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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly
Second Session

Parliamentary Record

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly

Second Session

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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 16 April 1985

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT

Parliamentary Record for February-March Sitzings

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, printed copies of the Parliamentary Record for the February-March sittings of the Assembly are not yet available for distribution. For reference purposes, 2 photocopies of the debates and the question paper have been placed on the Table. I ask honourable members not to remove these copies from the Chamber.

PETITION

Darwin Institute of Technology

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 154 students of the Darwin Institute of Technology relating to an inquiry into certain matters affecting the institute. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in parliament assembled, the humble petition of certain students of the Darwin Institute of Technology respectfully sheweth that they consider their lecturers to be fair, hard-working and supportive, that they support the resolutions passed by the Academic Board of the Darwin Institute of Technology on Wednesday 6 February 1985, that the action of the Northern Territory government has led to a possible lessening of the credibility of award courses currently being undertaken by students at the Darwin Institute of Technology and that the interference of the Northern Territory government in academic affairs has led to the imminent loss of highly-qualified and valued academic staff. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the government of the Northern Territory instigate a totally impartial inquiry into the untimely appointment of Mr Kevin Davis as principal of the Darwin Institute of Technology and investigate the allegations of inappropriate behaviour by certain lecturers in the performance of their academic roles and that the members of this board of inquiry be acceptable to all parties involved in this dispute and that action be taken to prevent any further disruption to the running of courses and to protect the future of the Darwin Institute of Technology against any further interference by the Northern Territory government into academic affairs, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MOTION

Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 3 of 1984

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly disapprove so much of Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 3 of 1984, which was tabled in this Assembly on 16 October 1984, as would permit the basic salaries of members to exceed a 6.8% increase per annum over and above the basic

salaries payable to members at the rates specified in Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 2 of 1984.

Mr Speaker, the government is of the view that the mechanisms provided for the determination of parliamentary remuneration allowances in the Remuneration Tribunal Act are equitable and proper. It is only right that an impartial tribunal should determine such salaries and allowances, and I do not depart from that view. Members on both sides of this Assembly have endorsed the view that parliamentarians should not set their own salaries. The Remuneration Tribunal's procedures are a widely-accepted means of providing for independent and impartial determinations. However, Mr Speaker, I must stress also that the government is supportive of wage restraint. For example, we supported the Fraser government's wage freeze and, at the national wage case hearings, we have argued consistently for restraint. Mr Speaker, the reasons for this approach have been dealt with comprehensively in this Assembly on several occasions and I will not go into them again. Therefore, the recent determination of the Remuneration Tribunal presents a very difficult exercise of judgment between the need for independent salary-setting procedures and the need to encourage wage restraint by example.

Members on both sides have expressed the view that current circumstances require us to show restraint, and I accept that view. By this motion I propose to restrict the increase in the salaries of members to the awards by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission under the national wage case principles of the 4.1% wage increase in May 1984 and the further increase of 2.6% on 18 April 1985. Mr Speaker, I will propose that standing orders be suspended later in the sittings in order to introduce an urgent bill to amend the Remuneration Tribunal Act to pass through all stages at this sittings. The bill will have the effect of providing for the automatic flow on to members of percentage increases handed down under the national wage case principles in respect of members' basic salaries. However, I stress that the bill will not abrogate the principle of an independent Remuneration Tribunal. It is not proposed to limit the powers of the tribunal except in respect of basic salaries of members. Indeed, in this respect, there is provision in the bill for the government to request the tribunal to consider principles outside the national wage case with respect to basic salaries if future circumstances should so dictate.

Mr Speaker, during the preparation of the federal budget, many ministers involved with the task of reducing the deficit of this nation have referred unfavourably to the pay increases that were granted to members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly by the tribunal. The increases that we were awarded have been promoted by some ministers of the Commonwealth government as unreasonable and irresponsible. In fact, they foreshadowed that the people of the Northern Territory were likely to suffer cuts in major funding proposals for the Territory because of those increases. I stand by the principles that have been outlined in this Assembly. We believe that we should not be setting our salaries. I would also say that it is important, not only for this Assembly, but for the people of the Northern Territory that, if the Commonwealth decides to reduce funding, to set aside the Memorandum of Understanding or to do anything else prejudicial to the funding arrangements of the Northern Territory, members of this Assembly should not be used as the scapegoats for those decisions. I have given great thought to this proposal and deliberated with my colleagues. I have discussed the matter also with other parliamentarians. I believe that the best course of action that we can take is to show by example that we are concerned about future funding for the Northern Territory and that we should not be seen as any reason for a reduction in funding by the Commonwealth to the Territory.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the motion, I point out to the Chief Minister that there is an error in his figures. In fact, I know how the mistake occurred. It refers to members' salaries not exceeding a 6.8% increase. That is the CPI increase which has been discounted by 0.1%. If one adds the 2 figures that the Chief Minister just gave - 2.6 and 4.1 - even Denis Collins would come up with a total of 6.7.

Mr D.W. Collins: The compound ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: The one benefit of your being a politician is that at least it got you out of Alice Springs High School as a teacher.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move an amendment to the motion.

Leave granted.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting '6.8%' and inserting '6.7%'.

The opposition has stated its position on this matter at some length. It is not necessary to canvass it again because it is already in the public record. However, in respect of the comments made by the Chief Minister about pressure being brought to bear by federal politicians, it is essential for me to make it clear that our motives for supporting a reduction in the salary increases have nothing whatever to do with any comments made by the federal government or indeed any pressure brought to bear on what we should be paid in the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister or anyone referring to the Parliamentary Record will see that, for the opposition, that has never been an issue. Our only regret in supporting the motion is that it was not moved when it should have been moved - last year.

Having said that, I must make it clear that the opposition supports this motion gladly. It is not doing so by virtue of responding to pressure from federal politicians in relation to what they might do to Territory funding. There is a prices and incomes accord between the government and unions at the moment. I would be the first to concede that it is under considerable pressure but it still seems to be holding up. It appears to have a track record of having achieved a substantial decrease in the inflation rate from double figures down to the present single figure. I am the first to concede that attributing all of that reduction to the prices and incomes accord would be extremely simplistic; I am not suggesting that it is the only reason. It appears to have had some beneficial effect on the Australian economy despite the inherent difficulties in a democratic society of keeping such an accord in place.

Mr Speaker, this is a democratic society and both sides of the fence are applying pressures. Pressure is being applied by unions in relation to the prices and incomes accord. Pressure has come from the government, in the opposite direction, and considerable pressure is applied as a matter of course from the employer groups. Every time there is a wage increase, the employers say that the whole economy will collapse overnight and life as we know it will cease to exist. That is the tenor of every one of those interviews on TV. I am simply saying that, despite all of the inherent difficulties and pressures which are canvassed openly in this society, the accord seems to have achieved a tangible result.

The points that I made during this whole debate are as follows. If we want to show some degree of responsibility, we must show some degree of leadership. In that way we will maintain the gains that we have made with the inflation rate although I concede that we seem to be getting into more difficult areas there. Perhaps that is all the more reason to keep the accord in place. We must show some leadership otherwise we cannot expect to implement cost-cutting measures with the Territory's own public service in terms of restraining the end-of-the-financial-year splurge which, as the Chief Minister said, has become a traditional event. I applaud the Chief Minister for highlighting a traditional event. I applaud the Chief Minister for highlighting this particular problem. The graphs which were published in the Northern Territory News indicate that this sudden leap into the sky at the end of the financial year is a very dramatic feature of the public service. Having worked for the public service in the Territory for 5 years myself, I know that it is a fact. The department that I worked for operated like every other department. People went into a panic a few months before the end of the financial year and said: 'What can we buy? What can we spend the money on because, if we don't get rid of it, we will not get it back next year?' If firm undertakings between government and its departments could be achieved in respect of that particular matter, I think a great deal could be gained. Indeed, I believe the Chief Minister is the first Northern Territory politician to have highlighted that particular problem.

Mr Speaker, we cannot expect public servants as individuals to give any genuine support for government initiatives unless the people who are running the public service themselves show the same kind of leadership and initiative in respect of their own financial affairs. For those 2 reasons - to support the national wage restraint which is currently operating and to provide some leadership and initiative to the Northern Territory Public Service in restraining spending here in the Northern Territory - the opposition supports this reduction in parliamentarians' salaries.

I advise the Chief Minister that, as a result of the government's indication that it will adopt an automatic flow-on of the national wage case determinations, when the government introduces its bill to amend the Remuneration Tribunal Act, which is substantially in accord with our bill that is currently on the Notice Paper, we will be withdrawing our bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I have just been told that the 4.1% and the 2.6% is not 6.8% but 6.7%. That may seem to be the case on the surface. However, 6.8% is indeed the correct figure because what is being taken into account is the fact that the 4.1% was granted some time ago. I will put it in simple terms so that even the Leader of the Opposition can understand it. If we were receiving a \$100 salary and then were given a 4.1% increase, we would receive \$104.10. If at a later time, we were granted a 2.6% increase, that would not be 2.6% of \$100 but 2.6% of \$104.10. That is equivalent to a 2.7066% increase. That is where the figure of 6.8% came from. It is a compounding effect of the 2.6% upon the 4.1%.

Mr Bell: Absolutely startling.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Since I was denigrated by the Leader of the Opposition, I felt it was my duty to put him straight.

I support the independent tribunal. As Government Whip, I had dealings with the tribunal. At the time, I put forward the government's point of view for a 4.1% increase. Mr Campbell said that, when he determined the first base salary for parliamentarians, it was between 2 levels of the public service. I

think they were E2 and E3. The principle is clear. When he was deliberating on this matter, he considered that he should return that salary to within that public service range. That is something that has not been raised in previous debates in this Assembly. He said that the parliamentarians had continued to accept a bit less because they had not thought the conditions were right because of approaching elections or whatever. Consequently, the level had slipped in comparison with levels in the public service. I think that point is worth considering.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Redevelopment of Darwin Airport

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the recent announcement by the federal Minister for Aviation that the federal government has decided to defer further contracts on the redevelopment of Darwin Airport pending a complete reappraisal of the project has come as a bitter blow for people living in the Northern Territory. I want to make it quite clear that the Territory government's position has not changed and will not change. The existing civil aviation facilities at Darwin Airport are totally inadequate; they are nothing less than a national disgrace. Redevelopment of these facilities is essential and I believe that all honourable members will endorse that position totally. Whilst the Territory may be prepared to accept a review of the possible alternatives for and costs of the project, we cannot accept that the project itself might be under review. I repeat that the redevelopment of the civil aviation facilities at Darwin Airport is essential. Continued use of the existing terminal and facilities is not acceptable nor is any bandaid arrangement to patch up the present hangar.

I would like to remind honourable members of the history of this project. In 1975, the federal government decided that Darwin Airport should not be relocated. In early 1979, the Department of Defence advised that the existing civil aviation facilities must be vacated by 1985. The Commonwealth then commenced planning for the relocation of the civil aviation facilities on the northern side of the main runway because of the Commonwealth's defence requirements. In December 1980, the federal Cabinet confirmed that new civil aviation facilities would be located on the northern side of the main runway. In April 1982, the federal Cabinet approved the redevelopment project for consideration by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. In November 1982, the then federal Minister for Aviation announced an \$86m project for the redevelopment of civil aviation facilities on the northern side of the Darwin Airport. This commitment was reaffirmed by the incoming Labor government in August 1983 when the federal minister announced that the commencement of construction had been approved for 1983-84. The estimated cost of the project was \$96m and rising fast. In May 1984, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works recommended that the project proceed with staged development on the northern side. In August 1984, the federal minister announced that \$7.5m had been allocated to the project in the 1984-85 federal budget. Mr Speaker, less than 6 months later, work has been stopped and the project is subject to reappraisal.

Mr Speaker, the federal minister cited pressure on the federal budget as the reason for the review. I am the first to agree that federal government expenditure has to be curtailed if prospects for the Australian economy are to improve. The Territory government has stated its willingness to cooperate to

achieve sensible national economic policies but there are aspects of this particular decision which raise serious doubts about the bona fides of the Commonwealth. Firstly, the Commonwealth is still saying that major airport redevelopment at places such as Townsville will proceed, despite the fact that Townsville gained new international facilities quite recently. Given the firm and unequivocal commitment which the federal ALP claimed it had to the Darwin project, this abrupt and unilateral announcement raised questions about the Commonwealth's real intentions. Secondly, the project has actually started and work is well under way. Expenditure to the end of March 1985 was almost \$5m and commitments for contracts let bring the total to some \$10m. Works completed to date include a temporary access road, a project office, the fill platform for the RPT terminal, the elevated water tower, administration building foundations and various other works. Taking into account the costs of design, architectural consultancies and other preparatory work, the total expenditure on the project to date is probably closer to \$20m than to \$10m.

Mr Speaker, it does not make sense to stop the project at this stage. Far from saving money, a total and unwarranted waste of taxpayers' money can be the only result. This brings me to the third area of my concern. The federal minister referred in his statement to the possibility that the site of the existing terminal and other facilities on the south side of the airport should continue to be used. Immediately, 2 points must be made. The first is that, the decision to move to the north side was taken by the Commonwealth alone. It was dictated totally by defence requirements. I am not aware that anything has happened to change those requirements and, pointedly, defence questions were not raised by the minister. The second is the very alarming reference to the existing terminal facilities. No one with any real interest in the future of the airport or in the aspirations of the Northern Territory could suggest, as a possible option, a redevelopment project based around the existing terminal or at that site.

Mr Speaker, the Territory government did not insist or demand that the redevelopment be placed on the northern side. In fact, I understand that the southern side offers some very suitable possibilities although certainly not at the present location. The northern side was decided upon by the Commonwealth for its own reasons. To talk now about reviewing the options on the southern side smacks of obfuscation and a lack of real commitment to the project. I raise the point because it is a matter of real concern. It is my understanding that the view of the Department of Defence has not changed and that it continues to be a defence requirement that the civil aviation facilities be relocated to the northern side of the runway. I am concerned that we face the prospect of a stalemate between the federal Departments of Aviation and Finance and the Department of Defence, with the Department of Defence saying that we must go to the north and the Departments of Aviation and Finance arguing that the northern option is too expensive. If such a stalemate develops, it will be Territorians who will be the losers.

Mr Speaker, in any approaches that I make to the Commonwealth, I will be seeking to ensure that we find ways for the project to proceed, whether on the northern side or on the southern side. This leads me to a further matter raised in the federal minister's recent statement. He referred to the Bosch report on cost recovery and the implications of this report on likely charges for passengers using Darwin Airport. The application of cost recovery or user-pays principles to the transport industry is a very contentious matter. I take the view that, as a matter of general principle, it is appropriate to seek cost recovery wherever possible across a range of services and facilities provided by governments. However, it needs to be done in a rational and equitable way so that distortions between economic sectors or industries are not created. This

is not the time to debate the issues raised by the Bosch report, but one very important issue must be resolved. A \$100m airport redevelopment does not mean that civil aviation users must contribute to airport charges sufficiently to service that \$100m of expenditure, Mr Speaker, and the reason why is very simple. The major components of the cost of the project are attributable directly to the Commonwealth's decision to locate the civil facilities on the northern side. As I have said, that was for defence reasons, not because of civil aviation requirements. Therefore, it would be grossly inequitable to suggest that these costs should be recovered from civil aviation users. The federal minister's use of the Bosch report to justify his actions is quite wrong and totally misleading.

So much for the continuing story of broken Commonwealth promises to the Territory. The important question is: where do we go from here? Honourable members will know that I have telexed the federal minister seeking clarification of the government's willingness to explore any reasonable avenues for cooperation to keep the project alive. I have asked the federal minister a number of specific questions about the Commonwealth's intentions. I have not yet had a response to these questions. Until we can be clear about just what is in the Commonwealth's mind, we are constrained in coming forward with our own ideas and proposals.

However, I have raised with the federal minister the possibility of the Northern Territory government participating in the project under some form of local ownership arrangement. The minister has said that local ownership is not possible because the airport is a defence establishment, but has invited Territory proposals for participation. That is not a very helpful response. The federal minister would know full well that the Territory could not participate without an acceptable arrangement to allow security for any investment and an appropriate degree of operational involvement and control.

Mr Speaker, I have asked specifically, therefore, that the federal minister consider excising from the defence establishment an area for the redevelopment of the civil aviation terminal. If this could be done, it might provide a basis for Territory involvement in the redevelopment project under some form of local ownership arrangement. The minister has not yet responded to that suggestion. Over the past few days, a number of companies have indicated their willingness to work with the Territory government to keep the project alive and I have been encouraged by this response. However, there is not much we can do until we know more about the Commonwealth's real intentions for the Darwin Airport.

Mr Speaker, despite the views of the federal minister to the contrary, the fact is that the redevelopment of the Darwin Airport is crucial to our economic ambitions and, in particular, our plans for major tourist development. This recent decision has been greeted with dismay by the tourist industry because it places in jeopardy so many plans for rapid growth. It has also been greeted with dismay by the construction industry because of wasted efforts and lost jobs. The federal minister may be able to afford to sit around and oversight reappraisals lasting 6 months. We in the Territory cannot. We need to create new jobs, secure new investment and maintain the growth momentum. The Commonwealth decision puts too much at risk and is not acceptable.

I hope all honourable members will support the government's sincere and determined efforts to find a way to ensure that the Darwin Airport redevelopment can proceed without delay. We will be pressing the Commonwealth for clear answers and a resumption of the project. The support of honourable members on both sides will give our efforts real backing and credibility and I ask for that support.

Mr Speaker, I was not able to provide these figures to the members of the opposition this morning because I did not have them in time but, overnight, I had a paper put together outlining the expenditure that we believe has taken place so far on the Darwin Airport redevelopment. I will read for the benefit of all honourable members an estimate of the current level of Commonwealth commitment on the previously approved proposal.

Firstly, I will deal with the indirect costs: planning, including feasibility studies, leading to site selection and including preliminary engineering investigation - \$600 000; environmental impact assessment, including studies relating to noise levels, social impact, mosquito control, pollution of Rapid Creek and motor vehicle traffic movements - \$250 000; preparation of a master plan - \$300 000; Parliamentary Works Committee deliberation, which includes the preparation of the submission and costs associated with formal hearings - \$500 000; recruitment and mobilisation of project staff - \$250 000; and project documentation for terminal building, other committed works and design work in progress but not complete - \$4m, \$1m and \$3m respectively. That gives a total indirect cost of \$9 900 000. The direct costs involve: expenditure to 31 March 1985 - \$4 900 000; unpaid value of existing contracts - \$4 700 000; and site rehabilitation - \$200 000. The total direct cost is \$9 800 000. The total cost of both indirect and direct outgoings is \$19 700 000.

Mr Speaker, the attached costs relate to Commonwealth expenditure only and do not reflect the financial commitments made by other organisations, including the Territory government, airlines and fuel companies and contractors who are involved in preparing tenders on works which are not now to proceed. Additionally, no account has been taken of the cost to the project attributable to delays. This is conservatively estimated at 3% to 4% or \$750 000 per month. The 6 months' review period plus 10 months for redocumentation would attract a cost of some \$12m.

I would also like to read into Hansard a brief outline of the project cost: regular public transport terminal - \$27.4m; aprons and taxiways - \$26.4m; central power house - \$1.4m; electrical workshop - \$1.2m; administration building - \$1.6m; water tower - \$0.4m; water storage tank - \$0.8m; maintenance complex - \$3.2m; intake station - \$0.1m; substation - \$0.3m; general aviation terminal - \$0.4m; helipad - \$0.3m; aircraft waste disposal - \$0.2m; airport lighting equipment - \$0.7m; airport traffic control - \$1.1m; tactical air navigation cost - \$0.3m; operations and flight service centre building - \$2.3m; DHC project office - \$0.6m; engineering services - \$0.9m; car parks, roadways, fencing, drainage and site preparation - \$13.2m; miscellaneous works - \$3m; and works by government authorities - \$1m. The total is \$95m.

Mr Speaker, I have appended those figures to my statement to give honourable members and residents of the Northern Territory a perspective of the project and an indication of the implications if we do not proceed. I have only 1 copy but, for the benefit of all members, I would like to table the following documents: Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works minutes of evidence; a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works report; a Housing and Construction report bulletin on redevelopment of Darwin Airport; a provisional master plan, which includes civil areas on the RAAF base in Darwin; a Darwin Airport traffic study from the Department of Civil Aviation; a Darwin Airport traffic study with appendices; and a Darwin Airport traffic study for the RAAF base. Further, Mr Speaker, I table documentation relating to the construction of the north side facility.

The point that I make is that the cost of that little lot and the site development that has been stopped recently is of the order of \$20m. I am the

first to acknowledge that the federal minister has a problem and I will be happy to work constructively with him to try to solve that problem. The end objective for all Territorians must be to have the bricks and mortar and the facilities for our international traffic, and anything less than that is just not acceptable.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there is no need for me to canvass this issue at length. Having read the statement carefully, and I received a copy of it last night, I can say that there is nothing in it with which I disagree. Perhaps, in support of the statement, I could highlight what I think are some of the key issues. The one thing upon which there appears to be no disagreement between the Territory government and the Territory opposition and, indeed, the federal Minister for Transport, is that Darwin needs a new airport terminal. In making the announcement to stop all of the works on the north side of the airport, the federal minister conceded that at least.

