cars for a 12-month period. That freight space would be paid for whether the carriages came back empty or full. In most cases, such an option would only be available to governments because governments would be the only bodies that have sufficient financial resources to afford that sort of scheme. Private businesses would be interested to pay only for freight space actually used. I am prepared to be corrected on that, but that is my understanding of take-or-pay.

Mr Finch: It is guaranteed carriage; it is useful to mining companies.

Mr B. COLLINS: Exactly. It appeals to very large companies only. That is relevant because, as the honourable member said, only mining companies, the very large corporations or governments can afford to enter into that arrangement. In terms of the carriage of very large quantities of freight, quite often it works to the companies' financial advantage.

Of course, that is interesting in terms of what was to be a very private-enterprise approach to government from now on. It is an interesting option that we will provide take-or-pay. Obviously, that will not be restricted necessarily to the Northern Territory government. As we know, there is to be a very significant establishment - and hopefully establishments - of the federal government in the Northern Territory, principally at Tindal. It will be necessary to transport substantial quantities of materials on a regular basis to Tindal. It may well be that discussions can be entered into with the Commonwealth government in respect of commitments it may be in a position to give, or at least discuss, in relation to its potential use of the railway for such purposes. If the Dibb Report recommendations are implemented, there will be a substantial army presence in the Northern Territory as well as an air force presence, and that will involve very large numbers of personnel indeed. It is also anticipated that they will be based at Katherine. Some of the local residents are getting a bit nervous about the social implications. They can just about cope mentally with the prospect of having the size of their town doubled overnight with air force personnel, but they will probably end up sweeping the streets or carrying garbage cans for the military if the Dibb Report goes ahead. Stationing battalions in Katherine would be an interesting exercise.

Nevertheless, even with the air force base, there will be a substantial Commonwealth presence in the Northern Territory requiring shipments of large amounts of freight. I hope that the equipment that will be based at Tindal will be a little more modern than the equipment on which the material may be

brought up the track otherwise they will be using biplanes and other wooden equipment to match the railway line.

Mr Manzie: Be positive.

Mr B. COLLINS: I am being positive. How positive can I be? I am suggesting that the government begin discussions with the appropriate minister in the federal government to find out how it intends to truck material to Tindal.

Mr Perron: You just went crook about the bulldozing of an old house in Alice Springs and now you are going crook when we want to buy an old train. Be consistent.

Mr B. COLLINS: That is one of the major problems we have in the Northern Territory. We have such second-rate politicians and they keep on wanting to demonstrate that. That is what I cannot understand. If I had that much wind, I would shut up and quit while I was ahead. In respect of that brilliant interjection from the member for Fannie Bay, could I suggest to the government, not that I want to teach my grandmother to suck eggs, that I would be interested in hearing the results of some discussions between this government and the federal government as to the volume of freight which is likely to flow in on a regular basis to Tindal and whether the federal government would be interested in discussing the potential use, on a take-or-pay basis, of the railway to move those essential stores and equipment for the Tindal base.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to see the tabling of this statement in the Legislative Assembly. I believe it is the most realistic assessment of the prospective private railway line we have so far seen. I support the investigation that is being carried out. I have complete faith in the people who are carrying it out and any assistance or support that the opposition can give in presenting a realistic proposal to have that railway line constructed will be given.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement made by the Chief Minister because I believe it is starting to open up the discussion of the potential of the railway into areas that need to be discussed and the Leader of the Opposition has raised some of them this afternoon.

We need to look at this project against the background that 6 Australian state governments today are currently receiving from the Commonwealth government \$3000m per annum by way of Grants Commission recommendations to pay for the operation of state government railways. It has become an accepted fact of life in this country since federation that that level of subsidy be paid to the states. We are breaking away from that tradition by trying to establish a railway that can operate without the level of assistance that the states receive.

We have to do this for 2 reasons. The political reality is that we will not get any warmth from the federal government because we are not of its political persuasion. More importantly, in terms of the future, any thinking Australian has to realise that we cannot continue to spend government money at the present rate. There must be a cloud over the \$3000m that is currently being handed out to the states to subsidise their railways. Does anybody honestly believe that we can continue that level of expenditure every year from now until the end of time as though it were a divine right? The reality is that we are not too far away from the time when the federal government and

the state governments will have to put the knife into the railway vote because there is considerable waste there that cannot be sustained.

In terms of the proposed railway that was put forward by ANR, we would all agree that the proposal was goldplated. ANR was not born yesterday; it knows how to do things in style, because it has been doing them for a long time. It proposed an Alice Springs to Darwin railway with a new route, high standards, high speeds for stock and passengers - all the things that a railway that does not have to make money and can afford to live on the government nipple can do. We cannot do those things.

We have to move away from the accepted norms in railway operations of state governments and bodies like ANR. We must put it on an economic basis and that was the premise underlying the Canadian Pacific proposal. 'If you want to build a railway and run it like everybody else in Australia', Canadian Pacific said to us, 'we are not much good to you, but if you want to run a railway at a profit, we can give you clues on how to do it'.

One of the first things that was identified as something that could not be sustained by an economic railway was the passenger service. The railway would have to be financed by its freight; it would have to stand alone on that basis. If you tried to mix passenger traffic with it, you would have financial disaster. That was brought out into the open as soon as Canadian Pacific made its proposal. We did not have to have it dragged out of us; it is common sense.

I am not despondent about it because I believe that ANR will continue to run Australia-wide passenger services whatever we do in the Northern Territory. I do not believe, when the Alice Springs to Darwin railway is completed and owned by a private company and financed on freight projections, that today's passenger traffic on ANR will stop at Alice Springs because it does not own the 900 miles of rail between Alice Springs and Darwin. In a very short time, ANR will seize upon the capacity to run its passenger trains through to Darwin on much the same basis as it runs them from Sydney to Perth to Alice Springs or wherever. I do not believe that we will miss out on rail passenger traffic but it may be done in a different way than it is being done today.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition reflected on the vision that Territorians had for the railway. In the early days, the railway was promoted as the 5-star, rolled-in-gold, nickel-plated production that would bring warmth to the heart of every citizen because Territorians knew they would not have to pay for it. Now that Territorians are coming to grips with the fact that the railway has to be economic, the ones that I have spoken to are more than keen to look at rational ways of making the railway a goer. Canadian Pacific focused on the matter very quickly. It told us that, if we want economic realism, we have to get away from the things that ANR does. We have to reduce our construction time and take a whole range of measures that will make the railway economic.

That exercise is under way and it is really interesting. I would like to touch on certain aspects because it is very important that our minds do not become fuzzed and blurred by the word 'second-hand' which the Leader of the Opposition used quite often in his remarks, as though it would be really bad for the Northern Territory if we used second-hand rail. Second-hand rail which has never been put on a sleeper happens to be lying all over Australia in hundreds of thousands of tonnes. It has been purchased over the years by state governments for use in their systems. It is rotting away in the middle

of nowhere and it has never had the fortune of a railway car passing over it. That is an Australian resource and a potential supply for the Northern Territory to buy at cheaper rates. Indications suggest that not only is that sort of resource available in Australia but that, in other countries, there are millions of tonnes of second-hand rail in store that has never been used and that people would be happy to sell. If we are to be economic rationalists, we ought to be happy to buy it.

The Leader of the Opposition also referred to the wooden sleepers. This project involves \$150m for rails and \$100m for sleepers. If you can save \$40m or \$50m through the way you purchase your material, you will enhance the economics of the project. Preliminary discussions and investigations suggest that it is possible to import wooden sleepers from many countries in the world for 40% to 50% the price that we would pay for Australian concrete sleepers. We would be unwise to go past that possibility. I would be the first to accept that, if we can use an Australian product and create employment for Australians, then we ought to do that. However, we will not be receiving 2 bits of assistance from the Australian community; we will have to make it on our own. If it is possible to save \$50m by the way we purchase sleepers or rails, we ought to look at that because that is prudent. Whether they are wooden, steel or concrete sleepers does not really matter much in the final analysis. Each material has its good and bad points. If the wooden sleepers enable us to get the project off the ground, then we ought to consider them. If the federal government says that it wants us to use local steel, that is fine but it must help with the additional cost. That is not an unreasonable proposition.

The use of the old alignment is one step that everybody believes now is an appropriate one to take in the Top End, given the nature of the project. If we had been able to have the original Alice Springs to Darwin railway proposal, which gave us a new route out to the west, that would have been fine. However, economics dictate that that is not possible.

The Leader of the Opposition commented on the fact that we may be using second-hand locomotives and second-hand rolling stock on the railway. He inferred that, in some way, that was not really the way to start off the railway.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say that at all.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition may not have said it, but his inference was clear.

I believe, and other people are now putting the view forward, that if we do not buy any rolling stock at all there is enough unused rolling stock in this country that can be put to use on the line that would enable us to move whatever we liked up and down the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. What is the logic of ANR stopping at Alice Springs with all its rolling stock and equipment? Why would it not come to Darwin if the line were there? That would be the logical thing to do. Why does the new railway company have to buy new equipment? It may not have to. It might be quite appropriate to buy some second-hand equipment rather than to buy new equipment, which is the way ANR has done things over a long period of time.

I suggest that employment levels and opportunities in Australia will not be lessened if we build the railway to standards which are a little different to those ANR is now using. ANR has the good fortune of not having to worry about whether it makes a profit or a loss. When it makes a loss, Treasury

gives it another bucket to fix it up. We do not have that luxury. Our railway needs to be conceived on an economic basis, and on the concept of the future land bridge. If we get the land bridge concept into place, considerable employment opportunities will flow from the railway. There is no doubt about that. We need not be pessimistic.

The Leader of the Opposition also touched on the possibility of a railway monopoly. I think that is a pretty valid point. Sooner or later, the question of the impact on road traffic will arise. Will a road tax be used to support the railway? I think that question needs to be addressed very carefully. It is clearly in the minds of many people, and let us not kid ourselves about it. Many operators are frightened that road taxes will drive them off the road and put their freight on the railway. I believe it is time for us to be smart, and to use the concept which has been used in north America for the last 10 to 15 years, and is used with great reluctance in Australia. My own experience with ANR is that it will be as bloody-minded as it can to prevent this. In other parts of the world, piggy-backing of trucks as far as possible on a railway is a hard-fought-for business. The railways are prepared to piggy-back as many trucks as possible. It suits the trucking industry because it gives the drivers the opportunity to have a break. You cannot piggy-back every truck every inch of the way but it certainly is good business, and it certainly is done in other parts of the world.

It is also appropriate, in the context of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition about traffic being taken off the roads and put on the railway, to do a little bit of forward thinking and calculating. We should ask ourselves what it will cost to maintain road systems in the Northern Territory if we do not have a railway and all our freight continues to be delivered by road.

Mr B. Collins: If we do not maintain our roads, we will not have a tourist industry. That is crazy thinking.

Mr TUXWORTH: No, I raise the point because I believe it is valid. We have a very good road system at the moment. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned it in his remarks a few moments ago, and it has taken 10 to 15 years to put that road system into place. Much of the money used to create it was part of the Bicentennial Roads Program. In a couple of years time, that level of funding for roads will not be available. We ought to think about what will happen in the 1990s, when the level of freight increases. The road repair bills will have to increase. The Leader of the Opposition raised the question whether the truckies will survive. Of course they will survive. They are as much a part of Australian life as motherhood and apple-pie. But the important challenge for us is to blend the trucking industry and the railway industry in a constructive way.

The Leader of the Opposition also referred to the take-or-pay contracts. I think that is a very wise approach to use for the financing of the railway. The pipelines from Alice Springs to Darwin and from Palm Valley to Alice Springs are both financed on take-or-pay contracts. These have worked well and, if we had not signed them, we would not have the pipelines. That is good business. Everybody does it, and there is no problem with it. I do not see it as a negative aspect which will have a deleterious impact on people who are currently carting cargo. Take the Carlton United beer contract, for instance. Clearly that would be worth signing as a take-or-pay contract. If you were a railway company, you would not want to win Carlton's business for a year or 2 and then lose it again to the shipping lines. You would want to win it for a long period. It would put many ships out of business, but it would increase

the economic viability of the railway. The freighting of products such as cement, flour, cars, army supplies, armaments and fuel could all be reasonably undertaken on take-or-pay contracts. It would be a very wise step to take.

I would like to reflect again on the piggy-back system, and put my remarks into context. I accept that ANR currently uses the piggy-back system, but it piggy-backs the trailer and not the truck. In other parts of the world, railway companies carry the truck and the trailer, and there is no added freight cost for the products on the back of the truck. That is the difference between what ANR does and what other people do. ANR charges for the payload on the back of the truck and the weight of the trailer. That works against the economics of piggy-backing.

I would like to conclude by saying that we are in early days, and the work being done by the working party is really good. There are many questions that need to be answered, but I would say to members that we are at about the same stage as we were 15 months ago with the pipeline. It will come together if we use our entrepreneurial skills to make it work. That is the challenge for us in the Territory. Other Australians do not have to worry about it. But we can do it successfully, and I have no doubt that the efforts of the working group and the determination of the government will prevail, and we will have the railway.

Debate adjourned.

NATIONAL COMPANIES AND SECURITIES COMMISSION  
(NORTHERN TERRITORY PROVISIONS) BILL  
(Serial 176)  
COMPANIES (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL  
(Serial 181)  
SECURITIES INDUSTRY (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL  
(Serial 177)  
COMPANIES (ACQUISITION OF SHARES)(APPLICATION  
OF LAWS) BILL  
(Serial 174)  
COMPANIES AND SECURITIES (INTERPRETATION AND MISCELLANEOUS  
PROVISIONS) (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL  
(Serial 175)  
COMPANIES (ADMINISTRATION) BILL  
(Serial 173)  
COMPANIES AND SECURITIES (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL  
(Serial 180)

Continued from 26 March 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have qualified for my old age pension waiting for this. This set of 7 bills gives effect to the Territory's agreement to join the National Companies and Securities Scheme, yet another Labor Party initiative that has at last been adopted by this government. One of many. We first proposed that this be done, as the Hansard record shows, in 1983.

There is no point in going into the technical details of the legislation. Suffice it to say that it will set up ..

Mr Perron: It was a Fraser initiative, wasn't it?

Mr B. COLLINS: Have a look at the Hansard.

For the benefit of the member for Fannie Bay, Malcolm Fraser was Prime Minister when the national legislation came in, and the Labor opposition proposed that the Northern Territory should be part of the scheme. We are not like the member for Fannie Bay who, on many occasions, has rejected a proposal purely on the grounds that it was suggested by the Labor Party. If we think a proposal from the conservatives is good, we support it. I have said before that the member for Fannie Bay has been the most consistent knocker, whinger, complainer and opponent of good schemes in the Legislative Assembly. He opposed the TIO and it is there now.

Mr Perron: I reduced it.

Mr B. COLLINS: I know you did. You said it was a lousy idea when the Labor Party proposed it. It would never work. You opposed the TAB, saying the facilities were not there and the radio would not work, but eventually it was introduced. It has been one of my more edifying experiences to watch the member for Fannie Bay eat crow on a consistent number of occasions. Here is another one. What a shame that, through his own actions, he is not in a position to introduce the legislation which is before the Assembly today, and to have the carriage of that legislation.

There is no point in going into the technical details of the legislation because the former Attorney-General, the member for Fannie Bay, did that in his second-reading speech. Suffice it to say that it will set up the uniform provisions with necessary redefinition and interpretation clauses so that it is compatible with Northern Territory legislation.

The legislation is complex. It has been worked on intensively, and I understand that those labours have now reached a conclusion. We know that there is a lengthy amendment schedule, and I thank the minister for giving me advance notice of that yesterday. I can advise the Assembly that we have studied the proposed amendments and we have no objection to any of them. We propose to support the passage of those weighty amendment schedules in the most expeditious manner possible.

The 6 states and the ACT are covered by the National Code. The uniform legislation is the result of a formal agreement executed in 1978. The agreement has always contained specific provision to enable the Territory to become a party. There has always been criticism that the national scheme is too complex and has spawned a large bureaucracy. We believe that that is a valid criticism and we should be aware of it as we join the scheme. However, that does not invalidate the fact that the Territory's current legislation is inadequate and outdated. As he confessed when he introduced this bill, this is just one of a long line of Labor initiatives that the former Attorney-General has finally had to support.

It would be counterproductive to maintain a separate system when all of Australia bar the Northern Territory is part of the national scheme. The benefits for Northern Territory companies wishing to expand into other parts of Australia are obvious as are those for non-Territorian and non-Australian companies which we are trying to attract into the Northern Territory. Once registered in one place within the code, a company is registered for all states and territories. At the moment, Northern Territory companies are foreign companies in other places, and that is about to change. It will be much easier for companies if they have to conform only to one uniform set of regulations.

The opposition first became concerned about the need to join the national scheme in October 1983. That was in connection with the Litchfield Corporation affair. We had a fair bit to say about it then, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will canvass that matter again when he speaks in this debate. Our concern led to a censure motion against the Minister for Mines and Energy on 18 October 1983. It is our belief that, under the National Securities Industry provisions, Litchfield would never have been licensed as a merchant bank.

In March 1984, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised this point in a question without notice when he asked the then Attorney-General, who has become our greatest supporter in the Legislative Assembly, why the Northern Territory had not joined the Uniform Securities Code. The response basically was that there was no funding for it but that the government had written to the federal government about it. The fact that we were already responsible for our own companies' legislation was not addressed by the then Attorney-General.

Five days later, on 12 March 1984, the former Chief Minister announced that a seminar would be held to consider the merits of Territory membership of the NCSC. At the time, Mr Everingham's attitude was quite clear: joining the scheme would involve too much regulation and small investors were already reasonably protected. I say again that the concern that was expressed at the time about the size of the bureaucracy required to administer this legislation, in my view, was valid.

In the meantime, the Palmerston Corporation, a local merchant bank involving some extremely prominent members of the CLP - Richard Ryan, Clyde Adams, V.B. Perkins, Fraser Henry, Neville Walker and so on - was experiencing difficulties. In late March, it was announced that there would be an injection of funds from a Hong Kong syndicate. It was stated publicly that the Chief Minister had met with the group and that the project 'had his blessing'. Within 3 weeks of being given the blessing of the then Chief Minister, the Palmerston Corporation was in provisional liquidation. Three Perth-based credit unions were trying to recover over \$500 000 said to have been invested in the company, and at least one principal of the company is now serving a prison sentence in Western Australia.

Mr Speaker, this did not stop the Chief Minister. Papers were circulated in August 1984 in respect of the seminar on the NCSC to be held in September. The then Chief Minister was still talking about 'eliminating every unnecessary item of government control'. At that time, he was strongly against joining the scheme. He insisted that the Northern Territory would not have voting rights on the ministerial council and would be ruled by a bureaucracy in Melbourne, despite the fact that the matter had not even been negotiated and that it was highly unlikely that we would have been expected to have joined the scheme without full voting rights. Regulation was equated with inhibition of business activity. No concern was ever shown for the investors despite the experiences of the Litchfield and Palmerston Corporations.

The seminar was held in September. No one really raised the problems of creating a separate corporate scheme when the rest of Australia was operating through a uniform code. The then Chief Minister, after the seminar, still spoke of 'taking the handcuffs off business and not tightening the shackles through over-regulation'. He kept referring to the over-regulation and red tape of the NCSC. Nothing was heard for some time and another Chief Minister was indeed elected.



On 2 August 1985, the then Attorney-General announced that the Northern Territory was considering adopting the national code. He pointed out that the Territory legislation needed substantial revision and it was more practical to adopt the national model. Naturally, there was no mention, as there never has been, of his previous objections. Since he was the most vociferous opponent of another Labor Party initiative now to be adopted by the government, the Public Accounts Committee, I was astounded to hear the now Chief Minister say this morning that, having been commissioned by him to conduct an investigation into how public accounts committees operate in other states, the member for Fannie Bay had become an instant convert.

On 28 January 1986, our fantastic Chief Minister, Mr Tuxworth, announced that the Northern Territory had signed the agreement to join the national scheme. He described it as 'a positive step in moves towards statehood'. The Territory would have full voting rights on the council and I for one never doubted that. The then Chief Minister said the move reflected 'the need for more adequate companies and securities control, with the expansion of commerce in the Northern Territory' - sentiments with which the opposition entirely concurs.

For those people who have an academic interest in the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly - and there are few of them - the history of this matter is typical of the way this government handles its responsibilities. It was clear from the end of 1983 that there was a strong need for the Territory to join the national code. That is why we raised the issue at that time. Shortly after we began calling for action on the matter, the government was forced to actually do something. Within days, we had some results. The government announced the matter would be considered. But, what then happened is as I have already outlined. The government took its usual approach. There was no balance or objectivity; it flew at the matter according to the leanings of a few key people.

Mr Speaker, as can be seen graphically in this particular case, the whole approach changed dramatically with the change in personnel. We are now back to where we were 2½ years ago, and that time has been wasted. At least, the government has seen sense and finally arrived at the position we advocated in 1983. We support this legislation wholeheartedly. We only regret the way the government played around with it for so long before getting its act together. We think the 2 debacles that occurred in the Northern Territory could have been avoided completely if the Northern Territory had joined the scheme at the time we suggested.

We have been given prior notice of the substantial amendments that will be introduced. We do not object to any of them. Mr Speaker, we intend to support the expeditious passage of those amendments through the committee stage.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I understand that I can speak to the legislation as a member. I introduced the legislation in a former role. Honourable members, I am advised by the Clerk that I may seek leave to make some comments in regard to legislation currently before the Assembly but without closing debate. Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly to do that.

Leave granted.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said we were back to where we were 2½ years ago and that we should have joined the scheme at that time. That is not strictly correct at all. It is certainly

true that 2½ years ago, if that is the correct time, we could have joined. Indeed, our joining the scheme was requested. The Northern Territory seemed to be some sort of fly in the ointment because it was the only jurisdiction in Australia that refused to join the scheme. After a very long period of debate, all states decided to join. What the Leader of the Opposition totally omitted from his comments was that the proposal for the Northern Territory to join the scheme 2½ years ago was as some sort of second, third or fourth rate member. We did not have the opportunity to be an equal participant with the states of Australia within the scheme. We were to be denied any possibility of voting rights on the forum of the state Attorneys-General which runs the National Companies and Securities Scheme and its legislation.

One of the major changes, which constituted something of a breakthrough, was achieved late in 1985, when the Attorneys-General from the states agreed at the Northern Territory's request that, if the Northern Territory should enter NCSC, it would do so on terms equivalent to the Australian states. That is what has been agreed and is to take place.

That is very important. For the Territory to have entered this scheme without any voting rights would have been potentially very dangerous. It would have meant that, irrespective of what effect amendments to the scheme would have had on the Territory, we would have had no say in relation to them and would have been unable to veto them. We would have surrendered our rights to legislate in the Northern Territory as we saw fit for the administration of companies in the Northern Territory. That is very important because those sorts of rights should not be surrendered easily. We are talking about conditions and controls over corporate affairs in the Northern Territory. That was one of the prime reasons why the Chief Minister at the time took very strong exception to the conditions of entry for the Northern Territory.

When I took over as Attorney-General, the federal Attorney-General raised with me first, informally, the question of when the Northern Territory would join the scheme. At that time, it had been operating for a couple of years and many problems encountered when it was first established had been ironed out. There was great scepticism amongst people, including some of the states which were members, as to whether the scheme would bog down in a massive bureaucratic nightmare or whether it would achieve its objectives. Many changes have been made and there was enormous discussion during those first couple of years. In a sense, by entering the scheme a little later, the Territory will have the benefit of entering a more refined scheme. I think that those matters should go on the record to counter some of the things the Leader of the Opposition said.

I do not think they played an enormous role in our decision, but 2 other facts bore on it. One was that, if the Territory had not entered the scheme, it would have had to undertake a major review of the companies and corporate legislation in the Territory, an exercise which I was advised was quite enormous and would take considerable time. A couple of years would have passed by the time a review was completed, consultations undertaken and legislation passed through this Assembly to establish a revised companies scheme in the Northern Territory. By that time, if the steps that we began tentatively last year in the statehood debate had progressed - and indeed I hope that they will progress over the next couple of years - it could have detracted from the Territory's case that it was the one jurisdiction in Australia which was not a member of NCSC. Thus, in a small way, the decision taken as a result of those considerations encouraged us to join the scheme earlier.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that, during the seminar that was held on NCSC in Darwin a year or 2 ago, no one raised the problems of the Northern Territory conducting its own scheme. From my reading of the transcript of that document, and I am sure that members opposite have the transcript of the speeches made at that seminar, some of those questions were highlighted. Notwithstanding that, it appears that the seminar concluded - though this could be debated - that the Territory should probably stay out of the scheme. That was mainly because many people see the NCSC scheme as very relevant and applicable to the corporate world of public companies, trusts, takeovers and sharemarkets, and perhaps not quite so relevant to the small businessman and the small family companies. I guess the majority of Northern Territory businesses would be small private companies rather than public companies.

However, I am pleased to say that the Chairman of the NCSC, Mr Henry Bosch, has taken it upon himself to review, streamline and deregulate much of the NCSC's activities in so far as its impositions on business are concerned. Certainly, the plight of small businesses has been considered and an effort has been made in the legislation to minimise the documentation required of them. New short forms, annual returns and so on have been developed already and will be introduced in the Northern Territory from 1 July this year.

Thus, there are advantages in not having gone into the scheme when it was first established. I do not think very much has been lost. I feel sorry for persons who had their fingers burnt in relation to the 2 companies mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. However, I see that the Territory is moving forward now and on terms equal to the other Australian states.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think this is an example of where the best possible course is to be a part of Australia and not to go and do our own thing. As I have said on a number of occasions, it is something that we should have been in before. I think the honourable member for Fannie Bay is only half right when he says that 2½ years ago the offer was not up to scratch. Rather, I think the attitude of both the government and most businesses in the Northern Territory which prevailed at that time, and which was expressed here and at that seminar, was very firmly against the NCSC. I will never forget the former adviser to the former Chief Minister, Lex Silvester, who had the carriage of that seminar and who delivered a keynote speech. I will never forget that speech, because he was virtually frothing at the mouth as he delivered it ...

Mr Perron: He still is.

Mr SMITH: ...so intent was he on opposing entry into the national scheme. It was one of the most rabid speeches I have heard from anybody on anything. It was very much: 'Let's keep out of the scheme. Let's keep the feds out. Let's cut the red tape. Let's go and do our own thing'. It was not an attitude that I supported at that stage, and I am pleased that the government has changed.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the member for Fannie Bay in that particular matter because it is my guess that had anybody else in the government been the Attorney-General during the government's discussion of this matter, we might not be at this stage today. I think the member for Fannie Bay has done the Northern Territory proud in the way he seized the nettle and brought us into the 20th century in terms of company legislation. I acknowledge that some of the concerns expressed at the seminar were about

whether the small companies structure in the Northern Territory fitted into what the National Companies and Securities Commission was attempting. I am pleased that those concerns have been allayed. I must say in passing that Tony Greenwood, who represented the commission at that seminar, was a very forceful and persuasive speaker and, certainly, he went a long way towards persuading me that there were more benefits than disadvantages to be gained from being part of the scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition referred to a couple of examples where things had gone wrong in the Northern Territory in relation to certain companies. He mentioned the Litchfield Corporation and the Palmerston Corporation. Those 2 incidents particularly raised the profile of the matter from our point of view and made us ask a series of questions 2 or 3 years ago about what was happening about joining the national scheme, because it was quite clear that the Companies Act of the Northern Territory was not working properly to prevent the sorts of things that went wrong with Litchfield and Palmerston Corporation.

To refresh your memory, Mr Deputy Speaker, on some of the major problems with the Palmerston Corporation, I want to read part of the liquidator's report. This report was prepared for creditors of the corporation. It was drawn up on 30 April and presented to the creditors' meeting on 30 May this year. As well as providing the history of what went wrong, it poses a number of pertinent questions about what action, if any, this government is taking on a couple of matters raised in it. I will come to those at the end. On page 1, in relation to the history of the company and the nature of the business, the liquidator said:

The Palmerston Corporation Limited was incorporated on 17 November 1981, and formed or acquired 5 subsidiaries. The group, hereinafter called Palmerston, carried on business as a merchant bank. Palmerston, in breach of its securities licence, engaged in property development and speculation. Financial statements were not presented in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards nor audited in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act. The auditor, at the time of my appointment, was unregistered and a bankrupt.

On page 3, it comments upon the statement of affairs and the realisation of assets, specifically assets not specifically charged. Then it goes on to talk about sundry debtors. There are loan debtors of \$10 000, which I will not mention, but there is a very important item, 'Share and Premium Calls \$231 300'. I quote:

I have written to all shareholders and former shareholders of Palmerston to pay the unpaid calls. To date, I have received replies from the former shareholders who are still solvent that they deny liability. I have instructed my solicitors to proceed with legal action for recovery of the outstanding amounts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are talking about a sum of \$231 300, a sum that the liquidator believes shareholders and former shareholders of that corporation are responsible for and should pay. It is important because some of those shareholders are still involved in business activities in Darwin at this stage. I understand that it is a matter on which discussions have been held between the liquidator and the Companies Office in the Northern Territory and, as I said, I will come to that matter later.

The liquidator then deals with some advances to clients. The Palmerston Corporation really managed to pick some beauties:

Oceanic Communications Pty Ltd - \$43 340. Oceanic Communications Pty Ltd was a company associated with the director of Palmerston and this loan was shown to be fully recoverable in the statement of affairs. I was only able to recover \$10 000 prior to appointing a receiver and manager to the company. I believe that I will only receive approximately one half of the loan from the receiver and manager. I will then exercise the personal guarantees that Palmerston is holding for the outstanding balance.

Hendry Constructions - \$56 932. The statement of affairs shows that this loan is to be recoverable to the extent of \$20 000. Palmerston had advanced funds to Hendry Constructions Pty Ltd and had also acted as guarantor for contracts. The security that Palmerston held in this matter has been found to be unenforceable and inadequate. Hendry Constructions Pty Ltd has been placed into liquidation and is without assets.

David Miller - \$183 808. David Miller was a director of Palmerston at the date of my appointment. The statement of affairs shows that none of this loan is recoverable. Mr Miller has subsequently been tried and sentenced to 4 years jail and been declared bankrupt. To the best of my knowledge, David Miller has no funds and no recovery is possible.

P. and N. Kelly - \$10 000. The directors in their statement of affairs estimate that this amount is recoverable in full. I have not yet been able to recover any part of this loan. I have instructed my solicitors to proceed with legal action for collection.

M. Henry - \$48 748. The directors' statement of affairs shows this loan to be unrecoverable and this matter is now subject to a special investigation. I believe that this is a fictitious loan used to finance the sale and purchase of shares in Palmerston.

Investments. The statement of affairs discloses a loan to a subsidiary called Commercial Factor Corporation Pty Ltd of \$29 919, which is shown to be unrecoverable. On my appointment, I took control of the subsidiary company and have not been able to locate any assets.

On page 6, in relation to the preparation of the statement of affairs, the liquidator makes this comment:

The directors made an error in the preparation of this section of the statement of affairs. An amount of \$348 743 was disclosed as being available to unsecured creditors. The correct amount should have been \$10 923.

On page 10, it refers to a special audit.

The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory has ordered that I conduct a special audit into the affairs of the company prior to my appointment. This audit is nearing finalisation and the results are being discussed with officers of the Companies Office. The findings of this audit may enable the creditors of Palmerston to take action

against some or all of the former directors of the company for insolvent trading, and recovery of any shortfall of their debt.

This brings me to a very important concern of mine. Insolvency trading is a very serious offence against the national securities legislation and, I think, our Companies Act. It occurs when a company books up debts in the knowledge that it does not have the surety to pay them. In this document, the liquidator states that there is a good chance that some former shareholders and former directors of the Palmerston Corporation may have been engaged in insolvency trading. He further states that discussions about these matters have been held with officers of the Northern Territory Companies Office. Further on, under the heading of 'insolvency administration', he says:

The commercial recovery and investigation aspects of my administration are nearing completion. I now envisage complex legal litigation will be necessary for further recovery. I also believe all avenues for possible recovery by way of insolvent trading should be evaluated.

According to the liquidator's report on the Palmerston Corporation, we have a very tangled web involving various shareholders and directors. The liquidator's comments refer to the misdeeds of the second wave of directors and shareholders after the initial, locally-based directors and shareholders sold out their shares. People like Mr Miller, who served some time in jail, Mr Emmett and Mr Jackson, who are not actually referred to by name but who were involved, have been dealt with by the liquidator and the law. My concern is that there appear to be some questions remaining concerning the operations of the first wave of shareholders. Quite clearly, those shareholders sold out to the second wave of shareholders. They are, however, still in business and still operating in other capacities in the Northern Territory. The main charges the liquidator is making against these people are, firstly, that they have failed to pay their share and premium calls, resulting in a loss of income to the company of around \$231 000 and, secondly, there is a prospect that they might have been involved in insolvency trading. As I have said, this is a very serious offence indeed.

I would ask the Attorney-General, either in his response today or before the conclusion of these sittings of the Assembly to answer some specific questions. Is the government aware of the liquidator's report dated 30 April? Has the Companies Office been involved in the investigations of the activities of former directors of Palmerston Corporation, particularly in relation to share and premium calls and insolvency trading? Does the government have any plans to consider action against former directors of the Palmerston Corporation on these matters under the terms of the Companies Act? I can only repeat that these are very serious matters. They do concern quite large sums of money and I think it is in the interests of everybody, particularly people who invested money in the Palmerston Corporation, that answers to these questions be given.

To relate that to the legislation before us, we had people in the Northern Territory who, in good faith, committed quite large sums of money to the operations of the Palmerston Corporation. It appears that the Palmerston Corporation somehow or other was able to escape through the net that existed at that time in the Northern Territory. Hopefully, by throwing out our existing legislation and coming under the National Securities legislation, we will prevent those sorts of occurrences in future. We will create a climate where people in the Northern Territory can have confidence that merchant banks and other investment companies operating here are properly registered and

properly supervised so that people do not lose their money overnight. From the layman's point of view, this is the protection we will get under the national securities legislation. There will be greater certainty and confidence amongst potential investors in the Northern Territory, that their investments here will be safe.

There are also numerous advantages for companies themselves. These have been spelt out quite adequately by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Fannie Bay so there is no need for me to go over them. I conclude by stating, once again, that the opposition fully supports this legislation.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I am extremely delighted that the members of the opposition are giving such unqualified support ...

Mr B. Collins: We proposed it!

Mr FINCH: ...and I would imagine that their constructive contributions will delight all members. I am even more pleased to see that they have not spoilt their track record by trying to offer any constructive support for the bill. All they have sought to do is to once again falsely claim some credit...

Mr B. Collins: Right. We will take you through clause by clause in committee. How constructive do you want us to be?

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not be threatened by such remarks. I am also very pleased to hear that once again the opposition's solution to problems is to create more red tape and more bureaucracy, and I was pleased to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition use those phrases.

There is no doubt that the National Companies and Securities Commission Bill is a very complex and complicated piece of legislation, and so it needs to be. In that context, the previous Attorney-General was more than justified in taking a quite deliberate and reasonable approach to such a complex proposal.

A great number of things have happened since this legislation was first suggested. Our entry into the scheme was first proposed in 1978 and the member for Fannie Bay pointed out quite clearly to members opposite, who are failing to listen once again, that the conditions attached to the initial offer were totally unacceptable. I dread the thought of our having entered into the scheme on the conditions offered then. We would not have had the slightest say in the conditions and regulations pertaining to this uniform legislation.

Mr B. Collins: Which ones didn't you like?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will be heard in silence. Continual interjections will not be tolerated.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I shall try to continue to be constructive in my approach to this matter. I point out to members opposite that a number of things have happened since their initial suggestion that we should join this scheme. There has been a substantial amount of finetuning of the uniform legislation. There have been other matters such as the positive commitment by the new chairman to minimise bureaucracy. That is what this government is all about: maintaining the absolute minimum amount of regulation and bureaucracy, to allow our business to get on with the job in hand. The Northern Territory

business community was still in its infancy in 1978. Since then, we have seen rapid progress in the development of business. At the moment, we have still only a handful of Northern Territory companies listed on the stock exchange - 25 public companies. With the implementation of the Trade Development Zone, manufacturing is increasing, and mining, if given more support by the federal government, will continue to grow and prosper. Business activity in the Northern Territory has increased to a level which justifies the move taken by the previous Attorney-General earlier this year.

This is significant legislation in that it is nationally uniform. However, within that framework, there is provision for each of the states and the Territory to have specific clauses that apply to local conditions. Benefits will result from this well-considered entry into the scheme. The business community is extremely mobile. With increased communication and transportation, companies from interstate and within the Territory operate across the state boundaries. Uniform legislation will aid the operation of businesses. In accepting the benefits of the legislation - and this is a point that members of the opposition might dwell on - we need to acknowledge that we are accepting the constraints of uniform legislation. It is a matter of all or nothing; there is no half way. Any amendments to the legislation or regulations relating thereto need to have the consent of all members of the Ministerial Council.

This legislation comes under the auspices of an executive as opposed to amendments undergoing full parliamentary scrutiny. It was the subject of some discussion at the recent Australian Subordinate Legislation Chairmen's Conference in Brisbane. The matter was referred to by Professor Dennis Pearce when he identified a number of specific features of the NCSC. One of the concerns was that regulations recommended by bureaucrats do not come under the scrutiny of subordinate legislation committees. In other words, the watchdogs of the people, delegated legislation committees, do not have the opportunity to comment on such regulations. There was some suggestion that possibly the Senate committee could be given an informal opportunity to preview such regulations prior to their being finalised.

Mr Deputy Speaker, despite the negative crowings of the opposition ...

Mr Bell: We were positive.

Mr FINCH: If that is as positive as our opposition can get, it is no wonder that people despair of its contributions on behalf of the business community. The previous Attorney-General was quite correct in deliberating and waiting until the Territory had full rights under the proposed agreements. I commend the legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, before the member for Millner spoke, I thought that today we were to debate the national companies and securities legislation. However, what I gathered from his speech is that we were hearing a history of the Palmerston Corporation. I could not for the life of me understand what the Palmerston Corporation's history had to do with ...

Mr B. Collins: I am prepared to believe that.

Mr SETTER: I am well aware of the history of the Palmerston Corporation. What I am saying to you is that I do not know what it has to do with the bills before us today. In fact, he plunged into a great diatribe about the Palmerston Corporation. With the enthusiasm that he displayed, I fully



expected that he would end up frothing at the mouth like one of the other persons to whom he referred earlier. I was pleased to note that this did not occur. He managed to control himself, but suddenly he plunged into question time. Now I can assure the honourable member that question time normally occurs shortly after 10 am each sitting day. I am quite sure ...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member must make what he is saying relevant to the bills that are being discussed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SETTER: Question time is normally held shortly after 10 am. I am quite sure that, if the member for Millner would like to ask his questions of the minister concerned, he will receive answers at that time instead of wasting the time of the Assembly during this debate.

The 7 bills before us relate to the introduction of a system of control of companies and securities in the Northern Territory. It is indeed complementary to legislation in the Commonwealth and the states. It has been a long road to bring us to the point of passing this legislation today and I do not think there would be any disagreement with that. In 1974, a Senate select committee proposed a uniform national system of regulation. That recommendation was taken up by the Commonwealth and, in 1978, a formal agreement was executed. The Northern Territory chose not to be a party to that agreement at that time.

Why, Mr Deputy Speaker? Because we would have joined with unequal rights. We would not have had the right to vote on a Ministerial Council. Of course, unequal rights are nothing new to people in the Northern Territory. In many issues, we face that every day of our working lives. It is indeed interesting to consider the reasons why we might have been excluded from voting. Whatever rational reasons various Commonwealth public servants might have had for suggesting that the Territory not be allowed to vote on decisions of the NCSC, there is an underlying and disturbing factor which deserves examination. It is an attitude towards the Territory by the Commonwealth which has seen our land given away despite our protests and our resources left to rot in the ground despite our willingness to develop them, and our communities used as playgrounds for its social experiments despite our own knowledge of what is best for us as Territorians. It is still going on.

It is pleasing to note that, with regard to the Ministerial Council, the Commonwealth finally realised its error and agreed to allow the Territory to be represented with the same voting rights as all other delegates. It is high time that the Canberra bureaucrats realised we will no longer be treated as second-class Australians. We demand our rights as full citizens and the Hawkes, Keatings, Walshes, Holdings and Cohens of this world should take note of that.

On 28 January 1986, the Chief Minister signed the formal agreement to join the scheme. From that time, the Territory has been represented on the Ministerial Council. However, having become a signatory, it was necessary for us to pass complementary legislation in order to comply with the requirements of the agreement.

The 7 bills before us today will come into operation from 1 July 1986 and therefore fall in line with the commencement of the financial year. I believe we are taking a very important step with the passing of this legislation

because we will gain legislative uniformity with the Commonwealth and the states whilst not being obliged to surrender any constitutional power. Let's face it, our existing constitutional powers are limited enough and therefore the loss of any rights would not be acceptable.

Whilst the Attorney-General detailed the provisions of the bills, it is worth noting some of the effects. There will be some differences to the legal responsibilities of Northern Territory companies. Essentially, procedures for lodgement of basic incorporation documents will be much the same and the annual return to be lodged by a company will be in a simpler form. Directors and other officers should particularly note the general tighter provisions relating to their responsibilities. A person who is insolvent shall not be a director promoter, nor be involved in the management of a company without leave of the court. That is a very important provision because too often we have seen people go into liquidation and, 5 minutes later, start up a company around the corner. Furthermore, a person guilty of certain criminal offences such as fraud or dishonest practices, punishable by 3 months imprisonment or more, shall not be a director-promoter nor be involved with management of the company within 5 years after conviction without leave of the court. An officer of the company, including a director, secretary or executive officer, shall at all times act honestly in the exercise of his powers and discharge of the duties of office. If he fails to do that, the penalty for such offences varies from \$5000 to \$20 000, depending on whether the offence was committed with the intention to deceive. An officer of a company, including a director, secretary or executive officer, shall at all times exercise a reasonable degree of care in the exercise of his powers and the discharge of his duties.

Stricter provisions also apply relating to loans to directors and disclosure of interest. The prohibition on a company having and dealing in its own shares has also been tightened. Powers of inspection of companies have been strengthened, as have provisions relating to offences by officers. Scales of penalties for offences are substantially increased and this is a very good thing indeed.

A new shorter annual return, form 66, has been prepared, which should apply Australia-wide from 1 July 1986, though for a 12-month period, the existing form 66 of the scheme can be used. The Companies Office will be allowing a 3-month period in which the old forms, used under the existing Companies Act, can also be lodged. Under the new form, a director or a principal or executive officer will be required to certify that the information contained in the annual return is true to the best of that person's knowledge and belief. That is a stricter certification than that which presently applies.

At the moment, a Northern Territory company wishing to operate interstate has to register separately in each state of its operation and lodge documentation in each state. Under the national scheme, a Northern Territory firm will be able to seek interstate registration through the Northern Territory Corporate Affairs Office. The local office will find out if the company name is available in other states and, after incorporation, the company will have to lodge documentation in the Northern Territory only.

To provide effective administration, the Territory will establish a Corporate Affairs Office, separate from the Registrar-General's Office, but incorporating the existing Companies Office. Although it is not possible to detail all the provision of these bills at this time, I am sure that members will agree there are considerable improvements over existing legislation, and these will be widely accepted in the community and, in particular, the

business community. Mr Speaker, I support the bills and commend them to members.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would just like to report to members that, as the Attorney-General, I now have responsibility for carriage of these bills in the Assembly. I certainly thank all members for their comments, as this is very important legislation.

Some concern was expressed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in regard to the problems of the Palmerston Corporation and their outcome. I can only say that the matter was referred to a liquidator by the Supreme Court and, as a result, the matter has been brought to the attention of the Companies Office and is being examined by that office. If any further detail is required, I can provide that information to him later or, if he wishes, I can provide it to the Assembly. I do not have full details with me at the moment. I think the point being made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was that this was a set of circumstances which arose under the existing legislation which will not occur under this new legislation. I do not think that even the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be so naive as to believe that legislation will prevent people from doing the wrong thing. I believe the new legislation will enable tighter control over these matters and possibly improve investigative powers, but it will not stop wrongdoing. We will still have situations like those described by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly today.

Another point which has been made several times is that circumstances in the Territory when this legislation was first introduced nationally were not such as to put us on an equal footing with the other states. That matter has been resolved, and the former Attorney-General did a tremendous amount of work in that regard. In addition, the government had to take some notice of the views expressed at a business seminar in 1984 which indicated that, in general, businesses did not wish to become involved in the national scheme. However, I believe all members of the Assembly are of the same opinion that, in this day and age, with much improved communications, transport, and business sophistication in the Territory, we certainly need to be part of the Australian scene and we cannot stand alone.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

See minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, earlier in these sittings, I moved a motion to establish a Public Accounts Committee. In my speech in reply to his Honour the Administrator, I acknowledged that the government has a responsibility to ensure that we expend public funds in an efficient and effective way, and the community demands no less. I must admit that there is a need for government to prune functions and tighten public expenditure to make the most effective use of the taxpayers' dollars. In addition, I announce that the government is committed not only to greater efficiency but also to greater accountability in its affairs.

In recent years, there has been increased interest by the electorate and media in committees established by the Commonwealth and most of the state parliaments in relation to finance and accounting. These committees are

involved in various ways in ensuring that not only the respective governments comply with the formal provisions and regulations circumscribing accountability, but also that value for money is obtained from the relevant expenditures.

Unlike the Auditor-General and the Public Service Board which have been created by this Assembly to exercise particular facets of control, the Public Accounts Committee is to be a committee of parliamentarians, an extension of the parliament, and invested with some of the parliament's authority. The committee will exercise control by criticism and public report, not by directive. To achieve this, it will scrutinise, by annual inquiry and regular review, the manner in which departments expend the moneys allocated to them by this Assembly. To a large degree, this follows the pattern of procedures set by the United Kingdom Committee of Public Accounts, which was created in 1861. It will also be charged with the duty to report to the parliament anything of sufficient importance which has arisen from these examinations. By this means, the work of the Auditor-General may not pass unnoticed, and various departments may be called to account for irregularities and defaults thus reported. Also, the committee has the duty to report to the parliament any alterations which, in its opinion, should be made to the form of public accounts, or in the methods of keeping them, or in the mode of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys. This Assembly, the Administrator or a minister may refer any question in connection with public accounts to the committee for report. Such references from ministers, the Administrator or this Assembly provide an opportunity for the committee to assist this government in its announced intention to minimise the inefficient use of money by government, and help us to identify ways in which we can be cost-effective in the provision of services.

The first report of the Auditor-General to be considered by the Public Accounts Committee will be for the year ending 30 June 1986. The committee will be able to consider matters in that report, which have or may have a continuing effect on the form of the public accounts, or the method of keeping them, or the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys. In addition, the committee may inquire, in the same terms, into the affairs of a public authority in the Northern Territory.

Many clauses in the proposed standing order are procedural, and I will not canvass those here. I note the membership of the first committee, and support the chairmanship of the member for Fannie Bay. As all members are aware, the member was the first Treasurer of the Northern Territory and he served in that position from 1978 until 1984. I am sure that his experience and counsel will prove invaluable to the committee.

The establishment of a public accounts committee is a significant event in the maturity of this parliament, and I wish the committee well in its deliberations.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, the opposition has persistently argued that the Northern Territory needs a Public Accounts Committee, and needs it because it is a tool for better government. I am pleased that the Chief Minister agrees with us. It will be interesting to hear the member for Fannie Bay say this himself but, apparently, he has been struck on the road to Doctor's Gully, and he is now a convert to the concept. Perhaps he can tell us what struck him, whether it was a dead mullet, lightning, a thunderbolt or whatever. Certainly, it is one of the most amazing conversions that I have seen in a political career. It will be very interesting to watch him in action as the chairperson of this committee.

I believe that the main work of the committee will not be in the controversial area of exposing alleged government corruption and or ineptitude. Its main work will be in improving efficiency in the delivery of services of the government as I think that members of the committee will find that, quite often, it will not be an exciting and glamorous task but rather an onerous one. If the job is done properly, it will demand careful attention to detail. It will develop amongst the members of the committee a bipartisan approach to their task. Certainly, that is the feeling that has developed in such committees in the Commonwealth and the states. It is quite unusual for them to submit majority and minority reports. As I understand it, in most instances, they submit unanimous reports. This is because they are able to bury political differences and are united by the opportunity as representatives of the parliament to investigate aspects of government and recommend how government may be more effective in its delivery of services.

In my view, an efficient and effective Public Accounts Committee requires certain important criteria to be fulfilled. It needs to be able to determine the things that it looks at. It needs to be able to call on persons and papers. It needs to be able to look beyond a straight ledger approach to government - in other words, examining the incomings and the outgoings - to the concept of an efficiency audit. This involves examining how the money is spent by departments, whether it is spent effectively, whether it can be spent more effectively and whether its expenditure has advanced the interests of people in the Northern Territory. It needs - and this is an omission in the present motion - the capacity to report annually to parliament. That is the only way that we can guarantee that the operations of the Public Accounts Committee will be discussed at least once a year by this parliament and an ongoing assessment made of the effectiveness of the committee.

The other important point that I want to stress is the concept of an efficiency audit. To make my position clear, I want to read into the record part of a document headed 'Notes for Public Information on the 15th Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts'. This is a federal committee. I think it indicates succinctly what such a committee should be doing:

Over the years, the committee has pursued a vigorous program of inquiry into the financial operations of Commonwealth departments and statutory authorities. In this work, which is in the nature of an efficiency audit, the committee is searching for value for money spent and is concerned to establish whether the department or authority under examination is adequately organised to implement the policies of government that fall within its area of responsibility.

It should be emphasised that the committee does not question the adequacies of policies laid down by the government but is concerned with their administrative implementation. In any inquiry that it conducts, therefore, the committee must have a clear understanding of the policies of government that underlie the operations of the department or the statutory authority involved.

In these circumstances, the committee asks public servants and officers of statutory authorities to inform it of the particular government policies which they are required to administer, but it does not ask them to express opinions on the adequacy of those policies. It is not unusual to find, however, that, in the implementation of government policies, the departments and statutory authorities develop administrative policies. These are matters which the committee regards as clearly within its purview and it examines

public servants and officers of statutory authorities on the nature, purpose and justification of policies they have so developed.

I believe that is an appropriate term of reference for this committee to follow. The significance of a Public Accounts Committee in other places is quite considerable. I want to read a few of the investigations that the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts has undertaken in the last few years. These include: an investigation into the government aircraft factories and into the Department of Industries and Commerce; an investigation into the form and standard of financial statements for Commonwealth undertakings; an efficiency audit on the administration of bilateral aid; an investigation into the selection and development of senior managers in the Commonwealth Public Service; and an inquiry into medical fraud and overservicing which resulted in a saving to the Commonwealth of millions of dollars.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure, which has similar terms of reference, has looked at the Australian National Railways Commission, lighthouses, payments to athletes and teams who did not participate in the Moscow games and management of the main battle tank. One that would have particular reference to the Northern Territory is Telecom's zonal charging policies. That underscores the point I was making earlier: they look at a wide range of issues. In the main, these are not controversial items of the day, but issues that are very important indeed in terms of delivering a better form of government to the people of Australia.

The medical fraud and overservicing inquiry is still proceeding. There is a current inquiry into project management in the Department of Defence and I think we may have started to see some of the results of that in the statements that the federal Minister for Defence made when announcing the Dibb Report. He indicated that the 3 arms of the defence forces would be brought together and a new position of Vice-Chief Marshall has been created.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure is looking at the moment at public service efficiency review mechanisms, civil coastal surveillance coordination, a review of Auditor-General's efficiency audit reports on the Overseas Telecommunication Commission's control over manpower and property, collection of sales tax by the Australian Taxation Office and processing and assessing of income and interest disclosed in income tax returns. Those are just a few of the inquiries that these government committees are presently involved in. Obviously, because they have more members and more resources allocated to them than it is proposed that this committee will have, they can do far more than we are likely to be able to do. I am not suggesting that this committee will undertake such a wide range of functions at any one time. What I am suggesting is that the field is open to it to become involved in a wide range of activities if it so desires and where it is so instructed by the Administrator or the Assembly.

I have said that I believe that it will be possible for this committee to operate in a bipartisan way. Hopefully, that will be the case. I must express some concern, however, that the government has seen fit to nominate for the committee 2 members who, until recently, were ministers of the government. Quite naturally, from their point of view, there will be some reservation about becoming involved in areas for which they previously had ministerial responsibility. I am encouraged by the reported remarks of the honourable member for Fannie Bay; he has not as yet committed himself. I hope that he is in a position where he can make positive statements about the Public Accounts Committee because I believe that it is a very important committee indeed and it is important that it do its job properly.

Mr B. Collins: You are so gullible.

Mr SMITH: You have to put the best light on these things.

Mr Speaker, the terms of reference for the committee are based quite closely on the existing terms of reference for the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts at the federal level. There are 1 or 2 minor changes but, in my view, they are not significant. However, I propose to move an amendment to clause 2.

I move that, after paragraph 2(e) of proposed standing order 21(A), a new paragraph be inserted: '(f) consider and report to the Legislative Assembly how, if at all, the administration of government programs and policies may be carried out more efficiently, effectively and economically'.

I move this not because it widens the terms of reference that the federal committee has been operating under, but because it states in very clear and simple English what, in effect, the committee will do. In my view, the wording in clause 2 does not quite spell that out as clearly and as simply as this paragraph does. This additional paragraph could solve a number of jurisdictional arguments over what the committee may or may not be able to do. I do not believe that it will extend the existing terms of reference as laid down and as interpreted by the federal committee. However, I believe that it says in simple English what the committee will be proceeding to do in the next few months.

My other concern relates to clause 3. Without being provocative about it, clause 3 will make it very difficult for the Public Accounts Committee to operate in any meaningful way in its first few months and possibly even in the first few months of next year. One of the important things the committee can do under clause 3 is look at the reports of the Auditor-General. We all know that we are unlikely to see any of the Auditor-General's reports before the November sittings at best. We are still waiting to see some of the Auditor-General's reports from the last financial year. That will be very slow reference indeed.

I am pleased that the Chief Minister, by interjection, is indicating that he intends to refer some matters to the committee for examination. I hope that they are meaningful references and that they will not be designed to clog the committee up with meaningless work or to prevent it from looking at more meaningful and perhaps more interesting areas.

I conclude by saying that we are pleased that the government, after numerous attempts by this opposition, has seen fit to introduce a Public Accounts Committee. With 3 exceptions, on which we will move amendments, we are pleased with the way that the terms of reference and its conditions of operation have been framed. We look forward to joining with the government members of the Public Accounts Committee in operating the committee in a way that will lead to more efficient and effective government in the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, the question I should address first is my reported support for such a committee, after spending a number of hours over several years speaking in this Assembly against the formation of such a committee. Honourable members who follow debate closely would be aware that on a number of occasions the government has said that it saw the formation of such a committee as an event which would happen in time. Indeed, I think a time was put on it, though it was not met, 2 or 3 years ago.