Mr Speaker, I am not a frequent overseas traveller but I have gone out to the airport on a number of occasions specifically to watch the problems created by the incoming passengers in the international terminal. Even if some argument could be put that there is no problem in the domestic area - I believe there is, and a serious one at that - it is not overstating the case to say that the conditions in the international facility are horrendous. I described in the last debate we had on the Darwin Airport how I personally witnessed that joke of a luggage conveyor, which could be described more aptly as a luggage compressor, at work. Although I had been assured before going out to the airport that ground staff would take luggage off the conveyor as it came in, I personally saw suitcases, particularly the soft fabric variety, compressed to half their width by the pileup of luggage at the end of that conveyor. It was embarrassing to see a young Darwin schoolboy who had brought back to Darwin, obviously from Bali or somewhere like that, something that obviously he treasured because he was visibly upset by what happened to it. He had one of those wooden, glass-enclosed frames which contained butterflies. There are only a number of species of butterflies which cannot be imported. Most of what he had was perfectly acceptable to quarantine people. He brought it all the way back to Darwin and I actually heard it being smashed to smithereens inside his duffle bag at the end of the conveyor belt at the Darwin Airport. It was quite embarrassing to watch that young bloke unzip his duffle bag and pull out this tangled mess of broken glass, wooden frame and mashed up butterfly wings. That is the kind of international facility that we have at the Darwin Airport and it is a total embarrassment to everybody concerned.

I think it is instructive to tell the following story because many people do not realise how bad it is. On the same occasion when I went out to the airport to watch the arrival of a Qantas flight - and there are customs officers at the airport who can attest this story - the line in the quarantine section at the Darwin Airport was constrained by a wooden barrier to separate the quarantine passengers from the rest of the mixture of passengers and luggage all piled up in that small room. A woman was standing in the line with her young daughter. The daughter obviously wanted to go to the toilet. The line was literally compressed in for the full length of the wooden barrier. The child physically could not move forwards or backwards. She was in the top quarter end of the line and would have had to have fought her way, which would have been physically impossible. I knew the woman concerned and saw she was in considerable distress and the girl was too. I helped the child's mother lift her over the quarantine barrier so that she could go to the toilet.

That is the kind of international facility that we have in Darwin. It is appalling and embarrassing. I warn all honourable members of this: before you go out in response to an invitation from customs officers to have a look at the airport facility, be careful to place a paper bag over your head, with holes cut for the eyes so people do not know who you are. One of the problems is that, while you are being shepherd around and through the lines of waiting passengers so that you can be taken to another sector what will happen is that when the customs officer takes you through the barrier where queues are lined up across the tarmac, everyone will assume, not unnaturally, that you were a passenger on the aircraft. As you go through, there will be a group chorus: 'Hang on, who do you think you are?' They pull you up because they think you are being given special attention. You have to make a public announcement across the tarmac that you were not on board the aircraft but out there having a look at the mess. I warn members about that.

Mr Speaker, the condition of our international terminal is beyond a joke. The reason I have told this story is that I recommend the experience. I suspect there would be very few government members who have not been overseas, with a few notable exceptions. However, any member who has not been through the international facility at the Darwin Airport should take the trouble to arrange with the airport authorities to go out there and have a look at the arrival of a Qantas flight. It is an instructive exercise for those who have not done it.

Mr Speaker, our need for an airport terminal is pressing indeed. I wish to support the Chief Minister in the observations he made on the use or the misuse which has been made of the Bosch report. It is a fact, and it is surprising how many people do not know it, that the only reason that the airport terminal is being built on the northern side of the airport is to meet defence requirements. It has nothing whatsoever to do with civil aviation needs. When we look at the detailed list of costings which is attached to the back of this statement, we see just how much additional expenditure is required as a result of the location of the airport. The aprons and taxiways that are required because of its location alone amount to \$26.4m, and that is without any of the other additional expenditure. The reason quite simply is that defence requirements necessitate that that is where the terminal should go. The actual cost of the terminal itself - and I imagine it would be more now - is \$27.4m.

People have been puzzled by this. I have been approached by people who have said: 'Look at that magnificent terminal at Cairns'. The terminal in Cairns is a beautiful one. How was it possible for them to do it? I think it cost \$30m to build that magnificent terminal at Cairns. We would love to pick that up and have it brought to Darwin. I explain to people that there is \$30m-worth of bitumen and site preparation in order to link up the terminal on the north side with the runways. They say: 'But why is it being put over there?' I then explain that the RAAF says that that is where it has to go.

Mr Speaker, it would seem, now that the decision has been taken by the federal government to locate a major fighter base at Tindal, that some doubt could be placed on the rationale for determining that the work should have proceeded where it is. Of course, that then begs the question as to why \$20m was spent where it has been spent. I think that the approach that the Northern Territory government is taking is very sensible. It has prepared options for either continued construction at a lesser cost on the north side of the airport or what would be the cheaper option ultimately, building on the south side of the airport. If the latter option is adopted, as a wounded taxpayer like everybody else, I would hope - and maybe it is a forlorn hope - that perhaps some of that money could be recovered eventually from the north side of the airport. Perhaps it could be used for something else. Indeed, it may yet be that that will be where the construction proceeds finally.

My major concern, and it will be the basis of the argument that I put to the federal government, is the whole question of this 6-month feasibility study. It appears that the minister's statement that he is treating the matter urgently is correct because departmental meetings have been convened already in Canberra to discuss the reappraisal. But, Mr Speaker, it may well be - and this is something on which the government and the opposition have to join together to ensure that it does not happen - that there will be no allocation for the airport in the next budget. It seems to me to be extraordinarily coincidental that the reappraisal of the Darwin Airport project over 6 months conveniently takes us up to the next federal budget. Perhaps I am overly suspicious about that, Mr Speaker, but it seems to be a real problem. That is why I do not hesitate to say that I think it is essential that, on this particular issue, there is seen to be no division of opinion between the opposition and the government. I think it would be tragic and extremely damaging to the Territory's interests if it eventuated that there was to be no allocation at all for the Darwin Airport in the forthcoming budget. I think that a plain-English reading of the federal minister's statement gives the impression that that may be a possibility.

Mr Speaker, having highlighted my major concerns, I indicate that, having read the statement and seen the kind of approach that the government will make to the federal government on this issue, we have no hesitation in joining the Northern Territory government in a combined approach to the federal government in the most effective manner. The most effective manner may not be the Chief Minister and I holding hands and going off together to Canberra. By 'joint approach', I simply mean that the submissions we will be putting, the points that we will be making and the kind of proposals we will be supporting in our communications with the federal government accord precisely with those of the government now that we have read them and considered them. It may well be that a joint approach will be more effective if it is 2-pronged rather than a separate approach by the government and the opposition. That is something that can be worked out in the near future. The most vital point is that, at the earliest opportunity, we need to obtain some indication from the federal government that there will be a budget allocation for the Darwin Airport in the next financial year otherwise we will be effectively 2 years behind the 8-ball once again.

Mr Speaker, I suggest again that the operation of the airport terminal has to be seen to be believed. I do not think that anyone needs to be convinced of that. I assure the Chief Minister that, whatever method is used for a joint approach, we have no disagreement with his statement to the Assembly this morning. I assure the Chief Minister that we will join him in pressing on the federal government the case outlined in the statement.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement. The Chief Minister mentioned the history leading up to the latest developments on the airport project. It was certainly disappointing to me to receive notification of the cancellation of the terminal development by way of a telex or a press release. I think that was a rather poor way for the federal minister to notify the Territory government and the Territory people of the decision not to proceed at this stage with further development of the terminal.

In relation to the history of the terminal, it is probably worth while noting that, after the Second World War, the present terminal was adapted to cater for airline passengers. At that stage, we had Qantas Empire Airways flying through Darwin. We had DC3s catering for the major domestic traffic between the southern states and the Territory. At that time, the present terminal catered for the requirements of passengers who were travelling on those flights without too many problems.

As we all know, we are now well into the jet age. We have jumbo jets catering for international traffic, carrying 450 passengers and more. We have 727 jets looking after domestic traffic, catering for 150-odd passengers each. Because of the 2-airline agreement, we have the added disadvantage of 2 arrivals and 2 departures occurring simultaneously and therefore creating undue congestion at the present terminal. We have a car-parking situation which is absolutely unbelievable for those people who have to drive to the airport either to pick up passengers or to let passengers off. The whole situation is absolutely substandard. I have to agree with the comments of the Leader of the Opposition on the international flight facilities. I recall quite vividly standing with my family in a queue on the tarmac at the Darwin Airport for 2 hours before we even obtained entrance to our magnificent facilities. I was standing there with another couple of hundred of people. We had arrived in Darwin after a 5 or 6-hour flight. There were a number of international tourists and a number of people who were at Darwin for the first time. Some fairly caustic comments were made about the facilities. With the development of our tourist infrastructure and our goal of transporting a million tourists to the Territory per year by 1990, the present situation cannot be allowed to continue. It is well below par now and, in the future, it will be worse.

The Chief Minister mentioned the history leading up to the present conditions: the defence advice to vacate the present civil area by 1985, approval by the federal Cabinet in 1980, approval for consideration by the Public Works Committee in 1982 and a reaffirmation by the federal government in August 1983 regarding development of the airport. Also, in May 1984, the Public Works Committee reviewed the situation. It decided that the best area for development of a new terminal facility was on the north side of the airport. That took account of defence considerations as well as the traffic flows that were envisaged in relation to both domestic and international travellers.

The thing that really upsets me, and I believe that it should upset all Territorians, is the fact that \$19m has been expended to date by the federal government in developing a site and preparing for the development of terminal buildings on the north side of Darwin Airport. I also find particularly disturbing the fact that costs are presently rising at 0.75% per month which, on the total expenditure that has been envisaged for the terminal, works out to \$0.75m per month. Since the federal Minister for Aviation has proposed a 6-month review period, the cost of the present development will rise by \$4.5m during that time. If that is taken in conjunction with the cost of redocumentation, which would take approximately 10 months, we are looking at an extra cost of \$12m. If we take into account the \$20m that has been spent already, we could end up with \$32m being expended by the federal government and we still would not have anything more than what we have now. That is \$32m for nothing. My mind boggles at the thought of a government contemplating the wastage of \$32m. We have heard comments from federal politicians regarding what they see as the Territory not utilising its funding to what they consider to be the best advantage of the Territory. However, such suggestions by those people must pale into insignificance when we consider that the cessation of the present development could cost the taxpayers \$32m for nothing. I believe that all Australians, not just Territorians, must be concerned at the sort of money that will be wasted.

I have heard comments from numerous people that \$95m for the Darwin Airport development is excessive. The attachment to the Chief Minister's statement certainly indicates that the terminal building itself is estimated to cost \$27m. Carparks, roadways, fencing and drainage will cost \$32m. The aprons and taxiways will cost \$26m and engineering services will cost \$9m. Those 4 items add up to \$76m. It is relevant to point out that the Public Works

Committee established that, if the terminal were built on the southern side of the present airport rather than on the northern side, the cost saving would be \$18m. If the review authorised by the federal Minister for Transport decided that the airport terminal should be built on the southern side of the airport, the \$18m savings that was originally envisaged by the Public Works Committee, which would be a far more capable review team than any other that could be set up, has already been lost by the expenditure of \$20m plus the extra \$12m cost involved in redocumentation and the 6-month lay off. Therefore, in order to save \$18m, the federal government is contemplating the expenditure of \$32m. I might not be much of a mathematician, Mr Speaker, but that is a pretty heavy minus situation as far as I am concerned.

I think all members realise that the facilities at the airport are substandard. The Territory has only one suitable means of moving people in and out of the Territory and that is by air. The distances by road are far too time-consuming for the majority of Territorians. As you well know, we do not have a railway from Darwin to anywhere, Mr Speaker. We are at the mercy of the airlines. We need the airlines for our tourist development and the cancellation of the development of the terminal will cause tremendous hardship. We must convince the federal government that development must go ahead.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise as shadow minister for transport and works to make some contribution to this debate and to involve myself in what, quite clearly, is wholehearted support for the statements made by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Transport and Works. Certainly, it does one's heart good to be in such a position. It does not do one's heart any good to be involved in crushes at airports as has been described so graphically by previous speakers. The only real criticism I have of what the Minister for Transport and Works had to say is that he said moving out of the Territory by air is the only means we have. Of course, that is not quite accurate. A large number of Territorians move out of the Territory by road. It will not do our case any good if we do not look at the transportation of people and goods in the whole context of the Territory's needs. That is a very mild criticism.

We support wholeheartedly what previous speakers have said. As politicians, perhaps we experience crushes at airports rather more frequently than some other people because of what has been referred to as that incessant movement that politicians mistake for achievement. Frequently, it puts us in the position of being in crowded airports. I would not suggest in any sense that the sort of chaos that has been described is in any way tolerable. I do not believe that it is a satisfactory situation in 1985 in a country like Australia. There is nothing around the northern coastline from Perth to Cairns that could be dignified with the title of an international standard airport. One is sorely needed in Darwin.

I should mention in passing that there has been much speculation and much debate about the fate of the Alice Springs Airport which, of course, lies in my electorate. I recall the minister's predecessor saying that there had been negotiations with respect to a local ownership scheme for the Alice Springs Airport that would bring it up to an international standard. I recall a media release on that matter but little more has been heard of it. I simply comment that that scheme is of considerable interest to many people in central Australia.

However, to return to the central issue in this debate, the Darwin Airport and the necessity for its upgrading, I do not think it is necessary for me to outline once more the Chief Minister's excellent description of the

process of planning and the expenditure to date. I wish merely to endorse his stance in that regard.

I would like to take a few more minutes of the Assembly's time to inform members that, as shadow minister for transport and works in the Northern Territory, I made representation to the federal Minister for Transport. I am sure that all members hope that my representation and those of all of us here will bear fruit. I wrote to the federal Minister for Transport in these terms on 12 March:

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you in my capacity as shadow minister for transport in the Northern Territory concerning media speculation about proposed funding cuts for the Darwin Airport project.

It has been reported that the allocation for 1985-86 of \$38.5m will be cut to \$10m. As you would be aware, the upgrading of Darwin Airport has been promised for a long time. It is our view that the pre-election pledge to redevelop Darwin Airport to international standards must be honoured and that moneys allocated for redevelopment should be spent in accordance with the initial timetable. It is, of course, beyond debate that the airport is quite inadequate. Your earliest advice concerning the future of the project would be appreciated.

Mr Speaker, I do not think there is any doubt about the bipartisan nature of our approaches to the federal government in that regard. All I would like to say is that I sincerely hope that they will bear fruit.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, it is very difficult to speak on this subject without a great deal of emotion and yet maintain what obviously is needed for a constructive bipartisan approach. On the last day of the last sittings, I spoke with some sincerity and, I hope, in a constructive way to call on the members of the opposition to support what I hoped would be a counter action against what was clear to me would be a reduction in the next year's expenditure on the project at Darwin Airport. At that time, I indicated that I had a clear understanding that the project was to be cut from \$38m to \$18m. There was some concern amongst people in the know that, as the honourable member for MacDonnell suggested, it might be cut to \$10m. Sadly, Mr Speaker, I was wrong again.

One wonders whether it was worth interfering. I have a nagging thought at the back of my mind that, by raising the issue so early, unfortunately we may have done some harm to local contractors and others. Not only have their current contracts been cut in midstream, there is little hope that, within the next 12 to 18 months, they will be likely to pick up the bag again. There is no joy for me in having brought the matter before this Assembly and certainly there is no joy in my saying that I was trying to tell you so. As I mentioned earlier, my endeavour was to be constructive and I would like to add whatever small amount of force I can to bring about a reconciliation over the whole matter as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Some members have spoken, and doubtless others will speak, about the direct implications of the curtailment of that major project that was vital not only to the Northern Territory but also to the national economy in so many ways which have been elaborated on already. I do not wish to go over them again. That \$90m project was decided upon in the first place - not by this Northern Territory government but after a great deal of deliberation by the federal government - as being the only viable option for

providing facilities for us in Darwin. The difficulties of development on a defence site were such that the decision was made to forgo, if you like, an expenditure of some \$30 or \$40m on the northern side to appease the defence forces and avoid what was to me obviously the most logical and technically feasible solution on the southern side, and not on the site of the current terminal building which is not only obsolete in its structural capacity, its electrical facilities and its air-conditioning, but also in its operational capacity in terms of how many passengers it can handle efficiently and how many people can use the car-park. The obvious solution was to develop adjacent to existing taxiways somewhere along the alignment of the runway on the southern side. There has been much pain and expenditure in the investigation. We heard about the direct costs that have gone down the drain. We have heard from the Chief Minister about some of the indirect costs, the studies and the Public Works Committee costs.

I would like to dwell for a short while upon the effect that the decision by the federal Minister for Transport has had on contractors. We have heard that some 11 contractors tendered in good faith on the terminal building itself. The successful tender was almost spot on the estimated price, which is very unusual these days. The federal government had in fact the opportunity to capitalise on what was a very competitive marketplace. Those 11 contractors, including the unsuccessful ones, spent between \$30 000 and \$50 000 each in putting their tenders together. Contractors accept that as their lot provided of course that the client that they are dealing with intends to proceed in good faith. What has happened in this case is that not only is the successful tenderer down the drain with the costs he has incurred in the post-tender days - that is, by putting together a team and programs and gearing up for what was to be a fairly major construction program - but also those 10 other contributors have wasted some \$30 000 to \$50 000 each.

In addition, each one of those contractors has probably pulled in 2 or 3 subcontractors to price the various components of the same job. Many of those subcontractors can barely afford to live from month to month and certainly cannot afford the waste in time and direct dollars to them in putting forward subcontract prices for what is to be a non-job. Many other contractors were programming around what was to be \$30m-worth of civil works which, I understand, had already been fully documented to be ready to go out to tender in January. I mention these because the secondary effects of such a decision spread right throughout the community.

I have talked about contractors and business people. What about the professionals who, on a basis of working for 3 years for the Department of Housing and Construction on that major project, brought their families to Darwin and or put their children into boarding schools? After 3 months, those people, many of whom have paid their costs themselves, now have to try to find employment locally. That is difficult because many of them are specialists in major projects rather than minor building works. Major civil and structural projects of the size and nature of the Darwin Airport project do not come along too often. The likelihood of these people obtaining employment locally is minimal. Will the federal government help these people with their return and subsequent employment elsewhere or will they be left holding their own bag after only 3 months of employment? What impression will that leave on them not only of Darwin but, more particularly, of the federal government?

What about all of the contractors and subcontractors who have been employed on the 3 or 4 projects that have started already? It is all right for us to say that they will be paid for the works already completed. That is

absolute nonsense, Mr Speaker. I urge members to talk to one of those sub-contractors and find out their indirect costs and, more particularly, the direct costs of employing additional workers, bringing them to town, buying materials, gearing up and forgoing other contractual work in Darwin. That has left a gaping hole in their forward planning. Ask them how they will feel at the end of the financial year. It is an absolute and utter disgrace.

There is no point in our going over the sad history, Mr Speaker, but it does give me the opportunity to get a little off my chest. I think it is worth indicating for the record the performance of the opposition. I understand the frustration that the member for MacDonnell as opposition spokesman must have in realising that his lobbying carries absolutely zero weight. However, I call on him to persist, with all the force that he can muster, in impressing on the federal government that the people of the Northern Territory are saying: 'What about us?'

Senator Ted Robertson slammed the local press as being irresponsible for raising this matter some 5 or 6 weeks ago. We can see now how irresponsible it was. I recall all his grand words about how he would lobby and how he would ensure that the Northern Territory would not be treated in anything other than fair and equitable manner. What he was suggesting was that we were entitled to pro rata treatment by the federal government. Rubbish! The Northern Territory is so far behind the 8-ball that what we deserve and what we should cry out for and what he should cry out for is a catch-up in the infrastructure that this Territory needs such as railways and water resource programs. Every other state had its major dams and major water structures in place after a long history of support by the New South Wales-Victorian bloc. This Territory is entitled to catch up.

Senator Walsh suggested in his press statement early in March that there was no way that a decision would be made until the full budgetary discussions had been completed. What else have they decided in the meantime and not told anybody? We must be the first cab off the rank. What other state in Australia has had a major project of this nature curtailed this early in the piece? There is no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition is right on track with his suggestion that what we have copped is the 3-card trick. The 6 months is an absolute nonsense. Unless we get together, there will not be an item in next year's federal budget for ongoing expenditure at Darwin Airport. It is just a trick to get us right out of the way, not just for the next 6 months but for the next 18 months.

Mr Speaker, I guess one can look at all the various aspects. We talk about the Bosch report and its suggestion about cost recovery on the Darwin Airport. How shortsighted that report is! What we need in this country is for somebody to be able to look ahead and examine the whole spectrum of the development of this continent. When we are talking about Darwin Airport, we are not talking only about the Northern Territory but about a national facility. What we have in the Bosch report is that every passenger who comes through Darwin will have to pay \$20 or more. What a lot of nonsense! As long as they wish to, federal governments can continue to commission reports and inquiries to justify their measly political decisions. Here we have another instance where a federal minister has not taken the advice of his department and indeed has not even discussed the matter with his department. I defy him to show me that he has. He has made this decision because he has been told to do so purely for political ends.

Over the last 3 to 6 months, we have seen the building up, aided

unfortunately by members of the opposition, of a deliberate attempt to denigrate the government of the Northern Territory and the elected member for the Northern Territory in the federal parliament. There have been slanders and comments that we will get what we deserve, that we have brought this on ourselves: 'If you guys didn't take such big salary rises and if you didn't waste \$2.5m on casinos...'. We dispute that of course. That is what they are talking about, Mr Speaker, not \$10m in direct costs, not \$20m in indirect costs. We are talking about really big sums here. Instead of slandering the Northern Territory government and the constructive work that it has done over the years, the Territory opposition ought to cease its false allegations about irresponsible spending and take the opportunity to get together with us and do something constructive for the Northern Territory. I have no doubt that the scene that has been set over the last 3 months was a deliberate attempt to make it easier for the federal government to stab us in the back on the Thursday before Easter. It is not difficult to be cynical about federal politicians at all.

However, neither this member nor, I would hope, any other member of the Northern Territory Assembly on either side of the Assembly will allow it to rest there. We will lobby as strongly and as forcefully as we can to ensure that a correct and just decision is taken immediately and is illustrated within the next budget to allow the development of this most important facility. I would suggest that the federal minister should see if he could set aside \$50m instead of \$100m and hand that over to us. I am sure that, given another 8 ha of land on the southern side, or wherever else on the Darwin Airport site, we could develop an extremely efficient facility on his behalf. I say that not quite tongue in cheek because we see time and time again that facilities that have been designed on our behalf by external consultants and departments do not always necessarily represent the most efficient and workable solution. I do not wish to denigrate the public servants who have been involved in that project from the Adelaide office nor the consultants that they have engaged, but when one sees design complications, at this early stage, that could have been avoided quite easily through local reference, one cannot help but reflect that it would be so much easier if they handed over \$50m and let us do the job in our own way and more efficiently, more productively and certainly much faster.

Mr DONDAS (Tourism): Mr Speaker, in rising this afternoon to support the statement, I would like to place on record that I am in complete support of all that has been said in this debate so far. The area that I want to cover relates to tourism. Most members of this Assembly would be aware that, about 4 years ago, the Northern Territory government chose to try to add to the various tourist infrastructures that existed at that time. The government decided that, as we could not mine uranium, which would have created jobs, and we were restricted in other areas, it was as well to concentrate on tourism. I think that decision may have been taken at the same time that the federal government announced that a new international terminal would be constructed. One can think of the many hundreds of millions of dollars that have been invested in the Northern Territory to put tourist infrastructure in place over the last couple of years. Of course, members would be aware that we have a Sheraton Hotel under construction. It is expected that it will be completed in mid-1986. We have the Darwin Beaufort Hotel which is due to open in August this year. Sir Frederick Sutton has made an announcement in respect of the construction of a 200-room hotel on his site in town and another gentleman has also announced the development of a 250-room hotel on the Esplanade.

Those developers expected that there would be a commitment by the federal government to complete the infrastructure which is sorely needed for the development of tourism. I must inform honourable members that, in the last

couple of days, grave concerns have been expressed to me by these developers. They have said: 'We all know what the international carriers are saying about the Darwin Airport. We heard it this morning. It is a disgrace'. During my recent trip to Japan and in speaking to JAL and All Nippon Airways, the first question I was asked was: 'We understand that you are going to get a new international air terminal at Darwin, is that so?' We said: 'Yes, as far as we are aware'. At that time, there was a commitment by the federal government to put that infrastructure in place. Of course, they were very pleased that the project was going ahead. I do not know how they will feel when we advise them that it has been put on hold for 6 months. The Chief Minister has sent a telex to the federal minister requesting further discussions to see if we can find a way of overcoming the present problem. Nobody denies the fact that the federal government has a \$10 000m deficit and it is trying to reduce it. It is unfortunate that it picked on one of the most important projects for the Northern Territory: the Darwin air terminal.

Mr Speaker, the decision taken several years ago to place the terminal on the north side was not supported by many members of this Assembly. However, we were happy to get a new air terminal and, if it was to be sited on the north side, that was fair enough. I can remember the honourable member for Millner racing up and down McMillan's Road getting petitions signed to get the federal government to place the air terminal facility on the southern side and not the northern side. We were going to get a new terminal and that was the important thing. However, the decision to build on the northern side resulted from a request by the Defence Department. The RAAF does not want the civil operation adjacent to it. Of course, as we have seen in the documents presented by the Chief Minister this morning, the move to the northern side will add considerably to the cost.

We are prepared to request an excision of land from the federal government to construct a terminal on the same terms as the Cairns international airport. I have not seen that new international airport but I am told that it is a good facility and something that we could well use in the Northern Territory. That facility, including the runway, cost around \$38m. Therefore, I support the honourable member for Wagaman who suggested that the federal government should give us a certain amount of money and let us design and develop it. The Chief Minister also said this morning that private enterprise would be interested in providing some infrastructure in a facility such as that.

One thing that has not been said today is that Darwin is a growth area. In fact, the figure that has been given to me unofficially is that Darwin at the moment is enjoying a domestic growth factor in the airline industry of some 9.8% in comparison with the national average of some 6%. We talk about the additional infrastructure being put in place to try to encourage international visitors from many other parts of the world to come to the Northern Territory. The decision was made by the federal government in support of what we were doing here. Australia enjoys 1% of the international tourist market. That 1% is worth about \$1000m to Australia and a large number of jobs are associated with it. Of course, the federal government had a target and extensively promoted Australia through Paul Hogan in the United States to try to raise that 1% to 2%. It takes a tremendous amount of promotion and funds to achieve that target.

However, there is a growing interest in the Territory. There is a growing interest amongst Australians because of the promotional campaigns that have been undertaken by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. The Territory is enjoying a growth factor of 9.8%. The airlines are about to commence additional flights to the Territory. In fact, I am told that TAA will put on another Perth

to Alice Springs service. There may also be a direct Sydney to Darwin flight. All these things are taking place at the domestic level.

However, the international terminal is a disgrace. I support the Leader of the Opposition. The fact that people must stand around for 2 or 3 hours to get through that facility is something that we should all be ashamed of. We knew a month or so ago, when we spoke to the federal minister, that even if work had continued, the project would not have been finished until 1987 or 1988. What were we to do in the meantime? We approached both the Minister for Immigration, Mr Hurford, and Peter Morris and asked if there was something that we could do in the short term to facilitate the movement of people through the immigration and customs area. Of course, both those gentlemen agreed that something could be done and it would not cost very much because the staff was out there. We were told it would mean putting up a sign to accommodate the overseas visitors first. We are hopeful that something will come out of those discussions. However, the 13 international carriers that have landing rights in Darwin, irrespective of whether the traffic is there or not, have all given the thumbs down as far as the Darwin Airport is concerned.

I am very disappointed that the brakes have been put on the development of the new airport terminal. I feel particularly sorry for those international visitors and Darwinians returning home from holiday who must go through the trials and tribulations of the Darwin Airport. In the short term, I would hope that the federal Minister for Aviation would accede to the request of the Chief Minister for some early discussions to see whether a solution can be found to this impasse. I was a bit frightened by what the honourable member for Wagaman had to say. If the money is withdrawn now, after 6 months, there certainly will not be any money in the 1985-86 budget for it. Of course, that will have very serious implications for contractors who have employed people and the consultants who have set themselves up in Darwin and it will be a crying shame all round. I can remember Mr Hawke sitting on a front-end loader when he started the work on the new Darwin international airport. We have lost our railway and we have lost our airport. I wonder what is next.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, it is also a sad occasion for me to have to stand up and join in this debate because, as opposition speakers have said consistently, we are most concerned at the decision that the federal government has taken. We want to do everything that we can to reach a satisfactory solution so that both domestic and international travellers are processed quickly and efficiently through the Darwin Airport. I am reminded of a constituent of mine who visited Hawaii quite recently. When he landed on the strip at Hawaii, there were 7 other jumbos which all landed within a very short space of time. 2000 people went through the airport facility. He said that, within an hour of getting off the plane, he was in his hotel room. When you compare that with what happens at the Darwin Airport at present, it is a pretty startling difference indeed.

Mr Speaker, I must point out my concern that it seems that our federal member is not sharing in this bipartisan approach that we are taking to this matter. My information from a pretty reliable source is that, even at this stage, the federal member has not been anywhere near the federal Minister for Aviation. I accept that, if he were to approach him at this stage, it would probably be a bit late. The fact remains that the federal member, who was elected last year on the promise of protecting the interests of the Northern Territory and doing things that the previous federal member could not do in Canberra, has let us down rather badly. We could not criticise the federal member if he had made the effort and had been refused but it is clear that he has not made even a minimal effort to talk to the relevant minister in Canberra. He has relied instead on abusing that minister in the federal parliament. I think that the federal

member deserves the censure of this Assembly. Quite simply, he has not been doing his job in representing the interests of the Northern Territory. What is unfortunate is that we are missing out. His predecessor got the Darwin Airport project on the go but it is interesting that, in his time, the whole Darwin Airport development has come to a halt - I hope only temporarily.

Mr Speaker, another interesting point is that, in retrospect, it is clear that what we seem to be saying on both sides of the Assembly is that we would be perfectly happy with a \$40m or \$50m terminal building on the south side. If we knew then what we know now, we would have been able to put forward a very good argument last year for the construction of both the Alice Springs and the Darwin Airports for \$60m or \$70m. I say that retrospectively and I am not casting blame or aspersions on anybody. Obviously, that opportunity is now lost.

Mr Speaker, I want to take up some comments made by the Minister for Tourism. We reach a situation in these debates where, to use the words of the Leader of the Opposition, the government cannot resist gilding the lily. The minister said that the prime reason why the 12 or 13 international carriers who have landing rights into Darwin do not exercise those rights is because the airport facilities are not good enough. That is absolute nonsense and he knows it. He should be prepared to be honest about it. The reason why we do not have more international airlines into Darwin is that the traffic does not warrant it.

A more accurate account of the attitude of the airlines was given by the Australian Manager of JAL in an interview on the ABC program 'Territory Extra'. He expressed concern that the airport redevelopment would not proceed and said that his organisation would find it more efficient if that airport development took place. However, he also said that he thought it was possible for his airline to operate within the constraints of the present facility. He was not saying, despite the impression that the government would give, that JAL would not come here because we did not have this new airport facility at that stage. He was saying that his company could operate out of Darwin Airport if the load factors were okay but there were problems in increasing the size of that operation beyond a certain point. When we are talking about encouraging overseas tourism into the Northern Territory, we are talking about a combination of factors of which the terminal is only one. There was a very interesting article in the Business Review Weekly of 1 February 1985 called 'Cashing in on the yen for adventure'. It was talking about the influx of Japanese tourists into Australia. In 1983, Ayers Rock attracted 1.9% of Japanese tourists coming to Australia, Alice Springs attracted 1.6% and poor old Darwin did not rate at all. This year, it is anticipated that 105 000 Japanese tourists will fly into Australia. Of those, 70 000 will be on holiday and most of the rest will be on business. That indicates that Japanese businessmen are taking a very big interest indeed in the Australian economy. According to this article, it is anticipated that, by 1988, there will be 230 000 Japanese tourists.

It is quite clear that we are talking about an expanding market and it is in our interest to penetrate that market. I have consistently supported the efforts that the government has been making to tap into the Japanese tourist market. Mr Speaker, the Chairman of the Tourist Commission in the Northern Territory has said that, this year, we are expecting between 5000 and 6000 Japanese tourists in the Northern Territory. If that is an accurate figure, we are looking at attracting 7% of the total number of tourists visiting Australia, which is quite a significant increase on the 1.9% who managed to get to Ayers Rock in 1983. It appears that the programs that we have been offering in the Northern Territory are having some effect already in attracting more Japanese tourists to the Territory.

Equally important and, in my view probably more important than the airport facility these people will suffer if they fly directly in from overseas, is the experience that they have in the Northern Territory and the efforts made by people in the Northern Territory to show them a good time and ensure that they enjoy their stay. It is clear that the Japanese tourists that we have in the next 12 months to 2 years will be the vanguard of much greater numbers in years after that. It is important that they go away with a good impression of the Northern Territory and a pleasant recollection of their holiday. I must admit that I have some doubts on whether they will obtain a good impression of the Northern Territory at present.

This article demonstrates that the Japanese market is a specialist one, that people who are interested in supplying package tours to the Japanese really have to narrow their product down to the Japanese way of thinking and that what is acceptable to Australian tourists and other overseas tourists is not necessarily acceptable to Japanese tourists. One of the things that we have to remember is that most Japanese are over here for a very limited period. The holidays that they have in Japan are much shorter than ours. It is very unusual for the ordinary Japanese tourist to be in the country for more than 2 weeks. As a result of that pressure, the Japanese tourists demand real value for money and what they mean by value for money is keeping on the move and fitting in as much as possible. An example given in this article is that, after a 10-hour flight from Tokyo to Brisbane, when most of us would settle quite happily into our hotel, the first thing that Japanese tourists do is go to the Lone Pine Sanctuary to cuddle a koala. I think that is indicative of the approach that Japanese tourists and Japanese wholesalers take to the market. In my view, that poses a problem because most of the tours in the Northern Territory do not operate at that sort of level.

I will relate an experience of a friend of mine who was in Darwin recently. My friend signed up to go on a 1-day tour to Kakadu, which involved a bus trip out, a 4-hour trip up the South Alligator River, a bit of a meal somewhere along the river and then the trip back home. What happened on that particular occasion was that the boat broke down and, instead of a 4-hour trip up the river, it was a 1-hour trip up the river and then 2 boats in tandem taking 3 hours to get down the river. There was no apology from the operators of that particular excursion. From what I have heard, it happens rather frequently. The Leader of the Opposition has received the same complaints. If that happens even to 1 or 2 Japanese groups, we can kiss those Japanese tourists goodbye. They want a quality experience in Australia. They do not want to be run around by slipshod operators in the Northern Territory or in any other parts of Australia.

Apparently, you can have a 2-day trip out there and the second day involves overnighing in one of the hotels there. The highlight of the second day is a half-hour plane trip through Kakadu. I am sure the half-hour plane trip is terrific but, to get the half-hour plane trip, you spend another 24 hours in the region. Again, that will not appeal to Japanese who are pressed for time and want to see as much of this country as they can. We must market the Northern Territory much better than we have been if we are to attract the Japanese tourists in ever-growing numbers.

Mr Speaker, the positive suggestion that I want to make is that the government ought to take the initiative in that area. There needs to be a round table conference; I will not use the word 'summit'. It should be a round table conference of everybody involved in the tourist industry who is interested in offering services to the Japanese market. There are experts in the south who would be very useful to the Northern Territory in developing this market. For example, there is a hotel chain on the Gold Coast which, because of the

efforts it has made, picks up 75% to 85% of all the Japanese tourists who go to the Gold Coast. Considering the number of different hotels and apartments there, that is amazing. One hotel chain with 2 or 3 hotels on the Gold Coast picks up 85% of the Japanese tourist market because it has specialised in catering for the Japanese tourist market. It knows how to go about it. For example, that hotel was taken out all the showers and put in baths and jacuzzis because that is the way the Japanese prefer to wash. It is little things like having Japanese language menus, having toothpicks on the table and having hot towels for people to use at the beginning of the meal. It could, in the future, include computer-controlled toilets.

Mr Speaker, in my view, not enough is being done. Again, I am not being critical but we really do have to zero in on the tourist operators whom we expect to offer programs to overseas tourists, particularly the Japanese tourists. We must make them aware of the special needs of these tourists and put some pressure on them to adapt to these special needs and to perform. If we create bad impressions within the next 12 months to 2 years, we will have great difficulty retaining that market. That lesson has been demonstrated in the south. People who have made a mark in that market but who are not prepared to offer a quality product lose out.

I accept that the airport is a problem but I believe that, until we get a satisfactory airport terminal, and hopefully it will not be all that long, we have an opportunity, if we market ourselves properly, to say to Japanese tourists: 'We have a problem when you get here but we can offer you such a well-packaged holiday that is unique in the whole world that you will be prepared to come and enjoy that holiday'. In the near future, the success of the Japanese tourist market very much lies with the Territory people and with our government which must make the necessary effort to attract and welcome Japanese tourists to the Northern Territory.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I fully support the statement on the Darwin Airport made this morning by the Chief Minister. Certainly, I support the bipartisan approach to be taken in future deliberations with various federal ministers. The \$20m question that I would like to ask, and I am sure it will unfold as another saga of the Northern Territory, is: What will happen to the perpetual monument evidenced out there off McMillan's Road? Will it stand forever as a monument to a mammoth bureaucratic bungle and mismanagement of federal funds? As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out, we may at various times take the opportunity to gild the lily but the simple fact is that, time and time again, we have been subjected to ridicule and accusations of mismanagement of funds in the Territory. It has been used as an excuse for various cuts and for arguments by various ministers to their federal departments. I am sure that, somewhere in Canberra there must be one huge dilemma as to what will happen about the \$20m already spent on the proposed new Darwin airport on the northern side.

However, I do not wish to dwell on that. I simply wish to make an appeal to both the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition that, as they enter into discussions with various federal ministers in Canberra, they take into account, in the overall equation, the tourist development in Alice Springs and do not forget what has happened with Alice Springs and the pending development of its airport. I would request the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to make themselves very familiar with the previous plan, the ALOP, for the development of the Alice Springs Airport that the Commonwealth tried to foist on Alice Springs council. If you read that, you will see that the ALOP involved a redevelopment of the terminal for \$3.6m and an upgrading of the runway and

existing tarmac area for another \$5m. Anybody reading that report will quickly grasp that the plans that were proposed were totally inadequate for the 10-year program of the ALOP. The growth rates that have been mentioned this morning certainly substantiate that argument. We have heard the Minister for Tourism say that there has been a 9.8% growth in domestic traffic in the Territory alone. The growth rate for Alice Springs over the last 12 months has been 6.7%, which is phenomenal. The development and the planned release of land in Alice Springs will mean another 8000 people in one area.

Mr Speaker, I make that appeal because I believe that, unless the approach to the federal minister incorporates both the Alice Springs Airport and the Darwin Airport, we will ultimately lose out. The clear indication from all the research done by the Tourist Commission is that it is imperative that any future approach incorporate an international standard airport in Alice Springs as well.

I will offer one example of how things grow and develop. Some 18 months ago, the Adelaide Airport opened with 1 Qantas flight weekly on a Sunday. Passing through Adelaide Airport recently, I went over to the international terminal and spoke to the staff. I was very surprised to learn that, in the short space of 18 months, they have 3 Singapore Airlines flights a week, 3 British Airways flights a week and 4 Qantas flights a week. That was simply because of the facility provided and a very active promotional campaign by the South Australian government. Because of the association of both Alice Springs and Darwin with the South-east Asian region and Japan, it is obvious that, once we have the catalyst of reasonable facilities, we will grow and develop. Honourable members should not forget the huge commitment made by the Northern Territory government to the promotion of tourism both overseas and within Australia, coupled with the active promotion by the Australian Tourist Commission such as the Hoge's advertisements in America. As honourable members know, everybody over there now barbecues shrimps and stands around with a can of Fosters in his hand.

The forward bookings and the forecasts made by the airlines and the tourist industry generally indicate that some impact is already being felt. It will be disastrous if a massive increase of tourist numbers to the Territory witness the appalling facilities that we have on offer. The reason we cannot offer any better facilities is the continual string of broken promises by the federal government. Once again I appeal to both honourable leaders in this Assembly to familiarise themselves with the facts regarding the Alice Springs Airport and not to leave it out of the equation when they approach various federal ministers.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I will not dwell too long on what others have said, but I think one of the great shames of the recent moves made in relation to the proposed new Darwin Airport is that there was a time when we could be fairly sure that, if a senior politician made a fuss about breaking ground on a major project, it would go ahead. Of course, one is always a little sceptical about the development of major projects, bearing in mind the impact that they have on budgets. Despite the Prime Minister himself having driven a backhoe to break ground on the project, we still cannot be convinced that the development will be completed. I think that is a shame. For Territorians, it may be the straw on the camel's back after the most famous of all broken promises - the railway line. With the railway, at least we did not have a project which the Prime Minister had actually commenced by driving the first golden spike. He merely promised it and then did not do it. In this case, we have had the promise, the commencement and now a halt. Let us hope it is only a temporary one. I think that is significant because, certainly in our

travels as ministers, we are often spoken to by investors and visitors about progress in the Territory and the airport terminal has always been a topic of conversation. For some time now, we have been able to assure them that the airport terminal will be built, that it has commenced and that funds have been allocated by the federal parliament. But it seems that, these days, there is no certainty whatsoever.