However, we acknowledge that, after a period spent in establishing procedures and getting on its feet, the new Territory government - and we must consider that that is what it is relatively - should have the same or similar protections, if that is what they are, in the form of a Public Accounts Committee or some similar body as other parliaments. I do not see very much point in being in any way embarrassed at having spoken against the formation of such committees in the past, and now saying that I believe the time is appropriate for the formation of such a committee. The new Chief Minister believes that it is a significant step forward. I am fully prepared to accept that it will be and I will work hard to ensure that the committee achieves its objectives of assisting the Assembly and the government so that, as the member for Millner said, the Northern Territory government will achieve more for its outlays.

Mr Speaker, I should touch on the terms of reference because this is the aspect that appears to be a little sensitive or, even worse, a little grey. I will deal first with the terms of reference as laid down in the motion. As the member for Millner said, they are similar to those pertaining to the Commonwealth parliamentary accounts committee. The terms of reference indicated in clause 2 are similar to those applying to such committees in virtually every state in Australia except Victoria, whose committee has unusually broad terms of references. Most states in Australia have virtually identical wording to that before honourable members now in paragraphs 2(a), (b) and (c). In other ways, however, the states and the Commonwealth differ.

I have only found one reference to the words proposed in an amendment by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the words dealing with efficiency, effectively and economically. Those words are not used in terms of reference in any of the states or the Commonwealth PAC. They apply to the Commonwealth's Estimates Committee. The Commonwealth PAC is established under an act, whereas the Estimates Committee is established under standing orders. As I understand it, a clause is contained in its terms of reference relating to efficiency and effectiveness.

From the reading I have done on the subject, it appears that most of these committees began as mere audit checking mechanisms - 'flick and tick', as it was described to me by the New South Wales secretary to the committee. They followed up the Auditor-General's reports, checked the occasional figure here and there and examined in more detail matters about which the Auditor-General may have been somewhat critical. That was a long time ago. In fact, public accounts committees were established by parliaments before there was such an officer as the Auditor-General. Why public accounts committees did not disappear when Auditors-General were created, I am not sure. Obviously, they performed quite similar functions.

However, over a period of time, the function of public accounts committees in some places evolved beyond merely checking figures, investigating discrepancies, recommending changes in procedures and reporting. Some committees now adopt what is called an efficiency audit approach. This has presented some dangers and obviously has occasioned considerable nervousness in state governments. They are concerned about parliamentary committees, particularly joint committees, making judgments about policy. I accept that we are not talking about judgments about recommendations on whether policies should be changed, but value judgments. I will read a few lines from a report which I have, and it may be the same report from which the member for Millner quoted. This is a copy of a public service training document about a committee, written by a David Reid who was formerly with the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts. On the subject of the shifting emphasis of the committee he had this to say:



By adopting the efficiency audit approach, the committee faces difficult problems involving value judgments. Once the purely legal and mechanical audit approach is abandoned, one is necessarily involved in asking about the reasons for actions, in assessing the relative merits of alternatives and in making a judgment upon them.

In that area lies a potential danger of conflict. That conflict would not be between the committee and the parliament because, obviously, a committee can do whatever parliament says it can do. However, there is the possibility of conflict because government may become unduly suspicious of the committee's activities and its potential. I am not limiting that to the Northern Territory because it is quite clear that there is some suspicion along those lines in the states. Indeed, in the terms of reference for the large and active committee in New South Wales, for example, there is no mention at all of costs and benefits or of government activity being carried out more economically.

I want to make the point that, by and large, the terms of reference of all such committees around Australia are similar to those proposed for this committee. There is no such reference for the committees in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Only the Commonwealth has such a reference and that pertains to the Standing Committee on Public Expenditure, not the Public Accounts Committee. Obviously, however, the states still manage to do their work and, through their audit approach, they cover elements of government waste, inefficiency and government overexpenditure in areas. For example, the government may have purchased more stores than it needed. All PACs appear to have become involved in such areas gradually.

I do not see such a committee in the Northern Territory being unable to become involved in such areas. However, I do not care for the terms of the honourable member's amendments which, in such a blatant fashion, propose that the committee has the right to examine government programs and policies to determine whether they are carried out efficiently, effectively and economically. I refer particularly to judgments in relation to 'effectively' as distinct from 'efficiently'. There is a very important difference there, of course, and it is an area that could lead to trouble.

What is envisaged by the government, in proposing the terms of reference in this form, is that clause 2(d) gives the government, the minister and the Assembly, the ability to refer to the committee any question relating to public accounts in any way. Obviously, that could relate to all the matters that the honourable member refers to in his proposed amendments. However, the difference between these proposals boils down to whether the committee itself should be able to determine that it will go on a fishing expedition to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of a particular government policy and the way it is administered or whether it can only do so as a result of a reference from the minister or from the Assembly itself. That is a difference.

In saying that, obviously I am not saying that the the first 3 terms of reference will limit the committee purely to a flick-and-tick exercise.

Mr Smith: We will withdraw our support then.

Mr PERRON: I have a copy of the terms of reference for all PACs in the Australian states. I am happy to supply a copy to members. We know the work that the committees undertake, and our committee will be able to perform the same functions. It will be able to follow matters up in great detail, call for relevant papers, call for witnesses and examine them, and virtually send them to jail if they refuse to be examined on virtually any subject ...

Mr Leo: But it will not be able to make remedial recommendations.

Mr PERRON: ... relating to the payment, receipt and handling of public funds.

Mr Leo: But can it make recommendations on remedies?

Mr PERRON: Of course it can. As I say, we have seen what the state committees do and it will be able to do the same. What it will not be able to do, unless it is referred to it, is to investigate a matter of pure government policy and decide that it will rip it to pieces or whether it is effective or not.

Mr Smith: How do you work that out?

Mr Leo: The amendment does not suggest altering policies. It only suggests how policies can be more efficiently, effectively and economically run.

Mr PERRON: I know exactly what it says. What I am saying is that we will have a committee which is basically the same as almost every similar state committee in Australia, with an addition that the government will be able to refer to it virtually any matter that it wants to. For example, the honourable member mentioned the Commonwealth committee saving the federal government a large amount of money by making recommendations concerning medical fraud and overservicing. I think that is a perfect example of the sorts of areas where a committee can be enormously valuable and useful. It can examine the subject and recommend that the procedures, the checking systems and the forms be changed.

Mr Smith: But you are saying that that can occur only as a result of a reference from the government.

Mr PERRON: No, it can all be done without the amendment; that is what I am saying.

Mr Leo: What is wrong with this then?

Mr PERRON: No, I do not think that honourable members opposite have carefully considered the differences between 'efficiency' and 'effectively'. I think members should consider those 2 words very carefully. In fact, there have been papers on the subject of parliamentary accounts procedures and their history and these point out the very important difference between those 2 concepts.

The member for Millner spoke at length about the Commonwealth experience. I have tended not to rely on the Commonwealth experience. I would rather look at the experience in the states. The Commonwealth is in a world of its own. It spends \$59 000m and employs 432 000 public servants. There are 148 members of the House of Representatives and goodness knows how many senators. Its system is designed to try to cope with that sort of bureaucracy. That is way beyond the comprehension of most of us. There is no reason why the Northern Territory, which is running a state-type system, should not look at the practices of the states.

In the past, the government said that these committees were unnecessary. It was only in 1984, for example, that many of the statutory authorities in New South Wales were compelled to table an annual report in parliament, and

government departments in New South Wales today still do not table an annual report. That parliament is 100 years old. There is not a shadow of the information which is available to our parliament. That indicates why, in the past, the government did not feel that there was a real need for a committee.

Tasmania's committee does not hold public hearings. I was told that, if you had public hearings, you were liable to have politicians taking sides or grandstanding. The Western Australian Parliamentary Accounts Committee cannot inquire into the financial affairs of statutory authorities such as the Water Authority, which raise most of their income from charges. In South Australia, the committee cannot inquire into universities or statutory authorities. I am sure that members are interested to learn that, even today, in parliaments that are decades older than this one and which have had PACs for decades, those committees are still not permitted to inquire into many statutory authorities.

The terms of reference proposed in this motion include the term 'public authority'. We expect that that will allow us to scrutinise not only statutory authorities, but also local governments and community governments. There is no reason why, once one of these committees exists, it should not be able to examine the finances of any public authority to the extent that it receives funds appropriated by parliament. I think the extent that the committee could examine the affairs of such an authority might be limited to areas for which funds are provided to it by government.

In closing, I advise that the circulated amendment relating to the committee being required to report annually to the Assembly is quite acceptable. The proposed amendment that the deputy chairman should be a member of the opposition is not acceptable to the government, at least not at this stage. After the committee has been operating for a year or 2, a different view might be taken on that.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I am speaking to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's amendment which is still before us.

It did not take long for the new convert to show his true colours. I wish to advise the Assembly that we well and truly appreciate the very profound difference between 'efficient' and 'effective'. So far as the opposition is concerned, it is effectiveness that should be pursued through the Public Accounts Committee. It is perfectly true that a government department can operate with 100% efficiency and be entirely ineffective. Indeed, if you believe all of the apocryphal tales that are told about public servants, and portrayed in 'Yes Minister', you would have to consider that they strive for 100% efficiency and no effectiveness whatsoever. I know, of course, that those accounts are untrue. But I acknowledge the very profound difference in meaning to which the member for Fannie Bay referred. I can assure him that, like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who has spoken often in this Assembly of target budgeting and goal-oriented programming, that I am interested in finding out whether the money is working effectively rather than simply working efficiently. As far as we are concerned, that is the purpose of this Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Perron: To set policies?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, one would have thought that, given his long experience in the Legislative Assembly, the member for Fannie Bay would not make inane comments like that. Government policy sets the goals for government departments. It is not the role of a committee of this parliament

to interfere with government policy and the opposition would not wish to do that. The member's comment is very revealing indeed, because it indicates a problem. It is our hope that the 'ad hocery' which has typified the operations of this government in the last 12 months, if not the last 8 years, will come to an end. If there has been a government in Australia that has been operating from day to day for the last year, it has been this government. I could give one or two prime examples of that. We expect the government to set the goals or the policy for how money is to be spent. As far as we are concerned, the committee's role is to discover and, if necessary, improve upon the effectiveness with which those goals are being achieved.

I will give an example for the member for Fannie Bay. If the government determines there shall be a 5-year plan to improve the standard of basic sewerage and water supplies in isolated communities of the Northern Territory, that would be its proper role. Government policy is then set. The committee's role would be to determine not simply that the money was being spent efficiently and in compliance with all the regulations, but whether those policy goals were being effectively realised in terms of the amount of money being spent. I would have thought that was very easy to understand.

Given that he will become the chairman of this committee, the member for Fannie Bay's comments in this debate indicate the profound problem that I anticipated would occur. I have been in here far too long to fall for a 2-card trick like that; I have sat through enough question times and experienced the total refusals of the member for Fannie Bay in his former capacity as Treasurer to provide any information whatever to the opposition. He has often said: 'If you want that information, you will have to get into government, because I will not give it to you'. More than any other member of this Assembly, the member for Fannie Bay has indicated his total contempt for the very idea of the committee that he is now about to chair.

Despite the fact that I am a practising Catholic, I have difficulty in accepting the story of Noah. I am fairly sceptical about the 24-hour conversion of the member for Fannie Bay that the Chief Minister tried to convince us about this morning on ABC radio. I wish to comment on the composition of this committee because that is absolutely crucial to its future operations. Although the proposals have been put before this Assembly by the Chief Minister in good faith, judging from the comments that have just been made and the directions that have clearly been set by the putative chairman of this committee, it appears to be a cruel hoax on all Territorians, particularly those who may have been willing to swallow the rhetoric about a new broom approach by this government. There is no new broom at all. There is simply a new face leading a tired and discredited government.

There is no doubt about it. Members on this side of the Assembly have been campaigning for more than 5 years for a Public Accounts Committee to be established. I believe that all Territorians have a right to expect more than the Chief Minister is offering. The former Chief Minister, a former Treasurer, and the budding Minister for Primary Production have been appointed to this committee. It is a good thing that the committee will not have to deal with problems such as those that are currently being suffered in South Africa, because you could hardly call it an eminent persons group. My views on the attitudes formerly expressed by the member for Fannie Bay towards the provision of information are well known. I do not intend to repeat them again. However, in the context of this debate and the Chief Minister's defence of his nominations, I would like to remind the Assembly of the previous attitudes of that former Treasurer and the former Chief Minister towards proposals to establish a public accounts committee in the Northern

Territory Legislative Assembly. Because I might be considered politically biased in this matter, although I am not, I prefer to use as my authority the current federal member and former Chief Minister, the former boss of these 2 gentlemen.

On my worst day inside or outside this Assembly, I have never said what he said about those members. It was with some disbelief that I heard him give such an honest appraisal of the 2 members opposite. The federal member was speaking about the member for Fannie Bay and the member for Barkly in a radio interview in Alice Springs.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is speaking to the amendment. I request that he restrict his comments to that amendment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Certainly, Mr Speaker. My comments are completely relevant to the crucial amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is seeking to change the terms of reference so that the committee will be able to consider and report to the Legislative Assembly on how, if at all, the administration of government programs and policies may be carried out more efficiently, effectively and economically. I am speaking in direct response to that very crucial change in the terms of reference because it is the views and the capacities of the members of the committee which will determine how effective that particular amendment will be. I am responding quite directly to the comments made by the member for Fannie Bay as to the difference between 'effective' and 'efficient', which are the words contained in this amendment.

Mr Speaker, in a recent radio interview in Alice Springs, at the height of the CLP crisis, the former Chief Minister said, and I quote: 'I should have sacked Tuxworth in 1983'. He then went on to say, in respect of the member for Fannie Bay, and I quote: 'Marshall Perron has not worked since 1983. He is only hanging in there for his pension'.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition is not speaking to the amendment. He is addressing the calibre of potential members of the Public Accounts Committee and that has nothing to do with the amendment. In some obscure manner, it may have something to do with the actual motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will restrict his remarks to the amendment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Certainly, Mr Speaker. In addressing the capacity of the member for Fannie Bay to comply with the terms of this amendment; that is, to allow the Public Accounts Committee which I am ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The membership of the committee is totally irrelevant to the amendment which relates to the deliberations of and reporting by the committee.

Mr B. COLLINS: I wonder if you could tell me how the composition of the committee is not relevant to the effectiveness of the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition must confine his comments strictly to the amendment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Certainly, Mr Speaker.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay has advised this Assembly of his views on the question of effectiveness and efficiency. With the greatest respect, this amendment is important because it does relate to the difference in meaning of 'efficient' and 'effective'. It is precisely because of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's proper pursuit of a drastic change in the whole approach to government budgeting that we have moved this amendment. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has pursued in some detail in this Assembly the proposal that the budgetary methods that are used by this government be altered to include a provision for target budgeting. On previous occasions he has produced documentation and examples of how other parliaments have effectively used a goal-oriented approach to budgeting, rather than the on-line approach that is currently being used by the government. For that reason, we have moved this amendment. In our view, it is not sufficient simply for the Public Accounts Committee to consider how efficiently the money has been spent. The honourable member for Fannie Bay is quite correct in pointing out the dramatic difference between those 2 words. In our view, it should be properly the role of the committee, even if the government disagrees with us, that money be effectively spent as well.

I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I would never view the role of any committee of this Assembly as being to interfere at all with the policies that are determined by the government. Mr Speaker, you would recall the concerns I raised in a previous debate, about not being able to distinguish between the operations of the committees of this parliament and the policy of the government. It was with some dismay that I was a member of a committee where that distinction was blurred almost to the point of being undistinguishable.

A parliament, in my view, can only be as effective as its committees. A working parliament - particularly one that only sits for 21 days a year - needs to concentrate on the efficient operations of its committees. I am prepared to debate and argue, on any occasion the government would consider desirable, that this parliament has been a profound failure in that respect. The operations of some of the committees of this parliament have been entirely ineffective. I will be having a few words to say in a later debate about my views of a particular committee of the Assembly where that has been so. Without digressing too far from the subject, that has certainly been my view and I am prepared to substantiate it in respect of the current operations of the important Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

A parliament is only as efficient as its working committees. I was interested to talk to a former senator, Kathy Martin, this morning. I asked her what she considered to be the most crucial difference in her lifestyle, given that she worked in the Senate and has now become a backbencher in the House of Representatives. She said to me, and I am sure it must be a problem for our current federal member, that the most distinct difference was that the Senate had a very sophisticated committee system and she felt far more effective and useful by being able to operate in that committee system. As a backbencher in the House of Representatives, there is not the same opportunity for that.

Comments have been made about the whole question of committees of parliament. I remember a speech made by the now Minister for Mines and Energy, Gareth Evans, when he addressed a group of eminent people in Sydney on one occasion. He said that many people held the view that members of parliamentary committees were the Portnoys of the parliamentary system in that they were engaged in work which was only partially satisfying, physically debilitating, and entirely non-productive.

Mr Perron: It is all in Hansard.

Mr B. COLLINS: That is correct, Mr Speaker.

Mr Perron: Do we need it again?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I reject that view of the committee system, as indeed did Gareth Evans. Having been provocative enough to open his speech with that statement, he then rebutted it very well. He described the effectiveness of Senate committees over the years.

I believe that the operations of this very important committee, after 5 years of striving for its establishment by this Assembly, would be greatly enhanced by an amendment which does not dramatically affect the terms of reference of the committee at all. It will not enable the committee to interfere - and I can give an absolute commitment that, as far as we are concerned, it would never interfere - with government policy, but will simply ensure that government policy goals are being met.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has gone to great pains to distinguish between 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness'. We have had considerable argument over the last hour about whether the amendment is absolutely essential to the operations of this committee. I do not accept the view that it is required. As the member for Fannie Bay has pointed out, it is not a feature of public accounts committees of parliaments around Australia. Fundamentally, the issues are dealt with in the terms of reference as they stand. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that it is the intention of the government to make this committee work. There are already a number of matters of importance that we wish to refer to the Public Accounts Committee. We will be seeking the assistance of the Public Accounts Committee in eliminating waste and duplication of effort within the administration of government and we are looking to its operation as a genuinely bipartisan committee.

The motion is that this provisional standing order operate on a trial basis as a sessional order. The Leader of the Opposition has given a number of undertakings about the committee not involving itself in policy. A very vexed argument in many parliaments around Australia is whether or not something is a matter of policy or not a matter of policy. This will operate on a trial basis to try and have it work in a bipartisan way. Our government intends to refer matters of substance to this committee. It is accepted and recognised that the effective performance of departments is a ministerial responsibility. Ministers will be seeking the assistance of the Public Accounts Committee in areas where they are moving to carry out investigations to improve effectiveness and efficiency and remove duplication in some areas of government activity.

I suggest to honourable members that we give this a trial and take up the issues as they are raised. The matter is to be reviewed later. These issues can be addressed in a subsequent debate on the committee. At this stage, the government is not prepared to accept the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that paragraph 3 of proposed standing order 21A be omitted.

Mr Speaker, the paragraph states:

The committee shall examine only those accounts of receipts and expenditure in the Northern Territory and reports of the Auditor-General for financial years commencing after 30 June 1986, provided that this shall not prevent the consideration by the committee of matters included in reports of the Auditor-General for the year ending 30 June 1986 which have or may have a continuing effect on the form of the public accounts, on the method of keeping them or the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys.

I stress that the only areas that can be looked at for 1985-86 are form and method. It will be the form of the accounts and the method of the accounts and then only if they have a continuing impact beyond the end of 1985-86. Let us examine what the committee will be able to do in 1986-87. We are talking about something which will operate on a trial basis and, therefore, it is very important to look at what it can do in 1986-87.

With regard to the 1986-87 accounts, it would appear that it can report on form and method if it has any of those accounts before it. The reports of the Auditor-General will not be laid before it during the period. Paragraph 2(a) relates to the ability to examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory and each statement and report transmitted by the Auditor-General to the Legislative Assembly for the period. Those will not be submitted during the period and therefore it will not be able to examine them.

I am pointing out the areas where it can operate in relation to the 1986-87 accounts. Because of the provisions of 2(a),(b),(c),(d) and (e), it would appear that the only area that it can report on is in connection with (d) which relates to matters referred to it by a resolution of the Assembly or by the Administrator or a minister. It would appear that that will be the sum total of its ability to operate during 1986-87, the year during which it will operate on a trial basis to determine its effectiveness.

There are 2 elements to this. First, there is to be no discussion of previous years. There is to be no discussion on the actual rorts that have been perpetrated by this government in the period up to 30 June 1986. The government has approximately 12 days to go to perpetrate further rorts with impunity. For example, we will not be able to look at the use of the Treasury to assist various friends. An example is the loans made by the previous Treasurer in order to overcome a cash-flow problem resulting from the transfer of the casinos from one company to another. The committee will not be able to look at that because it is part of the forbidden territory. We will not be able to have a look at the efficiency or effectiveness of any aspect of the use of ADMA funds or the way they were used to assist the Mudginberri owners. The list of the matters that will not be able to be considered by the committee goes on and on. It may be said that these all occurred in the past. However, it is well known that many of the rorts that occurred in the past have clear financial implications for the future. It seems absolutely ridiculous to me that, even though previous deals have financial implications for the future, all the committee will be able to do is contemplate in amazement the methods that were utilised to perpetrate those rorts.

My other point is that it would appear that there is no way to check the arrangements for the 1986-87 financial year because the accounts will not be referred to the Legislative Assembly by the Auditor-General, pursuant to the Financial Administration and Audit Act, until the end of the financial year. Therefore, the government has closed off all previous years. It has closed off the next financial year and deferred the whole business until the 1987-88



period. This is a patently obvious trick to defer the whole matter until after the next election. The CLP probably realises that it will be a Labor government and we will be revealing the details anyway.

We are witnessing an attempt by a new Chief Minister to say: 'I am the new broom. I am the new face. I am the new way forward'. When we actually examine the details, however, the reality behind his statement to the press that there would be a Public Accounts Committee which would be able to examine all these things is that everything will still be hidden. It is simply a new face on the same old CLP machine which has been operating the government from outside the Assembly for the last 8 years. It has been quite content to change Chief Ministers. The machine will not allow the public to see what has been going on behind the scenes. The lid will be kept on, not only in relation to past years but also in relation to the current financial year and the next financial year. Obviously, that is not acceptable to people on this side of the Assembly. We have moved the amendment on the basis that the whole paragraph should be omitted, thus enabling the committee to examine the implications for the Territory's future of the financial deals and the rorts which have been perpetrated in the past. The government will actually deny the committee the opportunity to examine budget matters which have great implications for the future.

Mr HALTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, that is the greatest load of drivel I have ever heard in my life. When I first announced the intention of this government to proceed with the Public Accounts Committee, I made it clear that we intended to draw a line and start from now. We did not want to bog the committee down digging back into what happened in 1978 or 1979 or 1977, nor did we intend to institute witch hunts, which is exactly what the member for Stuart is suggesting. We are interested in things that are relevant for today and for the future of the Northern Territory, not what was relevant 5 or 10 years ago. Our interpretation of paragraph 3 is that it enables the investigation of matters that are currently of financial importance to the Northern Territory. We have not adopted the narrow interpretation of that paragraph that has been suggested by the member for Stuart. Having spoken to those colleagues who have been proposed as members of the Parliamentary Accounts Committee, I know that they support my view that the terms of reference do not preclude the examination of matters that will be of relevance to the financial affairs of the Northern Territory from 1986-87 onwards.

I want to make one other point. I am not sure whether the member for Stuart has been listening. He was not in the Assembly when his leader said that the Public Accounts Committee will not concern itself with issues of policy, and he has just given us a 20 minute diatribe on how the opposition wants to dig around in what he called rorts and government decisions. In other words, he wants to examine whether the policies and decisions taken by government are appropriate for the Northern Territory. That is examining policy. The Leader of the Opposition made the point that governments take decisions and set policies. The job of the committee, to use his words, is to ensure that those policies are being carried out effectively. If, for example, the government takes a policy decision to provide financial support to the Mudginberri Abattoir, as we did last year, does the member for Stuart wish the Public Accounts Committee to tell us whether we should have taken such a decision or not? Or does he want it to consider whether the support we gave was effective or efficiently given, or whether the accounts were properly processed? There are big differences in those methods of approach. We are not trying to hide from things that are of current relevance to the Northern Territory. That was the intention of the paragraph, which refers to matters that have a financial impact on the Northern Territory government accounts as

from 1 July 1986. We do not believe that this paragraph restricts the proper performance of the work of the Public Accounts Committee. It does draw a line, and that has always been our clearly stated intention. We do not intend to go digging into matters that occurred 5 or 10 years ago and which are of no current relevance to the Northern Territory today.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak to the amendment moved by the member for Stuart, and reserve my right to speak to the motion.

This is an extremely important debate. The speeches of the member for Fannie Bay and the Chief Minister were very illuminating. What is becoming clear, to the very genuine dismay of the member for Millner who actually thought that the government was fair dinkum about this, is that the government's view of this committee is that it will be purely a paper-shuffling exercise. In terms of being an effective tool of the parliament, it is to have absolutely no teeth whatsoever.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect, the comments that I am making relate specifically to the deletion of paragraph 3. I believe that, unless that paragraph is deleted, the committee will not be able to operate in an effective manner.

Referring specifically to paragraph 3, I want to advise members of the government about my interpretation of policy, and its effective implementation. On the interpretation of the government, but not my interpretation, this paragraph would obviously preclude an examination of the government's forcible ejection of Federal Hotels from the Northern Territory, and the subsequent cost in lost revenue which affects the Northern Territory taxpayer. On my interpretation of the proposed terms of reference of this committee, even without absolutely clarifying the matter as we wish to do by the removal of paragraph 3, it would be possible for the committee to examine matters such as the Federal Hotels issue. This is because there is no question whatever that it is having a continuing effect on the revenues of the Northern Territory and the manner in which they are being collected.

In order to make absolutely clear to the Chief Minister and the member for Fannie Bay the very clear distinction I draw between government policy and the effective operation of this committee, I will give the following example. The government makes a policy decision, albeit a disgraceful one, to acquire compulsorily \$50m worth of privately-owned assets from a company which, up to that point, was the biggest single investor the Territory had had for a considerable time. The government makes a policy decision to eject that company from the Northern Territory and to replace that company, in the operations of the Northern Territory's casinos under our Racing and Gaming Act, with another operator. That is a policy decision, and I would not see the committee interfering with it. But it is absolutely within the purview of the committee to determine, by examination of people, papers, records or anything else, how effectively, on behalf of the Northern Territory taxpayer, that policy decision was implemented, and what effects it had on the Northern Territory. I do not see that the committee would step in and pass a resolution saying this should never have been done. I do not see it doing that. However, in my estimation, which I think would stand up to considerable scrutiny, that policy decision would directly cost Northern Territory taxpayers at least \$14m of public money. The fact about Federal Hotels, and the Chief Minister knows it, is that it was paying 20% in respect of the

Darwin casino gaming taxes. It paid \$2.5m in the last financial year of its operation in the Northern Territory. It is still paying gaming taxes for its 2 casinos in Launceston and Hobart.

For the advice of members, let me indicate that, when I attend the national conference of the Labor Party in Hobart on behalf of the Northern Territory, I have been invited to attend a meeting with the principals of Federal Hotels. I intend to use my time in Tasmania to find out in detail about the current regime which governs the operation of those casinos. The Legislative Assembly will be told the results of that examination at the next sittings. We are being painted further and further into a corner in this debate, which does not surprise me, in terms of the government's interpretation of the limitations of the powers of this committee. All we have had so far from the government is its interpretation of how limited the committee will be in its operation, not how effective it will be. In my example, the policy decision was to acquire compulsorily \$50m worth of casinos. The committee's legitimate task should be to find out whether that was done effectively and efficiently on behalf the Northern Territory taxpayers. It is a legitimate role of the committee to determine if it is true that that compulsory acquisition caused a direct loss of \$14m to the exchequer.

Let me use another example. Let us say that the government takes a policy decision to utilise the facilities at the old Darwin Hospital as the site for the Northern Territory's new university. That is a policy decision with which the committee would not interfere. However, it would be a legitimate role of the committee to investigate the extent of costs involved in the compulsory acquisition of the casinos or the houses at Myilly Point, and the fact that buildings have stood there derelict and abandoned for some time. I am familiar, as very few members opposite would be, with the condition of the interiors of those buildings. It would be a legitimate role of the committee to discover how much the Territory taxpayer will have to pay to have those buildings restored to their former condition. That would not be interfering with a policy decision of the government.

If the role of the committee as defined by the Chief Minister is so circumscribed that it will not be able even to investigate the direct cost of such actions in terms of revenue lost to the Territory, then it might as well not be formed. I had hoped that I would not have to lay it out in such detail but obviously I must do that.

It is important that the government tell the Assembly exactly how it sees the role of this committee. It is just as important to advise the government in no uncertain terms of how we see the committee's role. It appears to be quite contrary to the government's view. There is a substantial tax cost to the Northern Territory in the current casinos arrangement. I have seen the books of Federal Hotels. People keep on talking about the fact that the Alice Springs casino has never made any money and I know that that literally is untrue. Because of the reduction in interest rates that were being paid on Federal's financing, it made a healthy profit with the Darwin casino in its last trading year and a small profit on the Alice Springs operation. It was not a large profit, but a profit nevertheless. It is legitimate for the committee to investigate whether the decision to reduce those taxes is having a material effect on the revenue-raising of the Northern Territory. It should not interfere with a policy decision of the government to do that. However, if the committee cannot inquire even into the effect of that decision on the revenue-raising capacity or income of the Northern Territory, then it is indeed a sham and a fraud.

I am one of those members of the Assembly who, after 5 years of trying and finally seeing the committee established, quite honestly wants to see it work. I would like any member of this Assembly to indicate the party political use that I have made of my membership of any parliamentary committee. The fact is that I have not made any such use because the cold hard reality is that, if partisan politics are introduced into the committees of the Legislative Assembly, the committees become completely unworkable. This applies quite directly in this parliament, which is the smallest in Australia. Where any member from either government or opposition tries to introduce party politics the committee is brought very quickly into disrepute. I fear that will be the fate of this committee. I hope that time will prove my fears to be groundless, but this debate has not given me any comfort.

I conclude by saying that the amendment moved by the member for Stuart is a valid one which should be supported by the government. We have heard the Chief Minister euphemistically saying that matters like the casino acquisition and the open-ended guarantees provided by this government for hotel development were things of the past. He tried to put as good a face on it as he possibly could by saying that the new direction was to concentrate on marketing. Of course, that is nothing new. The member for Barkly spoke on numerous occasions of the government's initiatives in relation to marketing, as did his predecessor the Hon Paul Everingham, when he was Chief Minister. There is nothing new about marketing where the government is concerned. What the current Chief Minister was saying very clearly was that the open-ended guarantees that have been provided, which got out of hand very quickly, are a thing of the past. Let me say this with respect to the former Chief Minister, the honourable member for Barkly ...

Mr Perron: Is it relevant to the amendment?

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes, it is.

I have said this in the Assembly before. I do not lay at his doorstep the blame for any of the financial difficulties that we are now in in respect of those guarantees because I know that he was placed in the extremely invidious position, upon attaining the Chief Ministership, of having to wear all that. The reason I make that comment is because we cannot forget the major statement presented by the former Chief Minister on the financial implications to the Northern Territory of the matters covered by this paragraph. In respect of the statements that had been made by his predecessor, he had to advise us that the projected impact on our budget of those guarantees had not only trebled, but quadrupled. Perhaps a committee of the Assembly would have come to the same conclusions. As a result, when he announced the major reorganisation of the financial deals at the time, it was predicated on that very fact. Mr Speaker, I could not ask for a better example than that of the kind of effective work that a public accounts committee could undertake.

When the member for Barkly became Chief Minister, he was faced with a problem, which this committee may well face, with a number of government policy decisions which had had serious and unpredicted - at least as far as we were concerned - impacts on the Northern Territory's budget. As a result, he announced in a major statement to the Assembly that certain measures would have to be taken because, if they were not taken and if the current arrangements were adhered to, it would have had horrendous budget implications for the Northern Territory - as indeed it would have. That is precisely what I am talking about when I say that, if this committee is muzzled to the extent that it cannot look at those arrangements and recommend changes in the financial arrangements to retrieve us from that horrendous budget situation, it will be a very ineffective committee.

In response to something that the Chief Minister said in this debate 10 minutes ago, if he thinks this committee will operate, as he seems to indicate he did, by considering only those matters referred to it by the government, then as far as the opposition is concerned, he is mistaken, and he will find that out soon enough. A few minutes ago he said that the committee will have plenty of work to do because the government intends to refer to it a number of very important matters for its consideration.

Mr Speaker, it will be perfectly proper for the committee to investigate matters referred to it either by the Assembly or any ministers of this government in relation to the administration of government departments. But, as far as I am concerned, this committee will operate by way of its own motions in respect of what it investigates, and I make that very clear to the government also.

Mr Speaker, I urge the government to support the amendment of the member for Stuart.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I think it is just as well that the Leader of the Opposition will not be on this committee as well because, if he were, I do not think it would survive its first day.

Mr B. Collins: I agree. When I found out that you were on it, I withdrew. I want it to work.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, listening to the Leader of the Opposition it was quite clear in my mind that past fears about what the opposition might expect from such a committee were all very valid. Obviously, he expects this committee, after pursuing witch-hunts into the last several years of government, to table a report that supposedly will be massively condemnatory of just about everything that the opposition believes the government has done wrongly. I am not exactly clear on what he was saying. I will take one example because I believe he is very wrong. I do not believe the committee will conduct its affairs in the way that he suggests at all, and I do not think that committees of this nature anywhere in this country conduct their affairs like that. As a matter of fact, in my inquiries on this matter, it was put to me that there is a major principle that every committee should live by: that it never becomes involved in an issue that is properly dealt with by the parliament itself. If that principle had not been adopted, it is doubtful that such committees anywhere in this country would have survived after their first altercation with government, because every government has the numbers in parliament to tolerate or not tolerate such committees. They have survived because they have been smart enough to stay out of those affairs that are properly inquired into by the parliament itself, should it so desire.

I will take one example, Mr Speaker, that the honourable the Leader of the Opposition mentioned. Clearly, he wants a royal commission into the casino acquisitions, Mudginberri and everything else right back to the Willeroo days. I am sure that he would have a royal commission into all of those. He wants this committee to examine the casino acquisitions and the consequent effects and determine whether it was an effective move.

Mr B. Collins: We simply want to find out how much it cost.

Mr PERRON: No, he used the term 'effective'. As we have said in this Assembly many times over the years, the honourable members opposite being too thick to accept it, the casinos were not introduced to the Northern Territory by this government for their revenue-raising capacity. That would be a side

benefit. The main purpose was to introduce man-made tourist attractions to complement the Territory's natural attractions. It was never the aim of government simply to raise more taxes. The Leader of the Opposition would have this committee inquire into the effectiveness of the change in casino operators and have this bipartisan committee make a value judgment based solely on taxation matters. Presumably, he has not considered the overall efficiency of the operation or whether the casinos are effective in terms of the government's policy.

I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition spoke today, because I can assure him that his view of what this committee will do is very different from mine. I oppose the amendment.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I am speaking to the amendment and not the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the honourable member reserving his right to speak to the motion?

Mr LEO: I am reserving my right to speak to the motion, Mr Speaker. I would like to take up some points that were made by the Chief Minister and the member for Fannie Bay. They concern the ability of the committee to examine government policy and the way that policy was arrived at. From listening to this debate, it seems to me that government policies are arrived at fairly readily. From the debates conducted on the casinos so far, it is clear that at least half a dozen policy decisions must have been made over dinner somewhere: 'Ah yes, here is a policy decision - we will get a new operator'.

Mr Finch: Are you going to talk on the amendment?

Mr LEO: I am addressing the amendment. This is very pertinent to the amendment. The method by which policy is arrived at is extremely pertinent to the deletion of paragraph 3. However, the method by which these policies have been arrived at will obviously hinder this committee. Are we to find when this committee starts its investigations - and I would like very much to hear some comment on this by the member for Fannie Bay because it is obvious he will play a very important role on this committee - that it will be hampered by a minister saying that it cannot investigate a particular matter because it involves a policy decision? And when the committee turns to something else, will it find that it cannot investigate that because that also is a policy decision? What will be the point of this committee? There would seem to be at least a dozen ad hoc policy decisions made about ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! There is absolutely no way the honourable member can be speaking to the amendment which refers to report periods, times and those sorts of things. He is talking purely and simply about government policy.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will confine his remarks strictly to the amendment.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the amendment seeks to delete proposed paragraph 3 because it would not allow the committee to examine, other than in an extremely superficial manner, matters which occurred prior to 30 June 1986 - and we have not even reached that date. That means that it will not be able to examine in any depth any matters that are occurring now.

Mr Finch: It does not limit it then.

Mr LEO: If you cannot read paragraph 3, then I am afraid I cannot help you. It is set out in fairly simple English: 'provided that this shall not prevent the consideration of matters included in reports of the Auditor-General for the year ending 30 June 1986 which have or may have a continuing effect on the form of public accounts; or the method of keeping them; or the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys'. That is the extent to which the committee can examine matters which are occurring now - not something that happened 6 months, 12 months or 10 years ago, but something that is actually happening now. Once we pass the motion, we will not be able to investigate anything that is happening now.

Mr Finch: 'Shall not prevent'.

Mr LEO: If the member for Wagaman cannot see that there is a real problem with the limiting terms of this paragraph, I cannot help him. The examination of public expenditure is what I have sought for many years. I have moved motions to that effect many times in this Assembly. I have pursued in this Assembly the ability of a committee of this Assembly, not a committee of this government or a particular minister, to examine the way in which the public moneys of this Northern Territory have been expended and will be expended. This clause limits that effective examination; it restricts it to those 4 areas. If this motion passes with that paragraph, it will render this entire process useless. I ask the government members to accept the amendment proposed by the member for Stuart. It is not only the most worthwhile thing that this Assembly could do this evening, but also the most worthy thing that it could do this evening.

Amendment negatived.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I can now speak to the very broad terms of the motion, as I was unable to do before. As this debate develops, I am becoming increasingly alarmed about this government's view of what policy consists of. To take an example, in relation to the whole casino acquisition saga, it seems that there has been at least a dozen so-called policy decisions. How does this government arrive at a policy decision? Did the former Chief Minister make a policy decision that the casino needed a new owner? It was then a policy decision that certain people would be the new owners. Because the owners did not want to sell, it became a policy decision to boot them out. The new owners wanted a tax holiday and that became another policy decision.

I have never heard such 'ad hocery' in my life. The opposition is accused of being ad hoc in its decision-making. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that not on our worst day would we make policy decisions in such an ad hoc manner. As this debate proceeds, I am becoming increasingly alarmed about the manner and method by which this government makes policy. The committee will be prevented from examining matters because the government will say they are policy decisions. What will be the point of this committee if this government is prepared to make policy decisions with a snap of its fingers? I really am becoming increasingly alarmed about the potential effectiveness of this committee because so much emphasis is being placed on the use of the term 'government policy'. The only reason I have become alarmed about it is because of the ad hoc manner in which the government makes policy. There does not seem to be any rhyme or reason or any logic in the process by which policy is made.

Having said that, I welcome the introduction of this motion. I have moved similar motions in this Assembly on many occasions. It gives one a little

faith in life when one sees the policy gymnastics of the member for Fannie Bay and the way he has been able to accommodate the opposition's wishes and desires.

Before I conclude, I move that paragraph 7 of proposed standing order 21(A) be amended by omitting 'appoint a member of the committee' and insert in its stead 'appoint an opposition member of the committee'.

What the amendment effectively does is ensure that the deputy chairman of the committee is a member of the opposition. Given that the government has ensured that the chairman of the committee will be a government member, the opposition feels that, in the interest of balance, the deputy chairman of the committee should be an opposition member.

Amendment negatived.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, you will be pleased to know that I am now speaking to the motion and moving an amendment.

I move that, in paragraph 14 of proposed standing order 21(A) after 'the committee' (first occurring), shall be inserted 'shall report annually and'.

I will be amazed if this amendment is not supported by the government. This has been an interesting and enlightening debate and probably one of the few seat-of-your-pants debates that has occurred in the Legislative Assembly for some time. In speaking to the motion, I believe that, for obvious reasons, the composition of the proposed committee is highly relevant to the manner in which it is likely to carry out its operations. It is fair to say that I have some disagreement with my own colleagues - and this has been canvassed already in debate - on the interpretation of the terms of reference of the committee. They have moved an amendment as a result of their concerns and I have no argument with that. In my view, the terms of reference of the committee, as they are currently drafted, are wide enough to canvass the issues that I have already traversed.

The composition of the committee is relevant and it is fair to say that I am not satisfied with it. I believe that there are other members of the government who would have been more appropriate. One of the reasons that I say that, without putting too fine a point on it, is to reiterate and support the opinions of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who said he believed it inappropriate for the member for Fannie Bay and the member for Barkly to be appointed, purely because of the clear personal interest that they have as a result of having formerly been Treasurers in the Northern Territory government - one of them very recently.

Mr Speaker, I do not think that I am saying something dramatically untrue when I say that this situation is peculiar to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Indeed, it is a rare occurrence in parliaments around Australia that ministers resign from the frontbench and continue to serve as members of the backbench. The former Leader of Government Business had some very definite views, which he gave to this Assembly, on the inadvisability of ministers who have held prominent frontbench positions in the government retiring to the backbench. Because of the size of our Assembly, it causes a particular problem for the committee system. On this committee, which is to examine the public accounts of the Northern Territory, 2 of the government committee members were Treasurers, and 1 of them occupied that office very recently. That would give them some degree of sensitivity, in a very personal sense, which might not be felt by some other members of the government backbench in respect of matters that may come before the committee.



Mr Speaker, whatever I say about the capacities of the members that the government is proposing for this committee pales into insignificance beside the statements made about their relative capacities by the current federal member for the Northern Territory on radio in Alice Springs. It was pretty extraordinary stuff. He said on Alice Springs radio that he should have sacked the former Chief Minister in 1983. Concerning the current member for Fannie Bay, he said: 'Marshall Perron has not worked since 1983. He is only hanging around waiting for his pension'. I was in Alice Springs when those statements were broadcast. In respect of the issues canvassed surrounding the resignation of the former Chief Minister, my actions in that matter, as Leader of the Opposition, were simply part of my job. I am not quite sure what could be said about some other key players in that particular matter - and whether they were simply doing their jobs or not - but, in all the trials and tribulations that I have had in the Labor Party - and some have been very public ones - what happened to the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory at the hands of his mates did not happen to me on my worst day.

There is no doubt that the federal member for the Northern Territory delivered his opinion of those 2 members of our Public Accounts Committee in a very forthright manner. That is relevant because recent polls have shown that, whilst it is waning, the federal member for the Northern Territory still has a great deal of residual support in the Northern Territory electorate. Paul Everingham has a loyal following in the Territory and statements like that about people who were ministers in the government of which he was the head, not surprisingly, have a very debilitating effect on public confidence in members of the Northern Territory government. It is no wonder that Territorians are rapidly losing faith in the CLP when comments are made publicly on radio about people who are so prominent in that party.

We have a new Chief Minister expecting Territorians to accept, without question, the appointment of 2 tired and discredited politicians to one of the most important committees that this Assembly will ever establish. Whose assessment of these 2 former Treasurers should the Territory electorate accept, Mr Speaker? If you do not think that that is a valid question, I suggest you attend a few functions and talk to a few people out in the electorate. Perhaps it will wane with the passage of time, Mr Speaker, but I can assure you that ...

Mr Perron: My judgment of the electorate has been better than yours for all these years.

Mr B. COLLINS: ...that is absolutely true,

Mr Perron: That is right. It has changed all of a sudden, has it?

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes.

Mr Perron: Really? I have been hearing this for the 10 years I have been in here.

Mr B. COLLINS: Do you want to come over on this side and I will come over there?

Mr Perron: No thanks. If I went over to that side, I would be joining the losers.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I can understand the reluctance of the member for Fannie Bay to accept it, but the reality is exactly that. That support

has been there. A poll conducted over the last 2 weeks in Darwin has shown that that situation has changed very dramatically. It is no wonder that the electorate is losing faith in the CLP government, because 2 consistent factors influence the Australian electorate more strongly than anything else. One is the hip-pocket nerve. The responsible manner in which governments disburse the money which is given to them to hold in trust by people in the electorate is a matter of great concern to them. The second is stability and lack of divisiveness in the political parties which govern them from time to time. Those are the 2 issues that have been pre-eminent in Australian politics since our federation.

This government has failed signally in both those issues. Over the last 12 months particularly, it has demonstrated the most inept and ad hoc methods of administering public funds. It has been government from day-to-day. If you doubt that assessment of the government, Mr Speaker, get out into the business community and talk to a few CLP supporters. Statistically, I am forced to talk to 7 CLP supporters out of every 10 people I talk to in the non-Aboriginal community of the Northern Territory. I talk to a great many people who are strong supporters of the CLP and recently I did so in Tennant Creek. The government has a credibility problem at the moment in the electorate. The 2 government backbenchers I have been speaking about have a particular credibility problem. I am talking about things some members of the CLP and some members of the central committee of that party have been saying to me.

Mr Perron: They won't vote for John Waters, I can tell you.

Mr B. COLLINS: You are telling me?

Mr Perron: He is my opposition candidate next time around.

Mr B. COLLINS: Are you telling me that, too?

Mr Perron: Yes.

Mr B. COLLINS: I did not know that, goodness me. It is so nice to know what is going on in the Labor Party. I have not seen you at a branch meeting for some time, but I shall look forward to seeing you at the next one.

The one thing that is being said in respect of the member for Fannie Bay, and it happens to be my view too, is that it is an absolute disgrace that a member of this Assembly, with the experience and undoubted ability that he has, should have the luxury of lounging around on the backbench.

Mr Perron: You have just turned 180 degrees.

Mr B. COLLINS: Let me get to that. For that reason, in very rapid order, he has become a discredited person and a discredited politician. The same has happened to the member for Elsey and with equal rapidity. Our federal member has said Marshall Perron stopped working in 1983 and is just hanging around for his pension, but may I say to the member for Fannie Bay that a great many people in the electorate are saying it too. In terms of the credibility of this committee, I am making what I believe to be valid criticisms about the Chief Minister's choice of appointees.

Mr Speaker, honourable members opposite tell us what a terrible machine the Labor Party is because its members are locked into an authoritarian system where they are censured and called to order if they say something that the

party does not want them to say. Of course, that is a load of cant and hypocrisy because members of the CLP are subject to the same little process that members of the Labor Party are; it is called preselection. It has a very edifying effect on the forceful and honest opinions that are expressed by CLP politicians, which explains why they did not have the courage, intestinal fortitude or wit to make a determination on their own about who should lead them.

Mr Speaker, I believe it also explains why we have now the former Chief Minister and a former Treasurer as members of this committee. In respect of the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, let me say, without dwelling too much on it, it is a complete mystery to me why he resigned. I say that in total honesty. For his benefit, I might add that federal members of the parliament on both sides of the House were running around Canberra when it happened saying, 'Why in the hell did he resign?' Indeed, it is a great mystery to me why he resigned. I do not think that what the Chief Minister did in relation to travelling allowance ...

Mr Dondas: Oh, coming out of Unsworth now.

Mr B. COLLINS: Barry Unsworth? What about the other 6 or 7 on both sides of the House. Are you completely ignorant, Nick?

Mr Dondas: No.

Mr B. COLLINS: I condemn what the former Chief Minister did in respect of travelling allowance. I do not support it. But it is still a complete mystery to me why the head of government would resign. One of these days perhaps I will find out exactly what occurred on that Saturday at the central committee meeting.

Mr Perron: You were calling for his resignation.

Mr Leo: Would you resign if one of us called for your resignation?

Mr B. COLLINS: In respect of that interjection, perhaps the member for Fannie Bay can answer my question. Yes, indeed I did, because ...

Mr Perron: Now you say that it was unwarranted, make up your mind. It is another 180° turn.

Mr Leo: Will you resign now if I call for your resignation?

Mr Perron: No.

Mr B. COLLINS: It is all right. They do not want reality; they want fantasy. Perhaps the honourable member can answer the big question in a later debate. I was doing my job, Mr Speaker. Is that what all the people were doing on the central committee ...

Mr Perron: Telling lies, telling lies.

Mr B. COLLINS: No, I wanted his resignation, Mr Speaker.

Mr Perron: You just said it was unwarranted.

Mr B. COLLINS: No, I did not say that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Perron: You did so.

Mr B. COLLINS: I have a few minutes left. Perhaps I should speak more slowly and give the member for Fannie Bay a chance to clean the fishmeal out of his ears and listen. I can understand why this is a sensitive subject. It is totally relevant, Mr Speaker. I called for the resignation of the former Chief Minister because I believed that he should resign. Having said that, Mr Speaker, do I need to point out to the member for Fannie Bay that I have called for the resignation of numerous ministers, including himself, in the Legislative Assembly. We gave the old thumbs down yet none of them resigned. I thought they should have but I did not expect that they would. I called for the former Chief Minister's resignation and I wanted it but I did not expect that I would get it. It is still a puzzle to me why he resigned. I was doing my job. What were all the people on the 40-strong central committee doing? Were they doing their jobs? Was Lex Silvester doing his?

When extraordinary statements are made about the capacity of the 2 members that he has appointed to the Public Accounts Committee by a very senior member of the CLP, the only member we have in the House of Representatives, does the Chief Minister really think that will not affect public confidence in the operations of this committee? Of course it will. It is up to the CLP, and I do not hesitate to call on it to do so, to try to do something about it, one way or the other.

It is interesting to quote from what these honourable members have said in the past about a public accounts committee. When the opposition moved on 27 February 1981 to establish a standing committee, the now member for Fannie Bay, the former Treasurer, said: 'The opposition merely want a committee established to do their work for them and try and find a little piece of information they can clamp onto and say, "We have justified our existence because we found out where a few dollars have been misspent"'.

He said on a number of occasions: 'If you want any information about the financial affairs of the Northern Territory, then you win government'. That was before he told us he would refuse to answer any questions in the Legislative Assembly in respect of his comments about the ability of parliament to investigate these matters. During the last debate on an opposition motion to establish such a committee, the former Treasurer began his speech with the observation that he was becoming tired of debate on this issue because 'no one on this side of the Assembly wants a public accounts committee or needs it'. He concluded his contribution to that debate with the observation that 'committees of the Legislative Assembly should be established to perform useful functions and not to satisfy a whim. I oppose the motion'. It is a matter of record that he has opposed the formation of this committee consistently over the last 5 years.

The former Chief Minister in 1981 mirrored the paranoia of his soul mate on the backbench and expressed the view that a standing committee would develop into an army of public servants all plotting the downfall of the government. In respect of this committee, this debate has not laid my fears to rest ...

Mr Perron: Nor mine.

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, that has been made very clear and I think the debate has been useful because of that. We finally agree on something.

It is clear that the views of the opposition and the government on the way in which this committee should operate differ very profoundly indeed. It will only be a matter of time before it is demonstrated whether the fears of one side or the other are to be realised. I hope that this committee will be effective. I know that the 2 opposition members that are appointed to this committee want to give it their best shot. I urge support from members of this Assembly for the amendment I have moved to provide for annual reports to the Assembly.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, we have been around and around the mulberry bush many times tonight in this particular debate. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is one of the few occasions when we have had a seat-of-the-pants debate in the Assembly in recent times. At the outset, let me say that it is incumbent on all members of this Assembly to pass this motion. We have to do so in the interests of the credibility of the member for Millner who has already been on television saying that we have the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Speaker, I am not going to deal with the fears of either side about this motion. There is no doubt there has been concern on the government side for a number of years that the establishment of such a committee would lead to a witchhunt or a Star Chamber for the opposition. There was concern that it would be misused by the opposition. Conversely, the opposition fears that the government intends to restrict the operations of this committee so that it becomes totally ineffective.

It is our desire that this committee work as a genuinely bipartisan committee, that it will examine matters of relevance and provide assistance to the government by identifying areas where we can improve efficiency and ensure that the taxpayers' dollar is spent effectively. By improving the efficiency of the public service, it will be supporting what we all wish to achieve.

In respect to the proposed paragraph 3, I do not accept the fears of the members for Stuart and Nhulunbuy in relation to restrictions. There was an intention that we draw a line and establish the committee's operation from a particular time forward. I remind members that paragraph 3 ends with the words 'issue or payment of public moneys'. That is very broad and provides a vehicle whereby many issues that are of current relevance to the finances of the Northern Territory can be considered by the committee.

Mr Ede: 'Method'.

Mr HATTON: That is a separate issue. I have said before that the interpretation of our side of the Assembly is that this committee can appropriately deal with matters that are of current financial importance to the Northern Territory. It is designed so that we do not dig into matters that are irrelevant to today's Territory, things that might have happened in 1978 or 1979 or 1980. We do not want it to become a Star Chamber.

Obviously, both sides of the Assembly are approaching this committee with some degree of nervousness. This motion will establish the committee on a trial basis. It gives us a chance to put it into effective operation as a bipartisan committee. I urge members to support the motion in the terms proposed.

The government supports the amendment to paragraph 14 proposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition implied by way of interjection during question time this morning that a series of questions relating to the uranium industry in the Territory were somehow a waste of time or frivolous. He became annoyed that they continued to be asked. He may think that Territorians are not interested in the uranium industry and the uranium policy but he is very wrong. I would have thought that he would have taken the subject a little bit more seriously considering that the Territory's uranium mines are in his own electorate. The direct work force of the uranium industry lives in his electorate.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to read into Hansard the Northern Territory Labor Party's uranium policy which I understand was adopted as recently as last month at its May conference:

A Labor government will be totally and unequivocally committed to close down the uranium industry in Australia; close down all existing uranium mines and withdraw all export licences; will use all means within its power to ensure the federal government closes down existing uranium mines at the earliest possible date; will not approve any new contracts regardless of whether they relate to specific uranium mines or multi-ore bodies; ensure that existing options not yet taken up shall be treated as new contracts; establish a uranium control and enforcement authority which would oversee the closing down of the industry; ensure that such an authority will have the significant representation from relevant Aboriginal communities, environmental organisations and the ACTU and has supporting staff adequate to fully carry out the functions of the staff.

Under the heading 'Compensation':

Companies presently involved in either mining exploration or negotiations would not be offered compensation for the closure of the industry.

Aborigines: the NT branch acknowledges that the closure of the uranium mining will cause detrimental effects on the funding availability to many Aboriginal organisations and people in the Northern Territory. Furthermore, the branch believes that the present funding situation in the NT whereby land councils and the ABTA are dependent on mining royalties is holding Aboriginal people to ransom by forcing these bodies to rely on the amount of mining occurring in the NT. A Labor government therefore would support a system of guaranteed compensation for all disturbance to all Aboriginal lives, traditional lands and waters, past and present; ensure funding be determined at a rate negotiated between Aboriginal people and the federal Australian government, the rate to be sufficient to run land councils and adequately perform their functions in all areas; a National Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account established with regional branches with full Aboriginal control

totally independent 'of the government'. The NABT be funded through direct compensation.