I feel that the airport project has been put together with some sort of 10-year mentality and that is a terrible shame. I say that because of the decision taken earlier to place the airport terminal on the northern side of the runway. I could never understand that decision. I did not make any fuss about it internally. There was a team of people looking at the subject, including officers from the Northern Territory, and we heard that the insistence upon that location by the federal government was for defence reasons. If the terminal goes on that side of the runway, and it may be that that is where it will go eventually, it seems to me that it will be to our disadvantage. It will push all the traffic through the airport on to McMillans Road, Bagot Road, Dick Ward Drive and the Stuart Highway to get to town. We can assume that most of the traffic through the airport will be to and from the central business district, at least as long as the major tourist accommodation is here and it looks as if that will be the case for a long time to come. I could not see the sense in nearly doubling the distance that people would have to travel to get to town from an airport terminal situated on the northern side of the runway, compared to the convenience of one somewhere in the vicinity of the existing terminal which could feed the traffic straight on to the Stuart Highway which, of course, feeds straight into the heart of Darwin. The costs to the Northern Territory for access roads probably will be higher for a terminal on the northern side of the runway than would be the case on the southern side of the runway.

The major point I make in relation to the northern side of the runway as a site is that I am told that the completion of the advanced stages of the Tindal project - stages 3 or 4 - will mean that Tindal will be a totally-equipped, forward defence base, complete with engine-servicing facilities and whatever else you can imagine. It will be a very substantial base with a far greater capacity than stage 1 of Tindal. I understand that, at that time, the RAAF will withdraw from Darwin almost totally to Tindal, possibly even complete with radar facilities etc. If that is the case, it seems wrong to site an airport terminal in Darwin today on the basis of the existing RAAF facilities. That is what I meant when I said that it seems that the planning has been on a 10-year mentality instead of a 20 or 30-year mentality. Once the RAAF withdraws from Darwin totally, one presumes that the land it occupies at present will be sold by the Commonwealth or will revert to the Territory in some form for future use. That large parcel of land is situated almost in the centre of Darwin. It will realise a very handsome sum when it is sold eventually for whatever development would be suitable at the time. It seems that, eventually, the Commonwealth will recoup quite a substantial sum from facilities that it might be putting into the airport today.

I thought that I would take this opportunity to place these views on record by speaking to the Chief Minister's statement today because what happens over the next few months with regard to the final decision on the Darwin terminal is very important to our future. It seems a shame that the minister has announced a 6-month review. Other members have suggested reasons why he may have chosen 6 months, but I find it very disappointing that he could not have had a complete review of the project, its future, the possible savings that could be made on the project as it is envisaged today or the project on a new site. I do

not understand why that review could not have been done in a month. I am sure that, with attention to detail and with the raft of information that is available already on this project, a complete review could be done in a month if there was a will to do it in that time. At least we would minimise the uncertainty that faces us all, particularly the investors who have put money into this place, about whether we will have an adequate terminal by the time most of the major hotel proposals are completed in the Territory. I commend the Chief Minister on his statement.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the Chief Minister's statement regarding the deferral of the Darwin Airport project. I would like to tell the Assembly of my recollections of Darwin Airport. I visited that airport first in 1964 when I drove up to Darwin from Mt Isa. The first impression I received was that it was an old World War II hangar. It took me 4 days to drive here in my old Ford Prefect utility. That is how keen I was to get here. I was so impressed with the place that I decided that I had to come back in the future. I must admit, Mr Speaker, that I am very pleased indeed that I did because I believe that Darwin has a tremendous future. I returned to Darwin in 1973 after having lived in southern climes for quite some time. I walked off the aircraft straight into the heat of October. The terminal had the old ceiling fans swishing around and the same louvres were there. I thought to myself: 'The old dump has not changed very much in all that time'. Apart from some upgrading after Cyclone Tracy, it is still the same.

My next recollection is after Cyclone Tracy in 1974. I returned on the Saturday immediately after the cyclone to find thousands of people streaming out through that airport. We were coming the other way. The ceiling had fallen in, electrical cables were hanging and there were women with crying babies amidst all sorts of destruction. The floor was covered with water. Water was dripping through the ceiling. It was complete devastation. I thought to myself: 'Well, now that this place has been destroyed almost completely, we will get a decent airport at last'. But that was not to be the case; the same old hangar was upgraded again and it is still there. It is totally inadequate. If you go out there early in the morning, at lunch time, early in the afternoon or at midnight or later, particularly on Friday nights, you will find that the place is totally congested. Chaos reigns. There is confusion and people are falling all over each other. Mr Speaker, it is an absolute disaster and that situation has prevailed for years and years.

Because of our unique situation in the Northern Territory, our flights tend to arrive together. That is the way they are scheduled. They are not staggered in a way that would enable the existing facility to cope with the traffic adequately. The international side of the airport is a much greater disaster. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I have travelled overseas and returned through Darwin Airport. Mind you, I was not on government business. However, I have had the unfortunate experience of standing out there at 4 am, in the rain and heat, carrying loads of hand luggage and young children and experiencing all the other things that go with a long night flight from Singapore. When a Jumbo arrives with 400 people on board, they all have to undergo health and immigration checks at Darwin Airport. It would be sensible to direct people who were going on to southern ports straight to an international transit lounge where they could remain until they reboarded their aircraft. They could be passed through health and immigration in one of the southern airports which could cater for them more adequately. We should take through those facilities only passengers who are exiting in Darwin. But, that is too easy. What we do is force these poor unfortunate people - and probably

most of us have been subjected to this - to go through this total exercise. Having passed through our health and immigration checks, they go along to a pile of luggage, which the Leader of the Opposition described earlier, and pray that their baggage and its contents have suffered no serious damage. It is an absolute disaster.

With this in mind, for many years, the Territory government has been lobbying and presenting arguments to the federal government to develop a new terminal in Darwin. It is not as if it has happened only this year or last year; it has been going on for years. Finally, back in the days of the Fraser government, we heard that it had a commitment to build this airport in Darwin. Subsequently, we were very pleased to note that Mr Hawke's government decided to proceed with the project as well and we have just heard how he took great pride in driving the bulldozer, or was it a backhoe, to turn the first sod. That was fantastic. We were all very pleased. I, for one, was not particularly pleased with the construction on the northern side of the airport but, nevertheless, I was prepared to accept that because our real desire was a new terminal. Both sides of the Assembly were very happy. Then we saw construction occurring. There is a red or orange tower being erected out there. There are earthworks and all sorts of facilities being established. In fact, we heard today that \$20m has been expended already. We also heard that there is a strong possibility that the government will back away from that now and perhaps consider relocating on the southern side. How anybody could justify expenditure of \$20m on one side and then turn around and relocate on the other side is beyond my comprehension. However, apart from that disaster, what we are also talking about is the jobs that will be lost because, as the member for Wagaman indicated, a number of people have been brought up to Darwin to work on that project, many of them professional people. They will become redundant. Hundreds of jobs would have been created during the construction phase and, because of the upgrading of the facilities, far more people would have been employed in those facilities than at the existing terminal. Plainly, it is not simply a loss of \$20m.

I believe that the possibility of the federal government spending \$20m and then walking away from the project is more than we can tolerate. The member for Millner told us how important tourism is to the Northern Territory and, whilst I agree with some of the things that he said, I certainly disagree with others. The airport terminal is one of the most important pieces of infrastructure required to bring tourists into the Northern Territory. As he said, Japanese tourists get a holiday of approximately 2 weeks so they are not interested in flying into a southern city and then coming back to the Northern Territory. They would like to disembark here, virtually overnight from Japan, tour through the Northern Territory and exit again either through Darwin or through one of the southern ports. I can tell you that, at the moment, we are missing out on a tremendous number of international tourists, most of them from the United States. They are flying into Sydney and Brisbane, going up the Queensland coast to Cairns, flying from Cairns to Alice Springs, out to Ayers Rock, back to Alice Springs and on either to Perth or Adelaide. The Top End is missing out and the reason is that we do not have a decent airport. Once we get one, we will start to find those tourists coming straight to Darwin. However, international tourists who are used to all the facilities available around the rest of the world should not be compelled to stand for 2 hours in the heat and the rain at Darwin Airport. One group might do it but no more would come, I can assure you. If you fly into Singapore, it is wham, bang and out the door. In 10 or 15 minutes, you are gone and, in another 15 minutes, you are sitting in an international hotel. Here it takes probably 3 hours by the time you wait for a cab. That is the difference between Darwin Airport and Singapore Airport.

During the last financial year, we spent something like \$13m or \$14m on the promotion of tourism in the Northern Territory. The honourable minister has recently been to Japan. He spent considerable time and effort talking to people over there and encouraging JAL and others to have tours to the Northern Territory. What happens? The federal government lets us down and the facility that was to be provided will no longer be developed. I am very pleased indeed that honourable members opposite will be cooperating with us and adopting a bipartisan approach. That is long overdue and perhaps we can do it again in the future. I think it is very good because, where the federal government does the wrong thing by the Northern Territory, we should adopt a bipartisan approach. I compliment the opposition for that.

Mr B. Collins: Thank you.

Mr SETTER: It is my pleasure.

Mr Bell: Our day is made.

Mr SETTER: I believe that the Darwin Airport development is absolutely vital to the economic future of the Northern Territory. Our whole tourist development structure is built around this and we must fight tooth and nail to ensure that this facility is included in the forthcoming budget. I recommend that the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition should do all possible to promote this issue in Canberra.

There is one last thing that I would like to say and I am quite sure that the member for Millner will be interested in this. When I drove down McMillans Road adjacent to his electorate the other day, I noticed that, just across the road at the entrance to the airport, there is a nice flag pole and, at the top of that flag pole, the Australian flag is fluttering. I would urge the Chief Minister to send a telex to the Minister for Transport recommending that he fly that flag at half mast because that is where it should be right at this moment.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, the member for Flynn mentioned the \$20m cost. I wonder what it cost us for the flag pole. I understand the site office cost \$900 000 whereas everybody else uses a couple of demountables. The member for Wagaman spoke about the contractual problems that now exist as a result of terminating this particular project and the member for MacDonnell has suggested that there is more than one way of leaving the Northern Territory. I am not sure how people are expected to get to Bali or points north. People can drive down south but it is a lot slower. The member for Millner gave us quite a detailed outline of how we should become involved in cuddling crocodiles in the Northern Territory because we do not have koala bears for the Japanese tourists. The point I am making is that talk is getting us nowhere. Bipartisan approach or no bipartisan approach, the federal government has let us down once again. We were told that the Hawke government would build the railway. The airport was given to us and Mr Hawke was seen driving the bulldozer and showing us how his government would treat the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I would like to give a quotation. In keeping with the practice which I have established in this Assembly, I will indicate the source of the quotation after I have finished because to reveal the source would detract somewhat from the impact that I am trying to achieve. This is in answer to the Bosch report and was written a little while back: "'Unless the government takes remedial action," said the council' - they are referring to

the Darwin City Council - "the Commonwealth's first airport of call will remain the drab, uninviting, apparently uncared for, place it is today". That comes from the Payne and Fletcher report presented on 10 October 1937. We still have not moved very much farther down the line. The airport that they were referring to was the Ross Smith Airport which was so named after Ross Smith landed there. In fact, they had fires along Fannie Bay to welcome him to Australia and to show him just where the airport was. If he could return here today, he would recognise the present Darwin Airport as much the same as the one where he landed many years ago.

We have not proceeded much farther down the line despite all the reports. I refer in particular to the report of the Senate Select Committee on the Re-siting of the Darwin Airport which is probably one of the thickest documents that has ever come from the federal parliament. It is some 2 or 3 inches thick. Heaven knows how much time, effort and travel went into the preparation of that document to tell us where the airport should be sited. Millions of dollars, I suspect, would have been spent before we even reached the stage of deciding to build it on the northern side.

All that aside, we commenced to build it and, in mid-flight, we decided to call a halt and review the whole project. I commend our bipartisan approach. I think it is really a remarkable achievement that we have a united front against the federal government in Canberra. However, it will not get us much farther down the line than we were 50 years ago when people were talking about Darwin as the first port of call.

Perhaps we could reflect on that for a moment. Why don't we have a commitment by the federal government for the land bridge concept to bring ships into the Northern Territory, unload them and put the goods on to a railway system to send them south and avoid the tremendous waste which occurs now with shipping around the east and west coasts? Why don't we have a commitment from the federal government to build Australia's first point of call from the air? I offer one reason. If we did that, we could probably turn Victoria into a horse paddock. That is what Sidney Kidman wanted to do some years ago because most of the tourists would have flocked directly into the Northern Territory of Australia with its magnificent natural attractions at Kakadu and in Alice Springs. I would look very closely at the reasons behind the federal government cancelling this project. Is it another attempt to frustrate the developments which have taken place as a result of the efforts of the previous Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the current Chief Minister, and the Minister for Tourism to develop our natural resources and the tourist infrastructure that is being put in place?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can only agree with other speakers today that we have not progressed much farther down the line than we were some 50 years ago. Unless we have stronger words than have been spoken in this Assembly, we cannot trust the federal government to come up with the goods. It has done it again: first the railway and now the airport. I would like to conclude by saying that the Minister for Tourism is quite correct that we must have the facility before people will come here. It is the chicken and egg concept all over again. We are starting to put the infrastructure in place yet the one thing that we thought was a certainty has been taken from us.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, with so much sweetness and light flying around the Chamber, I am taking my courage in my hands to rise to speak. As I am not the shadow minister for transport and works nor a minister in this government, I would like to fly a kite which I will call the Alice option. As was mentioned by the member for Flynn, some time ago there was the possibility

whereby, for about a \$2m contribution from the Northern Territory government, we could have had about \$8m for an Alice Springs Airport. Certainly that was not enough. However, if we had put up about \$10m, we might have got together an amount of about \$50m which I believe could have built stage I of what we require in Alice Springs.

I think that this is one of those occasions when the government is thinking too small. We are talking about a Darwin Airport, whereas what we should be looking towards is a hyper-airport in Alice Springs. It is time that shy Alice stopped peeping out from behind the skirts of uncle Darwin and we acknowledged the real, long-term development of the airline and tourist industry in Australia. You may ask why Alice Springs, Mr Deputy Speaker. As we all know, it has one major attribute: it is central. From Alice Springs we already have flights direct to Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and, of course, Darwin. I believe that, by placing the major airport for Australia, a hyper-airport, in Alice Springs, we could then shuttle the passengers out across Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that we should remember that there have been developments in aeroplanes since the period referred to by the member for Berrimah. Sir Ross and Keith Smith did not have much of an option but to stop in Darwin. They were probably running a bit short of fuel by that time. Another famous aviator of the time, Bert Hinkler, who actually went to school with my grandmother, did not have much of a choice either. However, technology has gone past all that. We have longer-range planes that would not have to stop here. They could fly straight to Alice Springs. The technology of planes like the Concorde could be taken advantage of with an Alice Springs hyper-airport by flying directly to their overseas destinations.

I do not wish to be too hard on Darwin as many members are from Darwin. However, they must acknowledge that the Top End is not really in the same class as central Australia when it comes to tourist attractions. It does not have anything of the nature of Ayers Rock. It does not have the possibility of developing something which I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, is a favourite desire of yours. We could fly people into Alice Springs. If we can have the road developed out through Harts Range, towards Tobermory, across through central Queensland and over to the reef, we would have a very interesting drive. People could take in various gem fields etc on the way and, after having seen the rock, drive to the reef. Such circle tours would provide, in the long term, the development that we are looking for.

We talk about the ring roads which we are developing in central Australia. For example, the one from Ayers Rock around to Kings Canyon will be a very popular route. We are hoping that it will not be too long before we are able to develop that ring road or have a large ring road with rings within it coming out through Ormiston Gorge. Then, we would be able to offer people a variety of tours - day tours, 2-day tours etc - which took in the major attractions of central Australia. In the future, when Darwin gets its act together, people may decide to take in an Ayers Rock-Top End-reef tour.

We know that overseas fares are so much cheaper than internal fares. It seems to me that, to bring people from Hong Kong, Japan or wherever, and land them in Darwin and then force them to obtain an internal flight down to their real destination, which is central Australia, is really not the way to go. We have various options out of Alice Springs. I do not know whether Top End members realise it but we have a railway. There are a number of railway buffs who would like to travel on that railway south. Some time ago, the member for Sadadeen talked about balloons. That is not quite as stupid as it sounds.

Possibly, with our great natural gas resources we could fill up balloons with hot air and send them northwards where they could get a refill from this Assembly to take the southern trip.

Mr D.W. Collins: Dear, oh dear!

Mr EDE: In response to that interjection from the member for Sadadeen, possibly we could send him along as some sort of emergency backup.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not going to make any representations against the Darwin Airport but I think that we must look towards the longer term. Obviously, a hyper-airport in Alice Springs is the real answer to Australia's needs as far as international travel is concerned.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Millner asked what our federal member was doing about it. I will update him a little because he said he had it on very good authority that the federal member had not been doing anything. I can inform him that he has made an approach to Mr Morris for an appointment. Unfortunately, such appointments seem to be very hard to obtain. That is not surprising when the minister has only bad news. To suggest that the former Chief Minister would sit in the House of Representatives and say nothing means he has forgotten that the former Chief Minister is not backward in making his point for the Territory. That is the job that we sent him to do.

About 3 weeks ago, Senator Ted Robertson announced that he would organise a meeting with Mr Morris for the 3 Territory members: Senator Kilgariff, Paul Everingham and himself. That was another big noise. There has been absolutely no result. Therefore, when a Labor member cannot get his own government to agree to a meeting after 3 weeks, one can appreciate the difficulties the former Chief Minister might have in obtaining an appointment with Mr Morris who obviously does not want to see him.

My interest in this debate relates both to Darwin and Alice Springs. Alice Springs Airport was another federal government promise made prior to the infamous election of 5 March, after which more promises have been broken than you could shoot at. They offered everything that the Liberals offered and then offered a bit more to complete a good con job. The previous federal member, Mr Reeves, at one stage even tried to claim that some work that Ansett was doing at the Alice Springs Airport was a result of federal government action. That was nothing but a con and an insult to people's intelligence.

We heard mention of the ALOP plan. It is on record in this Assembly that the former federal member, Mr Reeves, opposed local ownership in the council but, when he was elected to the federal House, he changed colours and supported the idea. I believe very strongly that Alice Springs Airport is a federal government responsibility because of its national importance. The reality is that the federal government will not come to the party. Only on that ground do I support the suggestion that the Northern Territory government must become involved. We envisage that the Northern Territory, and particularly Alice Springs, will expand its tourist potential. You can see it in the job-creation process and the wealth-creation process. However, we are stuck with a federal government which is comprised of a visionless group of people who are inward looking. As I said, I do not believe that we should be involved. But, if we want results, we must become involved. Let us hope that our involvement will bring those results. Even then, we cannot do it totally off our own bat.

The Chief Minister said that the money already spent on the planning and work for the northern side of the airport was about \$20m. The Minister for Transport and Works mentioned that the savings that could be made on the southern side of the airport would be about \$18m. If that is true, then the review will be a complete waste of time because we are in too deep. If we scrap the northern side and decide on the southern side to try to save \$18m, because we have already spent \$19.9m, we would be \$1.9m worse off. Therefore, I would suggest that the review on that basis would be an absolute waste of time but, of course, that is what the review is for. It is a trick as old as governments themselves. If you want to save a bit of money, if you want to stall for time, then you have a review.

I agree with the Minister for Mines and Energy: if there must be a review - and I believe it is a waste of time - it could be done in a month. It will be sadly interesting to watch just how long this review takes. Again, we are stuck with a visionless, directionless, inward-looking federal government. Mr Speaker, when you are in trouble, there are 2 things you can do: work your way out through job-creation and wealth-creation, which takes courage and is what we believe that a decent airport in Darwin and Alice Springs would help us to do or, alternatively, hop into a corner and cringe. I am afraid the federal government has taken the second option and that is very bad indeed not only for the Territory but for Australia as a whole.

I support the call that the Chief Minister has made for greater Territory involvement and for the federal government to give us that \$50m and let us get on with the job which we would do to the best of our ability and which we would be prepared to live with. We should not have to take that course. The promises were made and the promises have been broken. If we want airports in Darwin and in Alice Springs, we will have to become involved. Let us get on with the job and let us see if we can get at least something out of the federal government to help us do exactly that.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I shall be brief. In jest this afternoon, the member for Stuart suggested we consider the Alice Springs option. I would just like to make the point that I do not see the development of an international standard airport at Alice Springs as an alternative; I think it will be imperative to our total tourist drive. The honourable member should not despair that we are not talking about Alice Springs today. I think that is not very far away.