The compensation, funding and funding for the administration of the NABTA be set as a percentage of gross national products agreed between Aboriginal people and the Australian government and that this funding should be in perpetuity. That revenue for Aboriginal compensation and the NABTA be derived through the introduction of appropriate taxes on large companies for resource rental and for land usage. That adequate compensation for displaced union members be negotiated with the appropriate trade union. To establish a specific purpose trust fund funded from royalty payments or other form of levy or bond from mining companies for the rehabilitation of mining areas.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask members opposite 6 questions relating to those words. Were those proposed amendments to the ALP uranium policy adopted at the conference?

Mr B. Collins: No.

Mr PERRON: If they were not adopted in whole, were any parts of them adopted?

Mr B. Collins: No. They all went down, I am afraid, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: Is the new clause which refers to multi-ore bodies included in the new paragraph?

Mr B. Collins: I do not know. You started off by asking if that is the platform of the Labor party, and it is not.

Mr PERRON: Perhaps I could outline the questions and members can think about them overnight, and answer those which they feel they can answer. Perhaps they could find out if the clause which refers to existing options being treated as new contracts was adopted! Is that clause aimed at closing down the Ranger mine specifically and quickly?

Mr B. Collins: I will tell you what. We can bring all the amendments in here and have a re-run of the 1986 conference.

Mr PERRON: What about the authority proposed to oversee shutting down uranium mines? Did that section get a run? Will it have representatives on it from the mining companies?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The debate is getting rather out of hand. I would suggest that members hear the member in silence and not enter into cross-Chamber debate.

Mr B. Collins: Mr Speaker, with respect, could you suggest to the member that, if he wants to be heard in silence, he should not continue to ask members on this side of the Assembly a series of questions which they then answer.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I will address my questions to yourself. In continuation, members opposite may care to inform the Assembly at an appropriate time whether the authority proposed in this policy to oversee the shutting down of uranium mines would include representatives from the mining companies which are to be put out of business? The present clause mentions only Aborigines, unions and environmental organisations.

My fifth question concerns the section on compensation which states that Aboriginals will be compensated, but that mining companies will not. Does the ALP consider that the losses which shareholders would bear as a result of this policy would be a just penalty for having the nerve to invest in the uranium industry?

My sixth question is whether it is envisaged by the ALP that the proposed compensation for the disturbance to Aboriginals, which would be a percentage of gross national production in perpetuity, be offset by any reduction in the existing taxpayers' funds used to assist Aboriginals?

That is the last question. I appreciate that my information may be incorrect and that parts or all of this policy were not adopted at the conference. It was certainly proposed, as I understand it. Members opposite could perhaps enlighten this Assembly on a suitable occasion about exactly what the policy is; that is, if they have the courage to let us look at their policy on uranium.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in the Assembly tonight as its newest member, and I am proud to stand in the footsteps of some very honourable people. These include previous members of the Legislative Council such as Bernie Kilgariff, the late Tony Greateorex, the late Lionel Rose and, of course, Jim Robertson. The area of Araluen has encompassed parts of the old Alice Springs electorate and I hope that I can fill the shoes, to a small extent, of the members who have represented that electorate before me. Obviously, Araluen is one of the oldest parts of Alice Springs and is comprised mainly of solidly-settled citizens of that town. The majority of houses have certainly been there for 8 or 9 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Everingham, now our federal representative, and the members for Elsey, Braitling and Barkly for their contribution and the hard work they did on my behalf in the recent by-election. I guess I should also take the opportunity of thanking the member for Stuart who at least did not let his dog bite me when I was doorknocking in his street.

Talking to local people during the course of the election, I became aware of a number of problems within the electorate. They all relate to what this Assembly would call very minor things, but I believe they are probably the main things that politicians are concerned with today, particularly backbenchers representing their constituents. Some of them are fairly simple things, and I can give a couple of examples. When I called at houses in the railway yard area early in the evening, it was dark. I was amazed at the fact that there was no street lighting in the area. When I visited a number of streets such as Van Senden and Memorial Avenues, a number of people complained about street lighting and lack of stop signs. I have addressed those problems since I have taken office in Araluen.

People cannot resolve some of these problems simply because they do not know how to go about it. The problem with the lights in the railway area was simply a matter of a bit of a dispute between ANR and NTEC, and was easily resolved with a phone call. I believe that I would be remiss in my services to my constituents if I did not attend to these little details, and I intend to carry on doing that.

Of prime concern are problems relating to motor vehicles and traffic flow in a town of 25 000 people. In the 6 short years that I have lived in Alice Springs, the volume of traffic has increased considerably. When I first arrived in the town in late 1979, there were probably about 13 000 residents.



If you multiply the number of families with 1 and 2 cars that have recently arrived in the town, you can see the dimension of the problem that faces the town planners and the town engineers in Alice Springs. There have been a number of tragic accidents, one of them about 2½ weeks ago, where a couple of young children were killed. I wrote to the Alice Springs Town Council some 6 months ago about that very intersection. I appreciate now the action that the Minister for Transport and Works and the Mayor have taken to resolve the Stott Terrace and Todd Street intersection problem by erecting traffic lights as urgently as possible. For members who do not believe that items like this really concern local populations, I have a petition that I will be giving to the Chief Minister while I am in Darwin. It was signed by 1075 people over a 3-week period. That represents a considerable percentage of the adult population in Alice Springs.

It is indeed unfortunate in the Northern Territory that the number one killer appears to be single vehicle rollovers. It is unfortunate that the children who were killed in Stott Terrace were killed basically because they were not wearing seat belts. The car rolled over and crushed one child. It is interesting, when we start talking about vehicles in the Northern Territory, to note that the United States government introduced legislation some 2 or 3 years ago to make roll bars mandatory in vehicles such as Toyota Landcruisers. With the prominence of high 4-wheel-drive vehicles in the Northern Territory, I think maybe the federal government should be looking at introducing similar measures. There obviously is a problem, and I wonder how many lives would be saved simply by having roll bars inside that type of vehicle.

The vast distances between towns, settlements and stations in the Territory make roads very important, not only for the locals but for tourists as well. Obviously, in such a sparsely-populated region as ours, a variety of road conditions will be met when one travels, for example, from Adelaide to Alice Springs. With the changes gradually happening on the south road, I would like to draw this Assembly's and the government's attention to the lack of facilities offered to travellers on the highway.

I would like to relate an experience I had about 15 months ago when I travelled up the south road in order to give members an example of what the unfortunate tourist might experience. I had a vehicle with 2 spare tyres. Unfortunately, I got 4 flat tyres. I abandoned my vehicle, leaving my wife and children, and hitchhiked about 80 km to a roadhouse. On the first inquiry, the roadhouse refused to assist me to repair my tyres, and suggested I brought them back the following morning. Being reasonably persistent, I asked if I could borrow some tools. Eventually I achieved some satisfaction and had the tyres repaired. After arguing, and making a request for a ride back down the road, for which I was quite willing to pay or provide petrol money, I was told that there was no vehicle available. This was despite the fact that this particular roadhouse had a couple of vehicles parked at the rear. They suggested that I hitchhike. There were some 20 German girls doing the same thing and, after grovelling around in the gravel for some 4 hours, even at my best looks, I could not compete for the offers of rides that they were getting. I could see myself either walking back to the car or sitting there for 2 or 3 days. Eventually, sanity prevailed and I was able to persuade one of the owners of the roadhouse to give me a lift to retrieve my wife and children.

Another incident on the same trip provided a contrast. I was towing a trailer and, about 45 miles south of Marla Bore in South Australia, I lost it. It just snapped off. After turning around and driving back about 16 km, and

finding our luggage strewn alongside the highway, looking rather like the French retreat from Moscow, we limped into Marla Bore. The operator of that particular roadhouse was a very efficient, pleasant gentleman. He welded the trailer, gave everyone a cup of coffee, and we continued on our merry way.

I suggest that, if things happen as we in the government believe they will with the sealing of the south road, there will be a marked increase in the volume of traffic coming into the Territory. I believe the Perth-Adelaide-Perth section increased by 24% overnight in numbers of vehicles travelling along it and it has since dropped back to about 14% or 15% increase per annum. If that happens to the Northern Territory, I wonder whether the Northern Territory and South Australia are prepared to offer the average Australian, because the people driving up and down the road are domestic tourists, the services that are required. I think that is an area that we must look at fairly quickly.

The emergency facilities, the breakdown facilities and the numbers of times you see police cars on the roads are probably not comparable with what the average Australian is used to when travelling along a nicely-sealed highway. I can see great problems for us, particularly if the 75 trailers that currently come into Alice Springs on the back of trains move on to the highway, as has been suggested they will once that sealed road is finished. If that happens and we have an accident involving a road train and a coach, I believe in this day and age that the length of time that it would take us to assist people who were injured on the road, say between the Marla Bore and Kulgera, would not be acceptable to the rest of Australia. There is obviously a need to examine the ability to cope with emergencies on that highway and I will be raising that very subject with the minister for Transport and Works while I am in Darwin.

Talking about tourism, there is an interesting publication that was given to me a couple of days ago called 'The Spirit of Fair Competition'. It might surprise members that it is put out by QANTAS. The fair competition they are talking about, which is very relevant to the Northern Territory and very relevant to the services that are offered to our own Territorians, basically involves a long argument which I presume has been presented to the Domestic Airline Review Committee over their inability to pick up passengers between Australian ports. They were allowed to do that until May 1979 when the federal Transport Minister removed this ability and thus lost the market for QANTAS overnight but created a market for Ansett and TAA. There are some 26 000 seats available weekly on domestic airline routes that are flown currently with 65% empty capacity by QANTAS. I need say no more, but it will be interesting to us in the Northern Territory to see how the spirit of fair competition, as they so blithely put it, relates to their airline when the Thai International and Singapore Airlines submissions finally hit QANTAS to fly from both Singapore and Bangkok into Darwin. I wonder what sort of spirit of competition we will see then. People probably do not realise that, if we did allow QANTAS to pick up domestic passengers, that would be of great financial advantage for us in the Territory.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I would like to address myself to the remarks made by the member for Araluen and the member for Fannie Bay. As usual, the member for Fannie Bay has cut and run. Having posed the questions and demanded the answers, he does not have the courtesy to stay around for another 60 seconds to wait for them. I will first of all address some of the remarks made by the member for Araluen which, by far, were the more sensible of the 2.

The theme of the member for Araluen's maiden speech is a familiar one to me because, indeed, he espoused the general line that he adopted in speeches on other occasions when he was Chairman of the Tourist Commission. Certainly, on one past occasion in this Assembly, I can remember quoting from a speech the honourable member gave at the annual general meeting of the organisation dealing with tourism in the Northern Territory and expressed sentiments on that occasion with which I completely concurred.

The honourable member touched on 2 subjects. One was the very tragic accident in Alice Springs where 2 young children were killed. The other was the facilities available to visitors to the Northern Territory. There is a problem with intersections, stop signs, and so on.

There is another problem which is commonplace in the Northern Territory and which provides a situation whereby it is good luck rather than good management that young children are not killed. I know that every member must have seen the situation I am referring to because I see it daily in Darwin and I never fail to become extremely angry every time I see it. It is commonplace to see parents safely strapped into the front seats of vehicles while a child or children are happily playing around completely unsecured in the back seat. Even in a minor accident or when the vehicle simply has to come to a sudden stop, those young bodies are instantly converted into missiles and do not survive the impact. The other people in the vehicle escape with literally not a scratch. I am glad the honourable member raised that problem again because it is a daily occurrence in the Northern Territory. I am pleased to be able to support his sentiments and once again urge parents to give their children at least the same protection they are prepared to provide for themselves.

Mr Speaker, I have a vital interest in the tourist industry of the Northern Territory. It is a fact that the most important people in the tourist industry are the people at the interface between the tourists and the services they receive in the Northern Territory. That is why I am so pleased to see the government supporting, as it has supported in recent years, the provision of those important training facilities in the Northern Territory. I have related to this Assembly on previous occasions, the extremely frustrating experiences I have witnessed in terms of substandard service provided to visitors, to their great dismay, by people who operate in the tourist industry. I am pleased that that is a trend which is fast diminishing but, obviously, as the member for Araluen has just pointed out, it still occurs.

Mr Speaker, the people who are attending the current training courses at the Beaufort Hotel are extremely important people to the Northern Territory. Depending on their attitudes and their professionalism, people will leave here either liking the place or hating it because the attitudes of people leave the most enduring memories in one's mind.

In 1980, I visited Africa, an experience I will treasure, to attend a CPA conference. I had to cut short my visit; I was able to stay there only for 2 weeks because I had to come back to the Northern Territory to hand out 'how to vote' cards for John Waters in a federal election campaign. During my stay in Zambia as a guest of the Zambian CPA, we visited Livingstone. It was one of the most unforgettable experiences of a lifetime. The Victoria Falls really are out of this world.

The Zambian tourist industry was on its first legs, recovering from 15 years of complete isolation because of the problems with Rhodesia as it then was. The facilities - not to put too fine a point on it - were primitive. I stayed the night in Livingstone sleeping on a mattress on the

floor with 2 other members of parliament from another country. I do not pretend that that was marvellous but the attitude of our parliamentary hosts and the proprietors of that hotel were so outstanding, so friendly and so cooperative that it literally did not matter one whit.

It is not very pleasant, Mr Speaker, to be caught somewhere as a result of a mechanical malfunction in an aircraft - it happens very rarely these days. On one occasion that I recall it happening to me, the attitude of the flight crew and flight attendants was so outstanding that it would have been an extremely unusual person indeed who could have become irritated about the inconvenience.

On another occasion, I was standing in the foyer of an important hotel in the Northern Territory. I was standing 2 feet away from a couple of American tourists who wanted to walk around Darwin. When they asked for something as simple as a map of the city, which the Tourist Commission issues free, they were unable to obtain one. When they asked directions to one of our tourist attractions - one of our restored buildings - no one there knew where it was. I must confess that I was attending a function and had a government car at that hotel. I personally took those 2 people down to where they wanted to go. They were extremely unhappy at the time but the fact that someone stepped in to assist them turned the situation around.

I completely support the comments by the member for Araluen in his maiden speech. I have witnessed personally the great assistance given to travellers in the Northern Territory on the Arnhem Highway by the highway patrols provided by the police force. On 2 occasions that I can recall, I have witnessed officers of the Northern Territory Police Force assisting travellers who had flat tyres on the Arnhem Highway. The member for Araluen raised a very pertinent point. The opening of the south road is now in sight. It is a long stretch of road from Adelaide to Darwin, and even the best maintained vehicles may have trouble. Despite the road being sealed, it is a long way between waterholes. His point is valid and I will be interested to hear what action the government will take. I do not necessarily say that the government has an obligation to provide those services, but it should at least inform itself of the situation regarding assistance to stranded passengers, particularly families with young children.

I did not think that the member would suggest, and indeed I do not, that there is enough money in the coffers of the Northern Territory government to provide a highway patrol service by the police force which would be able to completely satisfy the demands that would be made on it. Perhaps a combination of direct assistance by the Northern Territory police and some positive incentives to the private operators could ensure that the least possible distress is caused to what I hope will be a great influx of visitors to the Northern Territory. That will enable them to leave the Northern Territory with a good taste in their mouths which, of course, is the important part of the entire exercise.

In addressing myself very briefly to the extraordinary contribution of the member for Fannie Bay, I must say that I am quite staggered and taken aback by it. I think it is a perfectly valid thing for members of this Assembly to discuss Labor Party policies. However, the fact is that the document which he quoted as the platform of the Labor Party is nothing of the sort. He tried a little rescue mission at the end of his speech when he realised that he had put his foot in it. The document from which he quoted never even reached the floor of the conference. He quoted, for reasons best known to himself, one of numerous documents from branches which are tabled at Labor Party conferences.

Do not hold me to it but, from memory, I think it was the Gap Branch in Alice Springs which framed the document. I am quite sure that it would be delighted to have the member for Fannie Bay at one of its branch meetings as a guest speaker so he can debate the merits of the proposal which was not accepted at the conference.

I have just had delivered to me the documents for the forthcoming national conference of the Labor Party which contain a whole stack of similar proposals. One document is literally 6 inches thick and measures about 2 feet by 18 inches. The platform of the Labor Party is a document about 6 inches long, 4 inches wide, and about half an inch thick. It is reduced to that. I fail to see any point in the member for Fannie Bay canvassing a motion moved by a branch of the Australian Labor Party which was never incorporated into the platform of the party.

I would like to indicate to the member for Fannie Bay my willingness to discuss internal party matters in the Legislative Assembly. To start the discussion, I would like him to table the transcript of the central committee meeting of the Country Liberal Party held last Saturday, including all the motions that were moved and failed, and all the ones that were passed. I would particularly like a verbatim transcript of the speech that was made by Lex Silvester, who so richly deserved the abuse that was heaped on him by Senator Bernie Kilgarriff on the front page of the NT News, referring to the 30 pieces of silver that he should be ceremoniously presented with. If the member for Fannie Bay wants to indulge in debates like that, let us have it on both sides of the Assembly. I will debate with him the proceedings of the central committee, and he can debate with me all night about what goes on in the Gap Branch of the Labor Party in Alice Springs and is not adopted at Labor Party conferences.

I would like to conclude by raising a matter of some substance which involves the member for Sadadeen. It concerns a letter that he wrote recently as Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment to the member for Stuart. I will read it out.

Dear Mr Ede,

As indicated to you in the Legislative Assembly on 11 June 1986, the sessional committee has again asked me to request whatever details you might have regarding the 14 complaints you have laid before us, so we might investigate them as we see fit. It is surely an insult to ask Mines and Energy and the Office of the Supervising Scientist to do such a thorough investigation on such little detail. I have, however, written to both Mines and Energy and the supervisor of the Office of the Supervising Scientist, Mr Fry, fully acquainting them with the situation and seeking what elucidation they may be able to put upon your allegations. Naturally, your refusal at this stage to cooperate makes it an extremely time-consuming job for the department. In my personal opinion, your claims to be concerned for the health and safety of workers at Ranger are totally negated by your refusal to assist the committee in every way possible to accede to your request for an investigation.

That is a disgraceful letter to be sent to a member on behalf of a committee of this Assembly. I have no doubt that the motion that was moved to approve this letter did not include permission for the chairman to indulge in gratuitous abuse and insult of a member of this Assembly. I would like to put one specific question to the member for Sadadeen. This letter is dated

13 June. Considering that the Assembly with all of its committees was prorogued on 12 June, how dare the member for Sadadeen write on behalf of a committee that did not exist and of which he was not the chairman at the time he wrote the letter? This letter has absolutely no status whatever. Why did he indulge in such gratuitous abuse and insults?

Mr McCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I would like to say a few words about a visit I made in February this year to Indonesia and East Timor with the former Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, and other people from various Northern Territory government departments.

In the period from 1970 to 1975, I made a number of visits to East Timor. During that time, I became very familiar with the way of life there, the stage of development and the standard of living of the people. Certainly, the standard of living for most Timorese in 1975 was not high. East Timor had been under the control of Portugal for over 400 years and, during that long period, there had been little effort displayed by the Portuguese authorities to develop the country for the benefit of the people. The only substantial buildings were the government administration offices and residences, the shops of traders of the major towns, the hotels, churches and cathedrals. Schools and homes for the ordinary people were not particularly substantial. The roads generally were very poor. Generally speaking, the roads outside the towns were just stony tracks. It was not uncommon to see repair work being carried out by people with half kerosene cans filled with rocks. Until about 1975, when I was actually in East Timor, it was not possible to see such a thing as a bulldozer. In 1975, some bulldozers were brought in to carry out work on the road just outside Dili on the way to Bacau. There was very little development of any industries. Most of the work undertaken was subsistence farming and fishing. Corn and rice are the subsistence foods of the people of East Timor. Under the Portuguese rule, those commodities were taxed, and I have attended taxpaying ceremonies in East Timor where the people came in from the villages and paid their tax in rice to the local administrator. They did that with some ceremony.

There was some coffee grown and fishing villages along the coast used rock traps and nets in the shallow waters. Some deep sea fishing had been undertaken in the past but that had ceased by 1975. There were cattle and buffalo, but the cattle were Banteng and fairly small. The buffalo certainly were not of the size and quality of those we see in the Northern Territory. In 1975, tourism was the only industry that may have been developing, and I believe that that was the case. It is a unique country, very beautiful and very simple. The tourist hotels at that time, although simple, were very comfortable. The people who worked in those hotels were very easy to get along with. They would be an asset in the Northern Territory because their politeness and willingness to get along with and support tourists was very obvious.

In 1975, a major airport development was under way at Bacau. The Portuguese had some offers from the American government to bring in a 707 of American tourists on a weekly basis, and it was upgrading the airport facilities at that time.

Prior to 1975, it was impossible to get any sort of political discussion going with the people of East Timor. They were afraid to talk politics while they were under Portuguese rule. By July 1975, which was the last time I visited Timor, just a few weeks prior to the takeover by Fretilin, politics were coming to the fore. In fact, it was quite common then to see groups gathering and talking politics, and this was the first time I had seen it over

the years that I had been visiting the island. There were a few major political groups: UDT, the major Portuguese influence; Abu Deti which was the group that favoured Indonesian involvement; and Fretilin, the free Timor influence, was apparently the more radical group at the time. There were a couple of small groups, one of which proclaimed affinity with Australia and one that proposed a return to the old chieftain rule.

As I said before, with the political awareness developing, it was quite common to see the clenched fist salute when passing through villages. If you asked some of the people in the villages what the Fretilin movement said, more often than not the answer was 'no more work'. I guess that was the idea that had been given to them by people who were pushing that view.

At that time, the education system in East Timor was not fantastic. Some government schools were run by the administration and there were some Chinese schools in the larger centres and mission schools spread throughout the territory. The latter were run mainly by the Jesuit and Silesian orders. Most of those schools operated in 2 half-day shifts. There was very little in the way of university education and it was unlikely that more than a couple of students a year would go either to Portugal or to Taiwan for further education.

Health services were very poor and I suffered under the poor health services in East Timor at that time when I tried to obtain medicines; it was virtually impossible. As I have said, primary production was very much a matter of subsistence farming.

I have mentioned that in order to give members an understanding of what we saw when we visited East Timor in February. I admit that we saw East Timor for only 24 hours and that was not long enough to obtain a clear picture but I believe that, with my former experience, I was in a position to seek out and identify the very real changes that had been made in that time, and I will outline some of those.

The central city area in Dili, where we first landed, had not changed greatly except that the bitumen roads were in a poorer state than they had been in 1975. In contrast, there was a large, well-equipped, new hospital, a substantial number of new houses for lower-income people had replaced many of the very rough houses that existed in that area previously, shops were open, the marketplace had more and better quality goods for sale than had been the case in 1975 and simple medicines could be purchased at the markets. I would have appreciated the opportunity to buy medicines at the market in 1975. The people were well dressed. A number of new schools had been established. The people looked well fed and I have no doubt that they were, given the amount of food that was available in the marketplace. From the air, we saw that bitumen roads had been built from Dili through to Bacau via Manatuto and from Dili to Maliana. In both Bacau and Maliana, quite large hospitals and schools had been built. Over 1000 students from East Timor were studying at universities in other parts of Indonesia.

In Bacau, an area that I know extremely well, new sporting facilities, new houses and new administrative buildings for the town authority had been built. All the internal roads were bitumen which had been quite unknown until that time. Unfortunately, the large new airport facility that had been partly built for tourism in 1975, had been completed but was used as an air force base, so we did not have the use of that facility.

In talking to people, there was no doubt in my mind that, generally speaking, the people of East Timor were happy. Of those who have been moved in to assist with administration, I was pleased to find that all those to whom I spoke, and they said the majority of people were of the same opinion, came to further their chances for promotion within Indonesia. Many were from Bali and there were quite a number of young doctors amongst them. They came for 2 years and it was their view that they would increase their chances of promotion back in Bali by coming to East Timor for a couple of years.

In all cases, people brought into East Timor to assist in administration were given the task of training people and I believe that they were doing that effectively. Very few had the intention of staying. It was a bit like the situation in the Northern Territory 20 years ago, when most people came for 2 years with the idea of gaining better promotion opportunities when they returned south.

The whole atmosphere in East Timor was good. I was very impressed by the honesty of the Governor who was not afraid to show us whatever we asked to see. We changed the program at the then Chief Minister's request and we saw things that we asked to see at very short notice - the jail in Dili for one, and the hospital in Dili for another. I do not think that what I have said tonight will satisfy many of the people who have problems with the fact that East Timor is now a part of Indonesia. I say to those people that, unless they change that attitude, I think that it will take much longer than we had hoped to reopen East Timor for those very same people to visit their relatives.

I recognise the concerns of the Indonesian government that a number of people, who were inclined perhaps towards the more radical side of politics in 1975 and have continued the fight elsewhere, might return with money and some support to cause trouble within that province. I can recognise that problem but I can also recognise the desire of people who have moved away to return to East Timor for various periods of time or perhaps even for good. Unfortunately, they will not have that opportunity, I believe, unless they accept that it is now a part of Indonesia and calm their voice of protest.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I rise to take up the invitation offered tonight by the Leader of the Opposition to debate Australian Labor Party policy in this Assembly. I follow on from a few comments made by the member for Fannie Bay last night.

It is Australian Labor Party strategy to ensure that a sizeable and increasing number of Australians are totally reliant on social welfare handouts. The larger and the more widespread the handout, the greater chance of perpetrating the myth that the Australian Labor Party is interested in the plight of the poverty-stricken. It is an Australian Labor Party strategy to ensure that full employment in the pre-1972 sense is never again achieved. The policies of the ALP pervert the obligation of government to provide sound economic management. It is ALP policy to ensure that sufficient numbers of Australians need do nothing more to justify their existence or earn their income than go along to the ballot box once every 3 years or so, so that they can sustain a comfortable and work-free lifestyle.

Mr Speaker, it was evident in debate last night that the members of the opposition do not understand what is happening to Australia's once healthy economy or, if they understand it, they refuse to acknowledge it, knowing full well that the destruction of the Australian's will to work serves their purpose. Let me illustrate the destruction of that will to work and I will



use as examples a number of family situations. Take family number 1, where the breadwinner earns the average male weekly earnings and has a dependent spouse and 4 children. The annual income, before tax and including family allowance, would be \$25 896. The annual income, after tax and Housing Commission rent, would be in the order of \$16 000.

Family 2 is that of a professional man, someone upwardly mobile in the public service or, dare I say, a senior journalist from the Northern Territory News. But let us set his annual income at around \$32 000. Before tax, and including family allowance with 4 dependent children and a spouse, his income would rise to \$33 730. After income tax and Housing Commission rent, his income would be \$19 600.

Family 3 also includes a dependent spouse and 4 children, but its sole source of revenue is unemployment benefits. The annual income, including family allowances and the \$30 a week allowable income, is \$15 500. The annual income after tax and Housing Commission rent - and the tax would probably be nothing given the taxable rate and the claims the family could make - would be about \$12 500 per annum. The qualified professional, upwardly mobile, or the journalist in the NT News is working for \$7500 per annum. The average male weekly wage earner is working for \$3500 but a qualified tradesman, an electrician for example on an award rate in the Northern Territory of \$350 per week with tool and a family allowance, in the same family situation as the others I have illustrated would have a total income, before tax, of \$21 000 per annum. Less tax and Housing Commission rent, his income per annum would be about \$13 000. The money he earns above the unemployment benefit would not pay his bus fare to and from work. We are in the position in Australia today where qualified tradesmen are better off staying at home and voting themselves their income once every 2 or 3 years. It is only by offering so-called fringe benefits that employers can attract qualified, willing and able staff.

The socialist policies of the Australian Labor Party to redistribute income certainly have worked. Income has not been taken from the rich to give to the poor; it has been taken from those who are willing to work and given to those who are unwilling to work. It has been taken from the contributors to the economy and given to the non-contributors. I do not for one instant believe that the government should not support those who are unable to work through physical disability or through other disability or other circumstance. I am talking directly about those who are unwilling to work.

The incentives to work and invest are being removed continually. It is not worth investing in industry or housing. The only worthwhile investment is in Australian government bonds. Investors no longer have the option to invest off-shore. The Australian dollar is not worth the costs of paper and printing. The inflation rate is many times that of our major trading partners. The balance of trade deficit is consistently running at over \$1000m per month. Our exports of primary products go no way towards realising the dependence we place on them to provide foreign exchange. High inflation, dependence on exports of primary products, high tax levels and massive government borrowings are the classic symptoms of a banana republic. Have a look at any of the so-called banana republics and you will see that we fit into the very mould.

If the opposition does not understand the economic woes of Australia today, it has no right to be here masquerading as an alternative government. Despite the dire straits Australia finds itself in, we still have an opposition supporting policies that effectively deny Australia the chance to move out of the third world. Tens of billions of dollars in potential export

earnings through the mining and export of uranium will be denied Australia if the Australian Labor Party has its way.

If the Australian Labor Party stance on uranium mining were as simple as its concern with the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, it would be easy to argue against. If it were such a simple concern, the Australian Labor Party would support the processing in Australia of nuclear fuel rods, leasing them out, bringing them back for re-processing and then leasing them out again. The resultant high-level waste would be stored in Australia. It is a massive industry that could see us through to the 22nd century. It has the potential of being Australia's sheep's back to the 21st century. No way will the Australian Labor Party support such a policy.

Mr Speaker, to come back to what I said originally, it is Australian Labor Party strategy to drive Australia to and keep it at the poverty line, all the while blaming business, large and small, all the while blaming the rich or the perceived rich and all the while blaming its political opponents. If there were some ideology behind it, I could understand it. It does it for nothing more than the retention of power. The power and the glory - that is all it is about.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I do not have all that much time to reply to the member for Leanyer. There are 2 or 3 things that need to be said. The Hawke Labor government, despite its faults, has been pretty successful in creating new jobs. In fact, the unemployment rate in Australia has dropped quite significantly since the Hawke government was elected. Over half a million jobs have been created in the 3 years since ...

Mr Hatton: 8.8% unemployment.

Mr SMITH: The Chief Minister says there is 8.8% unemployment.

Mr Hatton: And climbing.

Mr SMITH: And climbing, particularly in Queensland, the Mecca of the anti-socialist forces in this country. The Queensland economy is in such a mess that it has been going against the Australia-wide trend of the last few months for unemployment to drop. To say that unemployment is rising is correct on the May figures but they were the only figures this year where unemployment was seen to rise. The other figures over 12 months have indicated a consistent drop in unemployment, except in that capitalist haven of Queensland where the unemployment figures are going through the roof because of the strange and peculiar policies of the Queensland government. The other relevant point is that the inflation rate has dropped quite significantly from the inflation rate inherited from the Fraser government.

I have been waiting for an opportunity during these sittings to raise this matter. The Labor Party is often charged with creating a situation where more and more people are being encouraged to go on to social welfare benefits. I must accept that, over the past few years, an increasing percentage of Australians are on welfare benefits. Let me relate an interesting little story of a recent Health Ministers conference where the South Australian Health Minister, Dr John Caldwell, presented to his confreres a proposal that they agree to put a case to the federal government that maintenance payments should no longer be met by the Commonwealth government but should be met by the absent spouse. I had considerable sympathy with that position because there are many deserted wives with children existing on a pittance supplied by the Commonwealth because the husband has denied all responsibility. In my

opinion, that is deplorable and the sooner we do something about it the better.

Mr Palmer: I agree.

Mr SMITH: You might agree. The Deputy Chief Minister came back and issued a press release getting stuck into Dr John Caldwell for having the cheek to suggest that we might save \$100m a year in maintenance payments by making the deserting spouse pay his or her fair share towards the upkeep of the kids he left behind. Perhaps you want to talk to your own confreres before you start casting stones at this side of the Assembly.

Mr Palmer: I did not cast any stones about that.

Mr SMITH: You had your chance.

Mr Speaker, what I wanted to speak about was the saga of the Dripstone Children's Centre. I am sorry that the Minister for Community Development is not in the Chamber; I hope he is within the precincts. If he is not, I hope that this matter is brought to his attention because it is creating some concern.

Mr Hatton: Ask him in question time tomorrow.

Mr SMITH: The way you people operate question time, one hardly gets a chance to ask any questions.

Some 10 or 11 years ago, there was a general feeling, particularly amongst users of the Darwin Community College as it was called then, that it would be a good idea to have a creche on the grounds of the college. In 1983, plans were made and a steering committee formed to plan a creche on the grounds of the Darwin Institute of Technology. That steering committee was put together by the present Children's Services Bureau of the Department of Community Development. Unfortunately, it has had a somewhat chequered career since.

The initial handover date for the children's centre was October 1985. Later handover dates were January, February, March and April this year. The latest handover date is some time 'in the near future'. The whole thing has been extremely badly handled from go to whoa. We have had a situation where the Children's Services Bureau has made it clear that it is the font of all wisdom in the erection of childcare centres. The bureau has refused to allow the steering committee, and the management committee which evolved from it, to play any meaningful role in the development of the centre and, as a consequence, there are at present a number of matters outstanding which need the minister's response before the centre can satisfactorily open. As I understand it, a sum of \$400 000 was allocated, and the project has gone over budget. Again, as I understand it, that is because of the inability of the government to get its act together on this particular matter. The whole matter has been plagued by the refusal of the Children's Services Bureau to consult with the management committee and to take notice of the legitimate requests of that committee. The management committee is composed of people who have a professional interest in the childcare area and, unfortunately, they have been ignored.

The problem has reached such a stage that several weeks ago members of the management committee met with the new Minister for Community Development and put to him a number of required alterations to the building in order of priority. I will quickly go through them. The first problem is that only

9 car park spaces have been provided at the centre. They have been provided at some distance from the centre and will require people using the centre to cross a busy internal road. If you have been to Ellengowan Drive, you will have noticed that it is in a very strange location. It has 4 roads surrounding it, and it looks like an island. I am not complaining about that, but we do have a problem with the car park spaces. They are insufficient, they are badly placed, and there was a suggestion that the fence along Ellengowan Drive could be moved to allow for car park spaces off the road near the centre.

Secondly, there is the need to adjust the heights of power points and door knobs in order to keep them out of the reach of children. They are very low and you can appreciate the problem that would cause.

Thirdly, there is a need to convert a storeroom to a combined staffroom and storeroom so that the old staffroom can be used as an extension area for the over 3's. Unfortunately, the needs of the over 3's were forgotten when the centre was planned. The needs of the over 3's arise because it is planned that this centre will have an extended use from early in the morning till quite late in the evening. In that situation, the over 3's should not be accommodated with younger children.

Next there is the nursery. The committee asked that the nursery and playgroup area be swapped because the nursery is larger and would accommodate more children. It asked that a door be installed between playroom 1 and playroom 2, because there were 5 access doors to playroom 1, which in itself is a pretty strange matter. It asked that a toilet be provided with a swinging non-lockable door to ensure privacy for older children who use the centre. It asked that sinks in the tiled areas of the playroom should be built at child height to encourage children to clean up and be independent. It asked that a shed next to the sandpit be altered so that the doorway of the shed did not open across the sandpit. There were other matters relating to shelving. Another problem is that the centre is enclosed by a criss-crossed, 6-foot, mesh fence which is very easy for children to climb. The committee asked, quite legitimately in my view, that a fence of the type used to enclose swimming pools be installed.

Finally, we come to the question of the landscaping. Under the regulations governing childcare facilities in the Northern Territory, centres cannot be opened until landscaping has been carried out. In this case, there has been no provision for any landscaping. That is a major problem, and I am advised that the prospective operators of the centre will not be opening it until landscaping is provided.

As I said, these matters were raised with the minister some 2 to 3 weeks ago. His promise at that stage was to get back to the committee within 10 days. That 10 days expired at least 10 days ago. I understand from the committee that, as of yesterday, it had received no communication from the minister. I would hope, now that the minister has returned, that he is in a position to comment on that centre, and I hope it will be comment that positively addresses the problems that have been legitimately raised by the management committee, and the efforts that the government is proposing to undertake to solve those problems.

In the 2 or 3 minutes remaining to me, I want to talk about a couple of other matters relating to the portfolio of the Minister for Community Development. One of them is dogs. The previous minister promised us faithfully that he was looking at whether it was necessary to introduce

legislative changes to the Dog Act to remedy the dog problem. We have seen nothing of it. I would certainly appreciate an update as to what the current government thinking is on the dog problem because it certainly has not gone away.

The question of dogs on beaches may be a council responsibility or it may be the government's. I have not quite worked it out. I consider that we have probably reached a stage, in terms of the use of our beaches, where we should identify a couple of our beaches as dog-free. Like many other people, I enjoy going to the beach at this time of the year. It is a sore point for many people, including myself, that uncontrolled dogs use the beach as their own backyard and, on many occasions, as their own toilet. I think it is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I do not deny dog owners the right to take their dogs to the beach, but I do think that people who do not own dogs, or prefer to leave them at home, have an equal right to be able to go to the beach and enjoy themselves without being hassled by dogs. With the advent of the stinger net at Nightcliff Beach, we will have more and more people there, and we may have a potential health problem if dogs are not banned from the area. It may well be a good place to start a dog-free beach on a trial basis.

Mr Harris: Or horses.

Mr SMITH: We do not have horses. I am not aware of any horses that go to the Nightcliff beach.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to be very long this evening but I would like to address a problem that is concerning me greatly. It concerns what I consider to be a very unsavoury method of revenue-gathering by the Transport Workers Union.

Some members of this Assembly may remember an article in the NT News several weeks ago. It concerned a gentleman whom the TWU claimed was a past member. He had been sent a summons from the Small Claims Court in Adelaide concerning supposed back payment of union dues owed. Whilst I thought it was an unusual problem, I did not consider it any further.

Since then, I have had somebody make direct representation to me concerning exactly the same problem. Whilst I obviously cannot talk about the particular circumstances surrounding this man's case, because it is probably sub judice, I can talk in general terms about the way in which the claim is being pressed. What worries me greatly is that I believe there are many claims being made in this manner. It is purported that these men are members of the Transport Workers Union who have not paid dues for some considerable period. In this person's case, the period was alleged to be 7 or 8 years. Legal claims are being pressed in a jurisdiction outside the Northern Territory over matters arising from employment in the Territory. This is placing considerable pressure on the people who are being served summonses here. This particular gentleman is not, and purports never to have been, a member of the union. He came to ask me to sign an affidavit to that effect for him to send to the Adelaide courts to support his rejection of a claim arising out of the Small Claims Court. I find it very disturbing.

In my understanding, small claims courts are designed to settle disputes between people as simply and quickly as possible. Their aim is to cause the litigants the least amount of trouble by not requiring them to be legally represented and by minimising any costs of appearance and settlement. I find it particularly strange that the Transport Workers Union in the Northern Territory, which is obviously well represented in its central headquarters

here, for some unaccountable reason considers that its registered address is in Adelaide, and makes appearances before and seeks settlement of small claims in the Adelaide court. I have checked with the Clerk of Courts in Adelaide and apparently the union has legal jurisdiction to serve notices and summonses on people in the Northern Territory.

Not only that, but the summons which I have in front of me does not have an address to which affidavits or written notices should be sent. It was necessary to make a long distance telephone call to find out where the affidavit should be sent. If the person summonsed wishes to dispute the claim it requires that an affidavit be filed and that the court be advised of an address for the service of any future summonses at a place not greater than 10 km from the court. The person who came to me to have an affidavit signed has never been to Adelaide or even to South Australia. He has no relatives in the area and knows nobody whom he could ask to accept notices on his behalf anywhere in South Australia, certainly not in Adelaide, and certainly not within 10 km of the Small Claims Court. He offered to open a private mailbox at his own expense at the central GPO in Adelaide, which is within 10 km of the court, but has received a letter saying:

The Commonwealth Law (Service and Execution of Process) Act of 1901, as amended, obliges you to give an address on your appearance which is within 10 km of the court from which the summons is issued, and as you have not done so I am not permitted under the act to accept your affidavit document.

I signed the affidavit because clearly the man would have suffered considerable expense if he had travelled to Adelaide, by whatever means, to make his appearance. It would have required him to stay for a considerable time in Adelaide for that purpose and, obviously, he would have lost salary while he was away as well. Having made a written affidavit, which has now been rejected, presumably he will be in default because he has not met the summons within the due process period. Probably his defence will be struck out and a judgment entered against him.

It seems to me that this is rather a strange method of serving summonses and clearly places undue pressure on people who are resident in the Northern Territory. I rang the Clerk of Courts in Adelaide at the Small Claims Court about this, and asked if there were many such summonses issued to people in the Northern Territory. He said that he was not really sure, but knew that he was waiting for answers to at least 200. He went on to say that he had a suspicion that, if he took into account summonses dating back to May last year that had not yet been served, there might be as many as 400 such summonses that have been issued on Northern Territory residents. I think that is reprehensible.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to allude briefly to some remarks made earlier by the member for Leanyer. At one point in his speech, he referred to the balance of trade which he appears to have confused with the balance of payments. I have noticed a rather disturbing habit on the other side of the Assembly to confuse both of those terms with the national debt and the budget deficit. Whilst they are different terms, they mix them all together and seem to believe they can pick up one at leisure and run with it and it will become the one they are trying to refer to at that time. It is quite amazing. I wish they would use the terms in their proper context because then they might be able to stop grandstanding and get to the nub of the particular problem.

On that point, I would like to refer honourable members to an article that appeared in the May 1986 issue of Australian Society titled 'Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics'. The article referred to mining statistics which were issued, and used very strongly by this government, by the Australian Mining Industry Council and the Northern Territory Confederation of Mines, as a basis for slamming the Land Rights Act. There were the notorious figures which indicated that there had been an enormous downturn in exploration in the Northern Territory and they blamed the Northern Territory Land Rights Act for it. As you may remember, Mr Speaker, they quoted the figure for 1982-83 accurately at \$25.3m and then stated that there had been a downturn to \$11.834m in 1983-84 and that this reflected the disenchantment of Northern Territory mining companies and their inability to work with the Land Rights Act. They hinted also at some other reason, which was not established at the time, as to why the mining companies could not work on the other 55% of the land. Presumably, they were saying that exploration had reached a stage where the Northern Territory had been fully explored and no further opportunities were available to them. That appeared to be rather amazing but, unfortunately, it was not taken up by the press at the time.

When the statistics indicated that \$28m had been spent in 1984-85, they found themselves in a very embarrassing situation. Either they had to acknowledge that, for some inexplicable reason, the figure had risen from something over \$11.8m in 1983-84 to \$28m in 1984-85, or own up to the fact that the former statistics were quite wrong. The figure for 1983-84 was actually \$24.150m, and the apparent decline in the Northern Territory's mining exploration in that year was, in fact, no more than the national downturn that occurred in that year in conjunction with some very serious changes in the international values of most of the minerals for which exploration is undertaken in the Territory. In 1984-85, given the corrected base of \$24.15m for 1983-84, the upturn was in the order of 16%.

It is regrettable, but not surprising, that AMIC and the confederation did not then say what a great piece of legislation the Land Rights Act was in view of that 16% increase. As I said before, there appears to be a tendency on the part of politicians to pluck figures out of the air, put them together and say that they have proved what they wanted to prove. They manipulate the statistics and the argument and misuse the terms until they get something which may sound good but does not bear any relationship to the truth and does not bear close examination.

Mr Speaker, the other point that I would like to refer to tonight was raised earlier this evening by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a letter that was written to me by the member for Sadadeen in regard to some complaints that I provided to the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I would like to make it quite clear, Mr Speaker, that I am always willing to cooperate with the Sessional Committee on the Environment, as I am with all other committees of this Assembly. However, I felt somewhat more than miffed when I read in the letter statements such as the following:

It is surely an insult to ask Mines and Energy to conduct a thorough investigation on such little detail. I have, however, written to Mines and Energy and the supervisor of the Office of the Supervising Scientist, Mr Fry, fully acquainting them with the situation and seeking what elucidation they may be able to put upon your allegations.

I wonder in what terms the letters to the 2 organisations involved were couched and whether they reflected the kind of letter I received. I am quite

prepared to follow the instructions or requests of a sessional committee or any other committee of this Assembly even if they are couched in such terms as these - if the letter is, in fact, a reflection of the motion that was passed by the committee. However, I wonder whether, in fact, the motion was couched in these terms or whether the member for Sadadeen took a fair bit of poetic licence with the request for information from the committee and set himself up as the interpreter of its desires when he wrote this letter.

I have referred continually to the author as the member for Sadadeen because his headed paper was utilised for this letter, and I am not taking umbrage at that. Some people may say that Assembly or committee headed paper should have been used. That is a minor point. However, I have purposely not referred to him as the Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment because that committee was prorogued on 12 June 1986 and this letter was written on 13 June 1986. From memory, the committee was not re-established until 17 June 1986. In fact, the committee did not exist and therefore he could have had no status other than as the member for Sadadeen. I am not being insulting when I say that I refuse to answer a letter from the member for Sadadeen which is couched in these terms. I find it gratuitously insulting. There is absolutely no reason why, if the honourable member wished to masquerade as the chairman of a committee which did not exist, I should have taken any further notice of him until such time as this Assembly had seen fit to reappoint him to that particular position.

The honourable member has purported to hold a position which he did not hold at the time. That is not only an insult to me but an insult to the committee and an insult to this Assembly. If a new letter is sent to me which faithfully reflects the will of the reconstituted committee, requesting me to supply information, I will do that to the best of my ability. However, I will not answer a letter sent by the member for Sadadeen who had absolutely no authority to demand these details let alone demand them in terms which were highly insulting and to assert a position of power which he did not at that time hold.

Mr Speaker, there is another point which I wish to raise tonight. This matter has been dear to my heart for a long time. I refer to the provision of electricity in rural areas in the Northern Territory. This is a very difficult problem because, if a traditional means of delivery is utilised, the cost of providing electricity to small communities is very expensive. In fact, the previous Minister for Mines and Energy was good enough to supply me some months ago with a paper on the comparative costs of the supply of electricity through mains power, diesel generation, a combination of those, and solar energy. The paper showed a disproportionate difference in the cost of providing electricity to small communities by solar power and small diesel or petrol sets. The figures seemed to indicate that solar energy was not an option which could be considered by this government.

Since that time, there have been a number of technological advances in this field. I am sorry that I do not have all the details with me. However, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to a system from the Solar Energy Resource Institute of Western Australia. I believe it takes advantage of major technological breakthroughs which achieved conversion ratios of about 20% for this type of system for the first time.

The Solar Energy Resource Institute of Western Australia has taken existing technology and put it together in a package. It has taken the container that we know so well and placed solar panels on top of it. Inside, it has installed a refrigerator system, batteries, lights, transceivers,



antennae and a converter system. In fact, it has put together a total package of electrical requirements for a small community. It will not run many household appliances. However, it will provide some flood lighting. It has been tested at a community near Millstream in Western Australia and has proved to be not just a success, but a resounding success. It has 3 by 150 litre chest-type freezers. It has a 150 fridge/freezer. It has a number of other attributes to commend it.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, last evening I was unable to complete my comments on the wonderful production of the HMS Pinafore which I had the privilege to view in Darwin last weekend.

In spite of my previous Thespian experiences as a member of the men's chorus in HMS Pinafore, Mr Speaker, allow me to reassure you, the member for Stuart and other honourable members, and more particularly the Hansard staff, that I will resist any temptation to break into song, as Speaker MacFarlane once remarked that singing is a contravention of standing orders in this Assembly. I am sure you, Mr Speaker, would be only too willing to remind me of that. However, the performance itself was a great joy. Gilbert and Sullivan is always good fun. The biting satire that it may have been in the late 19th century is perhaps not quite as mordant as it was then but it continues to be a joy. The performance last Friday night at the Darwin Performing Arts Centre in association with the Bougainvillea Festival and the Darwin Chorale was an absolute joy. I particularly enjoyed several of the solo performances.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Mr BELL: That is a low act.

Mr Dondas: If the Leader of the Opposition can do it, I can do it now. It is bloody 10 o'clock and I want to go home too.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable minister will withdraw those remarks.

Mr Dondas: I withdraw them unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I think the high point of the whole performance was the trio, Josephine, Captain Corcoran and Sir Joseph Porter. It had at least 2 encores as I recall. I enjoyed the fine voices of Roger Hale, who played Captain Corcoran, and Kathleen Banks. The egregious Tom Pauling made up for whatever he lacked in terms of vocal training by way of stage presence. It really was a wonderful show and the centre and the company and the individuals involved deserve the highest praise for it.

The other matters I wish to address relate to issues of concern to Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants in my electorate. I have raised these matters before, but I have no hesitation in doing so again. Essentially, there are 3 issues involved. The first relates to payment of Aboriginal teachers. The fact of the matter is that the pay system for Aboriginal teachers in communities in my electorate ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is required. Ring the bells.

Mr BELL: I am quite sure that the problems that confront Aboriginal teachers in my electorate are of little concern to any of the government members, but I trust that they will allow me the courtesy of hearing me out. The fact of the matter is that, with a system of government administration that is supposed to be sensitive to northern Australian circumstances, and self-government that is supposed to be sensitive to the needs of all Territorians, some of these people, for reasons beyond their control, are being paid 2, 3, 4 and 6 weeks in arrears. I have drawn this to the attention of numerous Ministers for Education, some of whom are no longer members of this Assembly. I get fobbed off with talk of Treasury regulations and heaven knows what. I wanted to raise this matter in the adjournment debate because, in South Australia, one of those dreaded socialist states which are havens of deadly centralism, Aboriginal teachers living in remote areas are paid on an index system where people ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Shut up and listen to me for a while!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: In South Australia, it is possible to pay people on the spot for hours of work done. What I want the Minister for Education and any of the hoons on the backbench that are interested in ...

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

Mr BELL: I will unreservedly withdraw the implication that any members of the government backbench are hoons, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Would the member withdraw the remark unreservedly and not debate the issue?

Mr BELL: With due respect, I have withdrawn it. I unreservedly withdrew any implication that the members of the government backbench were hoons, Mr Speaker. I may have taken several words to do so but I believe I withdrew unreservedly. Their intelligence may be in question but I certainly do not impute hoon-like characteristics to them.

The issue of payment for these people deserves more attention that it is receiving at the moment. I would very much appreciate it if the Minister for Education could take this problem on board. If it can be solved in South Australia, it should be possible to solve it here.

The second issue I wanted to raise is in relation to the number of Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants employed in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. The fact of the matter is that, in the last 6 years, that number has decreased by between 20% and 30%. I do not have the figures right at my fingertips, but my recollection is that, in 1980, 128 Aboriginal teachers were employed in bilingual schools in the Northern Territory. In 1986, that number has decreased to 99, and I would like to know why. Quite clearly, the importance of those programs and the professional development of Aboriginal teachers is exacerbated by the high levels of unemployment on the communities in which they work. I appreciate that there are fiscal restraints within which the minister must work, but it is a matter of concern to those communities and to the teachers themselves that numbers have decreased so dramatically.

The third issue which I draw to the attention of members and the minister concerns housing of Aboriginal teachers. I was privileged to attend the FEPI conference in Alice Springs several weeks ago, and it was of considerable interest. There was heated and reasoned debate about a number of issues relating to Aboriginal education. I was impressed particularly with the effort that the executive officer of FEPI, Mr Bill Baird, has put into that organisation and the efforts of a large number of other people, including those from places as far afield as Yuendumu and Papunya, who participated in the deliberations of that conference.

One of the major issues discussed was that of adequate housing for people employed in the schools as Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants. Quite clearly, people living and working under those circumstances expect the same sort of accommodation as expatriate teachers. It is not an unreasonable expectation. People at Papunya in my electorate are particularly concerned and I wish to draw the matter to the attention of the Minister for Education as well as the Minister for Housing. I raised similar issues several years ago when the member for Barkly was the Minister for Health. Quite clearly, Aboriginal health workers feel that they should be able to enjoy accommodation on a par with other people employed on their communities by the Department of Health. Here it concerns the Department of Education. People employed by the department cannot do their jobs. They cannot live in a humpy and front up for work.

Mr Manzie: Speak to Senator Ryan about it.

Mr BELL: If the Minister for Education wants to chip in, he can wait till I sit down. Since his mates call for quorums while I am speaking, I do not feel obliged to listen to him.

Suffice it to say that it is difficult for those people to leap out of a swag at 8 o'clock in the morning and appear at school and do a conscientious job. Quite obviously, they should have similar accommodation to expatriate staff who are required to work under similar circumstances.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to also put on record my appreciation of HMS Pinafore. It was a very enjoyable show. I would like to bore the Assembly with details of the fact that, years ago, before I came to the Territory, I actually sang in that same opera at the Willunga High School.

Mr Bell: In chorus?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: No, I played Captain Corcoran. Thus, I have one over the honourable member. Ours was only a small show but it was a very enjoyable occasion. It was great to relive the show. Alice Springs has had similar light operatic performances over the years and I have had the chance to join in them there too and thoroughly enjoyed it. I congratulate all of those involved in the Darwin performance. It was top class.

Yesterday, Mr Speaker, I was cut short by the clock in my remarks regarding Ti Tree. I mentioned that the Ti Tree Progress Association had done a great deal towards the construction of an airstrip to be used for emergency evacuations and for the safety of tourists. In his maiden speech, the member for Araluen spoke about his concern for the safety of tourists.

There was an accident recently just south of Ti Tree. After the jaws of life arrived, it took 2½ hours to extract the injured person. That must have

been an horrendous experience for him. The Ti Tree Progress Association asked me to approach the Chief Minister to provide 50% of the cost of a set of jaws of life. A single man operation unit costs about \$10 000. The fire unit from Alice Springs is willing to train the police officers and some of the locals in its use.

I commend the Ti Tree Progress Association for offering to provide 50% of the cost of this item. I think it is an example to the whole Territory community. A long time ago, I remember hearing the former Premier of South Australia, Sir Thomas Playford, talking at the first school that I attended in the Adelaide Hills. The local people had constructed an oval using their own tractors and equipment. He was saying what a pleasure it was for the government to have people who were prepared to contribute rather than simply ask for total funding for a project. The Ti Tree Progress Association deserves our highest commendation.

I welcome the opportunity tonight to comment on the matter raised by the member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition. I refer to the 'cooperation' of the member for Stuart with the Sessional Committee on the Environment regarding information about 14 complaints which he put to us in single sentence form. At the committee's request, I sent the letter to the honourable member on 3 April. He would have had it by the 5th because it was sent from Alice Springs to his office in Alice Springs. Between then and 10 June, I checked with the secretary of our committee a couple of times to ascertain whether he had received a reply. I asked the secretary to send a reminder, to check by phone and to send a letter checking whether the honourable member had received the letter. Some 67 days went by before the 14 points were simply handed to the secretary of the committee. There was no detail supplied.

The honourable member tried to make a great story out of the fact that I had erred in that the sessional committee ceased to exist with the prorogation of the Assembly. What is really important? He was trying to say that the health and safety of the workers at Ranger were the important concern. On the 18th, he said he would supply us with a copy of the complaints but he did not do so. We asked him again on the 20th at a second meeting. We sent a letter and 67 days went by. Finally, we received a bare list that did not give us anything to go on. It would be an insult to try to have Mines and Energy officers and officers of the Office of the Supervising Scientist try to match their records with such flimsy material. If he had been serious about the health and safety of the people out there, he would have cooperated with us to the full. I believe very sincerely all he tried to do was to politicise the committee.