Mr Speaker, I wish to set aside for the time being the waste of money and the bad effects that will flow through the Darwin community from cancelling the contracts and the waste that will flow from it in terms of interest payments. Those broken promises will have their day in a more political environment. Today's debate highlights something that is very important: the difference between Territorians and other Australians. It came through in the words of just about every speaker today. The debate highlighted the fact that we have ambitions, objectives, dreams, visions and the determination to see that they become a reality. We believe in creating employment, prosperity and wealth. One of the common threads in today's debate was that every speaker saw the dire effects in the cancellation of the project and spoke about it more in sorrow than in anger. Cancelling the project was seen as restricting growth, inhibiting our tourist promotion, laying off people and wasting funds. No one saw it as an exercise in saving our way out of the enormous financial mess that has been created in Canberra. The \$120m that is involved here is designed to have a creative effect that, in the long term, will be measured in terms of importing wealth into this country and creating jobs for Australians. Temporarily, that has been lost.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the support of honourable members in this debate. I will be working with whatever resources I can muster to ensure that we do get our airport and I will be seeking the assistance of all honourable members in that.

Motion agreed to.

TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING BILL
(Serial 102)
RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 103)

Continued from 6 March 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, in delivering the opposition's response to these 2 bills, I must say at the outset that the opposition supports their passage. As all members would be aware, these bills have been a long time in coming to the Northern Territory. The opposition has awaited their introduction for quite some time. It gives me great pleasure to support the introduction of a long-standing ALP policy and that is the introduction of a Northern Territory totalisator agency board.

However, I am disappointed with the enabling amendments to the Racing and Betting Act. Despite a clear indication of intent to the contrary, the government would seem to be still having difficulty in coming to terms with the necessity of withdrawing offcourse bookmakers' licences. This difficulty is clearly indicated by the omission from the Racing and Betting Amendment Bill of a clause or clauses and subsequent dependent references enabling the deletion of division 2 of part IV from the Racing and Betting Act. As an aid to the government in pursuing its stated intent of outlawing offcourse bookmaking and in an attempt to clarify the future of offcourse betting in the Northern Territory, I will be moving amendments which have been circulated to honourable members.

Should any members need to assure themselves of the government's stated intention on this matter, I would refer them to paragraph 3 on page 854 of the Parliamentary Record for August 1984 when the then Treasurer said: 'Accordingly, I now confirm that a full TAB service will be introduced from 1 July 1985 and that this will coincide with the closure of all existing betting shops'. A clearer statement of intent could not be placed on the public record and I therefore assume that there will be general acceptance by all members in this Assembly of the amendments which I will be moving in committee. There is little else to say about the Racing and Betting Amendment Bill other than that it is necessary for the introduction of a totalisator agency board in the Northern Territory.

The Totalisator Administration and Betting Bill will govern the future operation of the totalisator agency board itself. I have several difficulties with certain clauses in that bill and I hope that, in reply, the minister will be able to give me some assurances. The principal difficulty I have is with the composition of the board. There has been no position allocated specifically for industry representation directly on the board. In the states, there are a number of mechanisms which are used to ensure that there is industry representation on the board. In Western Australia, for instance, a number of representatives from the state's trotting organisations are on the board and also a number of representatives from the racing clubs. There is no specific indication in this bill that an industry member shall be a member of the board. However, I would be reassured, and I am sure that the clubs would

be pleased, if the Chief Minister would assure the Assembly that he will endeavour to insist that one of the board members shall be an industry representative. I do not know that it is necessary to introduce an amendment because, with the goodwill of the Chief Minister, I am sure that those requirements can be met.

Mr Speaker, I had a briefing from the Chairman of the Racing and Gaming Commission on the operation of the TAB in the Northern Territory. With the indulgence of honourable members, I will relate the operation as it was described to me by the chairman. There will be 3 levels of offcourse betting. There will be a sub-agency which will probably suit small communities which possibly do not have the population to support a full agency. A sub-agency will probably operate out of newsagencies or some other commercial business in a small community. Persons will have the opportunity to use that for betting in those remote communities should they so desire. The normal means of operation for the larger communities such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin will be through a system of agencies within those communities. At present, there seems to be some difficulty with renting space for the operation of those agencies but I am assured by the chairman that it is hoped that, either before the operation date commences or very soon thereafter, agencies will be able to be opened in all of those communities.

The next level of betting is something that goes with TABs throughout Australia: the telephone account betting system. Once again, I have been assured that there is a magic number that you tack onto the beginning or the end of a phone call and it makes it a 20c call throughout the Territory. That is the normal system of operating a telephone account anywhere else in Australia and that will be the system that will be used in the Northern Territory.

The overall financial structure of the TAB follows closely the financial structure of the TAB in the ACT which we have linked up with. There are some reservations about the wisdom of that decision to link directly with the TAB in the ACT, given the size of the pool in the ACT and its time zone compared to ours. Some people feel that it would probably be wiser to link with Adelaide which has the same time zone except in summer when we move an hour out of kilter. I am afraid I was not privy to the discussions that were held with totalisator agency boards around Australia in seeking to arrive at the best state system to link up with. I can only hope that the chairman and the government have made the wisest decision. I am sure that the future will tell the story on that one way or the other.

I have read through this bill. It does conform with most of the provisions of totalisator agency requirements throughout Australia. Of course, there are various idiosyncrasies, such as the matter of direct distribution of a proportion of betting that may be placed at an oncourse tote. In Western Australia, there is a direct dividend paid to the club whereas in the Northern Territory all the money will be going to an industry assistance fund and will be redistributed to the clubs. The clubs feel that they will still be obliged to go to the commission every 12 months with their hat in hand to seek funding whereas, in other places, that revenue is paid directly to them. However, all of the major requirements in this bill are consequent on taking the decision to be linked with the ACT totalisator agency system. I can only assume, having read its act and having compared it with this bill, that its operation will be very similar.

Those are the only reservations I have about these 2 bills. I understand that the government will not be proceeding to the committee stage today. The amendments that I propose can now be more closely studied. I hope that the

government takes those amendments very seriously. There needs to be a clear indication of intention as to where the Territory is going with offcourse betting. To leave provisions in the existing act which would allow for the licensing of offcourse bookmakers would be of no great comfort to the clubs or to the operators of the future Northern Territory TAB.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I support the legislation and I foreshadow to the opposition that we will take the committee stage at a later date to enable consideration of the amendments put forward by the member for Nhulunbuy. Although it may be long-standing Labor Party policy to introduce TAB, I am sure that, if honourable members go back to the original debate in Hansard, they will see that the government in the Northern Territory did not wish to proceed with the introduction of TAB until a very informative study had taken place which would highlight all the possible implications, not only for the Territory government but also for the racing industry.

Mr Speaker, I do not intend to deal with any of the proposed amendments from the opposition but I wish to express a few basic concerns that I have with the racing industry. Over the last 3 years, the racing industry in the Northern Territory has demanded more and more government funding to make it a viable proposition. Someone once said to me, although I do not have any evidence with me, that the horse racing industry is the second biggest employer in the country. There is no doubt that, in the Northern Territory, it employs a great many people. However, what we need to keep in mind is the rate of growth, particularly in relation to prize money, that the racing industry in the Northern Territory seems to be experiencing. It needs to be brought back into some proportion. There seems to be a general acceptance in the racing industry that the introduction of TAB will guarantee a huge increase in prize money and a much improved cash flow through a greater attendance by the general public at race tracks, mainly in Darwin and Alice Springs. However, the experience in all states that have TAB is that that is certainly not the case. In fact, it is quite the opposite.

While I agree that the findings of the working party indicate that there will be an improved economic situation for the Territory and that a larger percentage of money will be able to flow to the various race clubs, the clubs themselves must take a very close look at their own administration and operations. If you look at the rapid increase in prize money that has been promoted by the clubs for major carnivals and compare that, in proportion, to the normal racing programs you will soon discover - and this can be backed up by most trainers - that a racehorse is a losing proposition, and not only if you are a punter. It will be a responsibility of the government to ensure not only that the working of the TAB becomes a very efficient operation and something to be proud of in the Territory, but that the racing clubs themselves recognise that there is not a never-ending supply of money available to them to keep on promoting racing in the Territory.

The other area of concern is that of illegal SP bookmakers. I think you will note from the legislation that we are forming a task force of some dozen or so officers who will be very active in the Northern Territory, one presumes, to control illegal SP bookmaking. Personally, I cannot accept that it will be successful in light of the situation in every state in Australia, particularly Victoria and New South Wales, where illegal SP bookmaking is rampant.

I believe the 2 areas that I have mentioned - the basic control of the expansion of the racing industry in proportion to the funding available from TAB revenue and the policing of SP bookmakers - will cause concern if not

handled properly. I believe generally that the move by the Northern Territory government to introduce TAB betting will prove a very popular form of betting with punters. The trifectas, the quadrellas and the trebles will be novel in the first instance. With active promotion, I believe the whole system will work very well.

I wish to pick up one comment of the member for Nhulunbuy. I too had the idea that, because we were linking with the TAB in the ACT, Territory punters possibly could lose out by way of dividends. I took the trouble this morning to look at the racing results in Monday's Australian. It is interesting to note that the TAB dividends paid there on races at Flemington, Rosehill and in Queensland are really in proportion to the TABs from all the states. Therefore, I do not think that is a matter for concern.

One of the main reasons that I believe the ACT became a positive option for the Territory is that the Darwin punter is familiar, as I understand it, with offcourse and oncourse betting on Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane races. In Alice Springs, they bet on Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney races but not on Brisbane races. I believe that the guarantee is there from the ACT TAB that those 4 cities, as well as special events from Perth, will be covered. Thus, it is a means of providing the punting public in the Territory with the options it has at present.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, to some degree, it is a sad occasion today because we are looking at the phasing out of an important part of the Territory's history. I think due recognition should be made of that. What we are doing today is removing one more part of a unique Territory lifestyle and many people regret or have reservations about that. However, I am not one of those. As the honourable member for Nhulunbuy has said, we have taken the right decision and, if the TAB is conducted properly, it will be of long-term benefit to the racing industry in the Northern Territory.

It must also be said that, if some people have reservations, particularly existing offcourse bookmakers, they have themselves to blame to a large extent because it is undeniable that some most unusual patterns have shown up in betting accounts over the last few years. In what has been a rapidly growing industry in the rest of Australia where there have been TABs, the growth in betting revenue in the Northern Territory has been very small. In 1 or 2 years, there may even have been a decrease in the actual betting revenue received by the government. That has not been because of less betting but because bookmakers discovered ways and means of not declaring what it was intended by governments that they should declare.

Mr Speaker, we have a situation whereby we have a brand new opportunity to put a TAB in place that will suit the needs of the Northern Territory. I would like to compliment the government on coming up with what I believe to be a flexible system. It is important to place on the record my appreciation that the government will continue to allow betting on special sporting events within the Northern Territory. The betting that has taken place on NTFL fixtures this year has been an important attribute to the game. Certainly, it has not meant much in money terms but it has been a reflection once again of the Northern Territory way of life and I think it has added a lot of atmosphere. I am confused at the distinction between registered and licensed bookmakers under the legislation, but I hope that bookmakers who are eligible to apply to field at specialised sporting events will take the opportunity to apply and that sporting organisations will have some sympathy towards that.

On the other hand, I must say that I am concerned at the number of people, particularly at sporting events, who have been engaged for some time in what I believe are illegal activities. I want to read a short piece from a recent NT News which is headed, 'Of Bets and Rugby'. It says:

All punters were driven close to the edge in last Saturday's cliff-hanger Rugby Union preliminary final between South Darwin and RSL but a certain punter who gave RSL 5½ points start for \$500 was close to hysteria as the match went into extra time. When South Darwin kicked a penalty from in front, hope sprang eternal from the punter's breast and, when another one was scored under the post and it was converted, the punter let out a cheer that drowned out the Souths' stand. His betting opponent, a penciller for an offcourse bookmaker, raced to the sideline for an urgent conference with RSL players but just how much he offered for a \$1000 try will probably never be known.

What we have here is a clear example of an illegal act. I believe it is quite a significant illegal act. Unfortunately, that sort of illegality has been occurring at football fields in the Northern Territory for quite some time. In my view, it will be one of the tasks of this new gaming squad to stamp out that sort of practice. I suspect it will be very difficult. I do not think that we in the Northern Territory could tolerate a situation...

Mr Tuxworth: Where a bloke has a bet?

Mr SMITH: No, not where a bloke has a bet. I am not concerned if Ian Tuxworth and Dan Leo want to engage in a bet between themselves. That does not worry me at all. But what we have here is not that. It is a bookmaker at work offering odds, paying out money when necessary and collecting money when necessary, while the government of the Northern Territory is not receiving any tax out of it whatsoever. That is the real rub and, if it is allowed to continue, it will significantly undermine the operations of the TAB in the Northern Territory. As the honourable member for Wanguri said, we have not seen anything yet. Of course, I think that is a real risk that we run. As I understand it, the latest way that the illegal SP bookies operate in the south is that they get themselves a telephone in their car and go out in the middle of the bush somewhere with a clear 360 degree vision so that they can see the police coming.

It is quite clear that the prospect of illegal SP bookies in the Northern Territory is the most significant threat to the TAB system that we are about to introduce. I am pleased to acknowledge that the government has established the gaming squad. Certainly, in selecting Inspector Robin Chalker as the head of the gaming squad, it has selected a very good person indeed. It will be a monumental task to keep the lid on illegal SP bookmaking in the Northern Territory. Certainly, it is a task that has to be approached with vigour from the start because, if it gains hold, we will never stamp it out and we will be faced with the sorts of situations that exist in the states, particularly NSW.

I have one question that I want to ask of the sponsor of the bill. It has been said to me that a problem with stamping out SP bookmaking operations is that, if those operations are operated on Commonwealth property - and there is a lot of Commonwealth property in the Darwin area - the Northern Territory government is powerless to act. When the minister responds, I would appreciate his comments on whether in fact that is a potential problem and if there are ways of overcoming it.

The other concern that I have is whether the TAB will be operational on time. We all know that a 12-month time scale was originally proposed but, because of the government's delay in getting the thing moving and because it needed the confirmation of a fourth report - it was not satisfied with the first 3 reports which all said the same thing - this time scale was reduced to 6 or 7 months. It is to be hoped that it will get off to a flying start on 1 July. There will be nothing worse for TAB in the Northern Territory than if the start on 1 July is faulty or scrappy in some way. I can see that the honourable member for Wanguri still has lingering doubts about the wisdom of this move that his government is making. I invite him to feel free to express those doubts.

The other thing that I would like the honourable minister to comment on is whether it is true that all those people who will take out a TAB phone account before 1 July will be offered an incentive to do so. I have been told that there will be a \$5 contribution to their account to get them started. I would appreciate confirmation of whether persons who take out a TAB phone account before 1 July will have \$5 credited to their account. If that is the case, why? Does the government intend to recoup that money if, for example, a person ends up with \$100 000 after the first 12 months because he invested that \$5 wisely?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I reiterate once again the opposition's support for the principles of this bill. We wish the TAB well in its launch on 1 July. I am sure that all the eyes in this Assembly and in many other places in the Northern Territory will be on its operations in the first few months.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have some notes because I want to speak briefly at this stage. I felt that, if I did not write any notes, I would speak at length on this particular subject.

These bills herald the passing of a Northern Territory culture and, for that matter, a piece of our history. I mean, of course, the offcourse betting shops. With them go all the personalities who have operated them and bet in them. There are many stories to be told about the shops and their proprietors. I do not doubt the stories will grow in stature as the years go by.

The bookmakers have been much maligned by a certain element of the community over the years. I am sure that there have been some rogues among them. However, it should be recorded that they have been extremely generous to charities, various sporting bodies and individuals over the years. Almost on a daily basis, they were approached to buy a raffle ticket or to donate money to assist some junior sportsman to compete interstate. I remember vividly when the late Allan Ford wanted to sell the Winnellie Greyhound Park complex and there was the possibility that the complex would be closed. It was the bookmakers who responded with a large proportion of the \$60 000 needed to keep the sport alive. They did not sit back and put their hands out like many other people would have done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while there has been a great deal of criticism of the profits to bookmakers and the lack of funds being returned to racing, it should be noted that all of their profits have been made by conducting their business on southern races. Local racing has not provided them with \$1 of income. On the other hand, it has been taxes paid on their turnover on interstate races that have provided funds which have contributed greatly to financing Territory racing to the relatively high standard that I believe it now enjoys. I concede that they are facing ongoing financial difficulties, problems which have not been caused by offcourse bookmakers but rather perhaps by enthusiastic committees

and members of the various racing clubs. That enthusiasm no doubt has been fuelled by the incredible ongoing generosity of this government.

It should be noted also that the existence of the offcourse bookmaker has no doubt keep illegal SP operators and, therefore, organised crime out of the Territory, a fact which has saved a great deal of public funds. As an example of that, a recommendation of the Racing Industry Working Party reported that, with the closing of the betting shops, an inherent need was that a police gaming squad should be formed immediately to work in conjunction with the Racing and Gaming Commission and Telecom to police any illegal betting activity. That squad will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to implement.

Mr B. Collins: Are you speaking in support of this bill?

Mr DALE: I will let you know in a minute, Bob. Sit and listen. I have to listen to you often enough.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is conceded throughout the Australian racing industry and various law enforcement agencies that the only real way to control illegal offcourse bookmaking is to legalise it. The reasons for not doing so are rather garbled, particularly those given by ministers responsible in New South Wales and Victoria. Perhaps the most plausible reason is that, to license the illegal operators would attack the viability of the TAB. I have stated previously in this Assembly that I do not accept that point. At the moment, throughout Australia, 2 offcourse markets are being serviced, one by the TAB and one by illegal operators. I cannot see how legalising the illegal trader will significantly affect the turnover of the TAB. But, I can tell honourable members that it would certainly cut down the taxpayers' contribution to fund police gaming squads. These squads have a track record over many generations of being disinterested or unable to combat the crime bosses behind illegal offcourse bookmaking. I do not envy the members of the Northern Territory Police Force gaming squad the task ahead of them. I regret that we were unable to set an example to the rest of Australia by introducing the perfect model; that is, by having licensed offcourse bookmakers and a TAB operating in tandem.

There is no doubt that there are enormous financial pressures being placed on the people of the Northern Territory by the federal government. It is going through a calculated process of spanking the backsides of all Territorians because a majority of Territorians have expressed through the democratic process that they want no part of the ratbag, irrational, fence-hopping attitudes of the Australian Labor Party in the Northern Territory. There is no doubt that, initially, the TAB system alone will return more funds to government than would the tandem system. Therefore, this is yet another instance where we must take a decision based on the short-term financial implications. We cannot afford to give the Australian Labor Party in Canberra another cane with which it can flog the backsides of Territorians. For that reason and that reason alone, I support these bills. I believe that, in the long term, the tandem system would prove just as profitable and we would not have to fund a 12-man gaming squad to combat the inevitable thrust of illegal betting and its subsidiary crime organisations. As I said, I support these bills purely on the basis of the short-term financial implications.

Hansard will record my predictions in relation to illegal betting and organised crime in the Territory but that does not make me one of the great prophets. After all, that is what has happened in every state in Australia. The best bet you can have on the TAB is that it will happen here.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising today to speak in this debate, I will say at the outset that I am speaking with reservations. To me, race clubs are a bit like churches in that I can take them or leave them. I go to the races about twice a year and I go to church about twice a year or when necessary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not deal with particularities. However, on reading this bill, I am concerned by the gross increase in bureaucracy which I can see stemming from it. Over the years, our government and governments in other places have always paid lip service to the fact that we must stem the growth of bureaucracy and stop our public servant numbers building up. When this legislation comes into force, we will continue to employ more and more public servants. Like the members for Millner and Wanguri, I feel that it is rather sad that the colourful days of bookmakers are coming to an end. Whilst I do not know many of these people personally, nevertheless, having lived here for several years, I have read about them. Probably some other honourable members know more about them than I do, but their history is very colourful. As a result of being what they are and the way in which they operate, many of these people will find other ways of making an honest dollar, but it is very sad, in a way, to see history wiped out by this legislation.

To my knowledge, with the system that we have in the Northern Territory at present, there has been minimal crime associated with betting. It is my information that TAB can bring criminal activities in its train and we do not want that. To combat this, plans are afoot to form a gaming squad consisting of 12 members of the police force. Not only will that increase the bureaucracy immediately by 12 but it will involve the payment of salaries to these people. If my calculations are correct, some \$200 000 will have to be paid to the gaming squad members, and that does not include the expense of the training that will be required, no doubt in other states. Mr Costigan had something to say about criminal activities associated with TAB. I think it provides one of the easiest means of laundering dirty money. The gaming squad will have to engage in police activities in the Northern Territory with regard to gambling and betting at the race tracks which has not been necessary in the past.

Whilst I do not have an active interest in betting and gaming, I am concerned for people away from the main centres who may want to make a bet on the horses. Will they be accommodated by this legislation to their satisfaction or to the level that they enjoy at the moment? I hope that the promise that this legislation will make betting better for all people in the Northern Territory and also make the industry self-supporting will come to fruition. I am a bit conservative and I think that I prefer the old cliché about better the devil you know. We know the devil of the bookmakers and we do not know the devil of TAB. I would like to be assured that this TAB gambling will be self-supporting or at least cost less than the government handouts that are given at present to the clubs to keep the horses racing.

I have one final thing to say, Mr Deputy Speaker I hope that the existing gaming industry, that we are killing, is not an albatross that will return to haunt us in the future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have some hesitation in speaking in this debate. At the rate that the government is losing support, and given the strength of members' feelings, they will probably be dividing on this. I am just hoping that the Whip has it organised that, with our support, the other members of the government will be able to get this through.

For my contribution to the debate, I would like to refer briefly to a few comments that have been made previously in this Assembly on racing industry policy. It is well known that the establishment of the TAB has been ALP policy for some time. In that context, I would refer to comments made in relation to that most comprehensive and well-researched ALP policy which was released in 1983. I do not know whether the members opposite want me to table it. Possibly that is not necessary given that it is all in the bill that, hopefully, we are about to pass.

On 12 October 1983, the then Treasurer was disappointed to hear that a matter of public importance would be raised: 'The government's failure to develop a policy for the racing industry that secures that industry's long-term viability, guarantees the best possible return for the racing public and contributes adequately to the public welfare'. At that stage, the Treasurer complained that the MPI consisted of a reading of some 12 or 15 pages of ALP policy on TAB into Hansard. Obviously, that was not a bad move. Maybe we ought to do it with a few more of our policies. In supposedly addressing the motion, the then Treasurer spoke at that stage of the problems TAB faced in Victoria, of relationships between TAB and broadcasting and the expense involved in that, of the dollars the government had put into racing and of the difficulties faced by Northern Territory racing clubs. In his usual style, he said nothing at all constructive and scorned the Labor Party policy, a policy which clearly espoused the introduction of TAB in the Northern Territory. In that debate, it was interesting to hear the then Attorney-General supporting the then Treasurer but, unlike his less articulate colleague, he stated that he was 'very happy to see opposition members, on any occasion they like, put forward matters of public importance before the Assembly'. He said, however, that that was because of his belief that 'on each and every occasion they do so, they make unmitigated fools of themselves'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if it was foolish of the ALP, at that stage, to put forward a policy for the establishment of a TAB, how incredibly stupid would it be for the CLP to implement it? Conversely, it may be that the ALP's TAB policy was, and is, worth while and the CLP has finally recognised that, however begrudgingly and however belatedly and however much it might pretend that it thought of it first. Who is looking foolish now? It is not normally one of my vices to gloat but, having copped 19 to 6 for so long, it is good to see that the government members have acknowledged finally that the 6 of us have more brains than the 19 of them put together.

What else did the Attorney-General have to say on this matter? In a rather obscure burst, he referred to 'an ugly concept raised in the debate - the raising of revenue at all costs'. He said that the opposition gave no consideration to spin-off effects on a whole range of government agencies and accused the ALP of ignoring the social impact of policy decisions. He referred to 'reluctance and trepidation about stepping into the minefield called TAB' - and obviously some of the backbench still feel that reluctance. No doubt in statesmanlike tones, he said that 'the information currently before this nation and before the western world clearly indicates that the concern of this government, as to the effect of that course of action, is eminently warranted'. He said that the irrefutable facts in relation to TAB are that to deny a connection between TAB and SP bookmaking is to be blind to reality and to deny that there is a direct connection between SP bookmaking and organised crime is not just to be blind to reality but to be a blind fool. He said that there was no evidence to refute that proposition but there was every evidence to support it. He stated that it had been established without question in this country that TAB leads to a growth in organised crime which, in turn, leads to a further

revenue for organised crime which, in turn, if it does not corrupt the police force and government agencies, without doubt puts pressure on them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the light of those profound statements, I am happily surprised to see that other members of his party have shown the wisdom to change their attitudes and support our policy. Possibly, one of the other ministers or the Chief Minister in response will talk about the careful and quiet analysis which the government carried out. I have forgotten how many times it was - I think we have heard figures of 3 or 4 times. In that case, I am glad to see that the careful and quiet analysis of the real issues involved has proved, quite simply, that the ALP was correct in the first place and, as I said, well ahead of the CLP. It is a good thing for a government to accept the wisdom of opposition policy. I am glad that the government is big enough now to acknowledge that and we will support this bill after the amendments have been passed. After all, it is a legislative enactment of our policy. I would like to congratulate the members opposite on seeing that and I look forward to a continuation of the bipartisan approach we have been talking about. I am glad to see that it has rolled over into so many areas. We had it on the airport and on salaries this morning and now we have it on the racing and gaming industry. I think this is a commendable action that we are taking and, as I said, if any members opposite would like them, I would be happy to supply them with other policy statements from the Labor Party.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not going to respond today but I cannot let that contribution by the honourable member for Stuart go because he has walked right into it. I would like to touch for a moment on the well-thought-out, thoroughly-considered and consistent policy that the Labor Party has had on SP bookmaking and TAB over the years. The member for Stuart has only been around for a while and he has probably forgotten about a few of the performances that took place before his time.

Mr Bell: He can read.

Mr TUXWORTH: He may be able to read, but he has not read enough. I would just like to refresh the honourable member's memory and say that, back in 1974, we supported the bookmakers and the ALP supported TAB. In 1977, the then Leader of the Labor Party, it is alleged, wined and dined the bookies and the next thing we knew we were supporting TAB and they were supporting the bookmakers. When 1980 came around, we were supporting the bookmakers and they were supporting TAB again. In 1985, we are all bringing in TAB. However, after listening to some of the comments today, I wonder who is voting for it. The financial reality is that TAB will be a sensible move for the Northern Territory. It is bringing an end to an era that we have all enjoyed very much and we all have had a great affinity with. I see the introduction of TAB as similar to the proposals for the pipeline, Yulara and some of the other exciting things that we have done. When they were conceived, it was very difficult for people to come to grips with them. There is a flat earth mentality and a reluctance to change. However, there is a need for change and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy sought my assurance on whether members of the board would include representatives from the industry. I cannot give the honourable member any undertaking about the membership of the board other than to say that we will try to appoint the most appropriate people we can. We are looking for solid people to represent the industry and the government on the board so we will approach that in a constructive way.

The issue was also raised about the ability of the police gaming squad to operate on Commonwealth property and that there is a fair amount of Commonwealth property here. The point is that there are about 0.5 million square miles of country. I would be pleased to think that the Commonwealth property is the only problem that we will have in the Northern Territory for the gaming squad. I am sure that the activities of the gaming squad will be designed to see that illegal operations do not occur.

A further question was asked about the introduction of TAB. I can only say - and I say this with some assuredness - that TAB will commence on 1 July as has been announced. There is no reason for us to believe at this stage that that will not happen.

A further point was raised about the reference to SP bookies in the legislation. The honourable member for Nhulunbuy foreshadowed some amendments which would delete any reference to SP bookies. I foreshadow to the member for Nhulunbuy that the government will not be accepting those amendments, and for a very good reason. The reference to SP bookies is no accident. It takes into account our geography and the difficulty that we have in servicing all our communities. The major communities and other places in the Northern Territory that have access to telephones and computer connections will have the advantage of betting on TAB. There are other places in the Northern Territory where that will be physically impossible. The question is raised as to whether those people should be refused the opportunity to lay a bet simply because a telephone does not exist.

Somebody said to me last night that we should not have that reference in the legislation because it will mean that the bookmakers will come back. That is nonsense. We have as much interest as anybody else in ensuring the viability of TAB. We have a lot of money involved in it. I said: 'Take the example of the people on Groote Eylandt. How would you suggest that they lay a bet on Saturday afternoon?' They said: 'They can ring up'. Mr Speaker, have you ever tried telephoning from Groote Eylandt? It is like penny poker: you might get a call through and you might not. I would make the point that the first 2 lines that went into Groote Eylandt were paid for by this government at \$80 000 a throw - one for the police station and one for the nurses quarters. That was the only way that the policeman and the doctor and the nurses had any contact with the outside world in emergencies. People are saying to me: 'The people at Groote Eylandt can ring up the TAB in Darwin and place a bet'. What nonsense and drivel. There will always be places in the Territory where people physically do not have access to such facilities. If the commission or the minister believes that a community ought to have access to a bookmaker because of its isolation, then we believe that that facility should be made available.

The reference in the legislation that will enable that to happen should not be regarded as a threat to TAB. I think it is a very important principle. So often, we legislate with the 40 km mentality that, because you can do it here or in Alice Springs, then it can be done everywhere. The honourable members for Stuart and MacDonnell and myself and others who represent electorates that have not seen a telephone in the last 40 years feel very greatly the need for people in some communities to have other ways of doing things that we take for granted every day. I foreshadow to the honourable member for Nhulunbuy that, on those grounds, we will not be accepting his amendments. I understand his concern and I set it aside with those comments.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, it is not my intention to take the committee stage now. We will return to the bill during the course of this sittings. I thank honourable members for their support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 113)

Bill presented by leave and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I indicated this morning during the debate on the motion that it was my intention to pass this bill through all stages at this time. I addressed the contents of the bill in my remarks this morning. To recap, it gives the opportunity for national wage case decisions to flow on to members of the Assembly without reference to the Remuneration Tribunal.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Remuneration Tribunal Amendment Bill (Serial 113) passing through all stages at this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 113)

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, a funny thing happened to me on the way to the forum recently and I would like to bring it to members' attention. The story began about last Tuesday week when my secretary decided she wanted to see the Galaxy aircraft come into Alice Springs. She decided to make up a sign which said simply, 'Welcome'. She went out to the airport and there were some demonstrators who were not so keen on the Galaxy's arrival and they had other slogans. When they noticed her slogan, they were not very polite at all. In fact, it was reported that she was described as a 'warmongering bitch', which is hardly parliamentary language, but that is the fact of the matter. She said to these people that she was not denying their right to demonstrate and asked whether they believed in democracy. One would suggest that maybe they did not believe in democracy. However, the person who made that rude comment, along with others, picked on the wrong person when he picked on my secretary. Last Tuesday, when the last of these flights came in bringing parts of the Pine Gap antenna, we had 150 to 160 people out there who were organised by a few phone calls over the Easter weekend. We were not really trying. We had 20 placards at

the very outside. It was not as many as those belonging to the people who were opposing the arrival of this aircraft. The aircraft landed at about 2 o'clock and, by about 3 o'clock, I had gone back to the office. My secretary and a few others stayed on and they were shown over this giant aircraft. It is huge. Its tail stands higher than the control tower at Alice Springs Airport. The inside is equivalent to 4 storeys. I am a little bit jealous that I did not get a chance to look over it.

However, at about 5.30 pm, I was going home and the radio was on. Mention was made of some people being arrested at the airport. It certainly had not occurred while I was there. The story said that some of the people who were opposing the movement of this shipment had placed themselves in front of a vehicle and they had been arrested. That was the last I heard of it. I put in a fairly long night of study and other things. At about 7.30 am, the phone rang and I staggered out of bed. It was my secretary on the phone and she said: 'They have totally misrepresented you on the ABC. You had better give them a ring and get it sorted out'. I do not know whether I was all that coherent but I certainly expressed my dissatisfaction. For the rest of that day and again the next day, I was bombarded with phone calls: 'Were you arrested?'

Listen to the cackle of the honourable member for MacDonnell. What a cackle!

Mr Robertson: If he were there, he would have been arrested.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Yes, he would have been arrested if he had been there. That is for sure.

I rang the ABC in Darwin and got hold of the acting manager, Mr Bob Gulsom, who said that he would look into it. He took my phone number and said he would ring me back. I fully believed him. However, the whole day had been ruined. Imagine what 40 people asking that question does to you. One good thing that came out of it was the number of people who came in to inquire whether it was true or not and said: 'If we had known, we would have been out there and joined you'. If there is another one of those protests out at the airport, it will not be very difficult to get many more than 160 out there.

Mr Bell: Some blokes have a lot of time on their hands, Denis.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Those who work often do not have the time for this sort of thing but, when there is a point and when they are pushed, you will find that they will be there. It is called the silent majority.

By the afternoon, I had not heard anything from the acting manager of the ABC so I rang him again and he said: 'You did get a pretty good coverage in Territory Extra'. I agreed with him but then I pointed out to him that what was said on Territory Extra was not necessarily heard by the people who heard the news. I had been continually bombarded and my request of him was fairly simple. I wanted the ABC to admit that there had been a mistake and simply to correct it. I did not think that was very much to ask. I can understand his position. He tried to fob me off but I persisted and he said that he was not in a position to direct the person in charge of the news. Reading between the lines, I think he probably made a very good attempt to have the person in charge of news, a Mr Bill Fletcher, correct the mistake. I believe it was a genuine mistake. In fact, I have had many apologies from people in the ABC, including Mr Gulsom, and I appreciate their apologies. But it still does not correct the matter, particularly as it was not only Alice

Springs news but Territory-wide news. It also went interstate because I had a phone call from interstate from a person saying that he had heard it and asking what was going on. These things are pretty difficult for a private individual to correct. Perhaps a member of parliament is not entirely a private individual and must accept these things. However, it was so distinctly wrong.

Then there was the problem of just exactly what was said. After having spoken to Mr Gulsom who said that he could not make the news reader, Mr Fletcher, correct the mistake, I made no less than 5 phone calls to Mr Fletcher. Each time, I could hear him speaking in the background. Apparently, he was too busy because he was expecting calls on the National and so on. At 4 o'clock, I had an outside appointment. Interestingly, Mr Fletcher rang my secretary at that time. The appointment did not take as long as I expected. I was back in the office by 4.30 pm and, since he had said that he would be available until 5 o'clock, I rang again. However, he had gone home. He rang my secretary at home that night. She rang me and said that Mr Fletcher would ring me at home at 8 o'clock in the morning. 8 o'clock came and he had not rung me. I went to work and I rang again at 8.30 am. He denied categorically that anybody could have misinterpreted what had been said. He denied that categorically.

Mr Robertson: He didn't? I can't believe that.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: He did indeed. There is some question about exactly what was said. In the afternoon, there was some reference to the fact that there had been a welcoming group of which I was a part. It was reasonably fair. I would say we outnumbered them 160 to 20. Other reports said it was more like 50-50 which was a load of nonsense. One of my children received a phone call but cannot quite remember whether there were pips or not. Somebody from the ABC felt that I had been fairly hard done by. The significance of the pips is that it could have been a Darwin call. I cannot ascertain that but I am grateful to the person who called because he read to me part of a telex which he believed had been sent most probably Australia-wide: 'Those arrested included the CLP member for Sadadeen, Mr Collins, and all will face 2 charges each of trespassing and obstruction. They were bailed to appear before the Alice Springs court on the 18th of this month'. I have not been able to ascertain whether that actually went over because, when I tried to get a copy of the transcript, I was told that I could not have it and that I would have to apply to the manager in writing.

The other transcript, which definitely went over at 7.25 am Territory-wide, I obtained from the Chief Minister's Department. As you are no doubt aware, Mr Speaker, all the news is taped for fairly obvious reasons. I will read this: 'Peace protestors in Alice Springs will maintain their public opposition to the joint Australia defence facility at Pine Gap despite the arrest yesterday of 15 people. The demonstrators were arrested by police after they attempted to stop trucks from leaving Alice Springs airport with parts of a new antenna being built at Pine Gap. The equipment had earlier arrived by an air force Galaxy plane. Those taking part in the protest included the CLP member for Sadadeen, Mr Collins. The 15 people arrested will face charges of trespassing and obstructing when they face court on the 18th of this month...'. That definitely came over. I have no doubt about that. You might say...

Mr Robertson: Is it actionable?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I have been advised that it is actionable. As I said before, I asked only that the ABC correct the mistake and put it over the radio. It made a mistake and it should have corrected it, and not only in Alice Springs but throughout the Territory and Australia-wide because I know people in every state. However, Mr Fletcher refused absolutely point blank. As I said, I appreciate that there was a mistake made. I do not believe that anybody did this deliberately although, when you look at the whole of that transcript, of which I read only part, there is no mention of the welcoming group. If that is not bias, I do not know what is. I think that that point should have been made. There were 160 people in the welcoming party compared to about 20 demonstrators. There were a few other people who were neither on one side nor the other. If the ABC report is not an example of bias, I do not know what it is. I am sure that Debbie Nesbit, even though she may well be one of the peace movement supporters, would have done a professional job in that instance.

Mr Robertson: Her bit on AM was excellent.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Yes, my bit on Territory Extra was not too bad either. We are very pleased that that was broadcast.

However, as the honourable minister has mentioned, this is an actionable matter. I do not see a great deal of value in that. I would like to think that the ABC might improve its image. Mr Fletcher, whether he likes it or not, is dragging all of the ABC under his own umbrella. He has a pig-headed nature. A mistake has been made, hopefully without malicious intent, which he is not prepared to admit could possibly be interpreted in the way it was by many people, including the Centralian Advocate. Let me quote Friday's Centralian Advocate. I thank it for printing it because it does put the record straight a little, at least in my own town:

Red faces at the ABC after the radio news on Wednesday morning reported that amongst the 15 protestors at the Galaxy demonstration was member for Sadadeen, Denis Collins. Mr Collins was not arrested and in fact was at the airport amongst the welcoming party. We understand the boob was perpetrated in Darwin and was not the fault of local news gatherers.

I thank the Centralian Advocate for publishing that. It helped clear the record but the record should be cleared by the ABC in Darwin and by Mr Bill Fletcher.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, on a far less frivolous note, let me take up a little time of the Assembly this evening by making some very pertinent comments about a subject dear to your own heart, Sir. I refer to the roads in the Northern Territory. Specifically this evening, I wish to comment on a number of road building projects and commitments within my own electorate. The member for Braitling referred in question time this morning to the sealing of the Jay Creek to Hermannsburg road.

I note that, in Budget Paper No 5, the capital works program for this financial year, there is reference on page 46 to proposed new works in Alice Springs: the Larapinta Drive and the sealing of the road from Jay Creek to Hermannsburg stage 2 which is from the 73 km to 98 km. The 73 km to 98 km mark on that road is perhaps one of the most spectacular sections of road in central Australia. It takes us from down past the Waterhouse Range, where the bitumen currently stops, to Ellery Creek. I was rather surprised to hear in

question time this morning that there had been some suggestion that that sealing was not in fact to take place. It is ironical that, when so much of the debate today has been concentrated on the federal government capital works program vis-a-vis the Northern Territory, it appears that perhaps there has been some rolling back of capital works in this regard by the very government which is complaining of that, albeit with justification, on the part of the Commonwealth government. I am concerned that that is happening in regard to that sealing as obviously you are yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I will return in a moment to the Larapinta Drive which is part of the road out to the Mereenie oilfield. I will refer in passing to what I suspect is further money committee in the 1984-85 budget and not spent. I am very sorry that the Minister for Transport and Works is not here to hear this because I refer to the item on page 47 of the same document relating to the access road to Impadna, Idracowra and Horseshoe Bend. The Minister for Transport and Works may not recall it but certainly I made representations to his predecessor and expressed my satisfaction that this was timetabled. Last week, I travelled along that section of road and spoke to my constituents whose pastoral enterprises are affected by this particular road. They were concerned that little of this \$500 000 had been spent. That is a second question I have for the Minister for Transport and Works. What is the situation in relation to the upgrading of the access road to Impadna, Idracowra and Horseshoe Bend?

Since I have the capital works program in my hand, I might mention 2 further concerns. This is not really a question for the Minister for Transport and Works but I presume the sealing is going ahead on that section of the Plenty Highway from the 68 km to the 82 km mark. You would be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that there have been difficulties with the sealing of that section and they have caused concern to residents at a number of stations and to Aboriginal communities in the north-east area. I hope that sealing will go ahead. Their concern has been that one company was unable to fulfill a contract at one particular stage and the contract had to be relet. I would appreciate some news on the sealing of the Plenty Highway.

Turning to one further area that is to be upgraded, on page 42 of the same document, we note that \$89 783 was appropriated in 1984-85 for the upgrading of the access road between Ewaninga and Santa Teresa. That is also of concern to my constituents in that area. I would appreciate hearing of the fate of the proposed upgrading of that road. Certainly, very little seems to have been done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am on the matter of the upgrading of that road, it would be apposite for me to mention in passing, for the benefit of the Minister for Mines and Energy, that there has been some concern about the powerlines from Alice Springs to Santa Teresa. The powerlines have been pegged but not put in. I believe it is incumbent on me, as a conscientious local member, to point out to the minister that the pegs for the powerlines follow the old road and not the proposed new road. Surely, it will be somewhat less than efficient if the powerlines follow the old road. I will be in touch with him further in writing in that regard.