It is my pleasure to inform the Assembly that we have had our meeting. I have been reinstated as the chairman of that committee, and I believe that with the new members we can get back to where we were and serve this Assembly and the community in the manner in which the committee did until that particular time. I completely reject his nitpicking. He tries to tell me that health and safety are the important issues. But now he has gone off on this tangent. This situation would not have arisen if he had been cooperative in the first place. He has now said in the Assembly that he will be cooperative. I believe him but, if he is not, I am sure members will hear about it.

Mr Ede: You will get all the details in this Assembly.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member has interjected from a place that is not his own seat.

Mr SPEAKER: The point of order is upheld, and all honourable members can take heed of that.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to comment on certain allegations that were made in relation to the gas pipeline into Alice Springs from Palm Valley. I do not intend to kick the honourable member for Stuart too hard over this because, clearly, the complaint was made by a certain Mr Sullivan who was involved in the installation of that pipeline. When the news first reached me, my first reaction was that, if this gentleman knew that this pipe was defective, why didn't he refuse to install it? If he installed it even though he knew it to be defective, then he was negligent and could be open to some considerable charges. It is very pleasing to hear that the report of Mr Alder - an independent investigator from Victoria who has considerable expertise - found that the line is in good shape. The testing was carried out to 1400 lbs, which is the required test level, which will then allow 1000 lbs pressure as the operating pressure of the gas in the line. The line that runs from Palm Valley right to the power-station is normally packed by letting gas flow into the line up to some 800 lbs. The pressure drops back over about 3 days when the line is repacked. The allegations about safety gave the government advisors the chance to test it with pressures up to 800 lbs. They could bring it down to 600 lbs or 400 lbs and operate at a lower pressure. That would mean packing the line virtually every day, which is a little more costly. However, the government had time to investigate the matter. Indications are that the line is in good condition, and that is very pleasing.

I was concerned to learn from people in the Department of Mines and Energy that the pressure in pipelines passing through built-up areas throughout Australia is a maximum of 400 lbs. Even if that is actually written into the standards, I am satisfied that a 1000 lbs limit is reasonable and safe. However, for the peace of mind of people in Alice Springs, I would like to see the section of the line that goes through the town operating at a lower pressure. This requires a special valve device which would cost about \$150 000. That is not cheap, but the peace of mind of the people of Alice Springs would be enhanced.

The pressure actually required at the power station is only 50 lbs. That delivers sufficient gas to run the motors. The line pressure could be reduced to roughly 250 lbs or 300 lbs at the valve. Because we have a dynamic flow situation, there would be a gradual reduction in pressure. It could be 200 lbs at the power-station, 300 lbs at the valve, and still provide a sufficient quantity of gas to allow the Alice Springs power-station to withstand by 2 or 3 fold. I was asked my opinion by some people at a meeting of Mines and Energy officers and gas pipeline people. I would urge the government, even though it may be seen to be an overkill, to accede to this request. It is not necessary to close down the line to install the valve. It could be done when the proverbial intelligent pig is run through in September. I would request the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy to take it on board. I believe that, as in other places around Australia where gas pipelines pass through built-up areas, it should be done for the peace of mind of the residents. I think it would be very well accepted in the community. It is a bit like the Irishman who wore 3 pairs of braces: to be sure, to be sure, to be sure. It would be a worthwhile thing to do.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGES FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I read message No 6 from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to promote occupational health and safety in the Territory, to prevent industrial injuries and diseases, to promote the rehabilitation and maximum recovery from incapacity of injured workers, to provide financial compensation to workers incapacitated from industrial injuries or diseases and to the dependants of workers who die as a result of such injuries or diseases, to establish certain bodies and a fund for the proper administration of the act, and for related purposes.

Dated 17 June 1986

E.E. JOHNSTON

Administrator

Mr SPEAKER: I have also received message No 7 from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to provide superannuation benefits for persons employed by the Territory and certain public authorities, to make provisions for certain dependants of those persons, and for related purposes.

Dated 17 June 1986.

E.E. JOHNSTON

Administrator

PETITION

Maximum Height of Structures in Brinkin

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 72 residents of the electorate of Casuarina regarding the maximum height of structures in the Brinkin area. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory, electors of the Division of Casuarina, respectfully sheweth that structures higher than 7 m in the Brinkin area would affect the outlook and privacy of residents. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory Planning Authority should ensure that a maximum height limit of 7 m is maintained for the Brinkin area, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, honourable members will be aware that the federal Minister for Defence, Mr Beazley, recently tabled in the House of Representatives a report entitled 'Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities'. This report is more commonly known as the 'Dibb Report' after its author, Mr Paul Dibb, a defence specialist from the Australian National University.

The Dibb Report contains a detailed and wide-ranging review of Australia's defence capabilities. It examines the content, priorities and rationale of defence forward planning in Australia, and makes recommendations concerning Australia's present and future defence requirements. Particularly encouraging is its emphasis on the need for Australia to increase its defence capabilities in the north of the continent - a point of view which the Territory government has pressed for several years.

For the benefit of honourable members, I would like to summarise some of the main assessments made in the report. Australia is one of the most secure countries of the world. It is distant from the main centres of global military confrontation and it is surrounded by large expanses of water which make it difficult to attack. Australia's neighbours possess only limited capacity to project military power against it. In short, Australia is a defensible continent.

Australia faces no identifiable direct military threat and there is every prospect that our favourable security circumstances will continue. It would take at least 10 years, and massive external support, for the development of a regional capacity to threaten us with substantial assault. But there are possibilities for lower levels of conflict - some of which could be very demanding - arising within shorter warning times. Australia must have the military capacity to prevent any enemy from attacking us successfully in our sea and air approaches, gaining a foothold on our soil, or extracting political concessions from us through the use of military force. Australia needs to concentrate force structure priorities on the area of direct military interest; that is, Australia and its immediate surrounds.

A layered strategy of defence is proposed within our area of direct military interest. Our most immediate defence planning concern is to ensure that an enemy would have substantial difficulty in crossing the sea and air gap. To the extent that lesser enemy forces might land, we will need highly mobile land forces capable of dispersed operations with the ability to protect our military installations, infrastructure and civilian population in the north of the continent.

For defence planning purposes, priority should be given to more credible low-level conflict, which would be limited because of limited regional military capabilities. More substantial conventional military action against us could only occur if countries in our region were to develop the necessary capacity over time. This would take many years.

On the basis of this analysis and assessment, the report proceeds to make recommendations concerning the size, composition, equipment requirements, command structure, disposition and training needs of the Australian defence forces. I will refer in more detail to some of these recommendations in a few moments. Mr Speaker, it is inevitable in a wide-ranging review of a subject which is so important to Australia's future, that there will be some

controversial aspects of the report. In this regard, I mention the assumed warning time of 10 years for a major regional conflict involving Australia, the essentially defensive - some would say isolationist - posture that is proposed for the Australian Defence Force, the assessment that we live in an essentially stable and benign region, and the priority roles and equipment priorities proposed for each of the 3 services.

I do not propose to debate these controversies at this time. Rather, I wish to focus attention on a key theme of the report, and one which has important implications for the future of the Northern Territory: namely, the defence of Australia's north. It is a theme to which Mr Dibb returns again and again in his report. Honourable members will be aware that the Northern Territory government has argued consistently the need for a greater defence presence in northern Australia, and it is gratifying indeed that this need has received the recognition it deserves. Mr Dibb's emphasis on the need to defend the north follows directly from his analysis of Australia's defence needs and priorities. The move from a policy of forward defence in association with allies - which was the policy which prevailed in Australia until the early 1970s - to the present concept of self-reliance in the defence of Australia means that adequate forces need to be deployed in the region through which any significant threat must come; that is, the north of Australia and the northern approaches to Australia.

Mr Speaker, I referred earlier to Mr Dibb's proposal for what he terms a 'layered strategy of defence' within our area of direct military interest. The first layer relates to Australia's most important defence planning concern: to prevent any hostile force crossing the sea and air gap. For this we need good intelligence and surveillance as well as air and sea forces capable of interdiction. The second layer relates to the range of capabilities needed to defend our offshore resources and the coasts themselves. It includes air defence, mine counter-measures and appropriate naval ships. The third layer relates to the need for highly mobile land forces capable of operating across the north to protect population, military installations, infrastructure and industry. The report calls this defence system a 'strategy of denial'.

To give effect to this strategy, the report recommends boosting Australia's northern defences in a number of ways, many of which are of direct relevance to the Northern Territory. These recommendations include: expansion and acceleration of the current development program for over-the-horizon radar, including the conversion of the experimental Jindalee radar into an operational system, and the acquisition of additional radars as a matter of priority, to provide broad area surveillance of our northern approaches; continuation with the proposal to acquire a ground-based radar to cover the approaches in the Darwin Tindal area; development of a bare-base airfield on the Cape York Peninsula; continuation of support and development of the Regional Reserve Force surveillance units in the north of Australia; development of a modest naval facility on the north-west coast; planning for the basing of units of the regular army in the Darwin Tindal area with initial phases by the early 1990s; more training in northern regions to familiarise units with conditions in northern Australia and to test the logistics capability; identifying particular reserve infantry battalions for specific key installation security tasks in the north; and possible formation of a northern command to be called Norcom to provide a unified command structure for operations of the Australian Defence Force in northern Australia.

Whatever reservations I may have about some aspects of the report, it is pleasing indeed to see that a clear message of the report is that the defence



of all Australia is regarded as vital. There is no room in Dibb's analysis for a Brisbane-line mentality or for notions of protecting the industrial heartland. The north of Australia is to be made secure and kept secure. In this regard, I would like to consider briefly a couple of particular aspects of putting this strategy into effect. I refer, firstly, to the role of civil infrastructure in the defence of the north and, secondly, to the recommendation for the establishment of a regular army base in the Darwin-Tindal area.

With respect to civil infrastructure, the report states that 'much work remains before we have a comprehensive infrastructure capable of supporting a self-reliant defence posture'. Mr Dibb further notes the need 'to bring the location and capabilities of facilities such as roads, railways, ports, airfields, communications, water storage and power sources more clearly into line with the strategic requirements for the defence of Australia'. Mr Dibb adds that 'this requirement was noted in the defence White Paper of November 1976, but little seems to have been done where it matters - in the north and north-west of the continent and in transit areas such as the Centre'.

Mr Dibb also notes that, in a threat situation, 'convoying (by sea) might be used for critical civil or military cargoes but Australian defence strategy could not rely on coastal shipping to support operations in the north. Alternative means of transport, less susceptible to interdiction, including road and rail transport, should be used to minimise the defence force being drawn into convoy and other defence-of-shipping operations at disproportionate cost, and to the detriment of other strategic options'.

I agree with all of that. The problem is, as honourable members are only too painfully aware, the Australian railway network. It has the potential to provide vital logistic support to northern defence operations, but it terminates at Alice Springs, 1500 km short of the Darwin Tindal area which would be a focal point for such operations. The report reinforces the case for a railway, not that such further reinforcement really should be necessary.

Against this background, it is extremely disappointing to read in the report that the proposed Darwin to Alice Springs railway 'would be useful for defence purposes, but it should not be subsidised from the defence budget'. The entire civil infrastructure of Australia, its network of roads, railways, airfields, ports, heavy transport equipment and telecommunications facilities, collectively comprise a vital part of Australia's overall defence capability. I accept that there are constraints on the defence budget, as indeed there are constraints on our own budget. But the question is simple: does the Alice Springs to Darwin railway have a defence value? The answer is clearly yes. How that value is then realised is quite a separate exercise. It is disappointing that the report continues to play the bureaucratic budget game.

I also wish to comment on the proposal for the establishment of a regular army base in the Darwin Tindal area. As the report observes, the 'physical environment itself is neutral and those forces which are best trained and equipped to operate and be supported in it will have the greatest chance of success'. According to Mr Dibb's analysis, ground forces have a vital role to play in northern defence: 'It is imperative that Australia enjoy air superiority over its northern approaches. Hence it is imperative that those installations and facilities which provide that superiority be protected ... Even with the recommended sea and air defences, Australia cannot hope to provide an impenetrable barrier. Hence the need for ground forces as an integral part of the strategy of denial'.

Mr Dibb also makes it clear that the protection of defence assets and the civilian population in the north requires sizeable ground forces. For example: 'To defend a major isolated airfield such as Tindal against raiding parties would require up to a battalion group ... to give a measure of protection to the Darwin area and its approaches (excluding Tindal airfield) would probably require at least a brigade ... To protect the Darwin-Tindal area, and bases at Learmonth, Derby and Weipa, would alone require forces in excess of the present six battalions of today's regular army'.

What is clearly implied in the Dibb Report is the need for an historical shift in the operational orientation and, to some extent, the physical disposition of the regular army. In the bygone era of forward defence, it did not matter very much where our ground forces were deployed within Australia. The expectation was always that any fighting would be done overseas anyway. With the transition to a defence posture based on the principle of self-reliance, and with the clear emphasis on continental defence, the disposition of ground forces matters a great deal.

Essentially what Mr Dibb is saying is that, in future, the army should be trained and deployed more and more in the region where it is most likely to operate. It is an approach that I wholeheartedly endorse. In this regard, Mr Dibb specifically recommends the basing of units of the regular army in the Darwin-Tindal area, an area which Mr Dibb describes in his report as vital for defence purposes. Mr Dibb suggests that basing of army units in the north be phased in over several years. His own priority would see first the basing of regular infantry but adds that 'practical considerations may suggest initially a regular reconnaissance unit followed by a regular battalion and other arms and services, building later to a regular brigade'.

A regular reconnaissance unit would involve an estimated 450 military personnel, an infantry battalion between 900 and 1700 personnel depending on the support elements based there as well, and a brigade of at least 3000 personnel. The development of an army base in the Northern Territory, which progressively led to over 3000 military personnel plus their dependants being permanently stationed here would unquestionably provide an enormous boost to the economic development of the Territory, not to mention the defence of Australia.

Unfortunately, this development will not occur overnight and it will not come cheaply. The report proposes that at least a reconnaissance unit could be based permanently in the Darwin-Tindal area by the early 1990s and that this should be followed by further development for the infantry. The initial cost estimates for capital facilities are around \$100m for a reconnaissance unit and about \$800m for a base at brigade level.

Additionally, there would be some incremental recurrent costs in recognition of the generally higher costs associated with stationing troops in remote areas of Australia. In this regard, I note in passing an interesting comment made by Mr Dibb. He says: 'If defence forces personnel are to be expected to spend a significant proportion of their careers in remote and inhospitable areas, every effort must be made to provide offsetting amenities to promote morale and retain personnel. Conditions such as air-conditioning of houses and annual leave flights to southern centres should be regarded as reasonable entitlements'. In the context of the Territory government's present wrangle with the Commonwealth over the application of the fringe benefits tax, I am pleased to see that other parties recognise the various allowances paid to persons working in remote areas as reasonable entitlements - which they are - rather than as some malevolent tax avoidance scheme.

With regard to the future of Australia's tanks and other heavy artillery, the report states that there is 'a need to examine their potential contribution to situations where the defence would be more static and logistic support would be easier - in particular, the Darwin-Tindal region'.

The Dobb Report is not a statement of Commonwealth policy on defence. It is an independent report to the government. However, the Defence Minister, Mr Beazley, has enthusiastically welcomed the report, and the Chief of the Defence Force and Secretary of Defence have broadly endorsed it. Mr Beazley has indicated that the Dobb Report will be a basic input to a White Paper which the government is to prepare on defence. I think it is fair to suggest that the forthcoming White Paper will reflect the general thrust of the Dobb Report, though not necessarily all of its specific recommendations.

The Territory government welcomes the prospect of a greater defence presence in the Northern Territory as part of a general reorientation of the Australian defence force to the north of Australia. Honourable members will know from experience that, with the current federal government, there is a difference between the promise and the reality and between the recommendations of a report and their physical implementation.

The various recommendations in the Dobb Report are designed to be accommodated within the 5-year defence program for the acquisition of defence equipment and facilities. At present, this program calls for average real growth in expenditure of 3.1% per annum over the next 5 years. The report notes that real growth in defence expenditure has averaged 2.5% per annum over the last 10 years. The expenditure proposals in the report are achievable, but only on the basis of the Commonwealth government having the will to ensure a determined and sustained effort.

Under the Australian Constitution, national defence is a Commonwealth responsibility. However, I consider it important that this government maintain a close interest in defence matters, particularly in the light of the Dobb Report and its important recommendations affecting the Northern Territory. Accordingly, I have asked my department to monitor developments in the general area of defence policy as it relates to the Northern Territory, to conduct or arrange further assessments of specific defence issues affecting the Territory, and to advise on Commonwealth-Territory relations with regard to defence matters.

Although the Dobb Report analysed in depth numerous aspects of Australia's defence requirements, it also identified several areas where further examination is required. Some of these relate directly to recommendations having implications for the Northern Territory. While honourable members on both sides of the Assembly undoubtedly will have a variety of opinions on specific aspects of Australia's defence policy, I am sure they will all share my concern, and this government's concern, that the northern part of the Australian continent be adequately defended, and that the potentially important future role of the Northern Territory in the sphere of defence be properly recognised.

For its part, the Territory government will work to cooperate fully with the Commonwealth government in the progressive development of further defence facilities in the Northern Territory, to the benefit of all Territorians and all Australians generally.

Mr Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the Dibb Report and I thank the Chief Minister for making a ministerial statement on it. As he said, it is an extremely important document which has considerable ramifications for the Northern Territory.

I think one should start by congratulating Hon Kim Beazley for commissioning the report. Kim Beazley is rapidly developing a reputation as the best defence minister Australia has had, at least since World War II. I think his commissioning of this independent report by a well-respected academic, Paul Dibb, will only enhance his reputation in that regard. Certainly, it is an extremely thorough document and, hopefully, it will provide the basis for preparing intelligently for Australia's defence needs in the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, part of my speech will repeat some of the comments made by the Chief Minister on what the Dibb Report says. However, I do not think that will do any harm. The Dibb Report provides a logical look at Australia's defence forces and it fits together very well. I think it is important when we discuss the components of the Dibb Report that we are conscious of the framework in which it was prepared.

Essentially, Dibb identified 3 elements in the planning process: firstly, that there was a need for self-reliance in defence by Australia; secondly, there was a need for defence planning based on realistic budget parameters; and, thirdly, that low-level threats to Australia's defence could emerge relatively quickly but a major military assault would only build up over a period of years. The period he nominated was a minimum of 10 years. On the basis of those 3 essential elements he developed a defence strategy, and the term he used was a 'strategy of denial'. Of course, a strategy of denial means denial of access to Australia's resources and lands to any enemy. Dibb said that the strategy of denial has 3 features: firstly, that the specific geographical features of Australia and its surroundings are important; secondly, the concept of a layered defence will take advantage of those geographical features; and, thirdly, we need a clear understanding of the levels of threat that we face.

In terms of strategic geography, as the Chief Minister said, the features are quite obvious. We have vast maritime areas which surround Australia and a huge, remote and harsh northern part of the continent. He went on to conclude that the only powers capable of making a large-scale military attack on Australia would be the superpowers. I guess there are a limited number of superpowers and it is of some reassurance that only they could make a large-scale military attack. However, although the sea-air gap, which comprises our vast coastal waters and interior spaces, discourages large-scale military attacks, it can also make us much more vulnerable to small attacking forces. That is obvious of course. We have a large country and it is very hard to police all our coastline. A small attacking force that managed to get to our shores would be quite difficult to track down.

Consequently, Dibb identified, as our first priority, the need to build up our capacity to repel an enemy in our direct military interest area. He defined the direct military interest area as being the whole of the Australian continent and 1000 miles off the coast of the continent as well. That is quite a large area. I do not know how far 1000 miles takes us, but it is a considerable distance. To defend that direct military interest area, Dibb recommended a layered approach. The first layer would be designed to prevent any hostile force crossing the sea and air gap separating Australia from the rest of the world. The second layer would protect our offshore resources and

the coasts themselves. Finally, the third layer would involve highly mobile land forces, able to operate across the north, to protect populations, military installations, infrastructure and industry. From there Dibb went on to describe components of the armed forces structure which would assist.

One of the most important, of course, is the extension of the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar project and, quite obviously, that has significance for us in the north. Dibb proposed the extension of that project so that we would have continuous monitoring of sea and air approaches to the Northern Territory. This continuous monitoring not only would improve our defence capacity and early warning systems, but also would provide great benefit in the detection of drug trafficking and other illegal forms of entry to or exits from Australia. Mr Speaker, I think everybody in this Chamber would support the extension of Jindalee over-the-horizon radar project.

Dibb also argued that we needed a new class of light patrol frigates to patrol northern waters, with a capacity to lend assistance if there was a threat off the coastline or to play an important role in combating any threat on or near the coastline itself. Of course, with an established patrol boat base in Darwin that is of considerable significance as well.

In terms of the army, as the Chief Minister indicated, Dibb has recommended the development of forces able to deal with raiding groups in a range of low-level conflicts. They need to be lightly but adequately armed, highly mobile and self-sufficient as far as possible. He also said that a prudent armed forces set-up would provide for the maintenance of limited skills to fight a conventional land battle. Of course, Dibb has said that a conventional land battle could be inflicted on us only by the superpowers. In terms of the northern areas of Australia, he has said that we should have a priority area for ground force operations, but first of all we should have a small force which should be extended later into a full brigade. The Chief Minister also drew attention to the fact that the timing of this will be quite difficult and extended because of the infrastructure that will be needed in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I think we should be pleased that Dibb recognised the vulnerability of the north of Australia, and the crucial position that the north of Australia occupies in the coordinated Australian defence plan. As the Chief Minister said, the Dibb Report strengthens the case for the railway and I think that that will be useful in further discussions and negotiations to obtain it. Dibb also made it very clear that, whilst he was arguing in favour of the railway from a defence point of view, he was not prepared to sacrifice any of the other defence matters that he thought important. That has been the consistent position of defence chiefs ever since the railway became an issue. Consistently, they have said that the railway is a good idea, and it will enhance our defence effort, but not at the expense of anything else that they are doing in the defence area. That makes it fairly difficult to take them seriously because the railway would be a major addition to their budget. When they say that they are not prepared to give up any money at all to assist in the construction of the railway, it is clear that from the defence forces' point of view it has a reasonably low priority.

Mr Speaker, the economic effects of the Dibb Report, if implemented by the government, will be enormous. I think it fair to say that, in the next 10 to 15 years, the development of defence capacities in the Northern Territory will be one of the major factors promoting growth, particularly in the Top End. We need a consistent and coordinated approach to it, and I am hopeful that that approach can be developed at a federal level and, more particularly, at the

Northern Territory level. Our experience of dealing with governments in Canberra, of whatever political colour, is that you need to push them consistently otherwise the interests of the Northern Territory tend to be ignored or given reduced importance when other lobby groups get into the act.

The main threat to the implementation of the Dibb Report would be the election of a Liberal government in Canberra. I say that seriously because of the comments of the shadow minister for defence, Ian Sinclair. He has in effect rejected the Dibb Report and said that the concept of protecting our own shores and an offshore zone of 1000 miles - in other words the strategy of denial - is not a viable concept. He believes we ought to be returning to a forward defence concept. In his view, the major threat to Australia at present is from the Soviets. He points to the Soviet naval presence and the base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

Mr D.W. Collins: What about Vanuatu?

Mr SMITH: I think I would be more concerned about the naval base at Cam Ranh Bay than the fishing boats at Vanuatu. Do not get me started about the fishing boats in Vanuatu because, if there is ever an example of the United States of America cutting its own throat, it is the issue of fishing rights in the South Pacific. For years and years, the USA has refused to make its fishermen pay an adequate return for the economic resources they are exporting from that area. The USA is now paying a cost for that and, unfortunately, it may be a cost that the rest of us in the South Pacific will pay in years to come.

I want to turn back to the attitude of the alternative government in Canberra. The concern I have is with the federal opposition's defence policy. It is stated perfectly in the speech of the Chief Minister on page 11, where he says: 'In the bygone era of forward defence, it did not matter very much where our ground forces were deployed within Australia. The expectation was always that any fighting would be done overseas'. That is true, and it is consistent with a forward defence policy. My fear is that, if a Liberal government is returned some time in the future, it will adopt a policy of forward defence and ignore the findings of the Dibb Report. In that case, the arguments for enlarging the number of defence forces in the Northern Territory would disappear.

I expect that a Liberal government would reassess the presence of the armed forces in the Northern Territory, particularly around the Tindal area, because of the costs involved. Let us not fudge the issue. There are considerable relocation costs in locating armed services personnel in the Northern Territory. These costs are greater than those involved in keeping such personnel at bases further south. I repeat that, if you have a forward defence policy, it does not particularly matter where you have your armed services. They can be in the south, because you are expecting them to fight wars overseas rather than defend your own country. That is my genuine concern about Ian Sinclair's present attitude to the Dibb Report and his present position on defence policy for Australia. I think it is in the interests of everybody in the Northern Territory to talk seriously to the federal opposition and to seek some commitments from it that those sections of the Dibb Report which refer to expansion of the armed services in the Northern Territory will be accepted and followed by a Liberal government.

I wanted to conclude by talking about some matters which are not specifically mentioned in the Dibb Report, but are connected with northern defence. One is the question of the positioning of the Orion aircraft which

are engaged in coastal surveillance, a function for which they are admirably suited. Unfortunately, the squadron is located near Adelaide which does not make any sense whatsoever to me. I believe it would be much more sensible to position the aircraft in Darwin. That way, when they are involved in training exercises, they would also be involved in doing something useful about strengthening our coastal defence. I hope that this debate may help to create some action so that we can see the Orions based in Darwin, a more suitable place. The Dibb Report has put forward a good argument for consideration of the question of home-porting HMAS Darwin in Darwin.

Mr Palmer: Put HMAS Parramatta in Parramatta and HMAS Warrnambool in Warrnambool. The Bendigo could go to Bendigo.

Mr SMITH: What a useful contribution you make to most debates. This is no exception.

I think there certainly would be a lot of emotional feeling about the possibility of home-porting HMAS Darwin here. It certainly is appropriate in the context of the Dibb Report's assessment of our defence posture and where likely threats may come from in the next 10 years. It would make a lot of sense to homeport HMAS Darwin here and it would also have quite a significant impact on the economy of the Northern Territory. I put that suggestion forward as another serious possibility, and I hope it can be taken up in further discussions on the Dibb Report and the implementation of its recommendations.

To conclude, the opposition welcomes the Dibb Report. We think it is one of the best reports in Australia's history. We think it provides a tremendous basis for the future development of the defence forces of Australia and it provides us with the challenge of ensuring that it is implemented so that the needs and interests of the northern half of Australia are fully protected and developed.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Management of Uluru National Park

Mr MCCARTHY (Conservation)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the management of Uluru National Park. Members will no doubt be aware that 28 years of involvement by the Conservation Commission and its predecessors in the management of Uluru National Park was terminated on 30 May this year. In the words of one Conservation Commission officer, 'the termination puts an end to 9 frustrating years of attempting to work with Canberra'. The action to terminate the commission's involvement in the day-to-day management of Uluru National Park was unilaterally taken by the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service when, by letter dated 12 May, he instructed the Conservation Commission that all funding advanced by the Commonwealth to the commission for the management of Uluru National Park was to terminate from 30 May. All Commonwealth assets used in the management of the park were to be transferred to the control of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service officer at Uluru by 30 May. Ranger and warden identity cards issued to commission officers at Uluru were to be handed in, and the commission would cease to have any responsibility for the supervision of capital works on the Park.

This action by the Director of the ANPWS effectively terminated the role of the Conservation Commission in the day-to-day management of Uluru National

Park. As a consequence, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is in default under the agreement with the Northern Territory government whereby the Conservation Commission carries out day-to-day management of Uluru National Park in accordance with the general provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 as amended, its regulations and the current Plan of Management for the park.

This agreement is a continuing agreement and is not subject to cancellation by either party at short notice. It is the belief of the Northern Territory government that the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is in breach of the current Plan of Management for Uluru National Park. The agreement with the Northern Territory is stated as Commonwealth government policy within that Plan of Management and it says: 'The preparation of the Plan of Management would be the responsibility of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, whilst the day-to-day management would be carried out by the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission'. At a meeting at Uluru National Park on 6 and 7 August 1985, the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service clearly advised the Northern Territory representatives that the Commonwealth had decided that there would be 3 Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service officers in the park, the senior of whom would be the park superintendent. He further advised that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service park superintendent would direct Northern Territory rangers in the day-to-day management of the park.

There was no consultation with the Northern Territory and there was no prior discussion to determine mutually acceptable management arrangements as assured in the telex of 11 November 1983 from the Prime Minister to the then Chief Minister. In July 1985, a representative of the Aboriginal community advised the Director of the Conservation Commission that the non-involvement of the Northern Territory in the negotiations was a matter that the Commonwealth had decided.

The concern of the Northern Territory in being excluded from consultation on management arrangements for Uluru National Park was conveyed to the Prime Minister by the Chief Minister by telex on 9 August 1985 and again by letter on 12 November 1985. On 24 December 1985, the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment advised the Chief Minister that he had signed a memorandum of agreement with the Central Land Council on 26 October 1985 whereby it was agreed, pursuant to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1985, to establish the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management. The Chief Minister was further advised by the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment that the terms of the schedule to the memorandum of agreement required that 1 member of the board should be a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory of Australia, nominated by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory of Australia. He then proceeded to invite the Chief Minister to nominate a member of the Legislative Assembly for appointment to the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management.

The Chief Minister responded by telex on 7 February to both the Federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment and the Prime Minister advising that he had not received a copy of the memorandum of agreement and requesting that a copy be sent to him as soon as possible so that he could be informed of matters relating to the board of management. He expressed his continuing regret that the Territory government was not consulted in the preparation of the agreement. He advised that the Territory would be able to nominate a suitable person to play a role on the board, which would greatly enhance the general strength and competence of the board, subject to a satisfactory response by the Commonwealth to the 2 matters he raised.



Firstly, he did not consider it appropriate for Territory representation to be drawn from members of the Legislative Assembly and advised that, in his opinion, the board required a blend of professional people with particular experience and expertise to enable proper management decisions to be taken. That is a matter of opinion. The second matter of concern was that the proposed arrangements would place Territory officers under the supervision of Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service officers in carrying out day-to-day management of the park. He advised that it was an important principle for the Territory government that the standing and integrity of Territory officers should be properly maintained and that it was not acceptable for Territory officers to be placed in a subordinate role to ANPWS officers, as this was not consistent with proper principles of administration. He went on to seek the agreement of the Commonwealth to review the respective roles of the 2 organisations to ensure that the proper standing and integrity of both could be respected.

The response from the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment on 18 February 1986 advised that, while the federal minister was prepared to take up the matter of amending the memorandum of agreement with the Central Land Council so that the Chief Minister's nominee was not required to be a member of the Legislative Assembly, he was not prepared to review the management arrangements, and required that Territory officers must function as an integrated team with the ANPWS park superintendent in charge.

By telex on 16 April 1986, the Chief Minister again advised the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment that the Northern Territory government was prepared to make a nomination for appointment to the board, consequent on agreement of a clearly defined role for the Conservation Commission in the future management arrangements for Uluru National Park. He advised that this should be effected by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission entering into a management contract agreement with ANPWS and with the Uluru management board to put in place firm arrangements for the management of the park and the presence of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. By letter of 18 April, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment pre-empted any decision by the Uluru Board of Management, which had not yet met, by advising the Chief Minister that, if he was unwilling to agree to second Northern Territory officers to undertake day-to-day management responsibilities under the direction of the ANPWS park superintendent, it would be necessary to man the park solely with Commonwealth officers.

The Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service was advised on 22 April 1986 by the Director of the Conservation Commission of the proposals for the Conservation Commission to continue day-to-day management of Uluru National Park on a contractual basis in accordance with the approved plan of management and subject to the decisions of the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management, such contract management agreement to be entered into pursuant to section 36(4) of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975, and to clearly define the authorities and responsibilities of all parties.

The proposal by the Director of Conservation included a delegation of the powers of the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service pursuant to the proposed contract management agreement, the approved Plan of Management and the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and regulations, to the ANPWS park superintendent stationed at Uluru. A detailed contract proposal was presented to the meeting of the Uluru Board of Management by the Director of Conservation on 22 April. The proposal was rejected by the board on 23 April.

On 24 April, the Chief Minister once again reassured the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment that it was the intention of the Northern Territory government to provide a nomination to the Uluru board as soon as the management issue could be worked out. By telex of 28 April, the Chief Minister advised the federal minister that the offer of a management contract by the Conservation Commission to the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management still stands.

The position on the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management that is available for the Northern Territory government to fill is the same position that the member for MacDonnell voiced his concerns about on Wednesday 11 June. I assure the member for MacDonnell that the offer of the Chief Minister still stands. The Northern Territory government is prepared to provide a nomination for the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management as soon as management arrangements that are acceptable to the Northern Territory are put in place by the Commonwealth. Mr Speaker, I table copies of all relevant correspondence for the information of members.

On a more positive note, Mr Speaker, Conservation Commission rangers at Yulara are developing a very positive proposal to expand Conservation Commission regional operations from their base at Yulara using the staff resources that have been freed by the termination of their involvement in the day-to-day management of Uluru National Park. Their objectives are as follows: through extension, education and management programs, to promote wildlife protection and conservation land management amongst pastoral and Aboriginal landholders within the Petermann district; through provision of interpretive services, to assist tourism within the Petermann district; to protect and manage wildlife throughout the district; to manage Territory parks and reserves within the district; and to maintain and protect the areas and objects of historical anthropological, archeological and Aboriginal interest within Territory parks and reserves as trustees of the Territory's heritage for present and future generations.

The Petermann district referred to is approximately one-sixth of the Territory and is that administrative sub-region of the Territory lying south of Alice Springs and adjoining the Western Australian, South Australian and Queensland borders. The Petermann district is an arid zone area of some 200 000 km<sup>2</sup> where Aboriginal communities and pastoralists are attempting to live in very marginal lands, where uncontrolled fires, the impact of feral animals such as horses, and the impact of introduced pests such as rabbits, can easily destroy the natural environment. The introduction of conservation land management principles into this fragile environment is a matter of high priority, as is the promotion of a regional basis of an industry such as tourism to provide a more effective cash flow to the area.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, listening to the neophyte Minister for Conservation - he is one of several making their debuts at these sittings - we must bear in mind that he may not be aware of the history behind the current management arrangements at the Uluru National Park. Listening to him talking was a little bit like looking at history through the wrong end of a telescope. I suppose the minister is not really to blame and, with my customary kindhearted and schoolmasterly tolerance, I hope that I will be able to show him where the gaps in his understanding and knowledge of the development of the park lie.

However, before I return to that particular theme, I would like to place on record once again the circumstances that surround the introduction of ministerial statements into this Assembly. When I moved that this issue be discussed as a matter of public importance, I attempted to set a new standard of cooperation between government and opposition, as we attempt to fulfil our respective duties in public life in the Northern Territory. I gave the government considerable warning of the matter of public importance. I raise that because, when I was first elected to this Assembly, it was government practice to provide all members of the Assembly with copies of ministerial statements on the afternoon before they were delivered. An envelope that was dutifully stamped 'Confidential' would appear on one's desk. One used to read through those statements and be able to listen and contribute to the debate in a more informed fashion. Quite clearly, the government has given away the idea that statements should be provided so that members whose electorates may be affected can contribute in a more meaningful way. The government now seems to be more interested in capturing a couple of paragraphs in the NT News than in rational debate in this Assembly. That certainly applies to both statements that have been introduced this morning.

What could be more important to the people of the Northern Territory than a statement of that magnitude on defence?

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is starting to debate the Dibb Report now.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: The same applies to the management of the Uluru-Katatjuta National Park. To allay the slow mind of the Minister for Community Development, there is a connection. I trust that, when he introduces statements to this Assembly, he will afford us the courtesy of half a day's notice so we can consider them if they happen to be important to humble backbenchers such as myself.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the substance of this statement. It contains several points that I wish to pick up. The minister quoted the words of one Conservation Commission officer who said that the 'termination puts an end to 9 frustrating years of attempting to work with Canberra'. Some of my constituents are Conservation Commission rangers. In speaking to me about the matter, they may have been concerned about Canberra control. I am no devotee of Canberra control. I am a Territorian. I am aware that people who live in the south are not acquainted with the circumstances of northern Australia. I appreciate that people of good heart working in the Territory in the public and private sectors are vitally important because of their deep understanding of social and economic circumstances that apply here. Their experience is valuable not only for the Territory, but for the country as a whole.

Whilst the termination may have put an end to 9 frustrating years of attempting to work with Canberra for one Conservation Commission officer, I can imagine that some other of my constituents, who are the traditional owners of Ayers Rock, may very well say that it puts an end to 7 frustrating years of trying to work with the CLP government. I strongly suspect that the message is starting to get across to those Conservation Commission rangers, that they are being manipulated. Unfortunately, the Minister for Conservation and the Environment is allowing himself to be used as an unwitting and, I trust, ignorant tool of the strategies begun by such luminaries as Paul Everingham and Ian Tuxworth. However, more of that later.

There is another furphy on page 2 of this report, which requires scotching here and now. The minister said: 'The Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is in breach of the current Plan of Management for Uluru National Park.' This is a little number which the former minister, now Chief Minister, tried to run last year. To do him credit, it was a far more acceptable political tack than the one followed by his then boss, with whom he disagreed. I doubt that I have to remind the then Chief Minister, now backbencher for Barkly, who outrageously insisted: 'At no price will we tolerate traditional ownership of Ayers Rock. That is never to be tolerated'. At the same time, Steve was saying: 'If we just had management arrangements of this sort and that sort, I think we can probably work round this' - as has subsequently happened, I hasten to add, with Kings Canyon and Gosse Bluff. But more of that later. That is one crucial part of the history lesson which I hope the minister is paying attention to. That is why I said earlier that his statement is like looking at history through the wrong end of a telescope.

Mr Manzie: You are talking about one thing that the Territory government has initiated and successfully worked through, and you are talking about another thing that people 3000 miles away initiated.

Mr BELL: I was interested to let the minister run on, because I was really curious to find out the way his brain works on these matters.

If the Northern Territory government had taken up the opportunities available to it, we would not have had to call in the government that is 2000 miles away. If the minister would care to look through the history books, he will find the title to Ayers Rock could have been held under Territory title. Remember his boss before last? The short, squat one who has gone down to Canberra and now lives in Brisbane. If he had done what he promised he would do in 1982, there would be no need for this statement.

I regret these digressions, Mr Speaker, but it really is a recalcitrant class and my schoolmastery tolerance is being tested to the limit. However, to return to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service being in breach of the current Plan of Management for Ayers Rock, I want to just bring to mind one key date: 26 October 1985. A certain little event took place. All you blokes received invitations and it is a shame that none of you turned up. For the minister's benefit, 2 things happened. First of all, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ninian Stephen, presented the title to Ayers Rock to Aboriginal traditional owners who live, I hasten to add, not just in the Mutitjulu Community. Hands up all those who think those people all live in the Mutitjulu Community. No, they do not all believe that. That is good.

Mr Dale: Ah now, okay.

Mr BELL: Oh yes.

Mr Palmer: There is always a dummy in the class.

Mr BELL: I will be glad to give the member for Leanyer some remedial tuition afterwards. You'll be right, Mick.

The traditional owners received title to Ayers Rock on that particular day and, in return for that, they leased the park back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for the enjoyment of all Australians. A great opportunity was lost in its entirety to the minister, his successors and his predecessors. Paul Everingham was not responsible for their losing this

opportunity, although he had a hand in it. It was the member for Barkly who lost it for them, when he was Chief Minister. He lost the opportunity to have the park leased back to the Conservation Commission instead of to the Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I understand the history of this a little better than the minister. Actually, I am sorry he is not taking notes because I will not be giving him an exam afterwards, although I would dearly love to. The plain fact is that 2 key choices were made. The first key choice was made on 11 November 1983 by the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. He decided that he would not petition Canberra for the park to be leased back to the Conservation Commission, nor would he petition the federal government even more strongly in an endeavour to hold the park under Territory title. What did he do? He chose the worst option for Territorians. He took the option of ...

Mr D.W. Collins: Having an election.

Mr BELL: That is exactly right. It is nice to hear the voice of the member for Sadadeen.

With an extraordinary campaign of lies, untruths, half-truths and smears, he held an election 2½ weeks later. There was no rational discussion of the issues concerned and nobody understood the ramifications of the position he took.

But let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that this ministerial statement is the net result of it. We end up with a Minister for Conservation bleating about telexes to this one and telexes to that one.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Goodness me, they are obviously deeply embarrassed about this, Mr Speaker, judging from their interjections. Obviously it is a matter of great concern.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The minister was heard in silence. I believe that I have been fairly tolerant but it has gone beyond the pale. I ask all members to grant to the member for MacDonnell the courtesy of being heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I sincerely trust that the people on the backbench who choose to interject will take ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I believe the honourable member should address members of this Assembly in the appropriate fashion, as 'honourable members' and not 'those people'.

Mr SPEAKER: The point of order is upheld. The honourable member will remember official titles.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I speak for the benefit of those honourable members who, through simple lapses of taste and lack of breeding, choose to interject rather than to enjoy the fruits of my cogitations with respect to the mighty Uluru and the mighty Katatjuta, and the appropriate way to make it available for the legions of Australians and citizens of the world who wish to visit it. I trust that, when they have cogitated, having refrained from the temptation

to interject, they will rise and make their contributions in a befitting manner. I am quite sure, however, that they will not have the guts to do so because, like empty vessels, they make the most noise.

In short, the federal government is not in breach of the current Plan of Management for Uluru National Park, because the grant of title and lease-back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service - however regrettable it might be and however avoidable it might have been - meant that a Plan of Management was necessary to reflect the changed title ownership. That Plan of Management is being drawn up now. There was no mention of it in the minister's statement.

I will just skip forward a little. There is a reference to the Petermann district and pastoral Aboriginal landholders and the future role of the Conservation Commission in that regard. Really, it is not surprising that I suggest that the Minister for Conservation lacks any historical perspective or understanding of some of the current circumstances surrounding land ownership in my electorate. His statement is quite bewildering.

The problem with this statement is that it is made in vacuo. It refers on page 4 to the Chief Minister who responded by telex on 7 February. I presume this refers to the then Chief Minister. Again, the minister has failed to come to terms with changes in his own government, which is really quite surprising. I know it is a small point, but it is an error nonetheless.

The Minister for Conservation made this comment: 'The Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service was advised on 22 April 1986 by the Director of the Conservation Commission of proposals for the Conservation Commission to continue day-to-day management of Uluru National Park on a contractual basis'. I really cannot resist a smile at that.

Mr Dale: That is more like a chuckle.

Mr BELL: Yes. A chuckle, for the benefit of the member for Wanguri.

It is a little bit like shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. I clearly recollect the events. Full marks to our present Chief Minister. I have high hopes for him.

Let me change my tone of voice in case that remark is interpreted as being sarcastic. Quite honestly, I do have high hopes for him in this regard. I think that he shows a genuine interest in accommodating Aboriginal interests in a way that neither of his 2 predecessors did. I think that he is to be highly encouraged in that, and so I interpret this telex of 22 April, proposing new management arrangements on a contractual basis, as a positive gesture. The details had been worked out, as I subsequently became aware, by Conservation Commission rangers and staff. I do not want to detract from that positive gesture or be seen to discourage it in any way. It is consistent with the sort of approach the Chief Minister has taken with respect to the Kings Canyon-Watarrka National Park, and the Anarula-Gosse Bluff arrangement. I will give the Chief Minister and his government 10 out of 10 for the effort.

The trouble was that, as I have explained to a number of people, although I have not had the opportunity to explain it to the new Minister for Conservation, in the context of the large number of people involved in what was then more than 2 years of protracted negotiation about tribal ownership and management arrangements, it was just too late. That is the simple fact of

the matter. The second problem with the proposal was that it ignored the very people who now hold title to Ayers Rock. It relates back to my earlier comments about the 7 frustrating years that they suffered at the hands of the CLP in the Northern Territory. They had had a gutful by 22 April 1986. I do not think that a mixture of Cicero, Karl Marx, Winston Churchill and every demagogue rolled together would have persuaded the people to cop that arrangement.

I appreciate that the arrangement was put forward in good faith, but it was certainly not feasible within the proposed time frame. I was preparing to travel around parts of my electorate, a journey which was to conclude with the initial meeting of the board. I remember it was Friday afternoon, the day before the Araluen by-election, a fairly hectic time. I just about fell off my chair when the Regional Director of the Conservation Commission rang to say that the minister had asked him to brief me about this proposal. I asked 'What proposal?' He said he would drop around and tell me about it. I appreciate that spirit of doing business. I think it is to be highly commended and I think development of every sort - social, economic and political - can only be enhanced by that sort of approach. However, for the Minister for Conservation to cry crocodile tears because the Board of Management was not in a position to accede to those arrangements is just not reasonable.

Let me say at this point that this matter has nothing to do with the reputation of the Conservation Commission which is very high with many of the Aboriginal people in my electorate. I hope that the arrangements put forward here will be worked out amicably, as appears to be the case in respect of Watarra and Anarula. Some individuals come to mind such as, dare I say, Goff Letts. He resigned his position as Director of the Conservation Commission for the very reasons I have been discussing today. He had had a gutful of Paul Everingham manipulating Aborigines. Then there is Derek Roff, who was in the chair at the Chamberlain Inquiry today. He is a man of high reputation amongst the Pitjatjantjara at Ayers Rock and elsewhere. He is well respected by Nguwi Minyiutiri and Nipper Wiumati and his wife Barbara, who are up here for the Chamberlain Inquiry. In this context, let me reflect on the implication often contained in statements about these people, which is that they are manipulated. I do not know whether the minister actually heard Barbara Wiumati when she was being cross-examined.

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member should address his statements through the Chair.

Mr BELL: I am addressing my statements through the Chair

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will continue to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, far be it from me to do anything else. I trust that the minister saw Barbara Wiumati in the witness box at the inquiry. Even if he heard any of the comments attributed to her in the witness box, he would be convinced that people like her are not easily persuaded or manipulated.

I trust that, with these few comments, I have managed to convince the Minister for Conservation that he should go away and do his homework, because there are positive signs that the Northern Territory government is starting to come round. There are positive signs that it is starting to realise that there are benefits in working with Aborigines instead of against them.

Before I close, let me give an endorsement to the member for Araluen. He had some funny things to say about photography but I hope the government is able to put him on the Board of Management. It would be a good idea. I think it is a dreadful shame that you are making this contractual arrangement a sine qua non of appointing the member for Araluen to the board. I think his qualifications in tourism, and he expatiated in that regard in last night's adjournment debate, are excellent. Finally, I think the tendencies of the government are to be encouraged. It is a shame that there is not a further positive concession contained in this statement.

Debate adjourned.

WORK HEALTH BILL  
(Serial 203)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, I have pleasure in introducing the Work Health Bill. The government's intention is that the bill lie on the Table until it is debated at the next sittings of the Assembly. At this stage, the government intends that the bill will come into operation on 1 October 1986.

As honourable members know, this bill is the result of some 2½ years of investigation, consideration and consultation. In February 1984, the government, recognising widespread dissatisfaction with the existing system, established a board of inquiry into the system of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory. The report of the board of inquiry, the Doody Inquiry, was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in February 1985. The government then established a committee of senior officers to evaluate the Doody Report. This committee sought public reaction to the report and received 6 submissions. With the assistance of the evaluation committee, the government then formulated a coherent package of reforms. These reform proposals were unveiled in a public discussion paper released in February this year and in a draft bill tabled in the Assembly in March.

We invited and have received comment on both the discussion paper and the draft bill. The government would like to express its appreciation to those individuals and organisations who have in some cases put a great deal of time and effort into preparing detailed submissions. We have considered each of the submissions in detail and, as a result, have made a number of amendments to the March draft bill. In addition, we have scrutinised the bill to ensure clarity, consistency of policy, terminology and procedure. I would now like to outline the provisions of the bill before you. On the way through, I will highlight those provisions which are different from those in the March bill and also those major provisions which remain the same even though some submissions may have sought change.

First, let me emphasise one point. The government is making no change to the basic philosophy of this bill. This philosophy is set out clearly in the long title of the bill: 'To promote occupational health and safety in the Territory, to prevent industrial injuries and diseases, to promote the rehabilitation and maximum recovery from incapacity of injured workers, to provide financial compensation to workers incapacitated from industrial injuries or diseases, and to the dependants of workers who die as the result of such injuries or diseases'.



Turning to the bill itself, parts I, II and III establish the terminology of the bill and establish the Work Health Authority and the Ministerial Advisory Council. We are committed to small government. In March, we announced our intention of establishing the authority without creating additional positions in the public service. This will be achieved.

I would like to record the government's appreciation of the cooperation we have received from those departments which have released positions for the authority, and which have carried out the resulting necessary rationalisation of their own functions. The Work Health Authority will be a small statutory authority with the function of carrying out government responsibilities under the bill. The authority will be consultative, advisory and conciliatory in style. This is the only possible approach in a system dealing with safety, rehabilitation and compensation - a system where the interests of the various parties are delicately balanced.

One of the authority's major functions will be to gather and process information on the whole system. The authority will process Territory-wide information from all compensation claim forms to enable us to know, for the first time, what the real picture is. As recommended by the Doody Inquiry, the authority will be able to publish Territory-wide data on: the numbers, causes and types of accidents, injuries and diseases occurring; amounts of benefits paid and numbers referred to rehabilitation; the numbers of employers and employees; wages paid; contributions made and occupational classifications.

A Ministerial Advisory Council is established by part III of the bill. The membership of the council will include people who represent the interests of employers, workers, insurers, and professionals concerned with safety and rehabilitation. Through this channel, the government will stay in touch with the views of the people most affected by the legislation. We have found submissions and consultations over the last few months to be most valuable, and the process of consultation is one we wish to continue.

The bill is umbrella occupational health and safety legislation, imposing duties on all Northern Territory employers and all Northern Territory workers. The relevant provisions are set out in part IV of the bill. The authority's functions in occupational health and safety will be: to publish information on injury and disease and their causes from its data system; to provide advice on occupational health and safety to the government; to develop and recommend occupational health and safety standards for the Territory for approval by the minister; to provide an advisory service to employers, workers, and others, on occupational health and safety; to represent the Territory to relevant bodies, such as the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission; and, to promote consultation in the work place on occupational health and safety.

Through its information system, the authority may become aware of quite serious incidents which do not fall under existing safety legislation such as the Construction Safety Act or the Inspection of Machinery Act. The authority is therefore empowered, under the draft bill, to investigate these incidents. If it finds that there is a situation which requires remedial action, the authority can issue improvement or prohibition notices to employers requiring that such action be taken. The government intends that these powers will be used sparingly. In keeping with its advisory, non-adversarial role, the authority will place emphasis on first attempting to reach agreement with the employer on the cost-effective remedial action necessary. The improvement and prohibition notices will be appealable.

While the government retains its commitment to umbrella legislation for occupational health and safety, it has no desire to create layers of safety bureaucracy with which employers must contend. We are in the process of drafting administrative orders to ensure that our intention is carried out. These orders will make it clear that occupational health and safety, in those areas covered by existing legislation, will continue to be administered by the government departments which currently have that responsibility.

Let me illustrate with the example of the mining industry. Safety on mine sites is regulated principally by the Mine Safety Control Act, which is administered by the Department of Mines and Energy. Inspectors from the Department of Mines and Energy have the responsibility of investigating accidents on mine sites, of monitoring the observance of safety standards and of ordering any remedial measures needed. These responsibilities would remain with these inspectors. If the Work Health Authority became aware through its information system of an apparently serious incident, it would inform the Department of Mines and Energy which would carry out necessary investigation under its own legislation. Where there is an apparent overlap of the Mines Safety Control Act and the Work Health Act, the former would take precedence. The latter would come into operation only if a situation arose where the specific mines legislation did not apply. In such cases, if an investigation were required, the authority's powers would generally be delegated to the Department of Mines and Energy inspectors.

Because of its information system, the authority will be able to monitor trends in compensation claims in various industries. It may become aware of changes in the seriousness or incidence of particular types of injuries or diseases from mine sites. Various bodies, including the Department of Mines and Energy and the industry itself, could and should become involved in analysing the reasons for particular trends and in devising remedial policies. The Work Health Authority could well be involved at this stage.

The administrative arrangements to cover situations such as these are being drafted. As I said, they will be discussed with interested parties. At this stage, it would be my intention to table a document setting out the arrangements when the bill is debated in the Legislative Assembly during the next sittings.

Mr Speaker, there are a number of clauses of part IV of the bill which have undergone change since March, but I do not propose to discuss them in detail now. Workers' entitlements to compensation and rehabilitation benefits are set out in part V of the bill. 'Worker' is defined broadly in clause 3 of the bill to be: 'any natural person, receiving payments under contracts of service or for service'. The definition is clarified by specific inclusions and exclusions.

Natural persons who are independent subcontractors will be able to obtain certificates of exemption by application to the Work Health Authority. Having made application and received the exemption, no premium has to be paid in respect of them, and they will not be eligible for compensation benefits if injured.

The authority is required, under clause 58, to ensure that a person seeking an exemption has not been subjected to pressure and has considered other forms of insurance cover. It is intended that the authority, in considering whether to grant an exemption, should use similar guidelines to those used for payroll tax purposes. This would have the advantages of consistency within government administration and general conformity with

common law concepts of what an independent contractor is. This approach, essentially that recommended in the Doody Report, has been taken in an effort to minimise a grey area which has led to massive under-insurance problems and has deprived workers of their rights to compensation because of artificial contracting arrangements. This grey area seems to have flourished under the present system with its narrower definition of 'worker'.

How best to define 'worker' and how to minimise premium avoidance are problems in most jurisdictions throughout Australia. It is one area of this bill where we intend to do further work, to consider in detail the associated administrative procedures. Finetuning may be required in the August sittings. This definition, together with the proposals I shall outline later for improved and automated checks for non-insurance and under-insurance, represent a major effort to overcome these problems.

We have been pleased to receive in recent days a letter from the Commonwealth agreeing to amend its legislation to enable the work health legislation to apply to Northern Territory government employees. This will end the anomalous situation where the final discretion for the administration of Northern Territory funds for compensation rested with a commissioner in Canberra.

Benefits under this bill are payable in respect of the worker who suffers death, incapacity or impairment from an injury arising out of or in the course of employment - terms which are defined in clauses 3 and 4 of the bill. Clause 4 retains an injured worker's right to receive compensation benefits where the injury has occurred whilst journeying to and from work. We are seeking actuarial information to allow us to consider the possibility of insurers being able to recover the benefits under the Motor Accidents Compensation Act, and offset them against their payments under the Work Health legislation. In our consideration of this possibility we would need to balance the reduced cost to employers against potential increases in premiums for benefits under the Motor Accidents Compensation Act.

Fundamental to the benefit structure set out in the bill are the following 3 considerations: the seriously and long-term incapacitated must have benefits which last for the duration of the incapacity; there must be every incentive and no disincentive to rehabilitation; employers must not be faced with ever-increasing costs. These are among the reasons why the government has not altered its commitment to abolishing common law actions between employers and workers. Our reasons were set out in detail in March, when the draft bill was tabled, and I do not propose to repeat them at this time. The 3 fundamental considerations listed above are reasons why the benefit structure in this bill, as in the March draft bill, makes less use of lump sums than does the current one, provides a somewhat wider range of benefits for rehabilitation purposes, sets out clearly the obligation of the worker to participate in reasonable rehabilitation programs, and enables reviews of periodic benefits if this cooperation is not forthcoming.

The government is acutely aware that there is a balancing act to be performed with every workers' compensation scheme. We need to balance the rights of the worker to proper compensation for industrial injury against the employer's ability to pay for that compensation. The problem of escalating costs for the employers was one of the main reasons the Doody Inquiry was undertaken. Therefore, when the government's proposals were finalised in the form of the draft bill tabled in March, we commissioned a report on the cost of the proposals to employers. This report has been prepared by 3 of Australia's leading actuaries: Bob Buchanan from MIRA in Sydney;

Richard Cumpston from Mercer, Campbell, Cook and Knight in Melbourne; and John Ford, the Australian government actuary who, by agreement with the Commonwealth government, advises the Northern Territory. I seek leave to table the actuaries' report.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: The chief conclusion of the report is that the total cost of work health to insured employers should not be greatly different from that which might have been paid under the Workers' Compensation Act. This conclusion results from the counterbalancing effects of some quite substantial changes which act in opposite directions: 'the cost of benefits is expected to increase by about 18%; coverage of the work force is expected to increase by about 10%; existing premiums contain larger profit margins than required, to the tune of about 22%; and wages declared are expected to increase by about 20%'. No specific allowance has been made for the anticipated effect of safety and rehabilitation or reducing the incidence of injury and the duration of incapacity, thereby reducing overall costs.

The government has considered the report of the actuaries. We derive some satisfaction from their conclusion which is consistent with our intention and belief that the draft proposals would not be likely to increase costs to employers. Nevertheless, we believe that the figures are somewhat finely balanced and that employers would be justified in looking with some trepidation at the estimated 18% increase in benefit payouts. We have therefore made some changes to benefit levels which I shall detail as I outline the benefits. The effect of these changes should, I believe, decrease the actuaries' estimates of benefit payouts by some 8% or 9%.

There has been, as I previously emphasised, no change to the benefit structure and philosophy, only to certain of the levels. Death benefits remain a lump sum divided amongst the dependants. The lump sum will be 3 times the annual equivalent of average weekly earnings. This amount is approximately equal to \$75 000, the lump sum previously announced. The re-expression of the benefit enables indexation to occur without the rather complex and lengthy clause 176 of the March draft bill. Weekly amounts for surviving dependent children remain at 7% of average weekly earnings.

Compensation for injured workers financial losses will be primarily in the form of weekly benefits. Benefits for the first 26 weeks of total incapacity will be equivalent to the worker's normal weekly earnings; that is, the same as under the present Workers' Compensation Act and the same as in the March draft bill. Benefits for partial incapacity in the first 26 weeks enable any earnings to be topped up to normal weekly earnings. This is an alteration from the draft provisions designed to avoid the disincentive to return to work in the first 26 weeks. For incapacity beyond 26 weeks, compensation will be at the rate of 70% of lost earning capacity. In the draft bill, the proposal was that the rate would be at 80% of lost earning capacity.

The cost of long-term benefits was the major source of increase in benefit costs estimated by the actuaries, and it has been essential to lower this rate in order to contain costs. Nevertheless, this benefit still represents an increase over the current long-term benefit assessed by the actuaries to average 60% of average weekly earnings for those totally incapacitated.

Lost earning capacity, for the purposes of calculating the benefit, in many cases will simply be lost earnings. However, under clause 65, lost earning capacity actually depends on the worker's post-injury earning

capacity. This capacity is assessed according to criteria set out in clause 67 - criteria such as the person's age, physical condition, potential for rehabilitation and the availability of suitable employment. There is a duty on an injured worker, under clause 66, to undertake a reasonable rehabilitation program. Failure to cooperate can lead to a review of the benefit level.

These provisions are essentially as in the March draft bill but set out somewhat more clearly in this bill. It is vital to the success of this scheme that long-term benefits be administered firmly, consistently and in a humane fashion. The government and the community will be depending on the insurers and the Work Health Authority to ensure the successful administration of long-term benefits.

Benefits for permanent impairment have been somewhat reduced from those suggested in the draft bill. The maximum lump sum is twice the annual equivalent of average weekly earnings, some two-thirds of the amount specified when the draft bill was tabled in March, and approximately equal to \$50 000. The percentage of the maximum which is paid out will be the percentage impairment assessed according to the American guides for assessment of permanent impairment. Impairments of less than 15% will not attract a benefit. Impairments of 85% or greater will be deemed to be 100%. There will be no additional schedule or so-called 'table of maims'. To retain such a separate schedule would invite conflicting assessments and resultant disputes.

Reasonable expenses for medical, surgical and rehabilitation treatment will be compensable. In addition to the existing benefits for home and vehicle modifications and constant help, there will also be benefits for vocational retraining, work place modifications, mobility allowance and attendant care. These benefits will be paid at levels which are 'reasonable and necessary' for the purposes of rehabilitation. In determining what is reasonable and necessary, regard will be had to the cost to the employer of the proposed treatment or other measure, as against the benefit to both the worker and employer. The benefit to the worker is in terms of improved earning capacity and improved quality of life; the benefit to the employer is the incapacity benefits saved by the worker's improved earning capacity.

In relation to rehabilitation, the primary emphasis will be on making much better use of existing services and facilities. A new standard medical certificate is being prepared in consultation with the medical profession. On it, the doctor will be asked to give an early opinion as to whether rehabilitation is likely to be required. This will alert both the person and the insurer to the need to give early attention to rehabilitation treatment. Rehabilitation counsellors in the Work Health Authority will monitor the situation and liaise with various parties to promote early and appropriate rehabilitation treatment and, further down the track, the re-employment of workers with some residual incapacity. We shall be examining the need to specify in the bill a duty on employers to assist rehabilitation counsellors in specific ways; for instance, in efforts to retrain workers. The rehabilitation counsellors will concentrate on making the best possible use of the existing facilities in both the public and private sector. It will also be the task of rehabilitation counsellors to identify any unmet service needs and to bring them to the attention of the government.

Clauses 78 to 90 of the bill set out the claims and determination procedures. Certain time limits have been specified for claims procedures, to ensure that injured workers receive compensation benefits as soon as possible after claiming. The government is grateful to Northern Territory insurers who

have accepted the idea of standardised claim forms. This will enable the authority more readily to produce standardised statistics by processing the information from these forms.

A Work Health Court will be established by part VI of the bill to hear and determine disputes and appeals under the act. There are to be compulsory informal preliminary hearings within 28 days of application. These hearings will be presided over by a magistrate. The parties must appear at the hearings and set out all information before the magistrate, including the matters at issue. Final determinations at this stage would only be reached by agreement with the parties. The parties must appear at the hearings and set out all the information before the magistrate, including the matters at issue. Final determinations at this stage would only be reached by agreement with the parties. The magistrate, at this preliminary stage, may make a variety of orders to expedite final determination. The purposes of these preliminary hearings are to promote conciliation between the interested parties, to simplify and speed up the proceedings overall, and to finalise as many matters as possible without the formal court hearing. If a matter cannot be finalised at the preliminary stage, it would be listed for a formal court hearing.

Part VII of the bill contains the insurance provisions. As is the case at present employers, would be required to insure themselves for their full liability to pay compensation and rehabilitation benefits. The March draft bill allowed insurance policies to be written which did not insure the employer's liability for the first 5 days of incapacity and the first \$250 of medical expenses. This provision has given rise to some confusion, and a good deal of scepticism about whether it would really offer a cheaper option to employers. We have therefore removed this option from the bill, and have returned to the present situation where the full liability must be insured.

Insurance must be taken out with an insurer approved by the authority. Insurers will be approved if they can meet criteria relating to their ability to provide a satisfactory Territory-based service and to provide the necessary data to the authority, and to their financial viability. Authorisation under the Commonwealth Insurance Act will be a prerequisite to approval in the Territory. Full self-insurance will remain an option for large employers who, as under the existing legislation, will have to demonstrate their financial viability and their ability to provide the service in order to be exempted from the usual compulsory insurance provisions.

The role of the authority in regard to compensation will be primarily to monitor the system and to publish the data produced. The authority will provide a claims counselling service to give information to the public about entitlements and the system generally.

The Nominal Insurers Fund will continue much as at present. A new provision will enable the court to impose an additional penalty on an uninsured employer. This additional penalty would be to double the amount of premium which the employer had sought to avoid. Other efforts would be made to gather in premiums from the uninsured and under-insured employers in the Northern Territory. The Doody Inquiry estimated this shortfall in premiums to be some \$14m, or 50% of total premium income in 1981. Responsible employers are understandably bitter about being forced to subsidise those who avoid proper workers' compensation premium payments and the government firmly intends to do something about this.

We have worked out a series of improved and automated checks to be carried out by the Work Health Authority in cooperation with the Northern Territory

Commissioner of Taxes. There will be a new stamp duty, pitched at 1% of premiums, to offset the government's efforts in the area of acting directly to bring increased revenue to the insurers and hence to lower costs for responsible employers.

The necessary amendments to the Northern Territory Tax Act will be brought forward during the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly. The mechanism for the authority and the Tax Office to check for under-insurance and non-insurance will be as follows: employers will submit wages returns similar to those under the present legislation to their insurers, who will in turn submit them to the Commissioner of Taxes for the assessment of Stamp Duty on the premium payable. The Commissioner of Taxes will cross-check wages declarations against similar declarations submitted by larger employers for payroll tax purposes, and will carry out cyclical audits of all employers submitting wages declarations for workers' compensation insurance. The authority will check against business names records, and by other means, that all Territory employers have policies. By this system, and by the system of exemption certificates for independent contractors, it is intended that opportunities for premium avoidance will be significantly diminished.

The bill establishes a new Premiums Monitoring Committee, comprising representatives of insurers, employers and unions as well as officers of the authority and an actuary. The committee's task will be to monitor the cost of the system on the basis of the new, detailed data to be collected and published by the authority. Particular concerns about costs or premiums can be brought to the committee and, if satisfactory answers cannot be found by the committee, the government will be informed. It is intended that the Premiums Monitoring Committee will operate as a costs watchdog on the system.

The committee will be part of the framework established under this bill which is designed to contain costs in the future. The elements of this framework, in addition to the Premiums Monitoring Committee, are: the maintenance of an information system to enable adequate monitoring of the operation of all aspects of work health; the provision by the government of rehabilitation counsellors to promote early and appropriate rehabilitation efforts aimed at getting injured people back to work; the widening scope of rehabilitation benefits; the new system for checking for non-insurance and under-insurance to minimise premium avoidance by some employers; the introduction of preliminary hearings to minimise legal costs; and, above all, the obligation on all parties to make serious efforts to avoid accidents and injuries in the first place.

Cost containment is a prerequisite to the continuation of a proper system of workers' compensation benefits. This bill sets in place the mechanisms for cost containment. I believe we all share the common aim of remedying the problems with the current system. I believe we all share the fundamental philosophy of this bill: safety is the first priority in preventing injury and disease as far as possible; where injury and disease occur, the rehabilitation of the injured worker must be the major aim; and there must be a system to compensate injured workers with justice and support them with dignity during their period of incapacity.

I look forward to constructive debate on this important piece of legislation during the next sittings of the Assembly. I invite the opposition to seek from me whatever information it needs to participate in this debate. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT  
Business of the Assembly

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the Assembly to make a short statement regarding the more expeditious carriage of the business of the Assembly.

Leave granted.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I was provoked into making this suggestion by the 21 page second-reading speech that has just been delivered. Ministers have complete discretion as to whether they wish to adopt this suggestion or not. Could I suggest to the government that it could consider, in line with the practice in other parliaments, that if a minister considers it appropriate, second-reading speeches be incorporated in Hansard rather than read. Obviously, the practice would not be desirable where, for example, bills are proceeding through all stages of the Assembly in one day. There is nothing in our standing orders that would prevent this practice being instituted immediately. All that would be required, and I am sure the facilities of the Assembly would be up to it, would be that copies of the second-reading speeches be made available to all members at the time of incorporation with additional copies for members of the public who require them. It would have the additional advantage of immediately providing all members with a corrected, proofed version of the speech rather than having the risk of inaccuracies creeping into the daily Hansard.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, obviously there are some occasions when that could be appropriate. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition and myself could discuss the matter during the afternoon and report to the Assembly later.

SUPERANNUATION BILL  
(Serial 195)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to introduce a new superannuation scheme to be known as the Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme. With the passage of this legislation and the establishment of the scheme, the government will have achieved the important objective of securing effective and appropriate superannuation coverage for Territory public sector workers at a cost which is affordable to the government and the community in the long term. The new scheme has been developed after a 12-month review of the government's superannuation commitments and options. This review has been assisted by a superannuation working party on which both government officers and officers of the public sector unions and the Northern Territory Trades and Labour Council were represented. While complete agreement on all issues was not able to be reached within the working party, there was nevertheless a substantial level of consensus on most aspects of the scheme design and the views of the working party have been helpful to the government in its consideration of the best means of providing superannuation for its employees.

Members will be aware of some of the events leading to the government's review of its superannuation arrangements. At the time of self-government,



most Territory public servants and statutory authority employees were members of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. This arrangement was carried over so as not to disrupt the entitlements and expectations of employees who transferred from Commonwealth to Territory service and also to allow a period of time in which a method of funding superannuation liabilities could be settled on for the Territory to establish its own scheme at a later stage.

During 1982 and 1983, the Territory did attempt to put a new scheme in place. However, despite much effort and negotiation, this did not come to fruition. Instead, a joint task force comprising Commonwealth and Territory officials re-examined the question of the most appropriate funding of superannuation liabilities for Territory employees who were members of the Commonwealth scheme. This task force reported in mid-1984. Its recommendations took account of the respective responsibilities of both the Commonwealth and Territory governments. This report was adopted by both governments late in 1984. The financial arrangements agreed to were capable of being adjusted to any new scheme which might be established by the Territory.

However, in April 1985, only 5 months after this agreement with the Commonwealth was entered into, Senator Walsh, the Minister for Finance, wrote to the Territory to indicate that he had reviewed the arrangements and decided they should be varied significantly. The effect of Senator Walsh's unilateral decision is that the Territory now has to meet from its own resources the emerging costs of benefits under the Commonwealth scheme for Territory service after 1 July 1984. This decision has long-term adverse consequences on the Territory's budget and it is not within the financial capacity of the Territory to continue to offer superannuation coverage under the Commonwealth scheme to new employees. To do so, in the long term, would require the Territory to cut other government services and programs.

For the Territory to fully fund its accruing liabilities under the Commonwealth scheme, the Australian government actuary, who advises the Territory government, has indicated that the Territory would have to put aside an amount equal to 17% of salaries each year. If the Territory did not put aside any reserves and only met the cost of benefits as they became due, the initial payments required would be low but would rise significantly in the longer term. The government believes this would not be financially responsible, as the experience of other states and the Commonwealth itself in using this type of funding has demonstrated. Moreover employees' future benefits would depend on a flow of funds from Canberra, which is settled year by year in light of circumstances that vary from time to time.

Major reviews of public sector superannuation have taken place recently in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia as those governments have tried to come to grips with their increasing outlays and liabilities for superannuation. The Territory will be approaching the Grants Commission to have its superannuation needs assessed. The Grants Commission will assess the needs in relation to the cost of superannuation schemes in the states. If the Territory introduced or maintained arrangements which exceed the cost of benefits in the states, then it would have to find the resources to provide the additional benefits by diverting funds from other areas.

After an assessment of developments in public sector superannuation in the states, the Territory has decided that the maximum fully-funded cost of superannuation that can be sustained is 12% of salaries. This is also the level decided on by New South Wales for its new public service scheme introduced last year. Despite the reduction in cost from 17% of salaries for

the Commonwealth scheme to 12%, a greater number of employees will have access to employer finance benefits in the new scheme. The Commonwealth scheme best suits those employees who are able to achieve a long period of service leading up to retirement. However, this is not the appropriate type of scheme for the Territory because it has a mobile labour force. Most employees do not in fact receive any employer finance benefit from the Commonwealth scheme. The 1984-85 Annual Report of the Commonwealth Commissioner for Superannuation indicates that 2094 or 86% of the 2420 Territory employees who left the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme in the 1984-85 financial year received only a refund of their contributions with interest, and no employer finance benefit.

In determining an appropriate superannuation scheme for the Territory, the government has had, as one of its objectives, the fair and equitable distribution of benefits across as wide a range of employees as possible. Early vesting of employer finance benefits is crucial in this regard. On resignation, employees covered by the new scheme will have a partial vesting of employer finance benefits after 5 year membership and full vesting after 10 year membership. Employees who retire on age or invalidity grounds or who are retrenched will receive fully vested benefits and will not be subject to qualifying periods. Employees will have a choice of contributing between 2% and 6% of their salary to the new scheme. These contributions will be deposited in an employee fund managed by an investment board. These contributions will be refunded in full with interest whenever an employee leaves the scheme.

Benefits in the new scheme will be paid in a lump sum. This is the most flexible arrangement for employees as it allows them to accumulate benefits throughout their working lives and more easily transfer benefits between different schemes, or put them aside in approved deposit funds for their retirement.

When they reach retirement age, employees can convert the lump sum to an annuity. A wide range of such annuities is now available at competitive rates, and employees will be free to choose the type of annuity most suited to their individual circumstances. A further option available to employees is to take benefits in cash when they leave employment. However, this option is subject to the taxation provisions existing at the time when the benefits become available.

Employer-financed benefits will depend on the level of an employee's contributions, length of service and final average salary. For example, an employee contributing at 6% throughout his or her membership would receive, in addition to a refund of accumulated contributions, an employer-financed benefit equal to 1.5 times salary after 10 years, 3 times salary after 20 years' membership, and 4.5 times salary after 30 years' membership. This lump sum payment will allow employees to prepare for their retirement in the knowledge that their superannuation benefits will be closely related to their final salary.

The cost of invalidity and death benefits, which take account of possible future service, will be fully borne by the employer. All eligible employees will be accepted into the scheme and any reduction in benefits, due to an adverse health risk identified on entry, will apply only during the first 10 years of membership.

Membership of the scheme will extend to full-time and part-time permanent employees and will also be available to contract and temporary employees

employed for more than 12 months. The scheme will extend across a broad range of public sector employment in the Territory. In particular, local government bodies will be able to join the scheme if they so desire. This will facilitate career opportunities for employees since they will be able to maintain continuity of superannuation when they move between employers covered by the scheme. Existing employees contributing to the Commonwealth scheme will be able to maintain their membership of that scheme, but will be given a 12-month period in which to join the new scheme if they wish to. Information will be provided to all employees on their entitlements under both schemes so that they can make an informed decision.

Public sector unions are informing their members of the advantages of both schemes and the factors each employee should bear in mind in considering whether to transfer to the new scheme. Details of transfer arrangements are being confirmed with the Commonwealth government and employees will be advised as soon as they are finalised.

Responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the scheme will be undertaken by a Commissioner for Superannuation, operating within the Treasury. As far as possible, departmental administrative procedures will be consistent with the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. A review board will be established with employee representatives so that members of the scheme will have a means of seeking a review of any decisions taken under the scheme rules by the commissioner. The review board will also provide an important source of advice on amendments to the rules, which may be necessary from time to time.

I have already mentioned the operation of the Investment Board which will manage the employee fund with the objective of obtaining, through prudent investment, the maximum return on employees' contributions. The board will have 3 members representing eligible employees, and a chairman will be appointed after a consultative process involving the Northern Territory Trades and Labour Council. Thus, through both the review and investment boards, employees will have the opportunity to participate fully in the management of the scheme.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

THERAPEUTIC GOODS AND COSMETICS BILL  
(Serial 197)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to make provision for standards and controls over the manufacture and distribution of therapeutic goods and cosmetics which are intended for use by human beings. Responsibility for the control of such goods entering Australia rests with the Commonwealth. Constitutionally, the Commonwealth cannot legislate in the state sphere. In the absence of state legislation, we have a situation where products banned or prohibited as imports could be manufactured, distributed and marketed within Australia. The problem has been recognised for some time, and the states have taken steps to introduce legislation which complements that of the Commonwealth. This bill has been drafted after careful consideration of state and Commonwealth

legislation and with due regard to advice from the National Therapeutic Goods Committee on which the Commonwealth, states and territories are represented.

The bill covers therapeutic goods which are defined as therapeutic substances and therapeutic appliances. Therapeutic substances are substances used to prevent, cure or alleviate disease, ailments, defects or injuries, or to influence, inhibit or modify psychological processes. Therapeutic appliances are appliances or devices designed for the remedial treatment of disease, ailments, defects or injuries.

Mr Speaker, some control is necessary over the manufacture and sale of substances necessary to save life, or promoted as restoring or preserving health. This bill will make possible controls which will ensure that therapeutic substances manufactured for sale in the Northern Territory or brought into the Territory for sale meet safe standards. Instances have occurred in Australia and overseas where people's lives have been put at risk. A report issued by the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations in April 1984 reported that the number of recalls of pharmaceutical products due to dangerous labelling errors, contamination by mould and bacteria, and other faults, had more than doubled over the preceding 10 years.

The same report claimed that substandard medical devices were being used because of the lack of formal procedures for registering and testing the quality of such devices. I know of no such faulty devices being used in the Territory. However, the comments do highlight the point that some controls are necessary.

Commonwealth and state Health Departments, together with representatives of the National Council of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries and the Associated Chamber of Manufacturers of Australia, have developed a code of good manufacturing practice for therapeutic goods. The code follows closely the principles of the World Health Organisation's recommendations. However, it does not have legislative backing. This bill will provide the legislative backing and will help to ensure that, before therapeutic goods are permitted to be marketed, there is reasonable proof that they are both safe and effective.

The bill provides for the introduction of controls over cosmetics if and when such controls are considered necessary. It is true that there have been few adverse reactions recorded for cosmetics and I would not expect the majority of cosmetics on the market today to be affected by this legislation. It remains a fact, however, that the skin is not a barrier to substances applied to it and that some substances can be absorbed through the skin and can enter the circulation. Products such as mascara, eye liner and eye shadow have the potential to cause serious eye infections or even damage to eyesight. The bill contains provisions in part VI which will allow some control to be exercised over the advertising of therapeutic goods.

Clause 39 provides for the prohibition of false or misleading representations made in respect of the therapeutic goods or cosmetics.

Clause 40 provides that the minister may examine therapeutic goods or cosmetics in the light of advertisements published concerning them, and may compare the results of his examinations with the advertisements. The minister may then publish the results of his comparisons in a Territory newspaper.

I anticipate that these provisions will have a modifying effect on some of the more extravagant advertisements which appear from time to time.

Advertisers who are promoting their products in a fair and honest way need have no fears about the use of these provisions against them. The bill contains a provision in clause 41 to prohibit the advertising, sale or supply of therapeutic goods which are harmful or useless for their advertised purpose.

The bill also provides, in clause 46, for the establishment of standards for therapeutic goods and cosmetics.

Clauses 47 and 48 provide controls over the sale of goods from automatic machines or the hawking of therapeutic goods. Provisions are included in the bill, where licences or permits are refused, for appeals to a local court.

Debate adjourned.

FOOD BILL  
(Serial 198)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to provide for the preparation of food for sale, the standards of food for sale and related matters. The bill is intended to replace the existing Food and Drug Act which has been in force with amendments since 1936. The current food legislation has served the Northern Territory well. Some problems have developed, however, due to the fact that most of our food supplies come from interstate. Major suppliers in the food industry market their goods in all parts of Australia. Each state and territory has developed its own food legislation to suit its own particular needs. This has led to significant differences in requirements for standards, packaging, labelling, storage and transport of packaged food. The food industry believes that we should recognise that Australia is largely one market. According to the industry's estimates, almost 90% of food retailed in Australia is marketed nationally. Even short-life products such as bread and milk, which traditionally have been produced, processed and consumed locally, are now transported long distances across Australia, traversing state and territory boundaries.

The burden of having to comply with various different pieces of legislation is a cost on food manufacturers and, in their turn, consumers. Additional costs estimated by the industry have been as high as \$500m over the past 10 years. The Australian Health Ministers have discussed the problems caused by the different legal requirements in each state and territory. It was agreed generally that some degree of uniformity was desirable. In May 1985, the ministers approved unanimously that joint Commonwealth, state and territory working parties should draw up a model for uniform food legislation to apply throughout Australia. The Northern Territory has had representation on the working party and has participated actively in its deliberations. At the Health Minister's Conference held in 1980, a model uniform Food Act was put forward by the working party and was approved by the conference for implementation by the governments of the states and Territories.

The Northern Territory took early steps to have a bill drafted on the basis of the model. A suitable bill was prepared but further action could not proceed because the necessary supporting regulations, which contain details as

to how the food legislation is to function, were not ready. A draft model for the food standards regulation has been received. No agreement has been reached, however, for the other important set of regulations relating to food hygiene.

The government has decided to proceed with the bill and deal with the question of uniform food hygiene regulations when agreement is reached with the states on a satisfactory model. Indications are that this is still a long way in the future. In the absence of an agreed model for these regulations, it has been necessary in this bill to maintain sections of the Food and Drug Act after its repeal. This is provided for in clause 57, where sections of the repealed act are deemed to be regulations made under the new act. The bill covers much of the same ground as the existing Food and Drug Act, with extended coverage in some areas. One example is clause 13 which provides control over food vending machines. Clause 10 contains another example where provision is made for the date-stamping of food packages. This provision is currently included in other legislation, but the government believes that it fits more appropriately into the Food Act.

Clause 54 and 55 provide power to the minister in an emergency to prohibit the production, sale or cultivation of specified food. This provision is being introduced in food legislation throughout Australia for use in any possible future national emergency.

There are occasions where the Northern Territory's special needs require a different legislative approach to problems. In the case of food legislation, however, I believe the uniform approach with the states is in the best interests of the Northern Territory and Australia. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 196)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the overall effect of the bill is to repeal existing section 123 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and to replace it with a new section. The new section does 2 things. Firstly, it rewords the existing section so that it complies with current legislative drafting practice in respect of the regulation-making powers of the Administrator in Northern Territory acts generally. In this regard, the original meaning of the section is unchanged. Secondly, the amendment adds a provision to give the Administrator power to make regulations establishing local management committees, where necessary, on parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas declared under the act.

Honourable members will appreciate that Aborigines in the Northern Territory are becoming more involved with conservation issues, in particular with management activities and decisions concerning specific parks or proposed parks. In particular, I cite the arrangements applying to Cobourg Peninsula, which has been managed by a board with a majority Aboriginal membership since 1981. These arrangements were arrived at through the enactment of specific

legislation: namely, the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Act. Recent negotiations with Aboriginals associated with the proposed Kings Canyon National Park produced the concept of an appointed committee to have specific responsibility in relation to the operations of the park. This emerged during the park planning process when an informal local committee comprising a majority of Aboriginal people was set up. The Aboriginal membership comprised people with traditional affiliations in the area. These people are now domiciled in the 3 living areas which were excised from the park and to which they have been given title. When commercial facilities are developed in association with the park, it is proposed that a nominee of the commercial operator should become a member of the local management committee.

Because of the success of the local committee in the planning process, it has been decided to extend this into the park management function on a continuing basis, and to establish the committee by statute. As other parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas come on stream, it may be desirable also to adopt a similar strategy and set up a local committee. This being the case, any legislative amendment which is introduced must be sufficiently flexible to allow for variations in circumstance.

The amendment to section 123 will enable the establishment of local management committees and will allow the composition, functions and powers of those committees to be tailored to suit each individual situation. I believe that this is a significant step forward in the management of parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas in the Northern Territory. I therefore commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until 10 am on Tuesday 19 August 1986 or such other time or date set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

#### ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 191)

Continued from 17 June 1986.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to take responsibility for the conduct of this bill as it comes within the Mines and Energy portfolio.

Leave granted.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to delete section 14(3) of the Electricity Commission Act which currently restricts NTEC's level of expenditure without ministerial approval to \$100 000. This restriction upon NTEC's financial authority was introduced with the commencement of the Electricity Commission Act in 1979. Since that time, inflation has caused prices to rise by 80%. The major impact of this financial ceiling in relation to the awarding of contracts is that, depending on the timing of the commission's meetings, the approval process can take from 2 to 10 weeks. By contract, the normal

validity period on tenders is 6 weeks. During the period from July 1984 to September 1985, NTEC entered into 66 contracts involving amounts in excess of \$100 000 with 17 of these contracts being for amounts in excess of \$1m.

The necessity to seek ministerial approval is causing delays in the awarding of contracts and thereby hampering NTEC's ability to expeditiously perform its functions. It is to be further noted that the Department of Transport and Works and the Housing Commission have a similar involvement to NTEC in respect of awarding contracts. However, neither of those organisations are restricted in their financial authority. The continuation of the \$100 000 limitation on NTEC's financial authority represents an artificial and inefficient restriction on that commission's operations and is not in keeping with practices in other Territory government departments and authorities.

Debate adjourned.

TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 201)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have a couple of comments to make in relation to this relatively non-contentious piece of legislation. It always gives me a great deal of pleasure to comment on what some may be so humourless as to regard as trivial legislation. As I said in relation to a previous amendment to the Motor Vehicles Act, one can frequently miss the human tragedy and comedy that lies behind some of these amendments. The minister referred rather blandly in his second-reading speech to a recent article in the press which indicated there were problems in the Traffic Act in relation to siting of random breath-testing stations which were not set up on the carriageway, as required by the act. In neither case was there any doubt that the defendants were boozed to the eyeballs, as the random breath-testing machinery indicated. However, there was a simple loophole which encouraged the wit of the cartoonist in the Northern Territory News, who depicted an inebriated character on top of a book marked 'Technicalities and Loopholes'. The humour of it ought to be recorded in the Hansard.

However, in case members imagine that I am treating this as a risible matter, I hasten to reassure them about my attitude to the very reasonable nature of random breath-tests and their importance in saving lives. The minister made reference in his second-reading speech to the extremely cost-effective nature of random breath-testing in reducing the road toll, especially when conducted on an intensive basis. However, I just ask members to concentrate their minds on the steamy environs of the magistrates' court, and to feel a sense of some pity for the boys in khaki who have been out on a hot or a cold night, whether it be here or down in central Australia, doing their job in making sure that people are brought to book.

I am quite sure the Attorney-General and the Minister for Community Development will be only too familiar with the very dull days and hours that have to be spent in magistrates' courts, sitting around waiting for people to be brought to book, only to find that these miscreants who have threatened life and limb by driving under the influence have consulted a lawyer. The lawyer has very carefully read the Traffic Act and noted that the act says that a member of the police force may set up a breath-testing station at a place on a carriageway of a public street. This very clever lawyer, in the finest Rumpole tradition, says: 'Your Honour, the carriageway does not mean



the gravel verge. He must be parked on the metal of the roadway', and as a result of that sort of technicality, prosecutions have failed. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to the boys in khaki who, having been out at night to stop people in the first place, then having spent hours at the magistrates' court, find that some slick lawyer has made all their efforts amount to nought.

For those reasons, Mr Speaker, I rise to advise the minister and members that it is with considerable alacrity that the opposition supports this bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, this amendment to the Traffic Act raises a few issues beyond the reinforcement of that particular provision of the act.

In my opinion, random breath-testing has not worked. One only has to look at the statistics concerning the Australian road toll to see that. In Australia, we kill more 3000 young Australians on our roads every year. That is 5 or 6 times the number of young men who were killed in Vietnam. It is double the number of people who have been killed in the last 2 or 3 years of upheaval in South Africa. We can read every day in the paper about the horrific toll in South Africa but barely a mention is made of what we are doing to young Australians on our roads.

The Northern Territory situation is a little bit different to the rest of Australia because we have a sparse, largely unpopulated area, with long distances to travel. If you have a look at the road accident statistics, you can build a profile of whom we are killing on our roads. We are killing males aged between 18 and 25, normally city residents, driving on a country road, probably in an inherently unstable vehicle. They will be speeding or driving the vehicle beyond its limits, they will be under the influence of alcohol, and they will not be wearing a seat belt. In 1983, out of the 29 people killed in single vehicle rollovers in the Northern Territory, not one was wearing a seat belt. Conversely, every person who was involved in a single vehicle rollover in 1983 and who was wearing a seat belt is here to tell us about it. The mere amendment of the act from time to time does nothing to address the real problem.

I believe that this Assembly should take it upon itself to look more closely at the basic cause of the problem. Firstly, I believe that we should look at the speed limits applying in the Northern Territory. Random breath-testing by itself is a good thing, but stopping law-abiding citizens at the roadside, people who are to all intents and purposes breaching no other part of the Traffic Code, is not working. The statistics show that it is not. We should address ourselves more thoroughly to the issue of people wearing or not wearing seat belts. The fines now are grossly inadequate.

I will not go into much more detail about it now, because I believe we should fully address all the provisions of the Traffic Act with a view to cutting down or eliminating the carnage on the roads. If we only had 1500 people killed on the roads in Australia last year, Australians would congratulate themselves on a remarkable achievement. If we cut the annual road toll down to the total number of young Australians killed in Vietnam, we would have some of the safest roads in the world. But no parliament in this country has ever addressed itself thoroughly to the issue of road safety. I think it is probably because there are too many hard decisions to make. Random breath-testing was introduced elsewhere and it was easy for us to follow suit.

With those few short words, I commend the bill to honourable members.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent this bill being passed this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions in relation to this very important amendment to the Traffic Act. I listened to what the member for Leanyer had to say and I will take it into consideration. I also thank the member for MacDonnell for his kind consideration in the passage of this bill during these sittings.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR  
Hon William Wentworth

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Hon William Wentworth, a former member of the House of Representatives and minister of the Crown. On behalf of honourable members, I welcome Mr Wentworth and hope his stay in the Territory is a pleasant one.

Members: Hear, hear!

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Supreme Court Amendment Bill 1986 (Serial 188) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 188)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, obviously there are no comments from the opposition, so I will not say any more, except that the reason for urgency stems from the fact that the powers of the Master of the Supreme Court will be needed in relation to the National Companies and Securities Commission legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Local Government

Grants Commission Bill (Serial 199) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS COMMISSION BILL  
(Serial 199)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this legislation, but will seek the government's support for a small amendment that we think should be included in the bill.

The bill sets up the framework within which community and local governments throughout the Northern Territory will be able to make representations to a Grants Commission in the Northern Territory. In every state in Australia, there is a Grants Commission which recommends the distribution of funds to the responsible minister, and this bill does no more. There is a degree of trepidation within the Aboriginal communities where community governments are establishing themselves. There are many concepts and roles that are being grappled with in different ways. But communities in isolated places, by and large, will need access to the type of funding which the Commonwealth is making available to the Northern Territory, and it is appropriate that they be recognised within the proposed Grants Commission.

Mr Speaker, there is no conjecture about any of that, and the only difficulty that I foresee is the inevitable conflict of interest between the owners of Aboriginal land and the community governments which may be established. I think that problem will arise; it is unfortunate, but it is almost inevitable. Should that conflict arise, I would hope that it will not be used as another excuse for the Northern Territory government to have a public slanging match with the land councils or the landowners' representatives. I hope that negotiations with the owners will be conducted in an amicable manner so that we will not see a repetition of what has happened over the past 5 or 6 years since the Northern Territory government has been involved in negotiations with landowners.

Mr Speaker, as I said, the opposition wishes to include one small amendment. I believe the minister may also have an amendment. I ask the minister to support our amendment to clause 12(3) which states:

In respect of money which is not provided to the Territory under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1986 of the Commonwealth, the commission, in making a recommendation to the minister under subsection (1) in respect of a local governing body, may take into account the special needs or disabilities of that body.

It is the wish of the opposition that the word 'may' be replaced by the word 'shall'. In other words, the Grants Commission shall recognise the very grave disabilities communities throughout the Northern Territory, certainly within my own electorate and, I am sure, in the electorates of all members who have rural seats.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I repeat that the opposition supports the bill and asks that the government support this amendment.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I think it is an indication of an absolute lack of interest in rural matters, and possibly local government, that a number of backbenchers on the opposite side are not leaping up to debate this very important bill. It is one of the major advances in local government in the Northern Territory in recent times.

I would like to lead members briefly through how the bill will work. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, the Local Government Grants Commission that will be set up will have 7 members. 5 will be appointed by the minister, in addition to the Secretary of the Department of Community Development or, as we will see later, his deputy, and the departmental head of Treasury, but not his deputy. Unfortunately, there is no provision for the deputy head of Treasury because the honourable minister did not understand what was in his bill. Of the 5 people who are appointed by the minister, 2 will be people who, in the opinion of the minister, are capable of representing the interests of councils - that refers to municipal councils. 2 people will be those considered capable of representing the interests of community government councils. There lies a bit of a rub too, because the wording refers only to community government councils whereas we know from our briefing that the total number of bodies which will be involved in the distribution of PITS funding is 48, of which approximately three quarters are not community governments. I find the reference to community councils rather unfortunate. I think it would have been more appropriate to refer to the legislation that we passed the other day in relation to a community government association. It would have been appropriate for the bill to indicate that the association could propose names to the minister.

It is unfortunate that the minister, the Local Government Association, and the Community Local Government Association do not have the ability to ensure that at least one or both of their nominees will be on the commission. The minister's opinion will determine which people are considered capable of representing their interests. That certainly does not go nearly as far as I would wish it to. When we give such bodies status, we give them certain responsibilities. We should also give them certain powers, and allow them the ability to propose to the minister what people he will appoint to the commission.

Mr Speaker, I come back to the question of the membership of the head of the department principally responsible for the Financial Administration and Audit Act. I see that an amendment has been circulated by the minister indicating that he has had a change of heart and he will now have the grace to allow the Treasurer to keep his departmental head with him now and again. He will not be required actually to participate in all of the meetings of the Grants Commission, because he will be able to be represented there by his deputy. We raised this with the minister and he now has an amendment to rectify the oversight. We will support that amendment because we proposed it.

However, there is a lack of grace on the part of the minister in that he does not intend to support our amendment, which goes even further. I would like to refer to the functions of the commission so that members will be able to see my point. Clause 12(1)(a) states that the commission will report in respect of PITS funding. Another clause refers to other types of funding. Clause 12(2)(a) states that all the PITS money has to be distributed.

We come to clause 12(2)(b). Members must understand some concepts in relation to what a Local Government Grants Commission is all about. I will try to use terms that the average layman will understand. There is a concept of the equalisation of revenue-raising effort between different local

government bodies. People should be able to enjoy an equal level of services provided by their councils. Sometimes that is referred to as 'effort neutrality'. The idea is that, if there is no effort, then variations from that effort will indicate something. If one body, by a certain amount of effort, is unable to raise funds sufficient to provide a standard of service similar to another body which, by the same amount of effort, is able to raise more funding, PITS funding will go to the body that is unable to provide services from its own resources.

Clause 12(2)(b) states that, as far as possible, the amount of money recommended to be allocated to a local governing body should be sufficient to enable it by reasonable effort to function at a standard not appreciably below that of other local government bodies. If it went only that far I would have no problems. However, it goes on: 'which are, in the opinion of the commission, similar to that body in relation to those matters the commission considers relevant'.

This is an artificial decision based on the assumption that municipal councils are too powerful to be asked to share with other local government bodies. By this device, municipal councils will be looked at in one way. They will be given their cake and, if anything is left over, the other non-municipal councils can split it up among themselves. I accept that there is a need to get this operating by 1 July or else there will be no PITS funding at all. Thus, we will not move an amendment to that clause.

However, I put the government on notice that, if there is not a move to establish a method of determining what is effort neutrality between the rural areas and the urban areas within a reasonable period, we will seek an amendment to that particular clause to delete the reference to 'similar to that body in relation to those matters the commission considers relevant'.

I turn to our amendment. Clause 12(3) relates to funds that are not PITS funds - other government money which is made available to various types of local governments. In respect of that money, the commission, 'in making a recommendation to the minister under subsection (1) in respect of a local governing body may take into account the special needs or disabilities of that body'. That is rather meaningless. You are either establishing a principle or you are not. Are you saying that it is to look at special needs and disabilities or are you saying that it is not to look at special needs and disabilities?

It looks to me as though the government decided it would have a little bit each way. It could not decide whether it believed in the concept that every person has the right, under his own local government body, to have a certain standard of service provided and that, in addition, some have special needs or disabilities. The Commonwealth moneys are intended to take the equalisation factor into account. 30% of the moneys are to be disbursed on a per capita basis, and the remainder is to be distributed on the equality principle. This is federal money for distribution to local government. Clause 12(3) should not be a matter of 'may'. It should be a matter of 'shall'. The commission should be required to look at the differences between such places as Darwin and Kintore, and to take into account the sizes of the communities, cultural imperatives which govern peoples' lifestyles, and basic needs such as the requirement for water and power. People in all communities should have the basic requirements for a reasonable life. It is the duty of government to attempt to redress imbalances where they exist, and not just to indicate that it will address such issues if it feels like it.

There is one aspect of this bill which I absolutely support: it allows local governing bodies apart from municipalities to have access to untied funds. Mr Speaker, you would know the difficulties experienced by local government bodies out bush in explaining their relevance to the average person in the community. The problem arises because, in spite of community government initiatives, the reality is that those community governments do not have real power to determine their own priorities. For years, local government for people in remote areas of the Northern Territory has been simply a matter of receiving a budget which is a very detailed allocation of how the money is to be spent. The government's attitude has been that he who pays the piper calls the tune: 'We are providing specific-purpose funding and you will spend it according to that particular budget. You can negotiate and, if we decide that your idea is better than ours, we might let you go ahead with it. But we are the boss'.

People out bush very quickly realised that this was really no more than a local arm of the central government. They had a local body which was charged with carrying out functions which the central government considered could be more cheaply or more efficiently performed by a local government body. Local government was not there to reflect the wishes and the needs of the people of that community; it was there to reflect what the central government saw as the appropriate wishes and needs of that community. This meant that, over a very short period, the local governing body became divorced from the people. Certainly, people participated; they became members, but they often did so for relatively strange reasons. If you investigated them, you would find peoples' reasons for becoming councillors were not what you would normally expect. These bodies did not have the relevance of local government in areas where councils have the ability to allocate funds according to what residents see as the real priorities.

The introduction of untied grants gives communities that ability for the first time. The opposition would have liked to have seen that ability given years ago so that, when a community made a profit on a business venture, or when it was able to carry out a particular service at less than the budgeted cost, it would benefit. There are now moves in that direction but, for many years, it was not the reality. If a community had a surplus in a particular area, the government would reduce the following year's grant by that amount. Now, however, there is an ability to distribute untied grants. It will not be much. I estimate that the amount for the average local governing body may not be more than \$20 000. However, it is a start. On a per capita basis, it is way below the level of untied grants being distributed in municipal areas. However, I will go along with it simply because it puts the act in place and it is better to have something than nothing. Although I support the establishment of this principle in the bill, I will not continue to go along with inequitable distribution of moneys.

I would like to return briefly to the amendment that the minister has put before us. As I say, it is a brilliant amendment. We thought it up ourselves and gave it to him. It is a product of this negative, carping criticism which we are always being accused of. I hope that, having been convinced by my arguments in relation to that particular clause, he will have a change of heart on the road to Damascus and see that there is no point in having an amendment which says that somebody 'may' do something. Of course a body of this nature 'may' do things but that word does not extend its powers. By changing the word to 'shall', it would become a duty. I believe that, when members opposite pause and consider those arguments, they will support this amendment. If they are so positive and concerned for the development of the Northern Territory, I am sure that they will see how we have assisted them.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the Minister for Community Development seems surprised that I should rise to speak on a bill such as this. I find that difficult to understand. He should be more surprised to find that his colleague, the member for Victoria River, is no longer in the Chamber, and evidently is not interested in contributing to this debate.

Mr Coulter: He is listening to the Leader of the Opposition, who is also not in the Chamber.

Mr BELL: In response to the interjection from the Deputy Chief Minister, I am getting sick and tired of rising to speak and being met with ill-informed abuse. There have so far been 3 opposition speakers. Even after his relatively short time in this Assembly, the Deputy Chief Minister should be aware that it is customary, particularly when there is a small opposition such as ours, to have members from each side of the Assembly speaking alternately. I am the third opposition member to speak on this bill and I would have thought that, given the important and progressive nature of this bill, the Deputy Chief Minister would have spoken.

Mr Coulter: You sit down and I will get up. All right?

Mr BELL: The Deputy Chief Minister insists on interjecting. He is certainly most welcome to contribute after I have, but he has had 2 opportunities to bob to his feet and I am surprised that he has not taken them yet. I am delighted to hear, however, that he intends to rise to his feet.

I have some substantial and substantive concerns with respect to this bill, which is certainly of concern to my constituents. If I appear to overlap with some of the comments I made in Tuesday's debate on the related Local Government Amendment Bill, I trust that a degree of tolerance will be extended to me in a broad-ranging, second-reading debate, because there are contentious issues involved in these particular bills. They are not contentious in terms of votes in the ballot box, but they are certainly contentious in respect of the relationship between the Northern Territory government and Aboriginal communities. We are not a part of the Northern Territory government in the narrow sense but, in the broad sense of government, we do participate and are part of the relationship between government and the variety of organisations which represent Aboriginal interests. That is the reason I rise to speak in this debate, and the reason why these bills are of such importance. As I said earlier today, I detect on the part of the Northern Territory government, if not a change of heart, which would be too much to expect, at least a change of direction. There appears to be a gradual loss of interest in the confrontationist style which has characterised the Everingham and Tuxworth governments. I detect a more innovative problem-solving approach, now that the member for Barkly has taken his rightful place on the backbench.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member for MacDonnell is not confining his remarks to the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for MacDonnell will address himself to the bill.

Mr BELL: In returning to the matters of concern in this general area of community government and the appropriate forms of local government under the Local Government Grants Commission Bill, I will look forward to the remarks of the Deputy Chief Minister.

I am looking at the bill in the context of the variety of human, social and economic issues which have come to my notice in representing my electorate which is characterised by great distance, social diversity, economic diversity and, dare I say, political diversity. The opposition supports the bill and, clearly, the communities in my electorate are going to benefit. For the first time, through the mechanism set up in the bill, they will have access to personal income tax sharing, the so-called PITS funding. That is our essential reason for supporting this particular bill. In terms of support, there are a variety of issues which deserve considerable examination in the context of this debate, as they did in the debate on the Local Government Amendment Bill, and as they will require in the debate on the statement on the Turner Report. I personally expect to put in considerable work to come to terms with the arguments advanced by Professor Turner.

I draw the attention of the Assembly to work done in this area by both the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council, which has given rise to a report by Mr Martin Mowbray. He was the subject of some calumny on the part of the former Minister for Community Development. I am not sure whether the current Minister for Community Development will be left to make his own judgments in that regard. I certainly hope so. It is a matter of some concern to me that 2 people working in the field of local government as it applies to Aboriginal communities have apparently been unable to cooperate. There are enough difficulties in finding a *modus vivendi* for black and white in the Territory without it being obfuscated by the differing points of view of 2 professionals. I hope that some rationalisation of the points of view will emerge.

I would adjure the Northern Territory government generally and the minister particularly, as I did on Tuesday, to attempt wherever possible to keep lines of communication open with the land councils. I realise that there have been criticisms about the openness of those lines of communications but I do not believe, given the involvement of the Department of Community Development in communities in my electorate and the involvement of the land councils in carrying out their statutory responsibilities under the Land Rights Act, that there is any interest other than good, to be served by cooperation. It is a matter of concern to me, as it was in respect of the earlier statement about the management arrangements for Uluru-Katajuta National Park, that there was no mention of the land councils' involvement. I am worried that the Northern Territory government seems to be very interested in keeping the land councils at arms length. They are evidently regarded as *personae non grata* by the Northern Territory government and some of its officers. I think that is to be regretted. I do not believe that it is in the long-term interests of Northern Territory development in any sense of the word.

I want to make some specific comments on aspects of the bill itself, to follow on from the general principles which I have enunciated in this second-reading debate. I notice the member for Port Darwin sneering in the wings. I find that fairly difficult to believe. I would have thought that somebody like him, with his keen sensibilities about parliamentary practice, would have understood. I do not expect the Deputy Chief Minister to understand, but somebody like the member for Port Darwin, who has been in this Assembly longer than I, should know that a second-reading speech is precisely for debating general principles, and it is not specifically for looking at chapter and verse of legislation.

With respect to the bill itself, I have noticed that the definitions clause refers to local governing bodies and that clause 19 allows the minister



the discretion of declaring a body to be a local governing body. It is not quite clear how the local governing bodies are to be involved in the legislation generally. I notice that there are references to the local governing bodies, according to the definitions given, in clauses 18 and 20. But there are no references to the local governing bodies in terms of the composition of the commission and the appointment of the members.

The underlying issue here is that there are effectively 3 classes of local governing bodies, using the phrase in its broad sense: the municipal councils, the community government councils and the association councils. All the councils in my electorate are association councils. I appreciate, in terms of the legislation that we enacted on Tuesday, that those association councils will be able to be members of the Community Government Association and that therefore the minister will have the ability to consult with them. It is conceivable that somebody from an association council which was a member of the Community Government Association could be chosen by that Community Government Association to represent the interests of community government councils on the commission. That is envisaged. I notice that the minister is nodding his head to indicate that is correct. That is fine.

I will not refer to the amendments because they will come up for debate later. I have some queries on other matters contained in the minister's second-reading speech. He referred to the Northern Territory government's submission to the Self Inquiry. He said that the submission to that inquiry made considerable effort in recommending that community government councils established pursuant to part VIII of the Local Government Act, and some association councils - that is, those councils incorporated under other acts - should be included for the purposes of the distribution of funds pursuant to Commonwealth legislation to replace the Local Government (Personal Income Tax Sharing) Act. I have not seen the government's submission to the Self inquiry and I would be interested in receiving some information about it. I would like some clarification from the minister on the recommendation in the government's submission to the Self Inquiry which seems to imply that all government councils should be included, but only some association councils be included. I am querying the minister's use of the words 'some association councils'.

For the benefit of members who may not be as intimately involved in the thorny topic of appropriate forms of local government in Aboriginal communities, which has exercised my mind since well before I became a member of this Legislative Assembly, there has regrettably been rather an unproductive association between the Northern Territory government and Aboriginal communities. I appreciate that I have discussed, and I will not do so again, the reasons for that. Incidentally, I point out an interesting parallel that Professor Turner mentions in his report. He draws his comparison with the various Celts who settled in Canada and their use of local government forms to sort out their disputes. In this context, it is worth while looking at the broad view. In case we think we have problems with race relations in the Northern Territory, we need only look at Northern Ireland. Professor Turner says that the only way the Catholics and the Protestants could come to some accommodation in Canada was through the forms of local government that Professor Turner has studied. I think that is instructive for the Northern Territory experience.

For the benefit of honourable members who may not be as deeply involved in the debate as I am, they would be interested to know that there has been a stand-off between the community government councils and the so-called association councils. I think that merits investigation. There is a great

deal of distrust on both sides in that regard. The reason why I pick up one word is in the context of that sort of distrust. I ask the minister to give the reason for considering only some association councils in the submission.

The minister said that 'funding will now be provided to our community government councils and to those other declared bodies incorporated under other acts'. That is certainly the nub of this. He does not have to take notes about this. That is the guts of this bill and the guts of what we are supporting here.

I draw the minister's attention to the word 'may' in clause 5(3) and contrast it with his statement in his second-reading speech that the minister will be required, before making appointments, to consult with bodies which represent the interests of councils and community government councils. We have a conflict there between the legislation and the second-reading speech that needs to be drawn to the minister's attention. In clause 5(3) 'may' is discretionary whereas the second-reading speech gave the impression that there was a requirement on the part of the minister to so consult.

There are pages of the second-reading speech that I applauded as I read them. In the few moments that remain to me, I would like to give a little more advice that I trust will not be regarded as gratuitous by the minister. I felt a great deal of pleasure when I saw the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth working together so amicably in this regard. It smacks of a pragmatism that would do Bob Hawke proud. It is undoubtedly one of life's little ironies that this otherwise reactionary CLP government is able to cooperate with a federal minister who has such fine, dare I say, socialist left credentials. It is a shame that the president of the CLP has now departed from the gallery. I am quite sure that some CLP faithfuls like him might raise their eyebrows at that.

I would have appreciated a little more time to consider this bill. It should have been possible to present this as a draft bill or to introduce a statement outlining the government's intention. Before the minister leaps down my throat, I know that this legislation depended on the passing of legislation in the federal parliament. I must admit I would have appreciated a little more than a couple of days to think about it.

I would appreciate the minister giving some information about the Kin hills Stearns Report into infrastructure development on Aboriginal communities and the implications it may have for communities in my electorate. I am sure they would be very interested in the fruits of his department's endeavour in that regard.

My final point relates to meetings that are being held in council precincts. I understand that a meeting is to be held in Darwin on 24 June. As a local member, I would like to be kept informed. I offer whatever cooperation I can provide and will do whatever I can to facilitate such meetings. I wonder whether the land councils are aware of them.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): I move that the honourable member be granted an extension of time to conclude his speech.

Motion negatived.

Mr Bell: Dirty buggers!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw those remarks.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw any suggestion that the sexual proclivities of the government include buggery.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member shall withdraw those unparliamentary remarks without debate.

Mr BELL: I withdraw them.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members opposite for their contribution to this debate. In doing so, I would like to point out a few points of interest in the bill. The member for Stuart said that I could not speak for 2 minutes. I do not intend to speak for much longer than that. However, I spent some 18 months developing community government throughout the Northern Territory and the honourable member would be well aware of that because he spent 18 months travelling along behind me lighting fires. He knows full well that I could speak for a lot longer than that if I wished to.

The member for MacDonnell talked about the 2 professionals, Mr Mowbray and Professor Turner. Mr Mowbray has an extensive background in sociology. In fact, he is a professional student. I am not sure if he has ever left school - he is an academic educated beyond his intelligence. Professor Turner is also an academic, but one who has his feet on the ground. The 2 reports reflect this. Professor Turner is not on a pedestal like the other fellow, who has marble feet.

It is no coincidence that the Central Lands Council has provided copies of the Mowbray Report. The Turner Report can be thanked for that because the Mowbray Report was distributed today to be used for comparison. I recommend that members get procure a copy. One was given to the government but all members of the opposition received one. That might be indicative of how they feel about things.

The member for MacDonnell also referred to the Self Report. He now wants to get hold of it. In fact, most of the Self Report recommendations have been implemented, so he is miles too late. This legislation results from the Self Report and, as the member for MacDonnell quite rightly pointed out, from the actions of the federal Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services, Hon Tom Uren, who has spent a great deal of time in the Northern Territory and is impressed by the developments that have occurred here in relation to community government. There is plenty of evidence that the federal Minister for Local Government and Administrative Services and the Prime Minister do not get on too well together. We are in the same boat there, and that gives us a lot in common. However, Tom Uren has been the Territory's advocate at ministerial conferences throughout Australia, and has applauded the actions that have taken place here, providing a model for the rest of Australia in terms of local government for Aboriginal communities.

The Kinhills Stearns Report was another example of officers from the Department of Community Development getting out there and talking, without the use of rhetoric. Some wild statements came out of meetings that the Central Land Council became involved in, as they tried to denigrate the idea of community local government throughout the Northern Territory. The Grants Commission approach to funding of Aboriginal communities is another step in the right direction, and is one of a whole range of issues that have been

addressed over the past 18 months or so by officers of the Department of Community Development.