I have a further matter in relation to roads in my electorate. I refer specifically to the Santa Teresa to Andado Road also recently travelled over by myself with a great deal of interest because it is one of the less accessible tracks in my electorate. Certainly, it is only a track at this stage but it is to be hoped that it can be upgraded. I made representations to the predecessor of the Minister for Transport and Works in regard to this road and I wish to place his reply on the record. I made representations in relation to

this road to the honourable minister last year. He replied to me in a letter of 5 July 1984:

Thank you for your letter of 8 June concerning the Santa Teresa to Andado Road. This road was abandoned some years ago due to maintenance difficulties and alternative access to Andado was provided through New Crown Station. However, following a recent assessment of the tourist potential of the area, the road is now programmed for reopening in the 1984-85 financial year.

*Yours sincerely,
Jim Robertson.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, I note for the benefit of the Minister for Transport and Works that his predecessor gave that undertaking and I trust that he will honour the undertaking and see that this road is reopened this financial year. It is certainly a most attractive area which is inaccessible at the moment. I regard myself as one of the most fortunate representatives in this Assembly in having some of the most spectacular country in the nation in my electorate.

On the fringe of the Simpson Desert, you come out past the Rodinga Range and, following along parallel sandhills for many miles, you come to what is almost a seascape on the edge of the desert. You follow past the sand dunes for many miles and the road gradually weaves itself over low dunes and approaches this wave-like formation to the east. At the end of that particular road, there is a side track off to the famous sand of Acacia peuce in the Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve. This particular stand of trees is not unique because there are 2 other stands of these particular trees in the world. However, since there is only this particular stand, a stand in Birdsville and another stand in the Himalayas, that is pretty singular. The wood is particularly hard. Story has it that, in order for it to be cut by a cross-cut saw, water has to be poured over the blade to prevent it from breaking.

I see my time is running out. I endorse the reply of the honourable minister's predecessor that there is great tourist potential in that area. It is certainly a wonderful opportunity for the visitor to the Northern Territory to see some lonely, isolated but uniquely beautiful central Australian landscape. I hope that the upgrading and the reopening of that particular road will be able to be done in the 1984-85 financial year, as the honourable minister's predecessor faithfully promised.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in the adjournment debate this afternoon, I have several things to say. The first remarks that I have to make relate to the aftermath of Cyclone Gretel and the operation of cyclone shelters, particularly in the rural area, during that cyclone and perhaps during other cyclones in the future.

I say, at the outset, that I have the greatest faith in our Emergency Service personnel. I believe they are doing a good job and I know quite a few of them personally. However, I have certain reservations about certain things relating to cyclone shelters in the rural area during Cyclone Gretel which I hope are not repeated in future cyclones. It is about 2 years since we had Cyclone Max which was just a bit of a blow and nothing much to worry about. Cyclone Gretel presented a little bit more to worry about and a few more people became a little worried. A blow-by-blow description of what happened would be better than explaining in circumlocution what happened.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Howard Springs school is a designated cyclone shelter in the rural area. This is known to people in town, to the Emergency Service and also to the people in the rural area. Many people would never go to a cyclone shelter. They elect to stay on their own property because it is cyclone proof, because they have a regard for it or because they have animals to look after. For whatever reason, some people do not go to a cyclone shelter. But there are many people who elect for various reasons to go to cyclone shelters. Previously, one of my constituents had been appointed to be the controller of the Howard Springs cyclone shelter. He used to live over at Bathurst Island but now he lives in the rural area. I have known him for some time and I know him to be a very conscientious person.

At about 7 pm on the Friday night, he rang the Emergency Service's number to ask what he should do, which was fitting at the time because he was seeking advice from the specialists. He may have been speaking to somebody junior who may not have been au fait with the situation. He was told that they did not know very much about the cyclone warning. Everybody else out our way seemed to know about it. At 11 pm, he rang again from home because he was feeling a bit concerned. The winds were increasing. They may not have worried those people who elected to stay at home but he had certain responsibilities. He rang at 11 pm because he had not heard anything from the Emergency Service and he was told not to worry. He had not gone to the school yet. From 7 pm to 11 pm is 4 hours. He did not hear anything from the Emergency Service people so he rang again at 3 am which was another 4 hours. He was told when he rang at 3 am that there was a meeting in progress and that he would be told at 5 am whether people would be advised to go to the cyclone shelters.

It was my observation and the observation of my family that we got the stronger winds in the rural area earlier than the people in Darwin. Something should have been done about this by the Emergency Service because the same thing happened during Cyclone Tracy. At 4.30 am, this gentleman rang again to see if he could open the cyclone shelter. He was told that he could open it at 5 am. He had telephoned first at 7 pm and he was told at 5 am he could open the cyclone shelter. That is 10 hours after he first asked. Everybody admits that, compared to the last 2 cyclones, this cyclone came on us rather quickly. Considering the fact that the Emergency Service's personnel spend much time preparing for cyclones, and have had 2 years to get things in order since Cyclone Max, it is my opinion that it would have been better to be sure than sorry and open the cyclone shelter earlier instead of later.

The school was opened at 5 am. I was watching TV and I saw announcements from time to time about the progress of the cyclone but I cannot remember exact times. I can distinctly remember the announcer saying that it was time to go to cyclone shelters if you wished. It may have been all right for people in town, although I believe there were a few trees blown down in town, but I think it was even more hazardous for people in the rural area. I cite the case of a particular lady who lives at Bees Creek which is a good 5 miles away from the Howard Springs school. She was left at home because her husband was down the track working. She has 2 very young children. She was left to drive to the cyclone shelter at 5 am which I would say was pretty much at the height of the cyclone in the rural area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that this situation will not arise again and I think that all members will agree with me that it is much better to open the cyclone shelters earlier rather than later. Probably there were other people who had trouble getting to the cyclone shelter. No medical supplies were available at Howard Springs until a very late hour. Unfortunately for the gentleman concerned, one man needed hospital treatment. He was given brief first-aid at the Howard Springs centre. The nursing sisters were there

but they were unable to offer the degree of help they would have wished to, due to the lack of supplies. I know that my constituent, who was in charge of this cyclone shelter, has written to the Chief Minister, who is responsible for the police, and the Commissioner for Police who is responsible for the Emergency Service. I hope this is taken into consideration by the Emergency Service and that a situation like this does not recur. Probably it resulted more from ignorance of cyclones than from neglect of people in the rural area because, as I said in the beginning, I know that the people in the Emergency Service are hardworking and conscientious.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Community Development gave me an answer this morning to a question on local government in the Darwin rural area. I would like to say that the situation regarding local government there and a consequence involved with it, namely voting, is rather more complicated than in other places. I have spoken of this several times before. There are 3 distinct areas: what is called the Berrimah rates area, which is in the electorate of the honourable minister; the rural area, which has been considered by the Darwin Rural Advisory Committee in its report; and another area, which was not considered in that report, namely the Berry Springs-Darwin River area. Before any final decision is made, these 3 areas have to be considered on a reasonably equitable basis, having regard also to the particular interests, hobbies and farming enterprises in those areas.

I found it quite interesting that the honourable minister raised the subject of a farm rate. The present Minister for Mines and Energy, who was Minister for Community Development at the time, sponsored some legislation and I was particularly interested that this farm rate would be available to the city council to adopt or not adopt. However, I do not think it is available to the council. There is quite a large stable in the Rapid Creek area and personally I feel it should not be paying town rates but should be paying a farm rate. It is quite interesting that the honourable minister mentioned that but I do not know how it will be applied in the rural area. I cannot recall whether the minister mentioned this in his answer to my question or whilst speaking privately to me this morning, but the subject of shires was raised. The subject of shires in the rural area was first raised in 1975 by the Darwin Rural Landholders Association. It was proposed by the president of the association at that time. It did not receive very active support, probably because the idea was way ahead of its time, but it was interesting that the minister raised it this morning.

The Minister for Conservation gave quite an interesting reply to a question on the subject of geese versus rice growing. It was interesting and quite amusing. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition had something to say about this some years ago in relation to his personal experiences. I have said on numerous occasions that farmers - and I class myself as a farmer, having farming interests - will persist in growing things where other things grow better. People persist in growing wheat in marginal wheat areas in Western Australia where emus grow better. They shoot the emus and grow the wheat. People will insist on growing sheep and cattle where dingoes grow better so they shoot the dingoes to grow the sheep and cattle. There is a market for dingoes. People here grow rice where geese grow better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a market exists for magpie geese and it could be cultivated. This year, for the first time, the Conservation Commission has put in train an egg-gathering program. Their first magpie geese eggs are now hatching and the commission is sending these to difference places in Australia where magpie geese used to exist in large numbers in previous years. I have a bit of information on this and I feel that we have great natural resources on

our doorstep which we are not doing enough about. We could sell them, we could eat them, we could farm them, we could do many things with them, instead of which we let them fly around and be shot in the bush. They are taken by black marketeers. We let our reptiles crawl around and they are killed on the roads. If these native animals, which are our natural resources, were actively husbanded, not only would we provide a source of income to those people who are interested in this sort of thing, we would also encourage active conservation, discourage black marketeering in our native wildlife and we would share with other people the diversity of our wildlife in the Northern Territory.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am glad indeed that I did not get the call last time and that I was able to listen to what the honourable member has just said. Quite coincidentally, she spoke on the 2 subjects I intend to speak on: geese and cyclones. I will not cover the ground which I had intended to cover in respect of the comments that were made this morning by the honourable minister. I will say simply that I would have said very much what the member for Koolpinyah said. Whilst I ended up working for the organisation, one thing I remember about the original Humpty Doo rice project is that, when the project was begun, advice was given to the developers by the late Harry Frith, the then Director of the Division of Wildlife at CSIRO. The advice was given, in a very detailed submission of which I still have a copy, that the developers were about to locate a rice farm in the middle of the second largest goose colony in Australia and one of the largest goose colonies in the world. That advice was given by experts and it was ignored. I will not canvass a previous debate again but I remember that, when their crops were extracted from the geese for investigation, the grains of rice contained in those goose crops were packed to such an extent that the crops literally had the appearance of plastic bags; they were stretched to the stage of being transparent. They had the appearance of plastic bags full of rice. If you had stamped 'Sunshine' on the side of them, you could have marketed them straight away. That was the extent to which the project was a disaster.

The honourable member touched on a very important issue: the extent to which we insist on continuing to fight the environment and prevail over it - not always to our benefit - in order to establish these things when, in fact, the potential could be realised in another direction. We are all familiar with the excellent taste of magpie goose flesh and we know the extent to which the eggs have been marketed for years. I can remember a very thriving egg industry through Bagot Reserve. It is essential for that sort of operation to be kept under very tight control. We take magpie geese for granted, like many other things that we have that are unique to the Territory. We forget what colourful, magnificent waterbirds magpie geese are. They are an extremely handsome waterbird and much admired. Of course, we have become so accustomed to them that we see them as being like sparrows. We find it difficult to understand why visitors to the Territory rave about the beauty and the spectacle of a flock of thousands of these very handsome black and white waterbirds. If it is done carefully, the potential for the commercial harvesting of a species such as goose, could be just as viable and just as suitable for study as the commercial harvesting of the crocodile.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to say a few words about the cyclone, and not necessarily in a critical manner. I have a number of concerns about the way in which particular procedures were handled because I think the experience in town was largely similar to that in the bush. I was intrigued to hear the story about the cyclone shelter in Howard Springs. The story was so detailed that I would be very surprised if it were not entirely accurate. I can only say that the gentleman concerned would have to be commended on the extent of his persistence on behalf of the rural people who would have depended on that

cyclone shelter. What interested me in what the honourable member had to say was her comment that perhaps the problem has a lot to do with people's memories not being so sharp or that perhaps many people are here now who did not actually experience Cyclone Tracy - which we could well have done without.

Like many people in this Assembly, I have vivid memories of Cyclone Tracy. I have bored the Assembly with this subject on too many occasions to go over it again, but one of the reasons was because of the particular job I had to do at the time. The 3 days and nights that I spent doing that job provided me with memories of Cyclone Tracy that it would be impossible to forget. For that reason, I have a very healthy respect for the physical effects of the impact of solid objects on the human body, particularly when those objects have a sharp leading edge, as have sheets of corrugated iron. The thing that interests me most about the positive impact of the new building code and the way it is enforced in the Northern Territory is the absence of that commodity in our cyclones these days. The fact that roofs are screwed down now instead of being nailed down and the various other improvements that have been made seem to have had very tangible results in that that kind of flying debris is not really seen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the things that happens to people in cyclones, particularly people who have not experienced them before - and perhaps even more so people who have experienced them - is that they tend to become a bit anxious about information. Other people are dependent on them for what happens and they are equally anxious, particularly small children. Often they are very frightened and ask constantly what will happen and what they should do next. As a result, one tends to become anxious to obtain information about the cyclone. Fortunately, I live in a part of Darwin - and again the benefits of that are very obvious - which is provided with underground electricity reticulation and, apart from a few flickers, it did not lose power at all during the night. What a tremendous benefit that was. I had the benefit of the radio and the television and, despite that, because of the comments that I will make in a minute, I still resorted to the use of something that many people rely on - the telephone.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I shared this experience with many other people and I am simply putting this forward in a totally constructive manner. It is something that has to be investigated for the next time around. Those telephone answering systems clearly are put in for the purpose of handling a large volume of phone calls. For whatever reason, our telephone system simply does not cope with it. I have had the same experience on a number of occasions. I have not been able to get through to the number and, on several occasions, when I did get through, the message stopped halfway through. I made inquiries afterwards and I found that the experience was a common one. I was told that, due to the volume of calls, the system became overloaded. Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, those systems have no use at all if they cannot cope with the very thing they are designed to handle, which is a very large volume of inquiries. The other problem, and it was a serious one, for whatever reason - and I am not looking for excuses - was that the information on the telephone system became dated to the point not only of uselessness, but to the point where the information, if relied upon, could have been dangerous. It became confusingly out of line with the advice being given on the radio and television. That was the problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not encouraged this morning when I heard the public comments that were made about these problems on ABC radio. I do not know whether other members listened to Territory Extra but they would not have been encouraged to hear people say, even though they were talking about 2 different matters: 'That is not our responsibility. That is somebody else's responsibility and you will have to talk to him'. When a back-to-back interview

with the other people was broadcast, they said that really it was not their responsibility. The telephone system was the responsibility of the Bureau of Meteorology. That was not encouraging when representatives of that bureau had just said that it was the responsibility of someone else. I have no doubt that it was all true.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have taken the trouble to have a look at the updated cyclone plan, which I have in front of me, and I have no particular problem with it. I think it is perfectly logical and reasonable. I understand that the problem was that the cyclone had a dramatic increase in speed between about 8 pm and 11 pm which demonstrated what cyclones are famous for: they are unpredictable. However, I am not encouraged when I then hear people say - and I saw this on television last night: 'You have to appreciate that you cannot really complain too much about it because the cyclone did not behave as it was supposed to'. We are told constantly by the experts, and I accept it, that cyclones are well known for turning back on their tracks and returning for another crack. They are unpredictable. Whatever the system we have for tracking them, it must be adequate to cope with a cyclone's unpredictability. It sounds like the Premier of Queensland.

This brings me to my major bitch about what happened. Mr Deputy Speaker, the problem that arose in my view was that, during the evening and the early hours of the morning, there seemed to be no particular necessity to go to a cyclone shelter. Now I do not know the details. Hopefully, a government minister will be able to tell me. I heard only one advice to go to a cyclone shelter which was issued at roughly 5 am in the morning. As I have said, I have very vivid memories of what the impact of flying debris does to a human body. On hearing that advice, I looked out of the window of my home and I said to my wife: 'You would have to be nuts'. I had not gone out at all at that stage and I had not seen much iron flying past in the dark. However, I said to my wife: 'I hope there is not too much corrugated iron flying around out there. People would have to be out of their heads to go out into this even in a motor vehicle'. I was most concerned about that.

Almost hot on the heels of the advice to go to the cyclone shelters - and I am prepared to be corrected on this; it may have been made earlier than 5 am and I did not hear it ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It was at 5 am.

Mr B. COLLINS: Oh, I am not wrong.

Almost hot on the heels of that, we were informed that the cyclone was over Darwin and that we should stay where we were. Mr Deputy Speaker, thank goodness the speed and ferocity of the cyclone did not come close to that of Tracy. After experiencing Tracy, I do not think in wind speeds any more. They say wind speeds during Tracy reached 200 km/h and Gretel only attained 120 km/h. It did not even come close to Tracy. However, terror must increase by about 100% for every increase of 10 km/h. All I can say is that we were lucky because, if the cyclone had even approached the ferocity of Tracy and people had obeyed the instruction to go out to a cyclone shelter at the hour that it was given, somebody would have been hurt. That is of real concern to me.

There are a couple of other small issues. Once again, I commend Channel 8 and the ABC for the services they provided but could I just say that people really were anxious for information. It was very frustrating to turn on the ABC and to see a static display of a map showing Darwin with a cyclone symbol straight over the top of it and no sound or text. It stayed there for

what seemed to be hours at a time. Channel 8 was showing Fred Astaire. Again, I commend the TV channels for providing that service. It was very good to have both entertainment and the warnings but, surely to goodness, it would have been possible for Channel 8 to run messages across the bottom of the screen, as they do at other times, simply to update people, every 4 or 5 minutes, on where the cyclone was and what it was doing. In that way, one would be entertained and reassured at the same time.

They are only small issues. A friend advised me that his first indication that things were getting tough was when he became aware that the RAAF were evacuating their personnel. That was at 9 or 10 pm that evening when RAAF staff went around with buses to take their personnel out of the RAAF houses. In the light of my comments and those of the honourable member for Koolpinyah I suggest that implementation of the procedures needs to be examined and sharpened up. If the Chief Minister has this information, perhaps he could let us know now or at some time later in the sittings.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, the topic this afternoon seems to be the cyclone which occurred last Saturday and that was the subject on which I intended to speak. I must commend the member for Koolpinyah and the Leader of the Opposition for their comments because I support them entirely.

I was very concerned about the reports transmitted by the radio and the television. My son happens to be a police officer. He was at Palmerston and he was called in to work at about 4.30 am. He had to drive in from Palmerston to Winnellie. At that time in the morning, that was an extremely dangerous exercise because of the intensity of the cyclone. That was not the fault of the police officers. Because the information given to them was so far behind, they had to call their people in very suddenly. They should have been called in 2 or 3 hours earlier so that they did not have to run the gauntlet of driving from Palmerston to the city with debris flying around.

Like most other people, I had very little sleep that night because I sat up and watched the reports and listened to the trees crashing around my house.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Did you watch the Pink Panther?

Mr SETTER: Indeed, I did and it was most enjoyable. Peter Sellers was fine. Fortunately, the power remained on until about 5 am but, like most of the rest of Darwin, apart from those areas where underground power has been installed, my power failed because of trees which fell across the powerlines. At about 8 or 8.30 am, as soon as it was safe, I drove through every street in my electorate and it became immediately obvious that there were 2 major failures. The first was that the trees - African mahoganies in the main and quite a few acacias - had come down, many of them across the powerlines. The reason for this was that they had not been pruned regularly and they were planted in the front yards of properties so that they fell directly across the powerlines. In one short street, 3 trees lay across one section of powerlines and, of course, that meant 3 lots of repairs. This situation was repeated right throughout the electorate.

Everybody would agree that the main damage during this cyclone was caused to powerlines by trees. We did not suffer anywhere near the same damage in Cyclone Max 4 years ago. However, those trees, which were planted after Tracy, 10 years ago, had another 4 years' growth. Therefore they were up above the powerlines instead of at the height they were during Max. That was the

cause of the problem. I have tremendous praise for NTEC because it rallied to the cause and many members of its staff, who happened to be on holidays or were stood down for one reason or another, came back on duty and then worked right through until about 9.30 on Saturday night. They returned the following morning and worked through until 9.30 or 10.30 the following night. In some areas, they are still at it. I know that, in my electorate, many street lights are not working. NTEC has quite a job ahead of it throughout the city.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have established that Gretel was a fairly weak cyclone - 125 km/h. Tracy attained closer to 300 km/h. If we consider the force of Tracy to have been at the upper limit, the potential for damage between the strength of Gretel and that of Tracy is tremendous. It makes the mind boggle. It is fair enough to say that trees brought down powerlines during Gretel but, if the winds were to peak at 200 km/h, those powerlines would probably blow down by themselves or be brought down by flying debris.

Certainly, there have been lots of comments in the media in the last few days. I refer members to the NT News of 15 April. It says:

Blackout blamed on falling trees. Widespread destruction of powerlines by falling trees during Cyclone Gretel has inspired NTEC to re-examine its public education campaign. Trees knocked out about 95% of Darwin's overhead power connections on Saturday morning.

Certainly, I would agree that what is necessary is for NTEC to adopt a much harder line. It must tell people to remove those trees adjacent to powerlines. If they are a little further back but growing tall, they must be pruned back. We must adopt a very hard line on this issue. There is no question about that. How we are going to do it and how much it will cost us is another matter because, of the hundreds of trees that went down across powerlines, there are certainly thousands more which are still there and which are potential hazards. Even though I commend NTEC for its policy, it will cost us a lot of money and it will continue to cost us a lot of money. In some cases, it will be a very unpopular policy to implement because householders who have been growing trees for the last 10 years or so will not take too kindly to NTEC saying: 'We are going to chop down your tree'. However, that is the problem which we are faced with in the short term.