I would like to pay particular tribute to Hugh Richardson who worked extremely hard in the development of the policies which have emerged. It has not been easy. The need for speed in this particular case is simply that this bill was commenced only some 2 months ago. This bill is to meet the requirements of federal legislation which comes into force on 1 July. I believe that the federal act only went through parliament last Friday evening and our legislation needs to keep step with the federal act to enable us to become involved in this particular system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I told my colleague the Minister for Community Development, that I would be brief, and I have already spoken for 5 minutes. However, I do believe that tremendous inroads have been made in terms of the development of community government throughout the Northern Territory. There has been goodwill on both sides - from the communities themselves, and the Northern Territory government. I have developed long and lasting friendships with the people I have talked with about community government, and I believe the bill has great merit. It represents another step forward in the development of Aboriginal communities and open towns, such as Elliott, throughout the Northern Territory. I commend the bill.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions to the second-reading debate. I do not intend to tell members of my experiences in local government. I spent 6 years working in local government and I do not want to elaborate on my fears and trepidations about this bill. I simply want to get it into place so that this Northern Territory government can play its part to help local governments develop.

The concerns of most of the speakers today could be alleviated if they were to read the Local Government Act and this bill and, as I said in my second-reading speech, dovetail them into Commonwealth act. That would reassure them in respect of some of their concerns.

The member for Stuart expressed concern in relation to possible inequality between municipal and community governments under clause 12(2)(b) of the bill. The Commonwealth Financial Assistance Act requires that principles for allocation of funds be approved by the Commonwealth minister, and I refer the member to section 9B of that act. I will read that section for him, and remind him that the Northern Territory is regarded as a state for the purposes of this Commonwealth act:

In formulating principles under subsection (1) or in preparing proposals for revocation of variation of principles so formulated, a state shall have regard to the objective of ensuring that the allocation of funds for local government purposes is made, as far as practicable, on a full horizontal equalisational basis, being a basis that ensures that each local government body in the state is able to function, by reasonable effort, at a standard not lower than the average standard of other local governing bodies in the state, and that takes account of the differences in the expenditure required by those local governing bodies in the performance of their functions and in the capacity of the local governing bodies to raise revenue.

I hope that will alleviate the member for Stuart's concern.

Some members expressed concern about the reference to 'some' association councils. There are more than 600 incorporated associations which might be called associated councils as far as this act is concerned. Of these, only about 45 are known as major communities, which can reasonably be defined as bodies that carry out a local government function within the spirit of the Self Report. Criteria are being developed which I shall publish, and these will determine which categories of associated councils are declared.

I think the member resolved his difficulty about representation of councils when he said that the associated bodies can be appointed by the minister. They will then fall within the definition of the act and become community governments when considered for the distribution of funds.

I referred in my second-reading speech to section 5(3). I draw the attention of the member for MacDonnell to the fact that a community government association is not yet in place. That explains the wording there.

I think enough has been said about the general problems which members of the opposition have with this bill. They said that they support it. I look forward to their cooperation in the implementation of this legislation and the Local Government Act which comes into force on 1 July 1986. I will say again that I believe this is one of the most significant steps taken in the management of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory, and I can assure all members that the federal government is looking very favourably on what is happening here. I shall attend the ministers' council in Cairns which will consider what has been produced here: the Turner Report and the Local Government Act. The ministers are very pleased that the Northern Territory can now be considered as a state through this Grants Commission. We will be able to catch up with the advantages that the states have had since 1976.

In a moment, we will have 2 amendments before us. I will be moving one, and I shall appreciate the cooperation which I hope I instigated when I invited all members of the opposition to attend a briefing on all aspects of this and other relevant bills recently. I appreciate their cooperation in pointing out the need for an amendment to clause 9. In relation to the amendment proposed by the opposition to clause 12, discretion has been provided with respect to the making of recommendations on the distribution of Territory moneys to ensure that there can be no limitation or conflict between this requirement and that imposed on the Grants Commission by clause 13(3). Subsection (3) specifically requires that the commission take into account principles which the minister provides. While I have no intention of providing principles which would deviate from the requirement that distribution be in accordance with the principle of special needs and disabilities, to accept the amendment might inappropriately restrict the distribution of grants. It is as simple as that. This could occur if an unduly narrow interpretation of the phrase 'special needs and disabilities' were to be adopted. For that reason, we will oppose that amendment.

I commend the bill. As I said before, a great deal of cooperation will be needed from members of the opposition. They are out at the coalface, if you like, as far as the implementation of this bill is concerned. My doors will be open to them to provide any information needed to assist them in explaining the advantages of this legislation to the smaller communities, and what this initiative of the Northern Territory government can do for people in their electorates.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 and 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 79.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11 agreed to.

Clause 12:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 78.1.

Mr Chairman, I am not completely satisfied with the minister's reason for indicating that he will not accept the amendment proposed by the opposition. I had not appreciated the relationship between clause 12(3) and clause 13(3), until the minister pointed it out. However, on reading clause 13(3), I cannot imagine that the minister would want to impose on the Grants Commission any principle which would override its ability to take into account the special needs and disabilities of a body. In closing the second-reading debate, the minister indicated that there could be difficulty if someone were to apply a very narrow definition to the terms 'disability' and 'needs'.

I would appreciate it if the minister could give me an example of this. Quite frankly, I cannot imagine how those definitions could be made any clearer and, if they can be distorted in some way, I suspect that we should go through every piece of legislation that we have in the Northern Territory. I certainly would like to hear from the minister how those very clear words 'special needs' and 'disabilities' could be distorted or interpreted in some other way. They are written in plain English.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, if the clause were amended to read 'shall take into account the special needs and disabilities', the Grants Commission could find itself in a bind where it would find it very difficult to decide on precisely what amount, what portion of whatever it intended to allocate, would relate precisely to a legislative instruction in those terms. The thrust of the principle of self-government and the creation of the Grants Commission is to give flexibility in the distribution of funds to accomplish necessary works in various communities. I think that the restriction of the word 'shall', in this particular case, could only cause more harm than good.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is patently ridiculous. We are saying that it 'shall' take into account. We are not saying that there shall be an absolutely exact apportionment according to the special needs and disabilities of a particular body. We are saying the commission shall take them into account. When we try and relate it back to the principles the minister has placed in this legislation, it is almost frightening that he is even contemplating the possibility of establishing a principle which would be in contravention of that particular clause. Mr Chairman, as you well know, there is one particular basic reason why we in the Northern Territory, and rightly so, argue for special deals from the federal government in relationship to the rest of Australia. Our argument is based on the premise that we have reduced revenue-raising abilities and that we have special needs and disabilities. 'By your own actions, you shall be judged'.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is the honourable member addressing those remarks to me?

Mr EDE: It was a quote, Mr Chairman. I cannot recall where it comes from but it applies to this government, and it will apply to it every time it goes to the federal Grants Commission in its negotiations with the Commonwealth. If this government is not going to instruct its commission to take into account the special needs and disabilities of communities out bush, if it is not willing to have a 'shall' in there to tell the world that it will take those special needs into account, why should the federal government and the rest of Australia be prepared to take such factors into account when dealing with the Northern Territory? We are trying to establish a case for the Northern Territory. We are constantly trying to maintain the position that our special needs and disabilities necessitate special consideration in terms of funding so that we will be able to catch up. Why should we say that is all right when the Territory applies to the Commonwealth for moneys, but not when places within the Territory are asking for funding from this government? That is exactly what the government is saying by its refusal to insert the word 'shall' in this clause. I think it is disgraceful.

Mr Chairman, it makes me more worried than before about the allocation of PITS funding, because it will not be carried out according to the Self Report principle of revenue neutrality, as the minister would know if he could interpret the clause he read out. It is not the same. What we have here is a different principle to that delineated in the Self Report. Quite apart from the fact that it is different to the principle which we ourselves argue for in our approaches to the federal government, we have actually given it a weapon to chastise us with. The federal government would be able to point out that we do not apply the principle to the funding of our own communities. I believe this argument should convince the members opposite to change their attitude to this amendment, and support it.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I rise to offer my support to this amendment. I must admit, it hardly strikes me as contentious. You will recall, Mr Chairman, that in the second-reading debate I pointed out the difference between a requirement and a discretion in relation to clause 5 of this bill. The minister seems to be a little rubbery in his understanding of these things.

Mr Dale: Understanding you is what I am rubbery on.

Mr BELL: If you sit and listen patiently, you may very well be able to change that.

Mr Chairman, I would have thought this represented the fruits of the collective efforts of the Assembly and that the very sensible amendment put forward by my colleague, the shadow minister for community development, and so eloquently enunciated by him and by my colleague the member for Stuart, would have met with the fulsome support of the minister. He mentioned in his explanation that the amended wording would put too great a constraint on the commission. I find that fairly difficult to believe. I urge him to accept this amendment as an indication of good faith. I mentioned before the element of distrust which is present in some of the association councils, and I would have thought agreement to this amendment would have been the sort of collegiate exercise which the government would endeavour to encourage in order to allay that distrust.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, it is the amendment that I do not agree with. I agree with the logic propounded forward by the opposition. What I am trying

to tell them is that 'may' will more surely achieve what they want than 'shall'. It is as simple as that.

Mr LEO: I am afraid that I must be an extremely slow learner, Mr Chairman, so you will just have to bear with me a little longer.

I fail to see how the word 'may', which implies discretion, can ensure that the Grants Commission, when allocating funds, shall take into account special needs and disability. I am prepared to admit that I am a very slow learner, but I cannot see how 'may' can mean 'shall'. One is discretionary and one implies obligation. I just do not see how those 2 terms can be equivalent. I want the Grants Commission, when assessing the needs of communities throughout the Northern Territory, to be obliged to look at the special needs and disabilities of those communities. That is what I want. If that is not what the government wants, let it say so. If we are of one mind on that, I am prepared to admit that my interpretation of 'may' and 'shall' is completely confused.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I can imagine in a year's time the Grants Commission will look back on this momentous day and say: 'Remember when they sat in the Assembly and argued for an hour and a half about the words 'may' and 'shall'? It is just too ridiculous to contemplate. The Northern Territory government, in its dealings with the federal government, uses the word 'may'. The term 'shall' is very restrictive.

Mr LEO: I want it to be restrictive.

Mr COULTER: Yes, it suits your narrow tunnel vision.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I request that you point out to the Deputy Chief Minister, as a new boy, that he should direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer will direct all of his comments through the Chair.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the interjection of the member for Nhulunbuy, the term 'may' is a standard term which is used in a whole range of legislation. You cannot restrict it to 'shall' in this particular instance because it would block off a whole range of other options that could be available to the commission. The Northern Territory government has a clear track record in funding of Aboriginal communities. I believe that the term 'may' adequately covers the intent of the legislation, and I have every confidence that the intention will be carried out.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I think this is strange. As I understand this legislation, we are talking about 2 buckets of money that the commission can look at. One bucket of money is provided to the Northern Territory under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act, and a second bucket of money, under clause 12(3), comes from sources other than the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act. What confuses me is that it is quite clear, under 12(2), that the commission 'shall' ensure that the special needs or disabilities of communities are taken into consideration. It does not use those exact words, but 12(2)(b) says that it shall ensure that communities are funded 'not appreciably below the level of other local governing bodies'. In my view, that means it has to take into consideration the special needs or disabilities of particular communities, and shall provide them with funds



which will have the effect of bringing them up to a level roughly equivalent to that of other local governing bodies.

However, when we come to 12(3), that consideration is taken out and we have the unfettered ability of the minister, through the commission, to disregard relative efficiencies or relative standards of any of the local governing bodies. That is what we are concerned about. There is an unfettered right of the minister or the commissioner. I have not quite worked out who makes the final decision to allocate money, but it lacks the restriction which exists in 12(2)(b).

To reiterate the point made by the member for Stuart, it is a similar restriction that applies in terms of the Commonwealth Grants Commission when it looks at funding for the states and the Territory. Its basic charter is to provide funding on a basis that will enable the Northern Territory government to undertake state-like responsibilities and maintain functions at a level roughly equivalent to those of the states. That principle is missing from clause 12(3), and that is our concern. I think we are in a bit of a bind because we are starting to use a different set of words. We are starting to talk about special needs or disabilities instead of using a form of words more in line with what is in 12(2)(b). The principle is established in 12(2)(b). It is also established in the way the Commonwealth treats the Northern Territory generally. I do not see any problem with inserting that principle here even though the words are different.

The minister has stated, quite rightly, that he is not going to issue principles to the Grants Commission in this section, as he has the power to do, to prevent a disadvantaged community from having that disadvantage taken into consideration. We are arguing over nothing in that sense, but we are also arguing over a very important principle. It has been established at the Commonwealth level in its treatment of the states and, through the Memorandum of Understanding, of the Northern Territory. It will be established at the Territory level by the preceding clause of this very bill. I think there are excellent reasons and precedents for changing 'may' to 'shall' and it would certainly make this a much more consistent piece of legislation. It will not take away any powers of a sensible minister like the present one, it will reassure local governing authorities, and it will save possible conflict where a local governing authority may complain that its special disabilities or needs are not being properly considered by the Grants Commission. That is a political price which I would not want to pay as minister. I think the government is a bit short-sighted if it does not accept this amendment.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, in 12(2) the word 'shall' is certainly used. If you read the first words of 12(2)(a), it is pretty understandable why it is used. It says: '...the total amount of money recommended to be allocated in the financial year is equal to the amount of money provided to the Territory under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act...'. There is a 'shall' there. You would not like to see a 'may' there, would you? Clause 12(2)(b) talks about levels of funding required to reach a certain standard. I am trying to tell the opposition that, if I put a 'shall' in subclause (3) of clause 12, it will detract from the ability of the commission to achieve that goal under certain circumstances. It is as simple as that.

Mr EDE: We have a very simple point here. The minister has agreed that our logic is impeccable. He agrees with what we are trying to achieve. He simply states that the word 'may' will more easily achieve the common objective than the word 'shall'. That is the point which we dispute. I would like you to listen to this very clearly, because I am trying to say it in very

simple words. Let us say, for example, that we are talking about the federal Grants Commission. Imagine that it 'may' decide to take into account the relative inability of the Northern Territory government to collect revenue or its disadvantages, disabilities and special needs. Would the minister or any other minister prefer that to be the case with that body? Or would they prefer that the federal Grants Commission 'shall' take the special disabilities into account? I put it to you that we would want the Grants Commission to have as little room to move as possible. We would want to ensure that it took into account the relative disabilities of the Northern Territory. We would not want to say it 'may'; we would want to say it 'shall'. I cannot accept what the minister is trying to say that somehow black will be white, that fish will turn into fowl, or that 'may' will turn into 'shall'.

It is obvious that, if we are to achieve equalisation according to special needs and disabilities, we would be better off with 'shall' than 'may'. Either the minister is going to reject the principle and leave 'may' in or he is going to accept the principle and our amendment and insert 'shall' instead.

Mr DALE: I have been assisted, I confess. The Australian Legal Dictionary defines 'may' as 'a word which imposes an obligatory duty'. My problem is that if you do replace it with 'shall', you may stop the Grants Commission from considering something.

Mr BELL: I have 2 points to make. We are arguing semantics here. You just said that 'may' implies an obligation on the minister. That is not what 'may' means. 'May' provides a discretion. Perhaps we could simply report progress until we get a clear definition. I thought I knew what 'may' meant, but obviously I do not. 'May', as far as I am concerned, gives the minister the discretion. 'Shall' means that there is a requirement on the minister to do so, and that is what we are arguing for.

My second point is this. A moment ago the minister said that, if the amendment is passed, there would be circumstances in which he would not be able to take into consideration the special needs or disabilities of a particular body. I would like him to identify what those circumstances are.

Mr HARRIS: I move that the amendment be put.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be read a third time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in respect of statements made by the minister, I want to point out that he has misled this Assembly. It is a very inauspicious start for a new minister.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker!. The member for Stuart has alleged that I have misled the Assembly. I believe he can only do that on a substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Stuart did not accuse the minister of deliberately misleading the Assembly.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the process of misleading the Assembly while putting through his second bill ever, the minister has used a legal dictionary to state that 'may' is a word which imposes an obligatory duty. That is quite correct for one of the uses of 'may'. It is what is commonly known as the mandatory 'may'. There is, however, another meaning of the word 'may' in a legal sense: 'a word which confers an enabling or a discretionary power'. This is commonly known as the discretionary 'may'. Where a mandatory 'may' is used, it is generally taken to have the same meaning as 'shall'. I do start to move a little bit beyond my knowledge when I get any further than that. However, as I understand it, if the opposite had an effect which did not make sense then you will read 'shall'. Obviously this is intended to place an option before the commission as to whether it will or will not take it into account. As I said, I find that extremely disturbing. I find the actions of the minister even more so.

I will return to the point that I made earlier concerning 12(2)(b). We supported the bill. We did not make amendments even though we believe that clause 12(2)(b) is not in accordance with the Self Report.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members should be aware that standing orders preclude the third-reading debate to be used to reiterate points which have been raised in previous debate.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to put on record that the concept of a Local Government Grants Commission is probably one of the better moves that this government has made in relation to community and local government. It provides a conceptual framework within which we can start to address disabilities in terms of revenue-raising, physical facilities and so on. We have started out on that road. We have at last a means by which we can begin to establish principles and utilise a database of statistical knowledge in relation to Territory communities. For that, I thank the minister.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, before the debate concludes, I would like the minister to rise and confirm that the 'may' referred to in clause 12(3) of the bill is in fact a mandatory 'may'.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to confirm my cooperation with the opposition. I will be sending them a copy of the federal act as soon as I can.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to enlarge on matters in His Honour the Administrator's address in relation to the portfolio areas of Treasury, Mines and Energy, and Racing and Gaming.

Economically, times are tough. The Territory is faced with a Commonwealth government not kindly disposed towards us - that is about as kind a statement I can make under the circumstances. In the past 2 years, the Commonwealth has singled out the Territory for funding cuts which have had the capacity to apply the handbrake to vital and necessary development. 'Development' is a

word some people do not seem to like, but what it means, of course, is an improving lifestyle for Territorians by way of a buoyant economy, more essential community facilities like schools and health centres, better delivery of essential services to remote communities, more jobs for Territorians, less dependence on the Commonwealth for financial support, and more export dollars for the country as a whole.

Short-sightedly, the Commonwealth has sought to restrict Territory development. It has done this through direct cuts to funding and, indirectly, through policies which appease factional interests in the south. The Territory, however, has not buckled under pressure, and we have not turned aside from development policies. We do not intend to pull down the development shutters in the future. Savings will be identified, although painfully, across the broad spectrum of government activities. In anticipation of funding restrictions, a 6% reduction in the operational expenditures for all government departments for the 1986-87 financial year is being examined. Some worthwhile programs will have to be shelved and some services will not be delivered to the extent we would like. In the process of this review, we have closely examined the functions of government and the manner in which those functions have been carried out. In plain English, we are seeking greater efficiency in government at less cost.

The critical path to Territory development will remain open. It is the only direction which ensures a stable and viable future for Territorians. Nor will the government take the soft option of plunging into deficit budgeting. It would be easy to attempt to buy popularity like the current federal government and to spend countless millions on good-looking handout programs that offer nothing to economic and employment security. The penalty for that attitude is a ballooning budget deficit, a buy-now pay-later policy that inflicts grievous bodily harm on future governments and future taxpayers. We intend to spend only what we can afford, what will provide impetus to the development of the Territory and a real return on investment in the interests of Territorians in the future.

It is the intention of this government to finish the current financial year with a balanced ledger and to frame a budget for 1986-87 on similar principles. I repeat, Mr Speaker, that times are tough. There is not a big bag of government gold to dip the hand into. Policies and programs must be formulated so as to ensure maximum use of government resources. However, at the same time, it cannot be disputed that the Territory continues to light an economic beacon for the rest of gloomy Australia. Latest Territory economic indicators show that we are in good shape. Consider the following facts.

The population of the Territory rose to 146 000 at the end of the December quarter 1985, an increase of 3.8% over the previous December quarter and well above the national increase of 1.2%. For the interest of members, in relation to their electorates, Darwin's growth rate was 3.6% to 68 500, a figure which includes Palmerston. Alice Springs rose by 5.9% to 23 300 and Katherine by 7% to 4600. The populations of Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek remained stable at 3900 and 3200 respectively. One wonders what it will be as a result of the fringe benefits tax.

In March 1986, the number of full-time workers in the Territory reached 57 600, out of a total of 68 000 employed people. The unemployment rate in April dropped to 7.6% and the participation rate was 71.8%. Average weekly earnings for the December quarter 1985 were \$404.90, 12.9% higher than the average Australian earnings of \$355.60. Territory average earnings rose by 4.7% between November 1984 and November 1985.

The oppositon is always saying how bad this government is, how we are stifling growth and our policies are not achieving the desired results. Listen to some of these figures, Mr Speaker. The total value of work done on building residential dwellings in the 12 months to December 1985 was \$137.4m, an increase of 23.6% and almost double the Australian average of 13.2%. In the same 12-month period, 235 600 m<sup>3</sup> of concrete was produced in the Territory, an increase of 14% against the Australian average of 10%. Telephone connections totalled 70 931 in February 1986, a 14.9% increase on February of the previous year.

During the 12 months to February 1986, 7553 new motor vehicles were registered, an increase of 6.9% and more than 3 times the Australian average of 2.1%.

For the financial year which ended in June 1985, mineral production, excluding alumina, was valued at \$669m. This was an increase of 10.2% on the previous year's production. With alumina included, production grew to \$842m. Production of crude oil and gas from central Australia started in 1984 and, in the December quarter 1985, crude oil production increased to 19.5 ML compared with 17.6 in the same quarter in 1984. When the crude oil pipeline to Alice Springs is completed, production is expected to reach 27 ML per quarter. Production of gas totalled 9 million cubic metres in the 1985 December quarter compared with 6.3 million cubic metres for the same quarter in 1984. Private exploration expenditure increased by 16% in the 1984-85 financial year.

The cattle and buffalo turnoff increased by 15.6% to 332 000 head in the 12 months to March 1986. The number of buffalo decreased as a percentage of turnoff, declining from 9.4% to 7.2% in the same 12-month period.

The fishing industry significantly improved its output in 1985 suggesting it was recovering from the loss of the Northern Research Prawn Fleet. Farmed fish landings increased by 18.9% to 2.1 million tonnes from 1984 to 1985 and prawn landings increased by 0.7% to 3.2 million tonnes in the same period.

In the area of agriculture, the 1984-85 plantings of 7820 ha yielded maize, soya bean, mung bean, rice, peanuts and sesame seeds, totalling 11 596 t valued at \$2.15m. This was an increase over the previous year of 21.9% in area planted and 21.6% in production and 27% in value.

In the area of horticulture, the value of production of fruits and vegetables in the 12 months to February 1986 was \$5.1m, an increase of 48.6% over the same period in the previous year. Exports interstate and overseas rose by 116.2% and nursery production for interstate and overseas markets increased by a massive 65.8%.

In the area of tourism, the number of rooms in the December quarter 1985 increased by about 300 to 2955 over the same quarter in the previous year. Bed nights in 1985 totalled 892 273, an increase of 12.3% over 1984. Takings in 1985 from hotels and motels rose by 24.3% from 1984. The number of caravan sites in the December quarter 1985 grew to 4235, an increase of about 1000 from the same period in the previous year.

Foreign trade is an important indicator in light of the Commonwealth's current foreign exports position. The value of total exports from the Northern Territory for the year ended February 1986 was \$404.5m, an increase of 11.7% over the previous 12-month period. How much more would those exports have grossed had vital Territory mines not been stopped from producing hundreds of millions of valuable export dollars by illogical federal government policies?

Mr Speaker, you can name any economic indicator you want, and the Northern Territory, compared with the rest of Australia, is a beacon in the gloom and doom. It is a little like using a radiator for a lighthouse tower: there is a lot of heat but not much light in the southern states whereas, in the Northern Territory, the way is clearly shown.

The list of economic indicators reflects the basically healthy economic position of the Territory. The Prime Minister often talks about restraint. I would argue that his government's policies are having the effect of restraining the enormous potential of the Territory as a major contributor to the wealth of Australia. If the Prime Minister would show less restraint and lift the artificial barriers placed in the way of the Territory's progress, his government would not have to seek such ridiculous and harmful revenue-grabbing mechanisms as the fringe benefits tax and the capital gains tax to help to overcome its deficit problems.

In the mining area, it will be the Territory's intention in the next 12 months to assist in streamlining procedures so that prospective mining ventures can get on with the job. Mining contributes about \$800m to the Territory economy and represents about 4000 jobs. Those figures could be doubled almost overnight if the mining industry was allowed to become unshackled from the pedestrian, time-consuming and capital-consuming commitments put in place by Commonwealth legislation. The Territory has vast mineral resources, the envy of the world, but they are in large part resources to which industry and the Territory government are denied.

Access to land remains one of the major inhibiting factors to development. The existing Aboriginal Land Rights Act in the Territory does not work for the benefit of all Territorians. Of 26 offers of exploration licences over Aboriginal land in central Australia and 153 offers in the Top End, there has not been one agreement successfully concluded.

This hopeless situation is compounded by Commonwealth attitudes to national parks. Commonwealth decisions are locking up resources in the Kakadu area estimated conservatively at \$34 000m. Cynically, Territorians note that uranium resources at Roxby Downs in South Australia are able to be mined and exported while richer and technically superior mines in the Territory are blocked.

The Premier of South Australia is invited to visit Japan with the Prime Minister to negotiate uranium export contracts for the Roxby venture yet a moral party stance prevents similar happenings with Jabiluka and Koongarra. Uranium contributes \$428m annual value to mineral production in the Territory. It could be double that. Meanwhile Labor moralists posture, shuffle their feet, concoct weird and nonsensical justifications, and generally make total fools of themselves in the eyes of the world. They support a federal government that negates Nabarlek contracts and then spends \$36m buying uranium to stockpile, while France continues to conduct its tests in the South Pacific regardless and while Australia's place in the international market is overtaken by Canada and South Africa. While gold prices are high and exports assured, the federal government shows further imagination and perception in seeking to impose a gold tax which will have the effect of closing down several Territory goldmines.

In view of Commonwealth policies and depressed markets for some minerals, the time is ripe for the Territory government to investigate stimulatory incentives that can assist and provide relief to the beleaguered mining industry. Encouragement should be provided to increase exploration for gold,

diamonds and hydrocarbons and the government will be giving detailed consideration to a range of possible avenues of assistance in these areas.

The activities of the Northern Territory geological survey will be increasingly focused on providing information and new data on prospective areas for dissemination. The focus will be on areas to which the industry has access which is not inhibited by Commonwealth policies, and to areas which explorers have tended to neglect in the past. The potential for new and exciting commodities, such as platinoid metals, will be evaluated by government geologists.

A review of the Mineral Royalties Act has been undertaken and proposed amendments offer a number of significant concessions to the mining industry. This bill will be introduced later this year and the industry will be given ample opportunity to comment on it.

The collapse of world oil prices has the potential to impact seriously on the Territory's energy development aspirations. As costs hold their ground and prices recede, the Mereenie oil project is in some difficulty. The Territory government is seeking to redress the balance. Partial relief from royalty payments has already been granted and further relief is under consideration. The Commonwealth crude oil levy is a severe burden and the Territory, in conjunction with the Mereenie Joint Venturers and the Commonwealth, is examining the possible substitution of a resource rent royalty. This would give cash flow relief until the Mereenie field is profitable.

Measures being taken to stimulate oil exploration include a concentration of government geological activity in prospective areas. A new package of technical data will be available to prospective explorers later this year. Offshore exploration and development in the Timor Sea will continue to be promoted and an agreement will be sought with Indonesia on the potential exploration of the Timor Gap area.

In an exciting new step in the use of Territory resources, the government will complete a study of options for extending natural gas supply in Alice Springs, Darwin and other centres. Negotiations are under way with several gas companies and announcements on the outcome are expected later this year.

The Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline continues to make steady progress and is on schedule for completion at the end of the year. This project of great national importance is a suitable demonstration of the manner in which Territorians can put together schemes of vision and imagination in their own right, and it will stand as a lasting testimony to the abilities of the member for Barkly.

In the area of racing and gaming, my attention has been caught by the continuing operations of TAB. There is no doubt that, in the long term, TAB represents the best and most efficient method of distributing income to the racing industry and improving the facilities of the industry to the benefit of the public. There is, however, some public dissatisfaction with the current TAB operations, particularly as they relate to win and place bets. This is not a gambling exercise but a mathematical one. The so-called \$100 punters are said not to be availing themselves of win and place betting because of the size of the pool and the effect their bet will have on dividends.

I have undertaken a review of our existing arrangements with the Canberra TAB and intend discussing future possibilities with other TAB administrations,

notably Queensland, with a view to mutual arrangements. These might satisfy the needs of not only the Territory but the ACT and other states as well. It is the view of leading racing administrators in Australia that, eventually, TAB operations may be contracted to 3 large pools, New South Wales, Victoria and the rest. The Territory has considerable interest in belonging to the rest.

Mr Speaker, efforts need to be made to get the handbrake off of the mining industry and allow it to get on with production that is of vital concern to all Territorians and all Australians. I note the Turner Report talks about equity participation. It is my intention to encourage and promote equity participation.

I note also that the Leader of the Opposition recently gave his commitment to uranium mining on a television program.

Mr B. Collins: It must have been a long time ago.

Mr COULTER: Just the other night. I had better have a re-run of that to be absolutely sure.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the worth of some committees. If he would like to join me in promoting mining activities in Kakadu Stage 3, by advising his colleagues in Canberra of the potential of this rich area and working towards securing decent land tenure and overcoming problems associated with sacred sites, I would welcome his contribution to such a committee. We could not only pull the Northern Territory into the 21st century, but we also help the rest of Australia. So often we are told that we are a burden on the rest of the country. Now is the opportunity for us to get together and get on with the job. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. There are not too many people tougher than Northern Territorians. We can do it with a little cooperation and support.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is the third address-in-reply I have spoken to since the last election. I have never had less to reply to. Indeed, we are in an unprecedented situation in the Northern Territory. We are now working with our third Chief Minister since the last election. The reason we are in that position is because of the quite extraordinary behaviour of the Chief Minister's 2 predecessors. It is worth while canvassing a bit of that history, and I concede that is now history.

The first Chief Minister, in his inimitable, shoot-from-the-lip, frank style gave an interview to a very prominent national magazine just before the campaign in the 1983 election. He told the journalist that he would be leaving the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly after he had served 10 years. Quite accurately, she pointed out to him that that would mean that he would be resigning as Chief Minister before he had completed his term. He confirmed that that would be the case. The magazine was published with that special profile, and it caused the Chief Minister enormous embarrassment.

I can remember nailing the former Chief Minister in this Assembly not once, but twice, in question time, as a result of the commitment he gave in that magazine article. He denied that he had said it and accused the journalist of irresponsible reporting. Thereupon, a very angry editor of that prominent magazine was interviewed on ABC radio. He said that Mr Everingham had forgotten the journalist had kept a tape-recording of the interview. He had listened to it, and he stated that the interview was accurate. Mr Everingham denied twice in question time that he had said any such thing



and categorically assured the Assembly that, under no circumstance, would he do anything but serve out his full term as Chief Minister. He announced his resignation 6 weeks after polling day. That was followed by the ascension to the throne of the member for Barkly, Ian Tuxworth. I do not need to canvass the circumstances surrounding his departure.

Mr Speaker, it is an extremely unhappy time for the Northern Territory. The electorate has good reason to be very unhappy with the style of government and the quality of government that has been offered to the electorate by the CLP over the last 18 months. I must say that, waltzing out of an election with a majority of 19 to 6, and then going through 3 Chief Ministers in 2 years without an election intervening, is a pretty ridiculous state of affairs for the born-to-rule leaders of the Northern Territory.

When I was advised that it was the intention of the government to prorogue the Assembly, I understood that there was a substantial reason for doing so. Prorogation normally only takes place after general elections where it is traditional for the Queen's representative in this Chamber to outline his government's program for the rest of the term. When I was told that it was the intention of the government to prorogue, I thought that Steve Hatton must have a great many new ideas of his own as Chief Minister and wanted to take the opportunity, with all the attending pomp and circumstance, to announce the new-style Hatton government.

In the 3 address-in-reply debates that I have been involved in since the last election, I have never had less to reply to. Where is the Hatton government's program for the remaining 18 months of this parliament? The Hatton government has clearly failed to set out a clear program, or any program at all, for the ongoing development of the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, you do not have to go too far to find that is not just my opinion.

Mr Hatton prorogued parliament in an obvious attempt to stamp his authority on the CLP government. Indeed, how could there be any other reason for doing so? All we have received from him since is buzz phrases, clichés and a long historical account of what has been done in the last 8 years together, of course, with some instruction in better bookkeeping. The speech contains no significant new initiatives to help develop the Territory.

After I listened to the Administrator's speech with total disbelief, I was told by some of the gentlemen of the press that there was a vicious rumour circulating that, in fact, all the initiatives were to be contained in the Chief Minister's speech to the address-in-reply. Of course, we came right to the last word of that address without anything additional being said. There are no new significant initiatives by the new Hatton government to help develop the Territory. What we have is simply a new face fronting a tired and discredited government which has clearly exhausted its legislative program.

During the dying stages, and I use the word advisedly, of the Tuxworth government, the opposition was constantly being berated by ministers about alleged time-wasting in the parliament. 'Political grandstanding and time-wasting' became the CLP buzz phrases when they were asked to comment about our efforts to introduce some level of public accountability into this Assembly. I want to take this opportunity to level the same charge at this government.

Members opposite, and at least one extraordinary editorial in the Northern Territory News, talked about 'muckraking' in the Legislative Assembly. Obviously, the editorial writer and, indeed, the member for Port Darwin, who

became extremely agitated about this, have never spent a day in the New South Wales parliament, have certainly never passed through the Queensland parliament and have definitely never been in the federal House of Representatives. Obviously, they are totally confused about the difference between 'muckraking', which is a practice that I have never engaged in, and public accountability.

When the actions of ministers directly affect the use of public money, that is a matter of public accountability and not 'muckraking'. What ministers do in their private time is not of the slightest concern to me. They could be the world's greatest gamblers, carousers, lechers or whatever and I could quite literally not care less. It is only when they presume to behave that way either on the public's time or its money, that I have the slightest concern about the matter. If it involves taking family members and children on self-admitted holidays and not reimbursing the exchequer until the matter is raised by the opposition in the Assembly or if it concerns travelling allowances or the misuse of American Express credit cards, I will never resile from raising it in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Manzie: What about your trip to Yulara with your wife and family?

Mr B. COLLINS: My trip to Yulara? I am glad you have raised it. You have not checked out your bookwork too well. As a matter of fact, I took my wife and family down to New South Wales about 12 months ago when I had meetings in relation to opposition business in Sydney. On that occasion, it would have been quite simple, and probably even supportable, that my wife and child, who have never accompanied me on such trips at public expense, could have accompanied me without the slightest argument. If the minister would care to have a look in my cheque book, and I am happy to take him through it, he will find a cheque butt for \$1100, paid to TAA, for my family's travel expenses on that trip. I am perfectly happy to have my record in this regard scrutinised at will.

Mr Speaker, this Assembly has convened following the removal of the former Chief Minister by public demand and, since then, the CLP has shown nothing but cynicism towards this Assembly. It is an opposition in government. It has spent the majority of its time railing against the federal government on a wide range of issues.

It is important that the N.T. government report to this Assembly any significant progress or major problems that confront it in its dealings with Canberra. However, it should not be allowed to waste time idly launching into the federal government in this Assembly. The people of the Northern Territory have absolutely nothing to gain from this government constantly abusing the Assembly and mounting a daily and very boring tirade against Canberra.

If I could give some gratuitous political advice to the members opposite, as was offered to me yesterday by the member for Fannie Bay in terms of Labor Party preselections, I think they have failed pathetically in their efforts to turn over a new leaf in these sittings. The first question time was not a bad effort. The fringe benefits tax was a legitimate matter to co-opt members into asking questions about. This morning was not bad. I gave them 3 out of 10 for the questions on the airport, which were legitimate. Yesterday was an absolute disgrace. I am not talking about the uranium industry aspect. I am perfectly happy to debate that at the drop of a hat, and have indulged in about 300 hours of debate on it over the last 8 years. However, to spend the entire question time yesterday reiterating statistical information, which was up to 5 years old in some instances, was quite a pathetic effort for a new government.

I can well understand the frustrations of members opposite when one considers that their Canberra colleague, Mr Howard, is currently the most unpopular politician in Australia.

Mr DALE: Have you checked your rating?

Mr B. COLLINS: We have. Just recently, as a matter of fact. It is looking great.

Mr DALE: Is it? What, about 5%?

Mr B. COLLINS: I will not bother to let you know, but it is not bad.

Mr Speaker, John Howard is the most unpopular politician in Australia and this is despite the fact that he will not even allow the Northern Territory's federal Liberal member a chance to speak in major debates. It was an unusual and untypically wimpish cry from the federal member, when he complained bitterly that even his own colleagues would not give him a chance to get up in parliament and have a say. That is a fact, Mr Speaker. The member for the Northern Territory has been a dead loss in the federal parliament.

Mr Finch: He has 50 times more in Hansard than Robertson has.

Mr B. COLLINS: The last time I checked, he had contributed a total of 2 questions in question time and had spoken in half a dozen debates at the most. As a matter of fact, Mr Speaker, in respect of the non-stop interjections opposite, can I tell you of one very important subject the member has failed to open his mouth about in the federal parliament? It is the fringe benefits tax. He has neither asked a question about it nor said anything about it. He saves all that for press releases. However, this Assembly should not be used by this government to do the job of the federal opposition.

Mr Speaker, members on my side of the Assembly could have spent the past few days jumping up and down on the spot about the fact that the federal Liberal member for the Northern Territory has not said a word in the federal parliament about the grave impact of the fringe benefits tax on the Northern Territory. We could well have done so in response to the comments from government members about ALP Senator Ted Robertson. We chose not to do so. Feelings about the impact of the fringe benefits tax on the Territory are running very high indeed, as they should be. But I believe a concise and instructive report on the likely effects of the tax on the Territory was all that was required from this government in the Assembly.

It is obviously a very tired tactic by the CLP, to try to divert attention away from its own very profound problems. It is obvious that the new Chief Minister is still struggling to come to terms with his elevation to that office.

On 6 May this year, he and all of his Cabinet colleagues gave unanimous support to Mr Tuxworth, and 2 days later he joined the CLP parliamentary wing in voting unanimously to continue with the crisis-ridden Tuxworth regime. Then, 3 days later, the 19 elected members of this government, who purport to represent the interests of Territorians, were given a clear instruction by the 40 non-elected members of the CLP Central Council, that Tuxworth must go. Loyalty, along with honesty, is obviously not a virtue which has any currency in the Country Liberal Party.

Members of this Assembly strove to put their own interpretations on my comment here the other day about my surprise at the resignation of the former Chief Minister. I will make it even clearer. As I said then, my time in the Labor Party has not been without event. I know how I would have reacted had I been a member of a parliamentary party in similar circumstances because ...

Mr Perron: At least we did not have federal intervention, which is what you guys would have had if you had problems.

Mr B. COLLINS: He is as about accurate on that as he is about the uranium policy. Up a tree, as usual.

Mr Perron: You can't even select your own candidates in the Territory. What are you talking about?

Mr B. COLLINS: I did not think I did a bad job in that regard myself. I got what I wanted. Mr Speaker, if the member for Fannie Bay wants to continue to support my case, he can do so if he wishes. However, if I were the leader of a political party with the unanimous support of my parliamentary colleagues, and someone on the Northern Territory Labor Party's administrative committee told me to resign, I would tell him to go take a flying leap, and I would do so with a great deal of pleasure and enthusiasm.

Mr Dale: You get asked often, do you?

Mr B. COLLINS: Every now and again. I tell them to take a flying leap, and here I am. I do not think any of those gutless wonders on the other side of the Assembly should crow too loudly about this particular matter, because a more pathetic performance from members of a so-called government has never been seen in this country. We have 19 members who do not even have the wit or intestinal fortitude to make a determination about who is going to lead them in the Assembly. What a pack of people to lead a government in the Northern Territory - a pack of gutless wonders. No wits and no guts between the whole bunch of them.

Mr Finch: Big, tough talk.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I can understand the member for Wagaman being so defensive and upset about this.

Mr Finch: You do not disturb me in the least, I can assure you.

Mr B. COLLINS: It was an astonishing turn of events, not just in terms of Territory politics. It caused considerable amazement in parliaments around Australia, including Canberra, where people asked: 'Goodness, what in the heck is going on in the Northern Territory? If someone's parliamentary colleagues are behind him unanimously, how in the hell can a leader of government be forced to resign in a circumstance like that?' It does not happen in our party, Mr Speaker, I can assure you.

No sooner had Mr Tuxworth been forced to give up the office which he had brought into disrepute, than we had the unedifying public spectacle of a mini-Melbourne Cup field of candidates after his job. About 50% of the parliamentary party threw their hats into the ring. In case there are any strangers in this Assembly today, I will reiterate that this Melbourne Cup field of candidates had emerged from a 7-hour meeting 3 days earlier, declaring unanimous support for the man they were all breaking their necks to replace. We still do not know what new information came to light between

6 May and 11 May which destroyed this unanimous support for the former Chief Minister - or is it that nothing changed? Perhaps no facts emerged at all, and it was simply that the faceless men had issued an instruction which the parliamentary party was too terrified to fight. That is the only logical explanation which could be put forward.

Mr Speaker, the ongoing battle within the CLP is a major factor in the inability of this government to offer to the people of the Northern Territory positive, well-thought-out policies that will contribute to their well-being from this day forward. Let no one be fooled, the battle within the CLP is as strong now as it has been at any time during this year. I have to give 100% for attendance to the CLP president and kingmaker, Graeme Lewis. He has not missed a single day of these sittings. He has been in the gallery every day with his little tally sheet, putting down the marks.

Mr Dale: I have not seen John Reeves about. John who?

Mr Coulter: All the lawyers are out for preselection for your mob.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I hear the voice of the loudest noise on legs in the Legislative Assembly, the Treasurer. After his unbelievably bad performance during his first opportunity in question time, I said whilst walking past the president, who was available for interviews in the public gallery: 'Well, Graeme, you fixed up the Chief Ministership. Now you had better do something about the Treasurer. That should be easy for you now that you have knocked off the Chief Minister'. That was after question time on the first day. The president of the CLP came rushing into the public gallery after the Northern Territory News hit the newstands yesterday afternoon, and held a hurried conference with the current Chief Minister in the public gallery. I took the opportunity, as I walked past, to ask him to refresh my memory as to whether I had had a word with him about the Treasurer the day before. He assured me that I had.

Let there be no doubt that the new Chief Minister is under pressure from the still significant rump of Tuxworth support in the CLP. Obviously, it is this faction that is forcing some of the moves that are being made in the CLP. It is clear that the government is still in deep internal trouble and that it has forgotten the well-being of Territorians while it tries to sort itself out.

At the time when the CLP parliamentary wing was meeting on 14 May to elect its new leader, the discarded leader was telling the people of Darwin, via 8DN, that the CLP president, Graeme Lewis, had to go. I quote: 'If he does not resign, the party will continue to disintegrate and go down with the division and bitterness and blood shown on Saturday'. How can any government present itself in a united fashion before the people of the Northern Territory with these types of comments ringing in its ears?

The Chief Minister said on television last night that he would not reveal any new policies because he was 18 months from an election and there was no reason to waste them now. In the Legislative Assembly, he said something equally pathetic: that he had not proposed any new initiatives because, if he did, the opposition would simply criticise them. This is not particularly convincing stuff from a new leader of government. I suggest that the reason is quite simply that there are no new policies.

Today, when the Chief Minister addressed the Confederation of Industry - and a copy of the printed speech is available - he became even more

defensive about the lack of policy initiatives in the address-in-reply. On at least 3 occasions in his speech, he referred to the fact that there were no new initiatives, and he provided even fresher and newer excuses.

It is not too surprising. How would the members opposite have had time to consider and develop new policies and directions over the last 12 months? The elected members of this government are out of touch with the electorate and bitterly divided. Exhausted by internal conflict, they have no energy left for the government of the Territory. This morning, the former Treasurer almost vaulted over his seat to stifle the current Treasurer's response about the casinos. They are all too busy looking over their shoulders from the frontbench, or sideways on the backbench, to look forward to the development of the Northern Territory.

Mr Firmin: Cute.

Mr B. COLLINS: I thought that was pretty good.

Mr Speaker, let us review the actions of this government since it was installed in mid-May this year. I am pleased to say that I have assisted the Clerk with the technical problems of the Chamber by raising the temperature by at least 11 or 12 degrees. I have 5 minutes to go, so I should be able to do a bit more.

We have seen the government's knee-jerk response to opposition pressure about alleged misuse of American Express credit cards. It really was a knee-jerk response. The American Express credit cards have been replaced by a clumsier and more costly system which will be even more open to abuse. The government did not consult with American Express, which we took the trouble to do, before it made those changes. Had it done so, it would have been advised, as we were months ago, that the accounting system which the NT government was using for its AMEX cards was obsolete, inappropriate, and was not even being offered for sale any longer. That was the only problem that existed with those cards.

The former Chief Minister wrote, giving me what turned out to be a completely accurate answer, that he could not supply me with any of the detailed information I wanted about American Express credit cards because the accounting system was not able to provide it. That was why we made our first approach to American Express. We found, to our amazement, that the former Chief Minister was absolutely correct because the government was using a central billing system that American Express had not sold for the previous 2 years. Not the slightest attempt had been made to review that system or upgrade it to take advantage of the new computerised systems which had become available.

There was a simple method of properly accounting for use of the cards, but it was never used. As a holder of one of those cards, it always puzzled me. The solution was to institute a new system of checking and accounting in which copies of regular accounts would be sent to card holders so that they would be reminded on a regular basis of how much the cards were costing. Of course, the majority of card holders were honest. That system would have simply enabled them to keep track of expenditure. It was never instituted. I never received a copy of an account in the whole time I held the card.

Did the new government rectify this simply by implementing a system which provides a far more efficient method of dealing with the problem? No, without even talking to American Express, the new Chief Minister threw the

entire thing out the window. We now have this crazy system of running up legitimate expenses on personal credit cards, trying to sort out official expenses from private ones, and making a claim later on the government. That sort of clumsy bookkeeping went out 20 years ago. A corporate card system listing only official expenses, with copies going regularly to some central agency such as the Treasury, would identify anomalies in about 10 minutes flat. That is all that is required. Instead, we have a complete knee-jerk reaction: throw the whole system out and replace it with something that is stupider, clumsier and, in fact, more open to abuse. Had the government spoken to American Express, it could have been shown a new system of corporate cards that every other government in the country has been using for the last 5 years.

I refer now to the tender and contract arrangements that the opposition called for in 1985 and early 1986 and were eventually announced by the Tuxworth government. Although no one seems to care about it at the moment, they were held up as a major initiative.

It is fascinating to see the parliamentary CLP having these St Paul-like conversions. Let us have a look. Last year, a Public Accounts Committee would have been, to quote the government, 'inefficient, bureaucratic, unnecessary and wasteful'. Now it has become a stunning new initiative of the Hatton government. We have been proposing it for 5 years. We have helped the CLP out on a number of other previous occasions, and we do not mind doing it again. We proposed the gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin.

Mr Perron: You will hear about this again.

Mr B. COLLINS: The pre-schoolers opposite will be interested to know that the member for Fannie Bay shone in that debate too. The gas pipeline was first proposed by my predecessor, Jon Isaacs, in a major debate in this Legislative Assembly in 1981.

Mr Perron: Did he call it a pipedream?

Mr B. COLLINS: You called it a pipedream. The man who said it could never be done is now sitting on the government backbench.

We proposed the gas pipeline. Marshall Perron opposed it. We proposed the TAB and the member for Fannie Bay opposed it. We proposed the TIO, and he opposed it. We proposed the Public Accounts Committee, and he is now the chairman of it. What a performance! Our greatest ally in the Legislative Assembly. We now have the PAC and the review of the tender board.

Mr Perron: What about Crocodile Dundee?

Mr B. COLLINS: I will have an extension of time to respond to that. Crocodile Dundee is a classic example of the stupidity of trying to assist this government in a bipartisan fashion. I issued a press release after consulting with the Tourist Commission, the Film Corporation and Paul Hogan's operation. My press release acknowledged the fact that the Tourist Commission was launching initiatives to exploit Crocodile Dundee and making additional suggestions for improving that presentation. I am in the happy position of having known some of the real-life Crocodile Dundeers in my electorate before they died. My press release specifically acknowledged that the Tourist Commission was running a promotion, and suggested some ways of making it a better presentation. My reward for that was to be attacked by the responsible minister, and accused of trying to propose something that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission was already doing.

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): I move an extension of time for the Leader of the Opposition to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: I would suggest that, if members opposite ask me things, they should give me enough time to answer. Otherwise, they should shut up.

I must say that I was taken aback. I told my staff that it really is a waste of time trying to do anything in cooperation with this government. You acknowledge what they are doing, you give them credit for doing it. You suggest positively how they can improve this Tourist Commission initiative and, as a result, you are publicly attacked and accused of trying to steal somebody's thunder. It was an idiot reaction to what was a positive suggestion to help sell the Northern Territory, to try to assist the government in what has now become its major new initiative: marketing the tourist facilities of the Northern Territory.

As I said before, we proposed the gas pipeline, the TAB, the TIO, the review of the Tender Board and the Public Accounts Committee. Now we are willing to make a few more suggestions as to what the government should be doing in the next 18 months. The Chief Minister not only blew one opportunity to propose anything in the Administrator's speech, but he rejected a second opportunity in his address-in-reply.

Here are some other positive suggestions for the CLP. Following the Treasurer's revelation in the Assembly today that the Alice Springs and Darwin casinos are up for sale, it is obviously an appropriate time to completely renegotiate the financial arrangements entered into after the expulsion of pioneer, owner-operator, Federal Pacific Hotels. It is no secret that members on this side of the Assembly, and I believe the majority of Territorians, expect this government to go to the negotiating table with a firm and clear course. Members on this side of the Assembly and the majority of Territorians expect nothing less than a return to the commercial arrangements which operated during Federal Pacific Hotels' ownership of the 2 casinos. What this means is the withdrawal of all government guarantees and a return to the gaming tax levels paid by Federal Pacific Hotels: that is, at least 15%, and not the 8% now being levied and waived beyond \$40 000 a year.

I have another positive suggestion to make to the government, and it is a very serious one. I was interested to hear this morning that negotiations are currently under way for the sale of those 2 casinos. My positive suggestion is that the Northern Territory government should offer those casinos to Federal Pacific Hotels. They may well be interested now. It is a fact that, in the middle of that incredible debacle when the deal started falling out from underneath the government, overtures were made to Federal Pacific Hotels to come back into the casinos. Not surprisingly, the executive of Federal Pacific told the Territory to go and take a flying leap.

At that time, we were conned into believing that the disgraceful action of this great, private-enterprise government in passing compulsory acquisition legislation in the Assembly to acquire \$50m worth of private property, not for a public purpose, but to hand over to another private company, Henry and Walker, was done because, to quote the former Chief Minister, 'Federal Pacific Hotels were 24 hours off bankruptcy'. They were supposedly going to collapse overnight and, to avoid that terrible situation, that horrendous exercise was



undertaken. The transfer cost us millions in direct losses and is continuing to cost us millions every year. I have to advise members, if they do not know, that 2½ years later, Federal Pacific Hotels are still happily, successfully and viably operating 2 casinos in Tasmania and many other hotels in Australia. Federal Pacific Hotels is not only the largest hotel chain in Australia, but also the oldest. Last year, it celebrated 100 years of running hotels in Australia. This company, we were told by the government opposite, was going to go bankrupt within 24 hours. For the advice of members, it is currently happily paying the Tasmanian government 15% gaming taxes in the 2 casinos that operate in Launceston and Hobart. That is what we threw away 2½ years ago.

I did my homework. I consulted the executives of Federal Pacific Hotels, and I asked them to calculate for me, based on the current turnover, the amount of gaming taxes they would have been paying in the current financial year, on the current turnover. They informed me that it would have been \$4.5m. We have swapped that for \$40 000. Great financial managers, these people opposite! We all know the thing has fallen to bits. We all know it was a stupid and a rotten deal for Territorians. We have now been told that negotiations are at a delicate stage again for the sale of the 2 casinos. I suggest to the government the withdrawal of all government guarantees, the reinstatement of an equitable taxation regime, and that the government consider making overtures to Federal Pacific Hotels to ask it if it would be interested in coming back.

Let me mention another initiative we suggest the government should take up. I suggest to members opposite that they have a good long look at our proposal that Territoricorp be established to replace the frail NTDC. The government should look at that proposal carefully because it describes an organisation based on the highly successful EXIM Corporation of Western Australia. It would be aimed solely at the successful selling of the products of the Northern Territory interstate and overseas. The proposal is quite straightforward. There is no need for some huge new bureaucracy or more public servants. Our proposal involves a small, highly-professional, well-paid contract group which will get on with the job of marketing and get things done. Territoricorp will replace the pathetic NTDC, which should be called 'bunglecorp' for what it has done to the Northern Territory. It is about time it was abolished. I take no exception at all to the recent moves that have been made in that direction. We put this forward almost 12 months ago and I suggest to those opposite that they consider our proposals for Territoricorp, and implement them.

I also suggest that the Chief Minister investigate and establish an Industrial Supplies Office in the Northern Territory. The purpose of this office would be to provide an information exchange between Territory firms and enterprises and the principals of major development projects in the Northern Territory. It would ensure that Territory industry had the capacity and encouragement to form joint ventures, to meet particular project demands, and that project developers were made aware of the capacity of Territory industries. It would encourage developers to make such modifications to their specifications as would allow Territory industry to provide materials without extensive retooling. I can assure members opposite that this proposal, which was carefully worked out by the opposition, is based on successful enterprises elsewhere in Australia. Our proposed Industrial Supplies Office would be administered by the Northern Territory Confederation of Industry, the appropriate body, which would receive government funding support to enable it to carry out the task in an efficient manner.

Mr Speaker, I would advise the Chief Minister to have a serious look at the Territory's payroll tax because small firms in the Territory are relatively worse off than their counterparts in the states. Of course, there is little need to emphasise the obvious fact that a high proportion of the Territory firms are in the small category. Further, if some balancing has to be done in the payroll tax area, the Territory is in a position where slight imposts on larger manufacturers may have little or no real effect on the Territory since they will be passed on to interstate firms.

I would also advise the Chief Minister to undertake a review of the existing electricity tariff arrangements with the aim of overcoming the anomalies that exist for small domestic and commercial consumers. The government should also investigate the establishment of an industrial electricity tariff for the development of manufacturing in the Northern Territory.

The government must investigate the possibility of a Territory film development corporation, not with the aim of becoming involved with the actual production of feature movies, but rather to facilitate privately initiated feature films to be shot in the Territory, both for their impact on the local economy and for their undoubted public relations value. I also believe the government should seriously investigate the possibility of establishing a Darwin arts festival to follow at a suitable time after the internationally famous Adelaide Arts Festival. We have worked on this as well. Such an initiative not only would provide a significant tourism boost in what is the shoulder period of the year for the Territory, but also provide significant cultural benefits to the residents of the Northern Territory. One of the benefits of dovetailing into the Adelaide festival is that much of the significant travelling costs of international groups would already have been met.

I think that is probably a sufficient number of initiatives for the government to proceed with at the moment. I recommend that it takes some serious steps to get on with the task of government in the Northern Territory. We will always be here to help it do so.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, that was a beaut 40 minutes. I would like first of all to refer to the first 32 minutes of the Leader of the Opposition's speech because that showed him to be what he is: a yesterday's man. It was a history lesson seen through the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition. We know that history is twisted in various ways by various authors, but I have never heard such a biased version.

We heard that the government had not proposed any new legislative programs and that this would mean a halt to development and progress. I do not believe that legislation signifies that there will be progress or development. Quite often, the contrary occurs. However, the Leader of the Opposition thinks that it is an indicator of development.

The government has made it very clear that it is firmly committed to following the same directions it has been following for the last 8 years. The Treasurer gave a list of figures for economic indicators which indicated that the Territory was more successful than any other area in Australia. The direction that this government has taken and is still committed to is the most successful taken by any government in this country.

We received a lesson in history as seen through the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition. What a diatribe! It was simply waffle. He has left the

Chamber now because, obviously, he does not want even to listen to information that counteracts his version of history. I am glad he is not writing history books. We were berated because we had the audacity to criticise the Commonwealth government. I found that amazing. He said that it was a waste of time and non-productive. I do not consider that matters like the cancellation of the railway are not important. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition does not think it is of great moment. The cancellation of the Darwin Airport terminal and the ALOP for Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Airports is not very important to the Leader of the Opposition either. He does not believe that discussion about Aboriginal land rights and the tying up of 49% of the Territory is important. Obviously, in his view, The fringe benefits tax is not important to the Territory. How ridiculous! We have a responsibility as elected members representing Territory people to talk about these matters in this Assembly. If we cannot talk about them in the Assembly, where can we talk about them? What are we here for?

This diatribe lasted for 32 minutes and then we had 5 minutes on the casino. All the old stories and cliches were dragged out. We have heard it all before and we are sick and tired of it. Finally, in the last 3 minutes of his speech, we had a little bit of substance. He mentioned Territoricorp. We have already mentioned that we will be placing emphasis on marketing but, obviously, we will not be doing it quite the way that the Leader of the Opposition wants us to. He is in opposition because the methods that he has proposed are not acceptable to Territory people. He talked about extra tax and electricity charges and made a couple of good points which had already been discussed by government members.

He spoke about the concept of a film corporation and the prospect of an arts festival. I think the effort of the government in relation to the arts is outstanding in comparison with those of governments in the rest of the country.

I hear a sound of derision from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. All of his comrades have left him; he is the only member of the opposition in the Chamber. He derides the Territory government's efforts in relation to the arts and I find that disappointing because our development of centres for performing arts, the museum and its annexes throughout the Territory and government assistance to theatrical and performing groups is unsurpassed in this country. I believe that his laughter stems from ignorance because probably he neither knows nor cares very much about the arts.

Mr Speaker, as Minister for Education, I am pleased to be able to refer to a number of initiatives that are being taken by the government in relation to education. These cover a broad range of activities including early childhood education, teacher training, primary and secondary education, Aboriginal education, technical and further education, and the improvement of facilities. The emphasis is on improving the quality of education.

It is proposed that there be established in existing pre-schools in Darwin, in Alice Springs and in one Aboriginal settlement a demonstration school where in-service training of pre-school teachers can be improved by observation of experienced teachers at work. Teacher trainees at the Darwin Institute of Technology will also be located at selected pre-schools for periods of their training.

The Territory is forced into extensive recruitment of teachers from interstate each year. As the honourable members would be aware, this is a very expensive but necessary exercise which is about to become more expensive

because of the fringe benefits tax. This makes our aim to become self-sufficient in teacher training even more important.

There are 239 student teachers at the Darwin Institute of Technology this year: 95 in their first year, 65 in their second year, 30 in their third year, 19 in their fourth year and a further 30 studying for graduate diplomas. These figures show clearly the substantial progress we have made but it is still not enough and teacher training will continue to be one of our highest priorities.

We are also making considerable progress in training Aboriginal teachers. We presently have 2 methods of training. One is at the Batchelor College and the other is the Remote Area Teaching Education program. The number of effective fulltime students at Batchelor has risen from about 30 at self-government to 145 this year. That figure demonstrates the progress made in this area but again we realise there are still not enough teachers and we plan to continue the expansion of Aboriginal teacher training in the Territory. One of the initiatives the government is taking to facilitate this expansion is the establishment of an annexe of Batchelor College at Alice Springs. This will promote Aboriginal teacher training by enabling students in the Centre to study through the RATE program for the first 2 years, supplemented by short intensive courses at the annexe.

It is intended to undertake a review of the quality of primary education which will be conducted jointly with the Principals Association and FEPI, the Aboriginal educational consultative group. The objective of the review will be to improve the quality of teaching, learning and school management. The early childhood screening program in the Year 5 and Year 7 primary school assessment program will be extended to Year 7 in Aboriginal communities. Junior/secondary education in Years 8, 9 and 10 at high schools will be further developed to improve standards of understanding and skills by the end of Year 10. Those students will receive greater counselling to allow them to undertake appropriate and relevant courses at secondary colleges.

Senior secondary education in Years 11 and 12 will benefit from the development of curricula facilities for the secondary colleges which are being established by the government in Darwin and Alice Springs. At the same time, the courses offered by the Secondary Correspondence School will be enhanced to enable comprehensive high schools located outside Darwin and Alice Springs to offer a broader range of courses. The teaching of foreign languages will be encouraged and a Japanese Northern Territory teacher exchange program will be implemented with the aim of introducing the teaching of the Japanese language in the Territory. The development of basic conversational ability in Japanese is certainly highly desirable for those wishing to enter the tourist industry.

We will continue to monitor and expand our bilingual schools program. The government acknowledges the value of the program to Aboriginal communities and I can reaffirm our support for this vital area of education. Since taking over the program at self-government, we have introduced it at Maningrida and Lajamanu and are planning to introduce it at Kintore. Since self-government, 3 schools in the program have become fully-accredited bilingual schools and several others have reached the stage of provisional accreditation.

The delivery of technical and further education services will be expanded to meet the needs of rapidly expanding communities such as Palmerston. In addition, existing TAFE colleges will develop action plans to meet the challenging educational, vocational and recreational needs of established communities. The Darwin Institute of Technology will re-accredit teacher

education courses to provide an external mode of study for Aboriginal teachers from Batchelor College who wish to improve their qualifications. A number of other courses will be adjusted for the opening of the university college and re-accredited; for example, the Batchelor of Arts degree will become more vocationally oriented.

With the appointment of the Warden, Deans of Science and Humanities and the Registrar for the university college, the recruitment of academic and administrative staff will proceed to enable the development of curricula and facilities in time for the commencement of the academic year in 1987.

A number of comments have been made recently regarding the university; whether the cost involved is warranted and so on. At present, the Darwin Institute of Technology is doing an excellent job, with 9500 students enrolled and over 1000 external tertiary students. Many of the institute's facilities are strained to the limit; for example, the new library only has the capacity to seat 150 to 200 people. In addition, 500 Northern Territory students are studying at interstate universities.

Mr Smith: How many?

Mr MANZIE: 500. Some 900 students will matriculate next year from Territory schools and 1200 the year after. The nearest university is over 4000 km away, yet the Commonwealth government refuses to acknowledge the need for a university in the Northern Territory. Obviously, there is not only a need but an obligation on the government to provide university education opportunities to those Territorians who will be leaving school and seeking tertiary education. I think it is a terrible situation when 500 Territorians have to go elsewhere to study.

The Menzies School of Health Research is undertaking extremely important work for Territorians. This work is important because it relates directly to the needs of northern Australia, an area which has been ignored all too often. For example, the school is researching hepatitis, heart disease, infectious diseases and trachoma to name just a few. This research relates to central Australia and South-east Asia as well as the Top End, and the importance of an institution in Darwin undertaking quality research in problems related directly to our health needs cannot be underestimated. The Menzies School of Health Research is rapidly establishing an international reputation for its work. Recently, I had the pleasure of having a look over the school and the type of work that is being carried out there is most impressive. I urge honourable members to visit the facilities of the Menzies School of Health and to speak with Professor Mathews. I am sure he would be most pleased to show them the sort of work that is being done there. Certainly, it will be of great benefit to all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, there are other areas of development which have resulted from Northern Territory government initiatives in education. I believe those initiatives consolidate past achievements and improve the quality of education available to all children in the Northern Territory.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I thought the honourable minister would go on to talk about initiatives relating to his role as Attorney-General, but I concede that they would be hard to define in that area.

There is a reasonably widespread feeling within the community that the Attorney-General and Minister for Education would have made a better Chief Minister. On the evidence of the contributions made in this debate, I think

that confidence is well placed. For the first time, we heard a minister of this government announce some initiatives in his portfolio area, something that neither the Chief Minister nor the Deputy Chief Minister was able to do. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it was very refreshing. It is encouraging to hear that some new initiatives are being considered under the aegis of the new Minister for Education. Perhaps it is unfortunate that the honourable minister will not have the opportunity to exercise his skills in a wider arena as Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I wish to take up one comment on the university. The government seems to be relying on the blind assumption that 500 students from the Northern Territory presently at universities elsewhere and 900 matriculants next year will flock to the new university when it commences. My information is that this year's matriculation students are anxiously seeking university courses elsewhere that will not be offered here so that they will be assured of TEAS funding and air fare entitlements back to the Territory during the vacations.

Let us not fudge from this; there is dire resistance from our potential university students in the Northern Territory. There is obvious concern about a new university and the quality of any degree that may be obtained there. But there is also a belief held by these students that, at this point in their careers, it will be advantageous to go interstate to attend a large university because that will provide them with the opportunity to meet people from other cities who have had other life experiences. Students believe this will help them to become better people. If the Northern Territory government is relying on attracting to the university college a substantial proportion of these students, say 50% or 75% in the next 2 or 3 years, I think it is making a big mistake because I do not think that will happen. The government has never explained, to my satisfaction, where the students will come from in the first years of the university's existence.

Mr Speaker, in the Chief Minister's speech I detected a neat sleight of hand in relation to the percentage figures for public servants in the total work force in the Northern Territory. He boasted with some pride that the percentage of public servants in the total work force was something like 22.6%. 'Lower than in Tasmania', he told us at one stage. But the figures do not stack up. We heard from the Deputy Chief Minister that there are 57 600 full-time employees in the Northern Territory. I am not a mathematical genius but 15 000 out of 57 600 is well over 25% of the work force. I think the Chief Minister tried to prove a point, for whatever reason, but his point was not valid because well over 25% of the permanent work force in the Northern Territory is in the public service.

Mr Speaker, we have the continuing problem that the noisiest Treasurer in the western world does not understand what the Treasury is all about. This morning the noisiest Treasurer agreed that the federal deficit was declining under the Hawke government yet, in his very noisy speech this afternoon, he said that there is a ballooning budget deficit at the federal level. Mr Speaker, I know it is impossible to expect the new Treasurer to run a consistent line on anything, but he should be able to get his basic facts right. I would like to remind him once again that, in 1983, the world's greatest Treasurer at that stage, little Johnnie Howard, gave the Hawke government a budget deficit of \$8600m. He did not tell anyone about it until after the election. Before the election, he said it was \$6000m but, after the election, we learnt that it was \$8600m.

Mr Hatton: It never was, never. Don't mislead the Assembly, Terry.

Mr SMITH: It was probably \$9000m, and it was one of the major problems the Hawke government had to face.

Mr Hatton: Have you ever heard of indicative funding levels?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the Treasurer has not heard of special grant applications to the Grants Commission. I will not be surprised if, at the next sittings, those desks are much closer together so that the Chief Minister can keep an even closer eye on him than he has had to this week.

Mr Hatton: We are good mates.

Mr SMITH: They will not be good mates for long if he does not smarten up his act and show more expertise in relation to his portfolio.

Mr Hatton: You have had several years as a shadow treasurer and you haven't got it right.

Mr SMITH: Any time the Chief Minister wants a debate, let him give us a call and we will have a go at it and see who does best.

Mr Speaker, we have heard that the government intends to shift its emphasis to marketing. It is quite clear that Neville Wran's 'jobs, jobs, jobs' has been replaced by 'marketing, marketing, marketing'. I did not count the times the word 'marketing' appeared in the Administrator's speech, but it must have been close to 20. It had a very good run. The opposition has no objection to increased emphasis on marketing, but that emphasis and the comments made outside the Assembly by the honourable minister with that very long title that I can never remember, that has business and industry and something else in it ...

Mr Hatton: Business, Communications and Technology.

Mr SMITH: ... Business, Communications and Technology. Thank you.

The minister made me wonder what sort of structure this marketing organisation would have. Whilst I listened to him, I was reminded of the vast, bureaucratic, marketing nightmare of an organisation that the USSR had a few years ago.

Mr Hatton: I promise that I will not use it as a model.

Mr SMITH: It was such a vast, bureaucratic organisation that it strangled itself in its own red tape. It was a dreadful organisation.

Mr Hatton: It would have to be red tape.

Mr SMITH: My concern is that we will have a similar organisation, not as large, of course, but equally bureaucratic and filled with public servants. I reiterate the point made by the Leader of the Opposition: if the government is to become involved in marketing, it must establish the organisation with marketing experts. If necessary, they must come from outside the public service. Public servants cannot be expected to have highly-honed marketing skills. It would be a mistake to rely on public servants to do that job and I hope that the government will avoid that.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about EXIM in Western Australia. It is a very small organisation with 5 to 10 highly-skilled people which has been

successful in improving the marketing position of organisations in Western Australia. I gained the impression from the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications that the government intended to handle the marketing for tourism, primary production, horticulture and manufacturing through the one organisation. If that were the case, it would be a bad mistake because there would be nothing worse than having people marketing products that they were not completely familiar with. We need experts. I hope that, at least, tourism marketing will be left with the Tourist Commission because, despite its faults in keeping up with legislative requirements on reporting to this Assembly, it has been quite successful in marketing.

It is too simple to say 'marketing' and expect that to solve all the problems in the Northern Territory. The government must assist industries in other ways. The opposition proposal for Territoricorp sees marketing as only one of the means by which it would be able to assist industry. There has to be a capacity for a government organisation to provide loans to industry. There has to be a capacity for a government organisation to take up equity participation in exciting prospective industries. The government must have the capacity to get out into the marketplace to find people with money and match them with people who have good ideas.

The important thing is that assistance must be provided on a commercial basis. That is where the NTDC has fallen down: there has been no commercial basis for its activities. At times, it has provided funds on bases other than likely economic return. As a result, there has been a considerable loss of money and a waste of resources. Government assistance to industry must be on an economic basis. All that is necessary is to inject a small sum of money into an organisation. The government would be assisting industry and adding to its financial capacity to further assist industry.

Mr Hatton: Why can't they use private finance?

Mr SMITH: Because there are many circumstances in which they cannot obtain private finance. The question of venture capital is very important in this context. We all know that financial organisations are quite conservative. I accept that they are becoming less so with the entry of foreign banks into Australia. Also, they tend to charge extremely high interest rates. There is a niche in the market for well-placed government assistance on a commercial basis that will allow people with good ideas but little capital to get a project off the ground. We do not see the government replacing private financiers and investors. If a person can obtain money privately, he should do so.

As I said, I hope that tourism marketing is left with the Tourist Commission. However, I want to make a plea on behalf of the small tourist operators in the Northern Territory because, in my view, they have not been getting a fair deal. Their requirements are simple. For example, they would like their pamphlets to be displayed in tourist bureaux. They will take in their pamphlets and the tourist bureau will display them but, a week later, those same pamphlets will be tucked away in a desk drawer. That has happened consistently to a number of small operators.

There is a bias in the Tourist Commission at present towards the larger national or even international operators who operate in the Northern Territory. It is only a small matter. Probably, the heads in the Tourist Commission are not even aware of it, but certainly the tourist operators are aware that they are not getting adequate display space within tourist bureaux at present.



Mr Speaker, the tourist bureaus are doing strange things with their window displays. For example, within the last year, the Darwin Tourist Bureau has displayed Santa Claus, a promotion for the Broome Pearl Festival and a display of fruit and vegetables. All of those are admirable in their own right but they are not promoting tourist activities in the Northern Territory which, I would have thought, is the primary function of our tourist bureaus.

If the government is serious about tourism promotion, it must give the Tourist Commission a guaranteed budget. I remember talking to the previous Chairman of the Tourist Commission. Being a good public servant, he was reasonably diplomatic, but I could see that he wanted to tear his hair out because, last year, the Tourist Commission suffered a cut in its income from \$14m back to \$8m. I remember commenting about it at the time; it was stupid. The Tourist Commission cannot promote the Territory effectively if it does not have a consistent level of funding over a 4 or 5-year period. I hope that advice has been given by the new member for Araluen to the government and I hope the government acts on that advice.

We had a broad statement from the Chief Minister that government involvement in infrastructure development for tourism is finished. The government will concentrate on marketing, marketing, marketing. That causes me some concern because infrastructure development, particularly in the tourist industry, provides the most effective use of capital works. The injection of capital works funds results in direct and speedy returns in terms of money and jobs generated as a result of infrastructure development.

If there is no further infrastructure for the tourist industry, where will that leave the Kings Canyon and Litchfield parks? I asked that question in relation to Kings Canyon earlier in these sittings and I received an answer which did not make sense. The minister said that the infrastructure cost that the government would be committed to in Kings Canyon was around \$9.5m. He seemed to have that confused with the capital needed to get the project off the ground. The \$9.5m necessary to get the project off the ground is in place. All that is necessary is for the government to make a commitment to the development of the infrastructure. That cost is nowhere near the \$9.5m that the honourable minister was suggesting. It includes facilities that would have to be provided anyway: a school, new ranger accommodation, Aboriginal housing and water and sewerage facilities. The cost of the latter would be recouped from the operators.

I believe the government has misled this Assembly on this question. Even if it costs \$5m or \$6m, it is money well spent on capital works because there will be a quick return in terms of extra jobs in the Northern Territory. It would be useful if someone made a definitive statement on the Kings Canyon and Litchfield parks.

Mr Hatton: What is your answer to the Conway and Lander problems?

Mr SMITH: I do not know about the Conway problem; you will have to talk to me about it.

If there is to be no more funding of infrastructure for tourist development, obviously there will be no Litchfield park.

Mr McCarthy: The infrastructure is in Batchelor already.

Mr SMITH: You are going to have Litchfield park in Batchelor? That will be useful.

Mr Speaker, in relation to manufacture, the Chief Minister has joined every state premier in Australia, every state leader in the United States of America and powerful government figures in the UK in saying that hi-tech is the answer to everything. It is the buzz word of the 1980s. I think a dream of hi-tech in the Northern Territory is ridiculous. There is no possibility that we will attract hi-tech industries to the Northern Territory. For hi-tech, you need high-quality scientific research capacity nearby. Even with our new university, we will not have the scientific research capacity to attract hi-tech industries to the Northern Territory. The other problem, of course, is markets. We are a long way from the markets that hi-tech industries need.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister also said that we ought to attract sunrise industries to the Northern Territory. I agree with that. It is more realistic for the Northern Territory to concentrate on, to coin a phrase, 'medium tech industries' - industries that do not require up-to-the-minute technology but utilise reasonably modern but not terribly expensive technologies that do not require further research in the Northern Territory. The Trade Development Zone is attracting some of those and that is the way to go. There is no point in beating our heads against the hi-tech wall.

Mr Speaker, another matter that has attracted some comment outside and inside the Assembly is the question of government tenders and the government attitude towards tendering. I do not need to tell anybody here the concerns in private industry that stem from the government's tendering system. I am pleased that the Chief Minister has announced that there will be a review, but it is not clear to me what sort of review it is to be. I would like to know more about it. Who will conduct the review? Will it be a public review, in the sense that people will be invited to make submissions, and that those undertaking the review will be able to seek comment from people and the report on the review will be made public so that all people in the Northern Territory with an interest in it can comment on it? Perhaps the Chief Minister could respond to those questions during the adjournment debate.

Mr Hatton: I will not be here.

Mr SMITH: Oh, I will write to you.

Mr Hatton: You can call at my electorate office, if you like.

Mr SMITH: I have been told that you are never there.

Mr Hatton: Not true - call in.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the general approach of government to business in the Northern Territory is along the right lines. More than anything else, the business community needs some certainty about the level of impositions that the government will place on it. The government has gone some way towards that but, in the budget session, it will need to make a very clear statement about the levels of taxes and charges it will be placing on business in the Northern Territory. I use the word 'business' in its widest sense. Such a statement should cover not only the next 12 months but a longer term, if at all possible. Businesses shy away from investing if they are operating in an insecure economic environment. If the government can provide that security in the present economic climate, in so far as it is within its control, business will prosper in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, it is disappointing that the government has not announced any initiatives apart from those described by the Minister for Education. Perhaps that is because it does not expect to be in office very long. Whatever the reason, it is extremely disappointing and I hope that, before too long, it will announce some economic initiatives that will restore some confidence in its ability to manage the economy.

Mr DALE (Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, while my time in the ministry has been rather brief, I am convinced that the portfolios for which I am responsible will contribute to the enhancement of the lifestyle in the Territory, a point alluded to by both the Administrator and the Chief Minister. Territorians can only benefit from the massive amount of development which has taken place since self-government - development which has put the Territory on the map in the minds of people living in the south. Granted that development should continue, I will ensure that my departments keep pace with the community with welfare and recreational activities which mirror the high profile of the Territory on a national and international scale.

This is a place for all people. Our diversity of cultures, some 48 ethnic groups, all with a strong sense of identity, shows that. The Territory is a place for people of all ages; families with 3 generations are increasingly represented in the Territory community. The extended family, something taken for granted in the less remote areas of Australia, and harmony with our nearer Asian neighbours should give the community greater stability. This will decrease the high rate of dependence on welfare.

I will outline the extent of initiatives already under way and those we plan in the areas of community development, recreation and services. It is a long-held view that the Territory has served as a social proving ground for a succession of Canberra governments. My departments will be basing their initiatives on research and not on whims. I have already had the pleasure of announcing some of those initiatives. Along these lines, the Department of Community Development has initiated an annual strategic planning process. This identifies its main areas of impact in a rapidly changing community. The most significant areas of spending are demonstrated in the strategy plan which develops proposals and, with the minister's approval, costs these in readiness for budgetary planning for the next financial year. The result is a program which allies strongly with the government's priorities as laid out by His Honour the Administrator and the Chief Minister.

For example, given its concern with major demographic changes, the department is vitally interested in the future of Katherine, both in the light of the Tindal upgrading, and the possibility of further development courtesy of the recommendations of the Dibb Report. As a result, only last week I announced the decision to have a consultant prepare a report on the future social needs of the people of Katherine. We want to foresee and avoid the problems that occur when a small town experiences a population and economic boom.

The department continues to monitor the application of some 40 acts of parliament which fall within its sphere of influence and this year will see the introduction or revision of a number of pieces of legislation. The government will move to establish a Northern Territory grants commission. Following the national inquiry into local government finance, the Self Report, and successful negotiations with the Commonwealth, the Territory will now disburse Commonwealth funds to all local government authorities. Its acceptance into the national scheme of things is a major step and reflects the

Administrator's comments on the Territory's aspirations towards equal footing with the states.

The government will also introduce a National Trust Bill relating to the preservation of our heritage. Legislation relating to consumer protection, community welfare, the adoption of children and litter controls will be revised. Self-management by Aboriginal communities has long been a particular concern of the Department of Community Development and, at the start of the new financial year, the department will assume control of the Aboriginal Essential Services Program. The Local Government Act, which was revised completely recently, has been further amended to enable the formation of the Community Government Association.

At this stage, I should make particular reference to the report I received recently from Professor David Turner, an anthropological consultant. His report into Aboriginal self-management endorses the government's actions in developing community government and recommends a number of initiatives for further progress in this field. I feel the Turner Report will lead to the realisation that the Territory's homegrown initiatives are starting to bear fruit.

The Women's Affairs Division has remained within the Department of Community Development, despite the decision by the Chief Minister to have the Women's Affairs Adviser report directly to him. Of course, this means that I will remain in close contact with the deliberations of the Women's Advisory Council, a situation which I welcome. Given that much of the council's work has to do with the provision of services to women, it is only right that it continue to report to me in the first instance.

While on the subject of community programs, I should outline some of the undertakings of the relatively new Department of Correctional Services. A significant increase in ideas has occurred in this area in the past few months. While there is no simple explanation for the increasing number of offenders passing through the criminal justice system, the department is looking at a number of ways to make these prisoners work for their own and the common good. The emphasis for custodial deployment of prisoners will be placed on rural facilities such as Gunn Point and the recently-established Beatrice Hill complex. The theory is that, through strenuous physical activities, inmates can acquire skills and thus help in their own rehabilitation and avoid a return to the system at a later date. This initiative should reduce the cost to the taxpayer which is currently in the order of \$90 a day. The enormous expense of retaining offenders is the motivating force for a number of these initiatives. They include the Home Detention Scheme, which confines offenders in their own homes, and this concept was well received at a recent conference of Ministers for Correctional Services and at least 1 state will adopt the scheme.

On a minor but equally important scale, the department has set up programs to cope with young offenders following the transfer of juvenile justice functions. One such is the Wilderness Work Camp which has been set up at Wildman River to provide hard work and a learning environment for selected young offenders. Again, there is considerable benefit to the community through construction of public facilities, in this case at a popular fishing spot. The matter of the over-representation of Aboriginals in the prison system is being addressed. Initiatives such as the appointment of Community Corrections Officers on Groote Eylandt, along with a local Community Service Advisory Committee, will be examined for possible application elsewhere.

I spoke earlier of planning for the future within the Department of Community Development. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation and Ethnic Affairs is also involved in forward planning with a view to the service it provides keeping pace with other areas of development in the community. Catering for the needs of young people is an ever-changing task and there are various bodies which do solely that. The Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs continues to provide advice, with young people, their organisations and government departments all represented. The Palmerston Y-Joint opened earlier this year while a similar operation in Alice Springs, the Centre Centre - a name I love - is expected to open next month, both catering for the social needs of young people. Growth in Katherine, to which I referred earlier, has prompted a close look at the youth needs there. These investigations reveal a need for a coordinated approach through the many wings of the department for which I have responsibility. I intend to tie provision of youth needs and services in with policy development and the training of professional and volunteer youth and recreation workers.

Sport is a major factor in all Territory lifestyles and, recognising the benefits it generates, the government will maintain its commitment to the development of training programs and top-class facilities. The Centralian Masters Games, the first of their type in this country for mature-age athletes, will be held in Alice Springs in October. A number of facilities are being upgraded to cater for the estimated 2000 or so athletes who will take part.

In Darwin, work continues on the Marrara stadium. The intention is that major sports in the Top End will have their headquarters there. Marrara has been host to some national and international titles already: the Asian Tae Kwondo Championships, the Australian Womens' Gymnastics Titles and some exceptionally fine tennis. In the near future, the National Mens' Hockey Titles will be held there. I might add that the ABC has seen fit to ignore these titles next month and, I am told, does not have any intention of giving the event television time. I shall pursue that matter a little further.

So much for the nuts and bolts, but there is much in the pipeline by way of specialist programs. I propose to ask sporting clubs to give details of their priorities for the next 5 years and to indicate how they may go about achieving those priorities, with particular emphasis on talent development, administration and facilities. I hope that, in conjunction with priorities we have on line already, this will provide a foundation for future programs to come from the department.

Existing programs which will be extended include the coach-in-residence scheme, which I hope will embrace a further 5 sports this year, with access to the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme. Our best sportsmen and sportswomen can expect greater assistance in their endeavours always with the hope that, in time, they will pass on their expertise as specialist coaches. I mention the cyclist coach-in-residence, Shane Bannon, one of the best-known names in the Territory and a man who came close to Olympic selection. The government assisted him in his term at the South Australian Institute of Sport and our young cyclists are now reaping the benefit of his expertise.

The department will continue to provide assistance for salaries for the employment of youth and recreation workers. Particular emphasis is placed on their needs in regional and outlying centres where there is a major requirement for a range of youth and community activities. Officers will liaise with their peers in the Department of Education to develop comprehensive sports programs for schools. Particular emphasis will be placed on the basic principles and ethics of sport.

The Administrator told the Assembly that the emphasis on teaching and catering for Asian languages will continue. I must stress the department's ongoing provision of interpreting and translating services for the 48 ethnic groups represented in our community. Darwin has witnessed a variety of events at the Performing Arts Centre which accentuated our cultural and ethnic diversity. I am often asked how we can justify the centre and I have only to refer to the need to service that range of cultures.

Finally, the Museums and Art Galleries Board expresses our links with South-east Asia, the Pacific and our own tropical region. The Museum and Art Galleries Board is developing a regional museum program for outlying communities following on from more than 3 years work heightening museum awareness in the Territory. The museum undertakes scientific research, largely in the area of local marine and the complex land fauna undergoing drastic ecological change resulting from the comparatively-recent incursion of European man and domestic and feral animals. As part of its work, the museum liaises closely with industry on projects which may ultimately change the face of the Territory. Its purpose is to ease the impact of such change, to document it and make its findings available to the public, and to use these opportunities to make new discoveries. These areas are making a significant contribution to the long-term future of the Territory and I support unequivocally the endeavours of the diverse groups who work within the team.

Mr Speaker, as a minister of this government, I look forward to the dynamic future of the Northern Territory government which, in conjunction with the people of the Northern Territory, is vastly improving, on a weekly basis, the quality of life in the Northern Territory.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to introduce a bill without notice and move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the bill passing through all stages at these sittings.

Leave granted; motion agreed to.

#### LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 204)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, I thank the government for the complete cooperation it has shown on this matter. An anomaly exists in the Liquor Act. The problem is in respect of people under the age of 18 being on licensed premises, particularly in relation to drink waiters in the tourist industry. I have given the government credit on a number of occasions for the catering and hospitality schools that it has established in the Northern Territory. The scheme involves taking on school leavers at the age of 16. Indeed, we had a number of the students attending on us at the Assembly the other day. Trainees are used at a great many public functions and the Beaufort Hotel, for example, is cooperating with the scheme. Most of the trainees are under the age of 18. The trainees enter the scheme at 16 and undergo a year's training. After completing their training, they are still under the age of 18 and therefore have no legal right to pursue their occupation.

From inquiries that I have made, I understand that the way this problem has been handled to date is simply to ignore it. Obviously, that is not a satisfactory situation for anyone. Under section 106, it is an offence to supply liquor to minors and this would apply to these trainees. Section 117 indicates that it would be an offence to ask a trainee to obtain a drink for you because, 'a person shall not send a person under the age of 18 to purchase or collect liquor from or at a licensed premises'. Without doubt, asking one of these trainees for a drink would constitute a breach of that section of the act.

The bill will correct both these problems in a simple and efficient manner. After the existing section 116 in the act, it will insert a new section 116A:

(1) Except in accordance with a condition of his licence or as permitted under subsection (2) by the commissioner, a licensee shall not employ a person under the age of 18 years to sell, supply or serve liquor on licensed premises.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the commission may in writing, either generally or on the application of a licensee, in relation to a particular person, permit a licensee to employ a person under the age of 18 years to sell, supply or serve liquor on licensed premises where the commission is satisfied that the person is a genuine employee of the licensee or is undergoing employment training at the licensed premises.

Mr Speaker, probably this provision will make our legislation more modern and applicable than any similar legislation in Australia. I will indicate that by giving 2 examples. The legal drinking age in Queensland is 21 which, as the member for Stuart pointed out to me, probably means the effective drinking age is about 17. You can drink at 21 as long as you are not a sexual deviate, child molester, drug abuser etc. When that legislation was canvassed, the Canberra Times had a brilliant cartoon depicting 2 barmen standing behind a bar in Queensland. Behind the bar, there was an enormous sign which said: 'No sexual deviates, perverts, child molesters, drug abusers etc'. The bar was completely empty and one of the barmen was saying to the other: 'Lonely in here, isn't it?' and, indeed, Mr Speaker, it is very unusual legislation.

South Australia has an anachronistic provision stating that it is an offence for a person under the age of 18 to sell or serve liquor unless that person is a child of the licensee. It does not matter if the child is 5 years old - provided his father is the publican, he can be in the bar serving liquor. I do not think we want to follow that.

The bill before the Assembly is modelled largely on the NSW Liquor Act. The amendment will correct a confused situation in the Northern Territory and remove completely any doubt that the trainees - and I believe that they are a great credit to the tourist industry in the Northern Territory - will be able to be gainfully employed without any fear that they may be prosecuted or that the people they serve may be prosecuted.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate to honourable members that the government supports this amendment. The tourist industry has grown considerably and the government supports that growth. I have been involved in developing tourist industry training courses for our young people. The government is certainly desirous of ensuring that trainees are able to

undertake such work. If the law prevents them from carrying out the work that they are trained to do, then we should speak out against that law. Mr Speaker, the government supports the amendment.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(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 DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to open my adjournment debate by discussing the problems associated with the provision of psychiatric services in Alice Springs and generally throughout the Northern Territory. I seek leave to table a petition which is not in the required form but does bear the signatures of some 350 people from around Alice Springs. It states: 'We the undersigned support this petition to the Northern Territory government for the revision of the above facilities in Alice Springs'. It refers to a letter which discusses facilities for intellectually disabled and retarded people in Alice Springs. It was originally in the form of a letter to the previous Chief Minister. It refers to the appalling state of affairs in Alice Springs where there are no facilities whatsoever for disabled or retarded people. It refers also to comments by magistrates and the Disabled Persons Bureau and to media coverage in the Centralian Advocate on the problem.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: I table a petition from 350 people protesting at the inadequate facilities for intellectually disabled and retarded people in Alice Springs and requesting the Northern Territory government to expedite the provision of such facilities.

Mr Speaker, I have also received a copy of a letter from the Darwin Self-Help Rehabilitation Association which refers to problems in Darwin. It is a little worried that its meetings are held at the hospital. The people in the association see themselves as a self-help group and would like to have the facility away from the hospital. Specifically, they require a halfway house in Darwin. Alice Springs has a broad range of problems and people are mainly talking about the necessity for a respite house.

In Darwin, a halfway house appears to be the most pressing need. I am told that there are people sleeping in parks and in the Mall year after year. There is 1 person who has lived on Mindil Beach for the last 2 years. These people are intellectually disabled and tend to spend a large period of their time living in the open with short sojourns in the hospital. They have become physically ill as a result of the living conditions that they have to endure. They are unable to secure normal accommodation because of their psychiatric illness. They would be prime candidates for a halfway house if such an institution were established in Darwin.

The Self-Help Rehabilitation Association in Darwin tells me that it has made numerous proposals to the Department of Health and other government departments but without any success. It has continued to express a strong



interest in continuing to overcome the accommodation crisis experienced by people in the Darwin area who are suffering from mental illness. The group was established in response to a call from the Northern Territory government for a community group interested in sponsoring the development of community facilities for such people. The group says that, if the Housing Commission were willing to provide a house, it would probably require some 2 or 3 staff to look after it on a full-time basis. There are enough people in Darwin to fill such a facility. All of them are living in dismal poverty in parks, in the Mall and on Mindil Beach. We have heard about the Tamarind Centre. However, the physical facilities involved in the concept of the Tamarind Centre will not be available until stage 2 of the program. This could be some 2 or 3 years into the future and, in fact, will not incorporate a halfway house. The proposal is for an in-patient facility only which will cater for people for 3 to 5 days at a time.

Mr Speaker, when I was shadow minister for health, I spoke many times about the lack of psychiatric facilities in the Northern Territory. The problem affects my electorate to some degree. It is a major problem in a couple of my communities. Periodically, individuals there cause enormous problems. The reaction of officers of the department has sometimes been that it is no good talking about sending them away to institutions because the people always want them to come back after a while. That is true, but that analysis of the problem represents a lack of understanding of what the people see as a necessary facility: a respite area where people can simply have a break.

I have talked to health professionals who have worked for a number of years in this field in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. They have told me that nowhere else in Australia have they seen the level of commitment and support provided by families and friends to people in this situation than they have seen in the Northern Territory, and that is to the credit of the people involved. But there is the straw that breaks the camel's back, and we must give some relief to the families involved. I know a family which faced this task for years. Eventually, it became too much and the family broke up as the result of a violent confrontation which is still before the courts. It was most unfortunate and stemmed from the fact that the family had looked after the wife's brother year after year, without respite. If some person or body had offered to take that person for a couple of weeks or a month, to give the relatives a break so that they could get on with their own lives, and then returned him to the family and assisted them to find a way to live together, I think that family would still be together.

I wish to raise concerns in relation to the draft environmental impact statement on the dangerous goods storage facility north of Alice Springs. Many criticisms have been made of this statement. One is that it does not contain a detailed account or inventory of any kind of the waste which has to be stored. There is no description of the specific chemical wastes that are to be stored nor of the quantity of such wastes. It says nothing specific about the wastes to be disposed of, merely that there is to be waste disposal. Again, it does not refer to the nature, quantity nor the rate of accumulation of wastes in the facility either for long-term storage or disposal.

Mr Speaker, there are some glaring inadequacies in the report. Virtually no consideration has been given to the possibility of minimising wastes or recycling them to minimise the need for a waste storage dump. I recall seeing in a paper from America recently that, through genetic engineering, they have developed a form of microbe which can dispose of the most intractable waste, for example, PVC. Some wastes that have presented enormous problems can be

tackled now through genetic engineering of microbes. So far, in spite of all the talk about hi-tech, we seem to be going by the old route of simple burning.

There is very little in the report on site selection or how the decision was taken that that particular place should be chosen for the waste disposal facility. There are no details of the various quantities which are to be moved to the site. Very little consideration seems to have been given to the fact that moving what would appear to be the major amount of waste from Darwin to Alice Springs involves a long road journey which, in itself, is the most dangerous aspect of the whole operation. If the majority of wastes accumulate in Darwin, it would seem more appropriate to dispose of them as close to Darwin as possible rather than transport them to Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, another point is that no test bores were taken on the site itself to establish the specific geological and hydrological conditions on that site. Further, whilst the statement talked of buildings and constructions, no method was indicated by which to determine how safe any building or method of construction would be when no list or inventory of wastes was included in the report.

I am concerned that, under our legislation, it would appear that in replying to concerns that have been raised by various groups about the dangerous goods facility, it is not necessary for the department actually to look at each one and give a rebuttal. It would be possible for the department to give a general rebuttal and say that it had examined all the submissions that were received and rejected them without giving any specific explanations. This is the first environmental impact statement that the Northern Territory government has undertaken and I hope that it will get it right the first time and set a standard in which people may have some confidence.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I have taken some interest of late in suggestions put forward by the opposition that the gas pipeline proposal was a Labor initiative that the CLP picked up. I thought I would look into the debate where allegedly this proposal arose. It took place in 1980 and the Leader of the Opposition was Mr Isaacs whose demise, at that time, was not far off. He made quite a long speech on energy sources for the Northern Territory and planning for future electricity supplies for Darwin in particular. Several fuel options for electricity were discussed and, in relation to coal, which the government felt was the only viable option at that time, he made a couple of amazing statements. He acknowledged that we did not have sufficient coal in the Territory to run a powerhouse, and obviously the government agreed. He said: 'We will have to go to the east coast', and, indeed, we would have had to. He said: 'We would be competing with a few people for the supply of coal from the east coast. In just the last couple of weeks there was a coal contract signed with the Japanese Mitsubishi company for a mere \$700m. We will find that there will be sufficient coal to supply our export market, and not very much at all for the Territory'.

In 1980, the Leader of the Opposition said that one strong reason why we could not have a coal-powered station was that we would have great difficulty in securing supplies of coal. He said that, even though we live in a country that is acknowledged to have 400 years of coal available. I learnt that when I went to school. A couple of times in his speech, he mentioned the minister at that time - it may have been Mr Tuxworth who was Minister for Mines and Energy then. Jon Isaacs said: 'There is an inference that perhaps we ought to be turning to natural gas because natural gas has a number of advantages'. Indeed, Mr Tuxworth had canvassed the options for powering a powerhouse by

that means. We knew the Territory had reserves of gas but it was not believed by government and government's advisers that it was anywhere near viable. Obviously, Mr Isaacs had had it suggested to him that gas was a possible option, and he liked that option. He thought it was good and he believed that the Territory had reserves.

However, at the end of his speech, he said that we should have gas from the Joseph Bonaparte field, not from central Australia. He was not referring to the pipeline which is being built now, and which is purported to be an ALP proposal that we have picked up. I recall the public debates on it at that time, as other honourable members may. The Leader of the Opposition proposed exploration activity for gas reserves. In particular, he mentioned the Petrel field. Gulf Aquitaine was out there and had drilled some holes and found some gas. It was very expensive, but there was a proposal that the Territory government should buy into that program to secure some resources for future Territorians. That was a reasonable idea, but the government rejected that proposal.

Finally, Mr Isaacs said: 'I believe that natural gas, with its various uses of electricity generation, reticulation, conversion possibilities etc is the answer. We are sitting in an area where we can take great advantage of our natural gas reserves and I do not know why it is that the government does not involve itself to a greater extent'. He was implying that the government should involve itself to the extent of buying into the gas field. Thank goodness, we did not because it would have been a very expensive exercise to drill the next well. Petrel No 5 is expected to cost \$25m to drill and test and, of course, we all know that today the costings by Aquitaine to develop Petrel, and these have been done quite finely, indicate that the capital costs of developing the field are so great that it will take an export market of a minimum of 1 million tonnes of LNG a year to make development viable, and it can supply up to 2 million tonnes of LNG a year. Feeding the Northern Territory's requirements would be petty cash in terms of that sort of production. Had we relied on Mr Isaacs' view, set aside planning the powerhouse on coal at the time, and decided to wait until Petrel was proved up and a pipeline run ashore, we would be in big trouble. In 6 months or a year, we would be dining by candlelight.

Lately, we have heard a great deal about the gas pipeline being the ALP's idea. The difference is that the ALP intended to run it to the west and we have run it south. As recently as 12 May, the Leader of the Opposition said on a talkback radio program: 'Many of the proposals that we have put forward have been adopted by the government. The gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin was one of those'.

In 1984, the then federal member, Mr John Reeves, who did not hold quite the same view said: 'The federal government may have to review its commitment to Darwin's Channel Island Power-station if the Territory goes ahead with proposals to fire the powerhouse with natural gas'. We were being threatened by Mr Reeves that the proposal to use gas was not a good one. He said: 'The proposition to gas fire the Channel Island Power-station has raised a hornet's nest'. I guess he meant in Canberra. 'The Territory government looked at the gas-fired proposition for the Channel Island power project. It found it was too costly and too impractical and those circumstances have not changed'. In April 1984 Mr Reeves said that gas was too costly and too impractical. He went on to say, and I quote from this transcript: 'It just shows an amazing lack of planning'. He did not say it was an ALP initiative picked up by the government. He was saying that the government was insane for choosing gas.

More important was an item on the evening news, on ABD6, on 16 April 1984, from which I quote: 'Mr Collins today attacked what he described as the government's dramatic change of plans on the source of power for Darwin's Channel Island Power-station. He told Mike Dalton the natural gas option was damned by NTEC's own report'. The item quoted Mr Collins: 'They are now talking about constructing a pipeline from Palm Valley to Darwin. Now let me assure you that the information I have got from the gas industry itself is that, apart from being a ludicrous proposal in any case, if they get the gas at the end of the pipeline for nothing, which of course is not going to happen, but if they get it at no cost, it will still not justify the expense of this proposal'. That is not really supporting the ALP line. He continued: 'It is an absolutely lunatic proposal the government is putting up, and I cannot understand the justification for it'. Is this the proposal the government stole from Labor? The interviewer said: 'Surely this is just a review though. If it is not feasible, it will not go ahead'. Mr Collins replied: 'Why raise it? You are talking about constructing a pipeline that is going to cost as much as the power-station or in the vicinity of as much as the power-station - another \$500m for the pipeline'. His figures were a bit astray, but he asked, 'Why raise it?' He described it as an 'absolutely lunatic proposal'. He did not say that the government should take another look at gas because Labor mentioned it back in 1980. He did not say that.

Unfortunately for the Leader of the Opposition, it is often a very revealing experience to look at Hansard from time to time to see what really was said. I would hope that members look at Hansard occasionally when the Leader of the Opposition starts making claims about the past, to see what actually was said. He can be so wrong that it is not funny.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to pay tribute tonight to Ida Muriel Brown who died on 14 June 1986. Ida has been fondly described as a true Territorian.

Ida Brown was born in Deniliquin NSW in March 1926. She married Burge Dawson Brown. They had 8 children and 17 grandchildren. They also fostered many Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children. In 1949, the Brown family moved to the Northern Territory. They lived at Murray Downs Station near Ali Curung for 12 years. There were about 450 Aboriginal people living on the station. Ida Brown was among the first to begin teaching these people and that led to the movement to establish schools on pastoral properties. Both Ida and her husband were also heavily involved with medical research into a number of diseases such as poliomyelitis, encephalitis and trachoma which were prevalent among Aboriginal people at the time.

She was an accomplished equestrian and one of the few lady jockeys competing in races in the Alice Springs area. On several occasions, she was the sole supervisor of Aboriginal stockmen in cattle droves over the Queensland border.

There was never a dull moment in the Brown household. On one occasion, when they were living in central Australia, Burge noticed a turkey gobbler which was looking ill. He remarked that the trouble was that the gobbler had sand in its crop. To show his wife what he was talking about, he said: 'Grab that turkey, Ida'. It was fairly big, and she held it with some difficulty. Burge opened his pocket-knife, cut the turkey's crop, put his hand in, and pulled out a handful of sand. With that, the old gobbler gurgled and flopped down dead. Burge turned to his wife and said: 'Now look what you've done, Ida. You've choked the blooming turkey'. As I said, there was never a dull moment at the Brown's place, and Ida Brown in her steady way helped to keep it that way and to create a close, happy and loving family group.

Ida's interests were wide. She was a founding member of the CWA in Alice Springs, and was involved in the early days of the establishment of the Flynn Memorial Church. In 1961, the Brown family moved to Banyan Farm near Batchelor where they grew bananas and pawpaws. At the same time, they prospected for minerals, which led to the establishment of the iron ore mine at Mt Bundy. They moved to Darwin River in 1962, and lived there until 1967. During that period, Ida helped her husband train RAAF personnel in bush survival techniques. When they moved to Darwin in 1967, Ida and Burge continued to pursue a variety of interests. They prospected in Arnhem Land, shot buffalo, were involved in agriculture and studies on geese and buffalo and, at one stage, they operated a pet shop. Ida Brown, in her Nissan 4-wheel-drive, was one of the first to commence tourist safaris into Arnhem Land. In 1971, Ida and her family left Darwin for Bynoe Harbour. As well as being involved in sand and gravel mining with Burge, Ida participated in the north-west fishing study, which included a study on barramundi.

I regret that I was unable to attend Ida Brown's funeral yesterday. The affection in which she was and will always be held was evidenced by the large number who gathered to pay their respects.

I also wish to speak, in tonight's adjournment debate, about a problem that exists on the Whatley property, Prague, at Tortilla Flats. The problem has existed since World War II, and the Whatleys were unaware of it when they purchased the property. Only the Department of Defence was aware of it to its full extent. The problem is that there is live ordinance or unexploded bombs in areas required by the Whatleys for farming purposes. For the information of members, the Whatleys are one of the larger rice growers in the area, and they also run cattle. During World War II, the land adjacent to their property was used as a bombing range. For whatever reason, the aim of the bomber crews was less than satisfactory. Consequently, it is not uncommon for the Whatleys to plough up live ordinance on their property or stumble over it while mustering. The Department of Defence is aware of the problem but, unfortunately, has not done much about it.

Following initial approaches by the Whatleys, signs were erected indicating that there was danger from live bombs. However, continuing correspondence over a long period has resulted in no further action apart from the occasional repainting of those signs. Mr and Mrs Whatley have indicated to the Department of Defence that they require the land for rice growing and other purposes but, apart from a sympathetic word here and there in writing, they have had little action. I refer to a couple of letters which give some idea of the extent of the problem. The first is dated February 1985 and is from Group Captain N.J. Russell of the Department of Defence:

Dear Mr and Mrs Whatley,

I refer to your letter concerning the presence of unexploded ordinance on your property. The letter was forwarded by the officer commanding RAAF Base Darwin to the Department of Defence Air Force Office for attention. I am advised that RAAF and Army personnel conducted a survey of your property and destroyed a number of items found during that survey.

You requested advice on the safety of cultivating additional areas on your property. You will appreciate that records relevant to the wartime use of the property by the Department of Defence are not immediately available and, if in existence, will be held in archives. Consequently, I am not in a position at this time to give a qualified

answer to your query. .... For safety reasons, I ask that you continue to report to the nearest police station or the officer commanding RAAF Base Darwin, any explosive ordinance you discover on the property. You are assured that action will be taken to remove and dispose of the offending item. I would also urge that you do not interfere with any such item. The question of how to resolve the contamination problems which you have drawn attention to is being addressed within the department, and I will come back to that contamination problem later.

In March 1985, the Whatleys wrote as follows to Group Captain Russell:

We have outlined, on a map provided, areas that we would like checked, cleared and certified safe for cultivation. Those in red colour are areas that we would like cleared immediately, so that we can commence cultivating the area in October 1985. We would estimate the area to be approximately 70 ha. Other areas coloured in blue, we would like to bring into production in 1986. Remaining areas will be progressively developed in the future. Ultimately, the entire property must be developed with improved pastures and cropping, to realise the potential we visualised the property had when we purchased it in 1978. The area marked in yellow is our current hay paddock. Although it has been cultivated for the past 20 years, we are still finding shells etc on it, and this year it must be ploughed to a depth of 8 inches, with the resultant danger of live ordinance being disturbed.

The letter continues, and describes the contamination of a place called Oven Hill. In its final paragraph, it says:

We would like to stress that when we purchased the property we were unaware of the danger of unexploded ordinance over the whole property. We are becoming increasingly distressed at the possibility of our family being maimed or killed while carrying out normal farming activities. We must also stress that we must develop rice areas on Prague in order to realise the full potential of our property.

I first brought this problem to the notice of the then Chief Minister and the then Minister for Primary Production and Lands in December 1985. I had been aware of it for some time, but I had been asked by the Whatleys not to raise it because they were keen to get action from the Department of Defence before seeking help elsewhere. The present Chief Minister wrote to the Hon Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence, in March this year and, so far as I am aware, there has been no reply to that letter.

I now turn to the problem of contamination. There is a place on the property called Oven Hill. It is aptly named because it has a very large oven built into it. It is thought that the oven may have been used to destroy noxious chemicals. We have heard the member for Stuart express his concern this evening about the destruction of noxious chemicals by burning. Unfortunately, no one seems to be in a position to confirm or deny this belief. It is undoubtedly the responsibility of the Department of Defence to rehabilitate that area affected by bombs or possibly by chemical contamination. Unfortunately, there appears to be a reluctance on the part of the Department of Defence to fulfil that duty. I intend to refer the correspondence to our federal representatives. I hope that that may bring some action.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, substance abuse is nothing new to the Northern Territory. The roadsides of our history are littered with stories of the broken souls of those pioneers who became alcoholics and opium addicts. In more recent times, we have also had our share of those addicted to drugs like marijuana and heroin and, of course, alcoholism continues. So we certainly know quite a bit about substance abuse. There is nothing unique to the Territory about this. It certainly happens elsewhere. What is different, however, is that the European has passed on some of his unfortunate habits to the Aboriginal people who, as a race, appear to have greater difficulty coping with these substances than does the European.

In recent years, efforts have been made to address this problem and we have seen dry communities established at the request of local people and educational programs put in place. In part, these have redressed the problems and much credit must go to the NT Drug and Alcohol Bureau which has done considerable work in this area in conjunction with the Liquor Commission and Aboriginal community leaders who also recognise the effect that this abuse is having on their communities. More than anyone else, the Aboriginal leaders have sought to eliminate it. But, we have not yet won the alcohol battle. However, I believe that, in time, the battle will be won.

Today, we face the problem of the abuse of another substance in Aboriginal communities. Although it does not have the proven detrimental effects on health that alcohol has, it is just as damaging to the welfare of Aboriginal people in the Arnhem Land region. It is a substance which, if not identified for what it really is and programs implemented to ensure its reasonable consumption, will do as much damage to Aboriginal culture as alcohol has in the past. I refer to kava. I first voiced my concerns about kava in this place last year and, apart from the Midweek Territorian, may it rest in peace, which sought to ridicule my comments, the other media ignored them. There were also those who accused me of overreaction. Time will tell.

Since that time, I have been approached by a number of people from a whole range of backgrounds expressing their concerns and offering their support. It was interesting to note that the majority of these were Aboriginal people themselves or people who worked in the field of Aboriginal rehabilitation. Some were from the church. There is a real concern amongst many responsible people, both Aboriginal and European, that the abuse of kava offers a greater threat to Aboriginal culture than alcohol ever did. Before I go on, Mr Speaker, let me spend a few moments describing the origin of kava and the history of its introduction into Arnhem Land.

Kava is prepared from the plant *Piper methysticum* forst, a tropical shrub of the pepper family. The generic name 'Piper' comes from the Latin for pepper and the species name 'methysticum' from the Greek word meaning intoxicant. The plant is thus known as the intoxicating pepper. The kava plant grows naturally and widely throughout Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. It has been cultivated for domestic use and, more recently, for export. It is widely consumed throughout these areas in a ceremonial manner. However, its use is limited to the adult men. Sunset is kava time. The men gather daily at the kava hut which is the traditional meeting place for them. Strict rules govern its consumption. For example, women and children are excluded. The quantity of kava consumed and behaviour following its consumption is controlled by tribal law and, under such conditions, few problems have been identified. Some changes have occurred in recent times due to the urbanisation of people in the larger towns throughout the South Pacific. It would still be true to say, though, that by far the majority of kava is still consumed in the traditional manner and therefore there are very few problems.

Whilst there is little evidence of widespread detrimental effects to the health of those drinking kava in the traditional manner, no such evidence is available for the consumption of kava in its refined powder form, particularly when uncontrolled overdosing occurs, such as is happening in Arnhem Land. Let me quote from the 1985 report of Miss Kerry Alexander of the NT Drug and Alcohol Bureau. Miss Alexander's report is titled 'Kava in the North'. She says at page 5:

It should be noted that no pharmacological studies have been published which assess the effects of the widely-used powdered Kava preparation on humans.

This plant is not a native of Australia and, to the best of my knowledge, it is still not grown here. All kava being consumed in Arnhem Land is imported in a refined powder form and originates from Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. There are varying opinions as to when kava was first introduced into Arnhem Land. However, according to Miss Alexander's report, it was introduced to the Yirrkala community early in 1982 following a visit to Fiji in late 1981 by a group of community leaders led by a Fijian Uniting Church community worker. Members of this group returned to Yirrkala and brought a small amount of kava with them. Subsequently, they arranged follow-up supplies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that was the position in early 1982. However, I am advised that, in the past 4 years, kava consumption has spread to 8 communities across northern Arnhem Land involving an adult population of approximately 2000 people. Although I have heard several estimates of consumption, it is currently between 1500 kg and 2000 kg per month. That is a lot of kava.

At this point, I would like to advise members that the importation of kava and its consumption are completely legal. According to the Customs Act, it is classified as a food/beverage. Because it is imported from countries classified as 'third world developing', it does not attract any import duty.

My concern is for the physical, social and economic effects of this substance on Aboriginal communities. There is considerable evidence of massive overdosing by consumers and exploitation and excessive profiteering by importers, distributors and retailers. As I have pointed out, only 8 communities throughout northern Arnhem Land have taken to drinking this substance in the last 4 years. In another 10 years, it will have spread right throughout the Northern Territory and the problem will be horrendous.

When kava was first introduced, most of the product was imported into Sydney by 3 people, 2 of whom were Tongans who lived in that city. One of those is a Mr Sionne Tupouniva who address is the town of Nukualofa in Tonga. He visits the Northern Territory regularly to promote the sale of this product and to collect his ill-gotten gains. More recently, another company called A & P Imports has been established in Adelaide by Mr Kinloch who, I understand, was the headmaster of Milngimbi school and who is currently on leave of absence from his duties. His agent in Milngimbi is a Mr Lyle Jenke, who is married to an Aboriginal teaching aide and who, I understand, lives in a Department of Education house. I understand also that he uses that house as his point of distribution for kava in the community.

It is obvious to me that Mr Kinloch realised how much money was to be made out of kava. He took leave of absence and set about capitalising on that knowledge, and he is still doing so. A & P Imports has 2 other distributors



in Darwin. One lives in Fannie Bay and the other in Moil. I am advised that, so far this year, 5 t of kava has passed through the TNT Darwin Express warehouse at Berrimah. There are 2 other companies in Sydney and 1 in Canberra importing kava.

There is a considerable and increasing volume of kava finding its way into Arnhem Land and it is all being consumed by 2000 people. Recently, I saw a letter written by A & P Imports to an Aboriginal community council offering to supply kava. I am pleased to advise that this community replied:

We would like to tell you that your letter did not make us very happy. Under no circumstances does this council want to see kava introduced to this community. Therefore, we ask that, if you are here on any other business, that you never discuss the product with us. Of course, we feel very strongly about the effects that this product is having on other communities. We have enough problems without introducing more.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would also like to quote from a letter from the secretary of the Milingimbi community to the Director of Health in Darwin.

Most of our families are worried about our people drinking kava, the Fijian drink. I would like you to investigate what it does to the people. I have seen the families sometimes walking in a dreamworld. Sometimes they do not get enough sleep. They drink all night with little sleep. When they are worn out, they sleep in for hours, all in the day time and that is not a normal thing. They sometimes eat food and sometimes they don't even care about food. They just sit and drink. I have been on holidays. When I came back, it was just like watching skeletons walking around. I have begged my brother to stop drinking kava as it destroys their minds and bodies. I have spoken to our senior nurse, in charge of our hospital, about what to do. And just about all women have discussed it in family circles that it is a bad thing for our men. I told them we would have to investigate it first through the health authorities so that you would advise us what it does to our people. We would be happy if you would let us know as soon as an analysis is made because it also makes them blind and skin starts to peel off.

The concern regarding the growing abuse of kava has been increasing for some time and, in fact, 2 reports were brought down during 1985. The first is a report on kava use in Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land prepared by David Russell for the Uniting Church. The second is entitled 'Kava in the North - A Study of Kava in Arnhem Land and Aboriginal Communities' written by Miss Kerry Alexander. Both of these are comprehensive and provide great detail. They identify some of the negative effects as well as the few positive effects.

I was pleased to learn from the Minister for Health today that a further study of substance abuse is under way in Top End communities and should be concluded by December, with an interim report being brought down in September. I was pleased to learn that this study has a wider scope than previous studies undertaken and will consider the effects of kava on the social and economic life of these communities.

It is essential that the study examine health, community welfare, education and transport and works aspects. Advice is that there is massive overdosing by way of extended binges in communities where kava is

available - those in northern Arnhem Land - and that other substances are being added to the kava bowl; for example, aspirin, other analgesics, methylated spirits and alcohol. I am further advised that women and children of all ages are also involved in this consumption in an uncontrolled manner.

The results of this are still evolving. However, there are some of which I am aware. There has been discolouration and scaling of the skin and a concern by health authorities regarding the connection between excessive kava consumption and cardiovascular disease. There has been considerable increase in absenteeism from work and school to the point where Transport and Works projects, contracted to community councils, are falling well behind schedule because most men are not presenting themselves for work because they are bombed out on kava. There has been a breakdown in the community structure which is based on the older men who are the traditional tribal elders because they are losing control of the activities of the younger men due to the constant substance abuse.

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, to take up a point raised by the member for Jingili, the effect of kava consumption on driving ability is of concern. If people who are intoxicated by kava are driving motor vehicles, that would add yet another problem which would be of some considerable concern.

Yesterday, we had a matter of public importance debate relating to Turner House in my electorate. Our rule of allowing only 2 people to speak in such debates prevented me from giving my thoughts which briefly are these. I regret that Turner House was destroyed. However, if a person owns a property, it is a bit grim if he does not have the right to do with that property as he wishes. If the community wanted the property saved, it would have had to pay full compensation.

The member for MacDonnell has an office very close to that site but I wonder whether he is aware of something that is happening in his own electorate that is of far more importance than the fate of Turner House. I refer to the buildings at Hermannsburg Mission, which was established by the German Lutheran community in 1877, well over 100 years ago. The mission has been handed over to the Aboriginal people. It is a matter of concern that considerable damage has been done to the buildings. I was pleased to hear that the church, a delightful building, has not been damaged but many of the others have been. I intended to ask a question about this of the Minister for Community Development this morning but time did not permit me to do so.

I am told that the National Trust and other bodies are prepared, if necessary, to raise \$1.5m to restore and preserve the buildings. I hope the member for MacDonnell will take interest in those buildings in his electorate which are far more interesting and far more important historically than Turner House.

Last week, ABC television showed the launching of an airship in Sydney by Airship Industries in which Alan Bond is the major shareholder. I have been talking in the Assembly for some time about airships. I first came across them in 1982 on a visit to the United Kingdom. I remember being howled down by my own Chief Minister when I asked a question about them.

It was delightful to hear that, among other uses, Alan Bond was promoting its use primarily as a platform for radar for defence purposes and for coastal

surveillance. I believe it could play a very important supporting role for Jindalee-type radar. The radar we have at Darwin Airport is line of sight. All an enemy aircraft would have to do is drop down to sea level as it comes over the horizon and it would be goodbye to our air force. If the altitude of the radar could be increased, it would give much greater warning of incoming aircraft. I am delighted that Bond is pushing that line. When I learned that Alan Bond was involved with the airship, I contacted his office in Perth and pushed that particular angle. It is satisfying to me to learn that the company realises the airship's potential as a radar platform besides its many other fascinating uses.

This morning, in the debate on the Dibb Report, there was reference to Cam Ranh Bay as a possible strategic point for an attack on Australia. The Russians have a huge fleet and airfield there. They have bombers stationed there that are capable of reaching any city within Australia. When we look at Vanuatu where the Australian government has spent \$10m ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member that he must not revive an earlier debate.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Australia has spent some \$10m and has offered to build an airfield in Vanuatu. I hope that it does not become a base for backfire bombers. At this stage, a few Russian fishing vessels are allowed to fish in those waters. I know people from Vanuatu who are quite concerned at the Marxist leanings of their government.

The last matter I would like to raise is the Stott Terrace-Todd Street intersection which was the scene of a horrendous accident recently in which 2 young children were killed. There is a call to install stop lights; I had many phone calls over the matter. A suggestion from one of my constituents was put into effect by the Department of Transport and Works. Mr Ron Hawkins rang me and said it might help at that intersection if the word 'Stop' were painted on the road to add to the warning provided by the give-way signs. We have heard that these signs have now been replaced by stop signs, and areas have been cleared of obscuring vegetation. However, all my inquiries into the accident indicated that the vehicle had actually stopped. It had not inadvertently gone through the give-way sign. As I understand it, the vehicle stopped first, then proceeded, having misjudged the speed of the another vehicle which had the right-of-way. I think that it was not so much a matter of not seeing the signs but rather a case of bad driving. I may be corrected on this, but I understand that the vehicle had been driven for a long long time, and the driver may well have been tired.

People in Darwin have told me that many accidents occur at traffic lights. When lights were erected in Alice Springs, there was a spate of accidents. My point is that there is no substitute for good driving practice and that includes exercising caution and not driving when tired.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to raise 3 issues.

Firstly, I wish to recognise a long-term resident of Darwin who has been a surveyor in the Northern Territory for nearly 25 years. I refer to Earl James of Fannie Bay who owns the surveying company of Earl James and Associates. Mr James is currently attending an international conference in Toronto, Canada. The Federation Internationale des Geometres, which is the international federation of surveyors, has recently honoured Mr James, and I would like to place that on record here tonight. Mr James has been surveying in the Northern Territory, in public and private practice, for nearly 25 years

and has served this industry particularly well. He was the Northern Territory President of the Institute of Surveyors in 1972, and holds that office again this year. He was the federal President of the Australian Institute of Surveyors in 1978 and 1979 and, at the world conference last week, he was voted world vice-president. Judging by the dates, being elected in the Federation Internationale des Geometres is just like winning the Olympics. Earl has been elected for the period 1988 to 1992. Then he will automatically become world president from 1992 to 1996. Conference venues are decided 4 years in advance, and Earl went to the Toronto conference attempting to win the opportunity to host the world conference outside Europe for only the second time in nearly 100 years. He has been successful. The 1994 conference will be in Melbourne. Earl will be the host world president during that world council. I think it is a singular honour for a Territorian, and certainly a great honour for Earl James. I wish him well.

The second matter I would like to raise this evening is more serious. It concerns bicentennial funding. I was rather distressed last week to read in the newspapers that the Bicentennial Authority had seen fit to donate \$2.5m to CAAMA, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, to operate a television service in central Australia. I have no quarrel with CAAMA. I have said many times that I believe its radio service in central Australia is excellent. Nor do I have a problem with CAAMA operating a television service. However, I do have a quarrel with the Bicentennial Authority giving \$2.5m to an organisation to run a commercial operation. This is really not why I am speaking about the bicentennial tonight. However, I do want to put it in the context of another proposal which was put to the Bicentennial Authority.

Mr Peter Spillett, in conjunction with the Northern Territory Museums and Art Galleries, made a submission to the Bicentennial Authority for a re-enactment of a Macassan prahu voyage from the Indonesian Islands to the north coast of Australia. Mr Spillett, as some of honourable members may be aware, has served the Northern Territory in public life over a long period. Since his retirement, he has involved himself in research, writing several historical papers and a book called 'Forsaken Settlement', the story of the settlement at Port Essington. Although it was reasonably well known that the Macassans visited the Northern Territory, Peter Spillett's research has indicated that the extent of these visitations was greater than previously imagined.

I also have a great interest in history, particularly maritime history, and I have taken the opportunity over the last 4 or 5 months to read the original journals of several of the surveyors and navigators who worked in north Australian waters, particularly the 2 volumes by Stokes entitled 'Voyages in Australia'. These cover survey journeys of the 'Beagle', which is well identified in this city, under the commanders Wickham and Stokes. They worked intermittently in this area for about 8 or 9 years, and Stokes makes a number of references to Macassans visiting our shore for trepanging, and to the interaction between the Northern Territory Aboriginal tribes on the north coast and people from the Indonesian islands, particularly Timor, the Arus, the Tananbars and, further to the west, the Bandas and Macassar.

Spillett identifies the Macassan ties as the source of most of the trade attempted with Australia's northern shores, which concentrated on the collection of beche-de-mer or trepang. His \$6000 feasibility study, undertaken last year and presented this year, showed that not only did the Macassans make regular visits, but there was intermarriage and interaction between the 2 groups, particularly the Bugis people from the south-west corner of Sulawesi in the Macassan region, and Aboriginal people from Yirrkala and

Groote Eylandt. Spillett's feasibility study proposed building a traditional prahu, using the old methods. He sought out old men in Sulawesi who still knew the old methods, and proposed that they build a vessel and sail it in the traditional manner to the north coast of Australia. It was to be a 1988 bicentennial project, similar to the re-enactment of Cook's voyage to the south-eastern shores of Australia which led to white settlement in the Botany Bay region. It would have been a significant project for the Northern Territory and, in my opinion, it would have been one of the most significant bicentennial projects involving both whites and Aborigines.

Unfortunately, the response from the Bicentennial Authority to the request for \$80 000 funding was: 'We are sorry. It is an overseas project, and does not fit within the guidelines. However, it has some community involvement'. It has been rejected. I think that is a crying shame because Mr Spillett's project exemplifies peaceful interaction between an outside race and the Aboriginal people, more so than any other bicentennial project of which I am aware. I am not letting the matter rest. I have been in touch with the Chief Minister and have asked him to write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I am taking the matter up with researchers at the ANU in Canberra and the Department of Foreign Affairs because I believe in the project, and I believe it should be funded.

The third matter I would like to touch on briefly tonight concerns the ongoing problem with fires in my electorate. Some members have probably seen recent reports concerning fires on the Kulaluk land. Talks have been going on for a considerable number of years with Kulaluk's owners to reach agreement to allow the Conservation Commission to provide fire breaks and tidy up the land in preparation for planting of trees and reforestation. I would like to place on record my thanks to the 3 Ministers for Conservation we have had during the last 7 weeks. Each tried to assist, and the current Minister for Conservation last week approved funding to implement this project. I would also like to place on record the cooperation I received recently from the Gwalwa Daraniki Association and its adviser, Richard Bauer.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I would like to correct a couple of inaccuracies in the Leader of the Opposition's remarks to the Assembly this morning.

For some time now, he has been claiming that the TAB was a Labor Party initiative. For his benefit, I will read into Hansard some extracts from the debates of Tuesday 6 December 1977, at page 401. Ms June D'Rozario, then the relevant opposition spokesperson, was speaking on the Neilson Report and I quote: 'We would like, however, to place on the public record our sustained opposition to the introduction of TAB in the Northern Territory'. Another Labor initiative? That was the first extract I found in Hansard.

From the same date, at page 407, I quote from the then Opposition Leader, Mr Isaacs: 'The Labor Party has taken a view quite consistently throughout the last 6 months that, so far as the TAB is concerned, we oppose it'. Mr Isaacs continued: 'We have opposed the introduction of TAB and I am delighted to hear that the majority party is at last falling into line with that view'. If that was what happened, all the Labor opposition did was hoodwink the government and delay the introduction of TAB by 7 or 8 years. The opposition apparently convinced us to thwart a CLP initiative, and now it is claiming it as one of its own! I just thought, in view of debate earlier today, that the lie should be given to those inaccuracies.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, it is getting late at night and I know that it is sometimes difficult to collect one's thoughts at this time of the evening, however, I wish to cover some points raised by the member for MacDonnell last night in the adjournment debate. They related to problems being experienced by Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants in the Territory. He also had some concerns about housing and the current numbers of Aboriginal teachers and teachers assistants.

The member for MacDonnell was quite scathing in his comments regarding problems of payment of Aboriginal teachers presently employed in Territory schools. These teachers and teaching assistants are paid in exactly the same way as other teachers employed by the Department of Education. However, as has been said in this Assembly before, there are problems associated with paying some Aboriginal teaching assistants because, unfortunately, that group has a very high level of absenteeism and, consequently, the hours vary from week to week. Aboriginal teaching assistants are paid when their time sheets are presented to the salaries section of the region in which they are working. The time sheets must be certified by the principal of the school and are then mailed into the regional offices where they are checked and the information fed into the department's computer system. This results in a lead time of 2 or 3 weeks.

I would like to make it quite clear that the government recognises that this method of payment causes problems and is seeking ways to rectify them. Solutions have been sought in the past but they have not been successful. I have had discussions recently with the Teachers Federation regarding this matter and I have asked the Secretary of the Department of Education to find a solution which will work. I hope to have a solution to this problem by next month.

It should be noted that very few employees would have this problem apart from part-time instructors. The existing level of absenteeism normally would not be tolerated. Obviously, we tolerate it in an attempt to provide employment for Aboriginal people in their own communities. However, the problem of absenteeism and varying hours means that the normal method of payment by an automatic cheque every fortnight cannot be used. We are looking for a system which will overcome the inequities in the present system.

The honourable member claimed there had been a 20% to 30% decrease in the number of Aboriginal teachers over the last 6 years.

Mr Bell: In bilingual schools.

Mr MANZIE: He said there were 128 Aboriginal teachers 6 years ago and 99 at present. I would like to present some statistics because the honourable member inferred that we were cutting down on Aboriginal teachers. In fact, the opposite is the case.

The number of assistant teachers has increased markedly since 1979. In 1979, there were 225 positions available but only some 200 people were employed in those positions and that fluctuated between 190 and 215. A total of 274 Aboriginal teaching assistants are employed presently in the Territory - an increase of 70 rather than the decrease the member was talking about. There are 26 qualified Aboriginal teachers now working in Territory schools. The government is working to increase this figure through various education programs.

A total of 72 students are undertaking the diploma of teaching in Aboriginal schools at Batchelor College, including 14 in their third and final year. In the past, there have been no more than 6 students graduating from the course each year and this year's figures are very encouraging. A further 15 students are enrolled in Associate Diploma of Adult Education which started in 1985. In other words, we have 87 students presently studying diploma courses at Batchelor College. In 1985, there were 49; in 1984, there were 30; and in 1983, there were 26. I have not seen any figures that indicate any decrease or even a static situation.

The Territory government is seeking to improve opportunities for Aboriginal teaching assistants through courses at Batchelor College. Teaching assistants can undertake the Remote Area Teacher Education program at Batchelor. It enables teaching assistants to study the first year of the associate diploma course over a period of 2 years while still working as assistant teachers in their communities. There are 42 people presently enrolled in the RATE course. There were 12 graduates of the course in 1985, 12 graduates in 1984 and 6 graduates in 1983.

Aboriginals from central Australia have considerable difficulty in studying courses at Batchelor because of the distance involved and the problem of being away from their families. This is a particular problem for older students. Hopefully, that problem can be alleviated by the establishment of an annexe of Batchelor College in Alice Springs which will enable Aboriginal students to study through the RATE program with supplementary short, intensive courses at that annexe.

It is also intended to extend the RATE program to cover the first 2 years of the teaching diploma to be studied part-time over 4 years. Obviously, these initiatives will increase considerably opportunities available to Aboriginals wishing to become teachers. Our efforts in this regard surpass the efforts of any government in Australia. We are increasing our involvement because it is common sense that Aboriginal teachers be involved in the teaching process, especially where English is a second language.. I believe we are the only government in Australia that has recognised the significance of this and is working actively towards improvement.

I know that the member for MacDonnell has concerns. Obviously, he sees problems in his electorate but it would be nice to have a bit of encouragement for what we are doing instead of being castigated by means of information and statistics that are inaccurate and which give an incorrect impression that we are going downhill. That is extremely disappointing because this program requires plenty of encouragement, plenty of money and plenty of Commonwealth assistance. Because of such comments from the member for MacDonnell and others, groups from all over Australia are writing letters to us complaining that our attitude is despicable and that we are abolishing and downgrading programs and not providing assistance for Aboriginal teachers. In other words, we are informed by interstate groups that we are irresponsible and that makes it far harder to obtain assistance from the Commonwealth and recognition for the job that people are doing. I hope that the honourable member will reflect on the effect of his negative views and assist the government to improve this program.

Mr Bell: I am in opposition.

Mr MANZIE: This is where it all goes wrong. The honourable member says he cannot because he is in opposition. Politics should not come into the education of children. We should concentrate on trying to do the best job we

can. I would certainly appreciate any assistance that the honourable member can give by talking to his federal colleagues and explaining to the people what the government is trying to do and the problems that are involved. Finance is the foremost problem but it has not prevented us from continuing to think and act positively.

The honourable member raised the subject of housing for Aboriginal teachers on remote communities. The honourable member pointed out the problems involved and the attitudes of the people on the settlements. One can understand the attitude of teachers who do not have accommodation. The Territory government presently services schools in 77 remote communities. Of these, 52 are on outstations. There are 300-odd outstation communities that do not have schools at present. There are 421 teachers employed in these schools.

The department has 206 houses or flats, 100 transportable units and 50 mobile homes for these teachers. Senator Susan Ryan, the federal Minister for Education, indicated last year that the federal government would not provide funding for housing for teachers at remote schools. Essentially, this means the federal government will pay for schools in remote communities but will not pay for the houses needed to attract teachers. Obviously, this has placed the Territory government in a situation where it must pay for that housing to be installed because, without housing, there will be no teachers and the Territory cannot afford to reject offers by the federal government to establish schools in remote areas.

It costs about \$100 000 to install a transportable unit on a remote community and between \$120 000 and \$150 000 to build a 2 or 3-bedroom house. The main cost factor relates to the remoteness of the communities. The Department of Education policy is to house only those people who are recruited from outside a community. In urban areas, we house only married people recruited interstate. Single teachers are given assistance for an initial period and are then expected to find their own accommodation. Local staff in remote communities, teaching assistants and teachers, are provided with housing only if a house is vacant and looks like remaining so for some time.

Unfortunately, if the government attempted to supply houses for its 274 teaching assistants, that would cost between \$32m and \$41m. Simply to provide transportable units, we would be looking at costs in excess of \$27m. It is not a satisfactory situation but, obviously, the member for MacDonnell will realise that expenditure of \$30m to \$40m to provide housing would require cuts in areas of the education budget that must have higher priority; for example, teacher training and the building of schools.

I am not saying this is a good thing, but it is a fact of life. I have spoken to the Teachers Federation about a number of these matters. I have asked FEPPi to present all the problems in the form of a submission which I intend to support. I have also asked to discuss this with the Teachers Federation and received notification that it will support a detailed submission from FEPPi to the federal government explaining the problems.

Mr Speaker, the problem is immense. The federal government has no idea or does not want to know about the costs involved in this vast area of the Territory. As the member for Stuart said last year, to house all people in the Territory to a satisfactory level would cost \$2000m.

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



Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to commence by thanking the Minister for Education for his comments. Obviously, he made some points that I agree with and some I do not agree with. However, I very much appreciate the trouble he has taken in responding. I had not appreciated that he perceived my comments in last night's adjournment debate as scathing. Certainly, I did not mean to be scathing with respect to the general difficulties of the financial constraints within which he has to operate. I appreciate that that is a problem. I could supply him with more information about the provision of adequate pay arrangements, which was his first point.

On the second point, about the numbers, I will pass on to him another set of statistics that may be of interest to him and his department. In that context, I point out that he took an overall figure of Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants. My recollection is that I mentioned specifically Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants in bilingual schools, and I had a set of figures in that regard. I will pass them to him in due course.

Mr Manzie: Student numbers too, at the start and finish.

Mr BELL: All right.

With respect to the housing issue, I appreciate that big dollars are involved in housing but I mentioned it yesterday to flag the reasonable expectations of people. It would not be very difficult to paint the housing of Aboriginal teachers in humpies and expatriate teachers in houses as discrimination. I am not alleging that of the minister or his government, or anything like that. I appreciate that there is a difficulty in extending scarce resources as far as possible. If, as a result of this debate the minister is aware of those aspirations, I feel that I have at least done my job in that regard.

The further matter I wish to raise is rather more serious. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall that during question time this morning, I asked the Deputy Chief Minister if he was aware of the circumstances under which Mr David Laughner was dismissed and he said that he was not. David Laughner was employed on a contract from Tasmania where he had had 10 years experience in the field of juvenile detention, and his deep experience was well respected. He was recruited in September 1985 with high recommendations from the people who interviewed him at the time and, for reasons that should not necessarily be the subject of public debate, he was dismissed from the department in March 1986, barely 6 months from the time of his recruitment.

I presume that both the present Minister for Community Development and his predecessor, now the Deputy Chief Minister, will read these comments and I will be able to obtain some information about that. I believe that he was dismissed in spite of the fact that his work was highly respected within the department and that essentially external, political pressure, if you like, was responsible for his dismissal. Quite clearly, the allegation I am making here is that the minister directed his public service head or his public service head believed that his minister sought the dismissal of this particular person and the action was carried out for that reason. I believe that the circumstances of Mr Laughner's dismissal merit investigation.

I do not raise this lightly. I appreciate that it is a serious matter; certainly it was a serious matter for the Territory taxpayer who had to pay considerable relocation expenses for an officer who came up here on a 2-year contract. He had to return to Tasmania and further relocation expenses had to be paid in that regard. If it was a greater burden than it ought to have been

on the Northern Territory taxpayer, it was an even a greater burden on Mr Laughher and his family because of the expenses associated with selling up accommodation in Tasmania and arrangements that had to be made for moving, not to mention the slur on his professional abilities that was implied by dismissal of that sort. I believe that merits some investigation, and I repeat that for the Minister for Community Development, the member for Wagaman, who has come in a little late for the comments I have been making.

There is a pattern in these issues, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no intention of rehearsing it here but, in March 1984, I described the other side of the coin when a high school principal was about to be transferred from his position. But, as the honourable member for Braitling will recall, I made certain comments about the circumstances under which the proposed transfer of that particular officer were not carried through because of a pattern of external political pressure that was applied to the then Minister for Education. I have no desire to raise that particular issue again. However, I do wish to place the circumstances of Mr Laughher in that context of an improper relationship - and that is not an allegation; I am not alleging improper relationships between the minister and his department - but I want some answers that demonstrate that the relationship has been proper.

On the basis of the evidence that has been provided to me by Mr Laughher, I am not satisfied that his dismissal was reasonable and that no impropriety was involved. I believe that some statement is necessary from the honourable minister because, quite clearly, in a small polity like that of the Northern Territory, it is very difficult. Because of the smallness of our population, friendships transcend all sorts of boundaries, and the distances usually maintained between elected ministers, public service heads, public service departments and their clients is very much blurred in the Northern Territory where clients and public servants can be immediate constituents almost. In the overall context of the development of good standards of public administration, the circumstances that I have mentioned this evening deserve some attention from both the current Minister for Community Development and his predecessor.

One further issue that I would like to comment on very quickly is a rumour about the freeholding of pastoral land. The Chief Minister mentioned it briefly yesterday. There was an item on After Eight this morning and it is a matter of some concern that the Chief Minister should be speculating about the possibility of freeholding pastoral land at this stage. You will no doubt recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Martin Report into pastoral land tenure, and you may or may not be aware of equally extensive inquiries in Western Australia where there was a land tenure survey last year into the Kimberley properties. There was also the Jennings Report of February 1985 into pastoral tenure. In New South Wales, there were the Western Lands Commission Reports which were prepared after the Martin Report had been tabled in this Assembly. There was also the Vickery Report into pastoral land tenure. None of those reports, including the Martin Report, suggested that the freeholding of pastoral land was appropriate. I find it rather curious that we have the Chief Minister speculating about that given that the Martin Report is a relatively recent document. I wonder what has changed between 1981 and 1986 that can possibly cause that to be ...

Mr Dondas: The effluxion of time.

Mr BELL The effluxion of time?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The Aborigines have freehold ...

Mr BELL: I am interested to hear the comment of the member for Koolpinyah. I was quite interested to find out whether there was some connection between this speculation about the freeholding of pastoral land and the government's attitude to Aboriginal land rights. I was very interested to hear the member for Koolpinyah raise that because, quite clearly, it is in the government's mind.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is in my mind.

Mr BELL: I would hate to see this go ahead without appropriate investigation.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak this evening about 4 reports that we have been given during these sittings. I would like to compliment the compilers of these reports on their economical style and presentation. I am referring to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and Consumer Affairs Commission Reports, the Financial Statements, and the Attorney-General's Report on the Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Trust and the Report of the Commission on Motor Vehicle Dealers. I am very pleased to see it because, for years, we have been presented with glossy publications that must have cost a packet and which nobody reads. I think about all the trees that had to be cut down to provide the paper.

At the outset, I would also like to add my words of condolence to those of the Minister for Conservation regarding the death of Mrs Ida Brown, the wife of Mr Burge Brown. I also knew her, although perhaps not as well as the minister. She was some lady, and I think the Northern Territory will be the worse for losing her. I would also like to offer my congratulations to Mr Earl James. Mr James also proposed a project to the Bicentennial Authority which, I believe, was not accepted for one reason or another. Being on the Darwin Bicentennial Authority Committee, I share the member for Ludmilla's view about \$2.5m being given to CAAMA for its media project in Alice Springs. Up here, we find that money is as scarce as hens' teeth and, if there is money required for any project in any town or centre, the people have to work like little beavers to raise funds.

All members know that we will soon be subjected to a census which is due to occur on 30 June. My comments reflect the views of many people in the community, especially those in the rural area. I will concede at the outset that a census is necessary from time to time, as a head count. In biblical times, at the time of Christ's birth in Bethlehem, the Roman governor decreed that a census be taken. Citizens had to return to the town of their birth in order to be counted. The word 'census', I believe, means 'a counting'. But, a counting of what? My information, obtained straight from the horse's mouth, the Office of the Government Statistician, says that a questionnaire will be given to the people of Australia. It will consist of about 40 questions. People who obtain their big kicks from telling other people their private and personal information must be really looking forward to this big occasion on 30 June. However, for those of us who prefer to keep our private business private, it is a time of self-questioning. Do we beat our breasts, rend our garments and reveal all? Or do we go against our private inclinations and once more welcome government poking and prying into our lives? Must we give in to the unnecessary interference in our private lives under threat of arrest by the federal police? I am not kidding. Far be it from me to tell people not to fill in these forms, but honourable members can gather from my remarks what I, and perhaps other people, might intend to do.

I must digress a little to tell a true story. It was a very unfortunate event which happened in 1984 to a lady who lived in my electorate. She had been visited regularly by a person gathering statistics for a federal agency or perhaps the federal statistics officer. Although she cooperated at first in the gathering of these statistics, she finally jacked up and said she did not want to be visited any more. The officer, who had been visiting her regularly, dobed her into the federal cops. I will not even dignify them by calling them police. They came out like a couple of wild west sheriffs arresting a hardened criminal. This lady was of some standing in the community. All she had done wrong was to try to protect her privacy and that of her family. She said she would not give them the information although they were welcome to come on to her premises, which were business premises, to ask other people questions. That was not good enough. These federal cops, in their wild west way, belittled and humiliated this woman. She was completely shamed by her treatment at their hands. They would not even let her wash and change her dress. They would not let her put on thongs or sandals; she was barefooted because she had been working in the garden. She was literally manhandled into the paddy wagon and taken to Darwin where she was arrested and subsequently charged. Just imagine what would happen if our Northern Territory police handled the public like that!

To return to the census questions, do not forget that there will be about 40 questions. I have no disagreement with some of the questions, but I query others. I regard one particular question as sexist. It is obvious this census form was compiled by males and not females. First of all, one has to put one's name on this form. I have been assured by the Australian Statistician, who has control of this operation, that this information will be treated as confidential and anonymous. If that is the case, why do I have to put my name on it? I do not object to disclosing my age or sex or the number of people present in our household on the night the census is taken. I am required to describe my relationship to the person who fills out the census form and my marital status. Such questions do not worry most people. Generally speaking, people's age and sex are fairly obvious.

One is then required to state where one was a year ago and where one was 5 years ago. Many of us have had a settled existence and can easily answer that, but many others cannot and I cannot understand the need for that information to be supplied. We are required to say whether we are Aboriginal or not. Mr Speaker, that smacks of apartheid when it appears in a census form. If only we could all live as Australians and colour did not come into any of our discussions, how much better life would be, but now this questionnaire asks us whether or not we are Aboriginal.

Subsequent questions require information about the origins of one's father and mother, the date on which one first married and the number of times one has been married. I come now to the sexist bit, Mr Speaker. Females are asked how many babies they have had, but that is not asked of the males. I think it would be much more useful if the question were put to the males because it might be possible then to trace the fathers of the children of many unmarried mothers and so reduce the welfare bill.

I do not have time to go through all the questions but I will mention a few more. People are asked to indicate whether they speak another language and how well they speak English. That could be hard to answer. They are asked when they left school and, for those who left school many years ago, the exact date might be hard to recall. Certain questions relate to a person's employment: the nature of one's occupation, the name of the employer, the industry involved and tasks performed. I think it is a great imposition on us to be required to supply such extensive detail.

The statistics officer told me that the practice is to engage people from one area to collect census information in another area. A person from Nakara might be used to collect in Wagaman, for example. I told the officer that I thought persons from the northern suburbs could experience some difficulty in finding their way around the rural area. Even if they are provided with maps and know how to read them, there are many places that are hard to locate. People from Nakara would never find their way about the Kangaroo Flats area or off the old Bynoe Road. Leonino Road is shown on the map as a through road, but it is not, and it is very difficult to find out how to get to it. I find it a little difficult to believe that the collectors will come from other areas but, if that is true, I think the census will not be as reliable as it is intended to be. That does not really worry me because I believe most of this information will be filed away for politicians to use to produce facts for adjournment debates to show that they know how many houses have been built since Cyclone Tracy and so on.

A ridiculous situation existed after Cyclone Tracy. Probably, Mr Speaker, you will object if I say these people ran around like blue-arsed flies so I will say they performed like hymenoptera with azure-tinted posteriors trying to gather information about us all. It was reasonably easy to circumvent them. Unless I understand the reason for something, I do not believe in contributing to it. Whenever one arrived at or left Darwin, one was presented with forms to fill in. I did not exactly encourage my children over this nor did they need any encouragement at the time. They were travelling to and from school. All 6 of them were in transit at times. They gave some interesting responses indicating that they were domiciled in the Aleutian Islands or Alsace Lorraine, and that they were octogenarians of polyglot parentage. This information was never queried which causes me to question the basis for collecting it. I wonder where the information obtained through the 1986 census will end up and I am concerned about the degree of confidentiality involved.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, each year at this time, we have an influx of unemployed people. Some come north genuinely searching for work and others come to escape the southern winter. There is nothing wrong with that. We all live in a lucky country where we are able to move freely from one state to another. However, I do have concerns about the activities and behaviour patterns of some of those people. I stress that I am referring to some of them, not all of them. I acknowledge that there are people genuinely looking for work, but some of our visitors just do not give a damn about this community or anything else and their behaviour is a disgrace. I am ashamed at times when I view some of the disgusting habits of these people. I see people urinating in the streets. They do not even bother nowadays to hop behind a tree or a bush. Anywhere at all is good enough: in the Mall, in the streets, in front of everybody. On top of that, they spit and cause disturbances. It really is a disgrace and I just wish that they would all go home. It is just not good enough. I do not know what we can really do about this. As I said, it happens at this time each year.

I am pleased to note that, there has been an increased police presence in the central business district of Darwin. I acknowledge that one cannot expect the police to remain on duty full-time to keep control over such people. I believe the only way to address this problem is to reintroduce police foot patrols in the central business district. The problem period is the dry season which is also our major tourist season. Our tourist industry is one that we are fostering. It is developing all the time and we have thousands of visitors coming to the Territory each year. We must make sure that, when these people return home, they refer to our city as the wonderful place it is.

We cannot allow the habits of a few people to give our city a bad name. I believe the only way to achieve this is to introduce police foot patrols during the dry season.

Before moving on to my next point, I would like to comment on the remarks by the member for Millner in relation to the high unemployment rate in Queensland. I do so because Queensland is very similar to the Territory inasmuch as it has an influx of people at this time of the year. Some are genuinely looking for work while others move there because of the climate. One of the major reasons for those unemployment figures is the population shift to places like Queensland and the Northern Territory. The shift is occurring because people see those places as progressive. They see activity and job opportunities. The influx of people to the northern areas of Australia from New South Wales and Victoria is instrumental in creating high unemployment figures. The Northern Territory and Queensland are seen as progressive areas and people come here because of that.

I would also like to refer to 2 annual events of which we can all be proud: the Bougainvillea Festival and the North Australian Eisteddfod. The Bougainvillea Festival has been spoken about during the course of these sittings. It was first held in 1979 and has since gone from strength to strength. It receives grants from the government, and also enjoys very strong financial sponsorship from businesses in the community. This year, it was able to stage the Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, HMS Pinafore, which has been referred to here. The comments that I have received from the community show that it was a most successful production.

The eisteddfod is much older. It celebrated its 25th anniversary this year but, each year, the Eisteddfod Council is involved in a desperate struggle to find suitable venues for the wide range of artistic events presented. There is no shortage of interested participants because it provides a unique opportunity for Territorians, young and old, to demonstrate their culture and talents. It caters not only for accomplished performers but also encourages beginners by featuring special sections. This year the eisteddfod attracted 940 entries, including a 30-strong school choir from Alice Springs and a group of 50 from Jabiru competing in the choral, dance and instrumental sections. Students from Bathurst Island and Groote Eylandt and from 2 schools in Katherine came to Darwin. In the past, there has been a significant number of entries from Aboriginal communities, but reduced funding this year has made it impossible for that number to attend.

Clearly, the annual eisteddfod is an event of major significance throughout the Territory. We have outstanding artistic talent in the Territory which deserves to be recognised and encouraged. This year, one of the adjudicators from Sydney commented that the standard in the Northern Territory was higher than that in New South Wales. Unfortunately, the eisteddfod does not enjoy the strong community support that the Bougainvillea Festival does. It is organised by a voluntary body which has one paid part-time employee. It operates with a grant from the Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. The grant was reduced this year to \$5000 with a further \$4000 to assist out-of-town participants.

The cost of hiring premises, fees and expenses for the adjudicators who are drawn from Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane, and the provision of the prizes and trophies has to be met from ticket sales. Because of the large numbers competing in some events - this year, there were 180 groups with between 5 and 90 members - the selection of suitable venues is crucial and, each year, the council is hampered by lack of funds. Unlike the Bougainvillea Festival, it

cannot afford to hire the Performing Arts Centre at a fee of \$850 per day which is the rate for charitable organisations.

It seems to me that an event of this kind, which provides such a valuable platform for the Territory's young talent, should receive positive support and patronage from the community, business organisations, the media and the government. I hope that there is some way that we can make the Performing Arts Centre available for the eisteddfod each year. In fact, the eisteddfod was always held in the old Town Hall on the very site where the Performing Arts Centre is situated today. I would like to congratulate all the people who were involved in the Bougainvillea Festival and the eisteddfod.

Mr Speaker, I wish to touch briefly on the development in the Northern Territory of the Trachoma and Eye Health Program. This program has been the subject of considerable media coverage. My predecessor, Ray Hanrahan, and Senator Bernie Kilgariff have both been involved recently in defending the Territory program. Since the program's inception there has been continuing uncertainty about federal funding arrangements for it. In 1984-85, an amount of \$1m was appropriated by the federal Department of Health for funding the trachoma program in the states and the Northern Territory. In December 1984, these funds were transferred, along with the entire Aboriginal Health Branch, from the federal Department of Health to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In April 1985, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced that future funding for these programs would depend on the outcome of a review of all trachoma programs being conducted in the states and the Northern Territory.

The review team was led by Professor Fred Hollows who worked closely with the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation and representatives from the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Health. It was therefore no great surprise when the report of the review committee included the following recommendations: that the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation establish a national eye health, blindness prevention and trachoma eradication program committee; that a program secretariat be established initially in Sydney; and that Commonwealth funding of the existing state and Territory trachoma committees be wound down. Several letters of protest were sent to Hon Clyde Holding, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, from the Northern Territory Trachoma Council and Eye Health Committee, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health in the Northern Territory.

Mr Holding invited members of the various state and Northern Territory trachoma committees to meet with him on 8 May at Parliament House. The chairman and executive officers represented the Northern Territory committee at the meeting and were able to carry out a good deal of negotiation prior to meeting with senior staff of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and members of state committees. It gives me pleasure to announce to the Assembly that Clyde Holding rejected the major recommendations of the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation, the Hollows Report, and agreed to continue funding of the Territory program which he believes is carrying out an effective campaign against trachoma. In particular, he agreed to abandon the idea of establishing a national committee formed by the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation with its secretariat in Sydney. This was achieved mainly through the efforts of Brian Dixon and Dr Devanesen.

The continued funding of the program augurs well for the Territory. The Northern Territory Trachoma and Eye Health Committee received over \$154 000 during 1985-86. These funds are not received by the Northern Territory government but are paid directly to the Northern Territory Trachoma Control and Eye Health Committee. The committee is comprised of 9 Aboriginal and

3 non-Aboriginal members and works closely with the Northern Territory Department of Health. The Department of Health pays the salaries of the specially-trained Aboriginal health workers and also provides over \$100 000 for the tetracycline eye drop program used to control the spread of trachoma.

Finally, continued funding of this program will enable the development of large-scale, controlled field trials to evaluate the use of the tetracycline eye drops and the importance of face washing in the control of trachoma. Aboriginal health workers will be the key personnel involved and the project will be conducted in conjunction with the Menzies School of Health Research. This is seen as an important initiative in the fight against trachoma. It is hoped that the results of the field trials will help to determine the directions of future programs.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 10, 80, 240, 245, 255, 258, 264

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal -

education pilot program 59

teachers -

housing 183, 285, 286

number of 182, 283, 286

payment 181, 283

Airships, use for radar platform 279

Alice Springs -

dangerous goods storage 270

gas pipeline to Darwin 271

Regional Tourist Association 48

traffic problems 164

ALP policy -

on gas pipeline to Darwin 271

on income redistribution 50, 52, 54, 58, 62, 172

on the economy 172, 174, 178

on uranium industry 162, 168

Araluen electorate, street lighting 164

Australian Bureau of Statistics, recreational habits of NT residents 48

Bicentennial Authority, submission by Peter Spillett 281

Bores for remote communities 59, 62, 63

Bougainvillea Festival 291

Brown, Ida Muriel, death 273, 288

Census 1986 288

Central Business District, undesirable behaviour 290

Channel Island Power-station 272

Child maintenance payments 61, 174

CLP, central committee meeting 169

Darwin Airport 51, 55

Darwin Institute of Technology, children's centre 175

Dog problem 176

Domestic tourist market 48

Doyle, Bob, Tourist Commission appointment 49

East Timor, visit by member for Victoria River 170

Education Advisory Council 44

Electricity supply to rural area 56

Flat-rate tax 58

Fringe benefits tax, attitude of Senator Robertson 60

Gas pipeline from Palm Valley to Alice Springs 185

Government reports, presentation 288

Hermannsburg, damage to historic buildings 279

HMS Pinafore, performance at Darwin Performing Arts Centre 65, 181, 183

James, Earl 280, 288

Kava consumption in Arnhem Land 276

Kings Canyon 48, 49

Kulaluk, fires 282

Land Rights Act 179

Laugher, David, dismissal 286

Legislative Assembly, guest list for official opening 56

'Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics', article in Australian Society 179

Minister for Aviation 55

Minister for Tourism, overseas trips 48, 49

Motor vehicle accidents 165, 167

North Australian Eisteddfod 291

Nyrripi 59

Nhulunbuy -  
    control tower 54, 55  
    dealings with bureaucracy 54  
Palmerston, census 63  
Pastoral land, freeholding 287  
Psychiatric services 269  
Santa Teresa 64  
Seat belts, child safety 167  
Sessional Committee on the Environment,  
    letter to member for Stuart 169, 179, 184  
Senator Robertson, address at ALP conference 49, 53, 55  
Small claims court, actions by Transport Workers' Union 177  
Solar energy, advances by Solar Energy Resource Institute of WA 180  
'Spirit of Fair Competition', QANTAS publication 166  
Stott Terrace intersection, fatal accident 280  
TAB, ALP attitude 282  
Teacher evaluation 44  
Television services to remote communities 64  
Ti Tree Progress Association -  
    airstrip 45  
    jaws of life 46, 183  
Tourist Commission, annual report 1983-84 46, 49  
Tourist -  
    facilities on Stuart Highway 165  
    services 167  
Trachoma and Eye Health Program 292  
Turner House, demolition 279  
Whatley property, live ordinance 274

ADMINISTRATOR'S SPEECH 4

ATTENDANCE OF ADMINISTRATOR 4

BILLS

Biological Control (Serial 186) 105  
Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 122  
Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 122  
Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 122  
Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 122  
Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions)  
    (Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 122  
Coroners Amendment (Serial 185) 75  
Credit Unions Amendment (Serial 187) 70  
Criminal Law (Regulatory Offences) (Serial 190) 74  
Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 191) 8, 220  
Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 42  
Food (Serial 198) 218  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 204) 267  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 29  
Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 77, 224  
Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 194) 67  
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 184) 23  
Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 192) 72  
National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory  
    Provisions) (Serial 176) 122  
Northern Territory Tourist Commission Amendment (Serial 202) 67  
Real Property Amendment (Serial 179) 29  
Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 23

Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 122  
Superannuation (Serial 195) 213  
Supply 1986-87 (Serial 189) 23  
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 188) 73, 223  
Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 196) 219  
Therapeutic Goods and Cosmetics (Serial 197) 216  
Traffic Amendment (Serial 201) 71, 221  
Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 23  
Work Health (Serial 203) 205

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr A. Cadman MHR q5  
Senator B.F. Kilgariff q5  
Mr J. Sharland, British Consul-General for Western Australia q5  
Mrs J. Sharland q5  
Senator G. Sheil q5  
Mrs K. Sullivan MHR q5  
Hon W. Wentworth 223

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 9

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Mr R.W.S. Vale 1

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Hanrahan 108  
Mr Lanhupuy 94  
Mr Steele 18

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Lack of adequate heritage legislation 94

MESSAGES FROM ADMINISTRATOR 187

MOTIONS

Address-in-reply 10, 80, 240, 245, 255, 258, 264  
Leave of absence for members 10  
New Parliament House Committee 11  
Noting paper, 'Transformation and Tradition' (Turner Report) 19  
Noting statements -  
    Alice Springs to Darwin railway 113  
    Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities (Dibb Report) 192  
    Uluru National Park, management 199  
Public Accounts Committee 14, 135  
Restoration of general business to notice paper 17  
Restoration of government business to notice paper 17  
Restoration of statements to notice paper 17  
Select Committee on Constitutional Development 12  
Sessional Committee on the Environment 10

PETITION

Building heights, Brinkin 187

RESIGNATION OF SPEAKER

Mr R.M. Steele 1

STATEMENTS

Alice Springs to Darwin railway 108  
Business of the Assembly 213  
Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities (Dibb Report) 188  
Second-reading speeches, tabling  
Uluru National Park, management 196

TABLED PAPERS

Annual Report of Commissioner for Consumer Affairs 19  
Annual Report of Commissioner for Motor Vehicles 18  
'Transformation and Tradition' (Turner Report) 19  
Warrant nominating Deputy Chairmen of Committees 17

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

- Aboriginal teachers -
  - housing 183, 286
  - number of 182, 286
  - payment 181
- Bores for remote communities 63
- HMS Pinafore, performance at Darwin Performing Arts Centre 65, 181
- Laugher, David, dismissal 286
- Pastoral land, freeholding 287
- Santa Teresa 64
- Television services to remote communities 64

BILLS

- Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 38
- Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 228, 236
- Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 24
- Traffic Amendment (Serial 201) 221
- Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 24

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 3

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

- Lack of adequate heritage legislation 95

MOTION

- Noting statement, Uluru National Park, management 199

COLLINS B.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 88, 113, 245

ADJOURNMENT

- ALP policy on uranium industry 168
- Motor vehicle accidents 167
- Seat belts, child safety 167
- Sessional Committee on the Environment, letter to member for Stuart 169
- Tourist services 167

BILLS

- Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 122
- Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 122
- Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 122
- Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 122
- Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 122
- Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 42
- Liquor Amendment (Serial 204) 267
- National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory Provisions) (Serial 176) 122
- Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 122

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 9

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 2

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Steele 18

MOTIONS

Address-in-reply 88, 113, 245

Public Accounts Committee 143, 150, 156

Restoration of general business to notice paper 17

STATEMENT

Business of the Assembly 213

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Airships, use for radar platform 279

Gas pipeline from Palm Valley to Alice Springs 185

Hermannsburg, damage to historic buildings 279

HMS Pinafore, performance at Darwin Performing Arts Centre 183

Sessional Committee on the Environment, letter to member for Stuart 184

Stott Terrace intersection, fatal accident 280

Teacher evaluation 44

Ti Tree Progress Association -  
airstrip 45

jaws of life 46, 183

Turner House, demolition 279

COULTER B.F.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 240

ADJOURNMENT

ALP policy on income redistribution 62

Child maintenance payments 61

Fringe benefits tax, attitude of Senator Robertson 60

Palmerston, census 63

BILLS

Credit Unions Amendment (Serial 187) 70

Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 191) 220

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 29

Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 232, 237

Superannuation (Serial 195) 213

MOTION

Address-in-reply 240

DALE D.F.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 264

BILLS

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 41

Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 77, 235

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Lack of adequate heritage legislation 94

MOTION

Address-in-reply 264

Noting paper, 'Transformation and Tradition' (Turner Report) 19

TABLED PAPER

'Transformation and Tradition' (Turner Report) 19

DONDAS N.M.

BILLS

Motor Vehicles Amendment (Serial 192) 72

Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment (Serial 170) 23

Traffic Amendment (Serial 201) 71

Unit Titles Amendment (Serial 169) 23

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 2

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Lack of adequate heritage legislation 103

PETITION

Building heights, Brinkin 187

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal education pilot program 59

Alice Springs, dangerous goods storage 270

ALP policy -

on income redistribution 58

on the economy 178

Bores for remote communities 59

Flat-rate tax 58

Land Rights Act 179

'Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics', article in Australian Society 179

Nyrripi 59

Psychiatric services 269

Sessional Committee on the Environment, letter to member for Stuart 179

Solar energy, advances by Solar Energy Resource Institute of WA 180

BILLS

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 32

Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 235

MOTION

Public Accounts Committee 147

FINCH F.A.

ADJOURNMENT

ALP policy on income redistribution 54

Darwin Airport 55

Minister for Aviation 55

Nhulunbuy control tower 55

Senator Robertson, address at ALP conference 55

BILLS

- Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 131
- Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 131
- Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 131
- Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 131
- Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 131
- National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory Provisions) (Serial 176) 131
- Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 131

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 10

FIRMIN C.C.

ADJOURNMENT

- Bicentennial Authority, submission by Peter Spillett 281
- James, Earl 280
- Kulaluk, fires 282
- Small claims court, actions by Transport Workers' Union 177

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Mr Steele 18

HANRAHAN R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

- Doyle, Bob, Tourist Commission appointment 49
- Kings Canyon 49
- Minister for Tourism, overseas trips 49
- Tourist Commission, annual report 1983-84 49

BILLS

- Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment (Serial 194) 67
- Northern Territory Tourist Commission Amendment (Serial 202) 67

MOTIONS

- New Parliament House Committee 11
- Restoration of government business to notice paper 17
- Select Committee on Constitutional Development 12
- Sessional Committee on the Environment 10

HARRIS T.

ADJOURNMENT

- Bougainvillea Festival 291
- Central Business District, undesirable behaviour 290
- North Australian Eisteddfod 291
- Trachoma and Eye Health Program 292

BILLS

- Food (Serial 198) 218
- Liquor Amendment (Serial 204) 268
- Therapeutic Goods and Cosmetics (Serial 197) 216



HATTON S.P.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 10, 80

BILLS

Electricity Commission Amendment (Serial 191) 8  
Essential Goods and Services Amendment (Serial 171) 42  
Work Health (Serial 203) 205

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES 9

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 1

MOTIONS

Address-in-reply 10, 80  
Noting statements -  
    Alice Springs to Darwin railway 113  
    Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities (Dibb Report) 192  
Public Accounts Committee 14, 135, 147, 149, 161

STATEMENTS

Alice Springs to Darwin railway 108  
Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities (Dibb Report) 188

LEO D.M.

ADJOURNMENT

ALP policy on income redistribution 52  
Nhulunbuy -  
    control tower 54  
    dealings with bureaucracy 54  
Senator Robertson, address at ALP conference 53

BILLS

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 30, 42  
Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 224, 235

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 3

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Lack of adequate heritage legislation 100

MOTIONS

Public Accounts Committee 154  
Restoration of statements to notice paper 17

MANZIE D.W.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 255

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal teachers -  
    housing 285  
    number of 283  
    payment 283

BILLS

Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 135  
Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 135  
Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 135  
Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 135  
Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions)  
(Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 135  
Coroners Amendment (Serial 185) 75  
Criminal Law (Regulatory Offences) (Serial 190) 74  
National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory  
Provisions) (Serial 176) 135  
Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 135  
Supreme Court Amendment (Serial 188) 73, 223

MOTION

Address-in-reply 255

McCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Brown, Ida Muriel, death 273  
East Timor, visit by member for Victoria River 170  
Whatley property, live ordinance 274

BILL

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment (Serial 196) 219

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Lack of adequate heritage legislation 105

MOTION

Noting statement, Uluru National Park, management 199

STATEMENT

Uluru National Park, management 196

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Brown, Ida Muriel, death 288  
Census 1986 288  
Electricity supply to rural area 56  
Government reports, presentation 288  
James, Earl 288

BILL

Local Government Amendment (Serial 193) 30

PALMER M.J.

ADJOURNMENT

TAB, ALP attitude 282

BILL

Traffic Amendment (Serial 201) 222

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs, gas pipeline to Darwin 271  
ALP policy -  
    on gas pipeline to Darwin 271  
    on income redistribution 50  
    on uranium industry 162  
Channel Island Power-station 272  
Darwin Airport 51  
Senator Robertson, address at ALP conference 49

BILLS

Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 125  
Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 125  
Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 125  
Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 125  
Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions)  
    (Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 125  
National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory  
    Provisions) (Serial 176) 125  
Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 125

MOTION

Public Accounts Committee 139, 153

POOLE E.H.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs, traffic problems 164  
Araluen electorate, street lighting 164  
Motor vehicle accidents 165  
'Spirit of Fair Competition', QANTAS publication 166  
Tourist facilities on Stuart Highway 165

SETTER R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Kava consumption in Arnhem Land 276

BILLS

Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 132  
Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 132  
Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 132  
Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 132  
Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provision)  
    (Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 132  
National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory  
    Provisions) (Serial 176) 132  
Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 132

SMITH T.E.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 258

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs, Regional Tourist Association 48  
ALP policy on the economy 174  
Australian Bureau of Statistics, recreational habits of NT residents 48  
Child maintenance payments 174  
Darwin Institute of Technology, children's centre 175  
Dog problem 176  
Domestic tourist market 48  
Kings Canyon 48  
Minister for Tourism, overseas trips 48  
Tourist Commission, annual report 1983-84 46

BILLS

Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) (Serial 174) 127  
Companies (Administration) (Serial 173) 127  
Companies (Application of Laws) (Serial 181) 127  
Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) (Serial 180) 127  
Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions)  
(Application of Laws) (Serial 175) 127  
Local Government Grants Commission (Serial 199) 237  
National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory  
Provisions) (Serial 176) 127  
Securities Industry (Application of Laws) (Serial 177) 127  
Supply 1986-87 (Serial 189) 23

MOTIONS

Address-in-reply 258  
Noting statement, Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities  
(Dibb Report) 193  
Public Accounts Committee 135

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY 118

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 3

MOTION

Address-in-reply 118

VALE R.W.S.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER 1