Certainly, there was a tremendous amount of inconvenience to consumers because of the loss of power. From Lee Point Road towards the east, the power supply is underground and from Lee Point Road back towards Nightcliff and Darwin city, it is all overhead power. By 10.30 pm on Sunday evening, 99% of power had been restored. That meant that some people had their refrigerators and freezers off for up to 40 hours. Those people were not happy at all.

A couple of points come out of this. First of all, there is the tremendous cost of repairs. We have all the overtime incurred, the cost of materials and so on. I would hate to think how much it will cost NTEC to repair all those facilities. Doubtless, we will find out before too much longer. The cost will be horrendous.

We must face the fact that Darwin is in a very cyclone-prone area. It is well known that, between certain latitudes north and south of the equator, cyclones and or hurricanes occur. Every year, several cyclones pass by our coast. In fact, the Gulf this year has abounded in cyclones. They were also prevalent down the Queensland coast. It is nothing new. It happens every year.

In fact, in the last 10 years, we have experienced 3 cyclones in this very city. When you consider the cost of the damage incurred from Gretel - and I will exclude Tracy because that was an extraordinary cyclone - and work out the cost over the next 10 years or the next 20 years, you can imagine the millions and millions of dollars that will be spent repairing cyclone damage. That is completely ignoring the inconvenience to consumers and the ruin of food in freezers etc. I believe that we must not allow this to continue. Admittedly, we cannot do anything about it in the immediate future. The government must develop a policy on putting the power supply underground in the older Darwin suburbs where it is currently overhead.

I refer back to not long after Cyclone Tracy, 1976-77, when the whole of Darwin, which extended as far as Lee Point Road, was refurbished. Immediately after Tracy, the power was slapped up anyhow. Gangs from all around Australia set up temporary power supplies. A couple of years later, we refurbished the area and brought it up to standard, suburb by suburb. At the time, tenders were called on the basis of 2 alternatives: underground supply and overhead supply. It is my understanding that the decision was made to opt for overhead supply purely on the basis of economics. In other words, it would have cost a lot more to put it underground than to put it overhead. I accept that completely. Having made that decision, we sentenced ourselves to the type of inconvenience that we have suffered this last weekend and the ongoing and repetitive costs that we have incurred. There is no alternative to that unless we put the power underground.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It will cost you \$5000 like it cost the people in the rural area.

Mr SETTER: I am sorry Noel, but we are not going to put it underground in the rural area.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! All members will cease interjecting and address all their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: It is certainly most important that we bite the bullet and adopt this policy now. I would be the first to admit that it will cost a lot of money - millions and millions of dollars. We cannot expect to do it in 12 months but, having adopted the policy, we can progressively do it over the next 5 to 10 years. We could phase it in; that is the way to handle it. Once we have done that, we will have eliminated the inconvenience to our consumers and the possibility of this repetitive cost for intermittent cyclones. Certainly, I would commend that to members. I believe that the government has a responsibility to its consumers to have a very close look at this. In fact, this has been supported by comments made yesterday and today on talkback radio. Today, numerous people phoned a talkback radio program and supported this view. There is a very strong feeling in the community that the government should adopt this approach.

I also refer members to a comment made yesterday by Mr George Brown who works for the Darwin City Council. He made the claim on talkback radio yesterday that, 11 years ago, Darwin was promised that all its power would be put underground. I cannot comment on whether that is true or false because I personally do not recall it but I am quite sure that some members of the government could confirm that one way or the other. However, subsequently, it was decided to opt for the overhead option purely on the basis of price. Certainly, to put the power underground in existing areas will be very expensive because NTEC must negotiate with other services. It is not as easy as it is in new subdivisions where you just dig a hole, drop the services in and cover it over.

In the existing suburbs, you have to negotiate with the suppliers of all the other services such as sewerage, telephones etc. It is more expensive but it is certainly worth biting the bullet on this one and opting for underground power through the existing Darwin suburbs where we have overhead power currently. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend that recommendation to the government.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Palmerston Rezoning

Mr COULTER (Berrimah): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 100 residents of Palmerston relating to the zoning of land in Palmerston. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain residents of the town of Palmerston respectfully sheweth that proposed rezoning of lots 771, 772 and 773, Priest Circuit in Gray, Palmerston from D1 to D2 will adversely affect quality of life of the suburb. The residents also petition that lots 835, 836 and 837 Henry Avenue, Gray, Palmerston be restricted to single-family dwellings. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that lots 771, 772 and 773 Priest Circuit, Gray, Palmerston maintain D1 zoning and that lots 835, 836 and 837 Henry Avenue, Gray, Palmerston be restricted to single-family dwelling, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PETITION
Taxi Services

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 53 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to taxi services. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory of Australia respectfully sheweth: (1) that the operation of efficient and reliable taxi services are vitally important for tourism; (2) that the Northern Territory government encourages people to use taxis instead of driving if they have been drinking alcoholic beverages; (3) that public bus services do not operate on Sundays; (4) that it is becoming increasingly difficult to contact Darwin radio cabs by telephone; (5) that there are growing delays in cabs responding after bookings have been made, particularly at night; and (6) that there is a deterioration of services offered and inadequate location knowledge by drivers. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the government carry out an investigation into taxi services to ensure that there is an adequate number of taxis available at all times, that facilities and services of taxi companies or cooperatives are sufficient to provide a prompt response to telephone calls and that taxi drivers abide by a code of ethics and have a sound location knowledge sufficient to efficiently perform the services of a taxi driver, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PETITION
Classification of Videos

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 6233 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to the classification of films. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of 6233 citizens of the Northern Territory of Australia respectfully sheweth that the legislation introduced in the Classification of Publications Bill (Serial 72) passed through the Legislative Assembly on 7 March 1985, whilst generally supported, is opposed in respect of: (1) the requirements for R-classified films to only be displayed in a separate enclosed room with X-classified films; (2) this requirement shall create severe and unreasonable restrictions on persons' choice of viewing and on the operation of video shops to the point where shops may have to withdraw all R-certificate movies or may have to restrict access to the entire video shop for persons under 18 years of age; and (3) we believe that R-classified movies should be allowed to be displayed on shop shelves beside all general video movies provided they are clearly marked with R classification. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the government will amend the Classification of Publications Act by deleting from clause 35(4)(ab) the words 'R or' and inserting the following subclause: '(3) a film classified as an 'R' film shall not - (a) be sold, let on hire or delivered to an infant (other than by a parent or guardian of the infant); or (b) be exhibited or displayed in a public place unless the container, wrapping and casing in which the film is contained bears the prescribed markings'. We, your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION)
(COSTS IN PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE APPEAL TRIBUNAL) BILL
(Serial 94)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill is simple and straightforward. It seeks merely to empower the Motor Accidents Compensation Appeal Tribunal to award costs in matters before it.

This issue has been of concern to the opposition for some time. In March 1984, I raised it during debate on an amendment to the principal act. At that time, I commented on the inequity of a system by which a person must appeal to the tribunal to have his entitlements reinstated as a result of an incorrect decision of the TIO, and then bear the full costs of that appeal. In other words, he must pay for the TIO's mistakes. We would all accept that that situation is hardly fair, especially since recipients of benefits under the scheme are often in a parlous economic situation as a result of the accident in question.

At that time, I asked the then Treasurer, Marshall Perron, for specific assurances that the amending bill would rectify this situation. In response to that appeal, the honourable minister's performance was up to his usual standard. Firstly, he informed the Assembly that he had raised that very issue with his officers and that it had been clarified to his satisfaction. Unfortunately, he had forgotten the explanation so we just had to take his word for it. It was a risky situation, indeed, and so it emerged. Later, when the particular bill was in committee, the honourable minister had another go. He introduced an amendment to the bill to ensure a resolution of the question of costs. He prefaced its introduction with the comment: 'Whilst this amendment is really quite unnecessary, to show my incredible willingness to cooperate in this matter, I have agreed to an amendment'. He went on to assure the Assembly that court costs could be, and already had been, awarded by the tribunal. Mr Speaker, that did not turn out to be true because, in October last year, a Mr Katsaras had been injured seriously when struck by a motor vehicle while riding his bicycle. Some time after, on the death of his mother, he had to go to Greece and, in an attempt to do the right thing, he informed the TIO of his trip. Armed with this knowledge, and despite the fact that it had reports from several doctors as to Mr Katsaras' medical situation, the TIO wrote to require him to attend a medical appointment at 2 days' notice. Since Mr Katsaras was away, naturally he missed the appointment and the TIO used this as a justification for stopping payment of his benefits.

Mr Speaker, I will not go into the strong criticism that the tribunal made of the TIO's conduct in this case. However, I want to draw attention to Mr Justice Nader's comments on the question of costs. He found that, although the case was appropriate for an award of costs against the TIO, he had no power to impose them. He acknowledged that there was a power to make rules to award costs but, since no rules had been drawn up, he did not have the requisite power. In the course of the judgment, the tribunal accepted also that costs had not been awarded in any cases before it. That was another piece of misinformation from the former Treasurer.

Mr Speaker, it is more than 12 months since this Assembly passed what the honourable minister assured us was 'empowering legislation'. It is now 6 months since Mr Justice Nader found that he could not make an order for costs and no rules have been drafted in an attempt to correct the situation. Now we have a new minister responsible for the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme, none other than the honourable Chief Minister. I call on the Chief Minister to support this legislation and demonstrate his genuine concern for cooperation on this matter. Let us see an attempt to correct an obvious injustice which could affect any Territorian. I call also on each member of this Assembly to support this legislation and to end an unacceptable situation. In all conscience, there must be an affirmative vote on this bill. Let us all vote, at the appropriate time, to ensure that Territorians are given a fair go. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 85)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, there are 2 main purposes to this bill. The first is to split up the offence in respect of bringing liquor into a restricted area so that higher penalties can be imposed on those dealing in liquor. In other words, the penalty for bringing liquor into a restricted area for personal consumption will stay the same; that is, \$1000 or 6 months imprisonment for the first offence, and \$2000 or 12 months imprisonment for the second and subsequent offences. However, where liquor is brought into a restricted area for purposes of sale, penalties under this bill will be increased to \$5000 or 2½ years imprisonment. This increase is achieved by clause 3 of the bill. It has been drafted after consultation with Aboriginal communities who have had their areas declared dry in an effort to restrict the consumption of alcohol and its impact on their social structures. For obvious reasons, it is felt that those who see alcohol in such situations should be dealt with through harsher penalties.

Mr Speaker, the second major aspect of this bill deals with the issue of forfeiture of motor vehicles used to transport liquor into restricted areas. At present, the Liquor Act provides that, where a person is convicted of taking alcohol into a restricted area, the motor vehicle which is seized in connection with the offence is forfeited automatically to the Crown. It is then sold or destroyed. There is no discretion, in any quarter, to prevent forfeiture. It does not matter if the vehicle was used without the knowledge of the owner, even if it were stolen for the purpose. Technically, the vehicle must be forfeited and no one can prevent it. This has resulted in cases of hardship and injustice.

The current provision has had a chequered history and I would like to go into that briefly because it is the best way to illustrate why we have proposed these amendments. It will also serve well to illustrate the unsatisfactory nature of the current provisions and the government's inability to deal with the problems they have created.

Until December 1982, there was a discretion with the court as to whether a vehicle was to be forfeited where a conviction had been recorded. However, the relevant provision was amended so that forfeiture became automatic when a conviction was recorded. At the time, the then honourable member for Fannie Bay, Pam O'Neil, moved an amendment to retain the court's discretion on forfeiture. However, this was defeated by the government when the minister responsible, now the Chief Minister, foreshadowed another amendment which would place the discretion with the Chairman of the Liquor Commission. Then, inexplicably, after acknowledging the need for some discretion, that amendment was withdrawn and so forfeiture became automatic on conviction, despite the government's admission that there should be some discretion somewhere.

Thus was created what has been described recently by the Supreme Court as legislation with the potential to become an instrument for quite grotesque injustice.

Less than 2 months had elapsed when this fact became obvious. A Mr Swan of Nhulunbuy operated a fleet of 4 taxis. Unbeknown to him, and contrary to specific instructions, one of his drivers transported liquor into a restricted area. The car was impounded and charges were laid. The driver pleaded guilty and was fined a mere \$300. Automatically, on the driver's conviction, Mr Swan lost his valuable vehicle, worth approximately \$6000 to \$7000, and thereby suffered a loss of income,

and yet Mr Swan's drivers had all received instructions not to carry liquor to the area in question. Ultimately, the government responded to pressure and sold the vehicle back to Mr Swan at a reduced sum. However, the proprieties of that transaction were questionable and certainly compounded the injustice involved.

In the following month, March 1983, the then honourable member for Fannie Bay raised the matter again in this Assembly. By then, the now Deputy Chief Minister was the relevant minister and he also made motions about dealing with the problem. He informed the Assembly that he had sought a legal opinion on the whole matter and he undertook to advise the Assembly at a later date. He also undertook to have 'a good look at the problem'. As far as we are aware, neither commitment was met and so the iniquitous provision continued to operate. One has only to look at records compiled by the Liquor Commission to see fairly obvious cases without even looking for detail.

A number of forfeitures involved the confiscation of community vehicles; that is, vehicles of communities which had requested that their area be declared dry and which were trying to enforce that decision. If, unfortunately, one of such a community's rare resources, one of its vehicles, is used to transport liquor into the area, without permission and against the directions of the local council, the vehicle is forfeited on a conviction. It is the community that is penalised, the very community which is trying to uphold the ban on alcohol. Surely, the government can see the contradiction in that situation.

Mr Speaker, in response to this situation, in August last year, the member for Stuart introduced similar amendments to those contained in this bill in conjunction with government amendments to the principal act. The Deputy Chief Minister was responsible for the legislation and, during debate, he admitted that there had been cases of injustice. However, he claimed these were not due to the provisions themselves. He blamed it on what he called the 'then current peculiar circumstances'. I quote from what he said at the time: 'The Chairman of the Liquor Commission is unable to exercise his discretion to dispose of vehicles under claim until the outcome of the legal proceedings on an issue is known'.

Mr Speaker, it became clear to everyone, within weeks of the December 1982 amendments, that there was no longer any discretion either with the courts or with the Liquor Commission. As early as February 1983, the Chairman of the Liquor Commission himself had disclaimed that he had any discretion under the new amendments. The opposition has pointed out in the Assembly on a number of occasions that there is no discretion and, on a number of occasions, the government has acknowledged the need for some discretion. Unfortunately, it appears that the Deputy Chief Minister has not got the message yet, despite the fact that, in October last year, the Supreme Court stated categorically that there was no discretion and that the December 1982 amendments had made forfeiture on conviction automatic. Further, the court went on to pass scathing criticism on the government that was responsible for such provisions. I would refer honourable members to the Supreme Court judgment in the matter of the Queen versus the Chairman of the Liquor Commission of the Northern Territory ex parte Frank Jarna. That should leave no doubt about the Supreme Court's views on the current provisions and the need for their amendment.

Mr Speaker, in the face of continuing inaction by the government on this matter, the opposition feels obliged to reintroduce the amendments it proposed previously. The details of the amendments are as follows. Clause 5 gives the court a discretion to order forfeiture in 2 circumstances: firstly, where the owner is the person convicted or, secondly, where someone other than the owner is convicted but the court is satisfied that the owner supplied the vehicle

knowing that it would be used to transport liquor into a restricted area. This latter provision would enable the court to look at the owner's involvement and to determine whether he or she had consented, tacitly or otherwise, to the use of the vehicle. It will empower the court to ensure that the innocent are not penalised and that vehicles are restored to their owners in appropriate cases.

Following on from this, clause 6 makes provision for vehicles to be released pending trial of the charges where the owner has not been charged and the court is satisfied that the vehicle will be available at the time of the trial. Again, this will leave it up to the court to see that injustice and inconvenience are minimised where appropriate.

Mr Speaker, as a logical extension to these amendments, clause 4 introduces a device for the return of seized goods. This device is used in other Territory legislation; for example, the Fish and Fisheries Act. It allows goods such as vehicles to be detailed for up to 7 days before they are technically seized by notice in writing. This would facilitate the return of the vehicle or other goods where police inquiries indicated that the owner was not implicated in the offence so that forfeiture would be unlikely. This device avoids the more technical process which must be gone through to claim the goods once they have the status of being seized. These amendments to the forfeiture provisions are long overdue. The original December 1982 amendments removing any discretion should never have been made. Surely, after the remarks made in the Supreme Court last October, the government will need no further convincing. It cannot behave responsibly and ignore the severe criticism and definite statements made by Mr Justice Nader in that judgment. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Standing Committee on Expenditure

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- (1) A standing committee to be known as the Standing Committee on Expenditure be appointed to -
 - (a) consider any papers on public expenditure presented to the Legislative Assembly and such of the estimates as it sees fit to examine;
 - (b) consider estimates and figures of expenditure and make recommendations concerning ways in which programs may be carried out more efficiently;
 - (c) examine the relationship between costs and benefits implementing government programs; and
 - (d) inquire into and report on any question in connection with public expenditure which is referred to it by the Legislative Assembly.
- (2) The committee consist of 5 members, 3 nominated by the Chief Minister and 2 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.

- (3) Every nomination of a member of the committee be forthwith notified in writing to the Speaker.
- (4) The members of the committee hold office for the remainder of the term of the Legislative Assembly.
- (5) 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum.
- (6) The committee elect 1 of its members as chairman and 1 as deputy chairman, who shall perform the chairman's duties when the chairman is absent. In the absence of both the chairman and the deputy chairman, the members of the committee present shall elect another member to perform the duties at that meeting.
- (7) The committee be empowered to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.
- (8) The committee appoint the chairman of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chairman of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee, the members of the subcommittee shall appoint 1 of the members present to perform the duties of the chairman at that meeting.
- (9) A majority of the members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee.
- (10) Members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may take part in the public proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion, or constitute a quorum.
- (11) The committee and subcommittees be empowered to move from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or in private session, to adjourn from time to time, to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly, and to send for persons, papers and records.
- (12) The committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence from the committee or any subcommittee as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.
- (13) The committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources.
- (14) The committee, in selecting particular matters for investigation, take account of the investigations of other committees of the of the Assembly and avoid duplication.
- (15) The committee have leave to report from time to time and any member of the committee be empowered to add a protest or dissent to any report.
- (16) The foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr Speaker, a similar motion has been moved before in the Assembly and, with the exception of 1 member, all members have had the opportunity to debate it before. The previous defeats of this motion were not a measure of the worthiness of the proposal although they were a measure of the shortsightedness of those opposite who played a very active role in defeating it on previous occasions. This motion was last put to the Assembly on 14 June 1984. I believe that, since that date, the case for a committee on expenditure has become even more clear.

Let us recall the events that have occurred since that date. I would just like to list some of the financial transactions which have brought this Assembly into disrepute. There was the casino affair with its myriad of complex problems: the gift of \$2.5m; the interest free loan of \$2m; the waiving of stamp duty estimated at \$1m; a tax holiday at an estimated value of \$3m; interest assistance to the tune of \$1m; land and property transactions which would involve a loss of \$4m; and legal and other fees of approximately \$1.8m. There has been the disclosure on the TIO's financial affairs, the Auditor-General's challenge to the government's handling of contingent liability, the recently-debated parliamentary pay rises and the Chief Minister's very own costs incurred with his new-age thinking program.

Mr Speaker, each of those events is pertinent to the question of the need for a committee on expenditure because each indicates not only the misuse of public money but also the difficulties in sorting out fact from fiction. It is not merely the events themselves but the deceit that surrounds them. Let me just reiterate these points. Not only has the government expended \$14m on the acquisition of the casinos for private interests, it has failed to explain adequately the basis for its decision. Now we have a situation where the former Chief Minister has stated clearly that there was no reason for the use of public money and has called for the release of further documents. Of course, that saga is still unfolding in this Assembly. Further, the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Industry and Small Business has not been able to inform the Assembly whether some of the money was paid illegally. Mr Speaker, that saga is still unfolding now. These are clear justifications for the need for an expenditure committee.

Mr Speaker, the TIO has suffered significant financial losses in the last 2 financial years. I do not wish to deal with the politically-convenient denials of those losses by both the former Chief Minister and the former Treasurer. The particular issue of relevance here was the statement by the former Treasurer last November when he was able to claim, after a loss of \$5m in 1982-83 and almost 6 months after the completion of the 1983-84 financial year, that he had received no reports on the TIO's financial position. In the face of a \$14m loss, this attitude is a clear justification once again of the need for an expenditure committee in this Assembly. Should some members opposite believe that a body such as the TIO would be outside the ambit or the purview of a committee on expenditure, I would ask them to consider what the future holds: wait until this Assembly is allocating money from consolidated revenue to prop up the TIO. The worst is still to come, Mr Speaker.

In his report for 1983-84, the Auditor-General raised the issue of the government's treatment of certain arrangements that had been entered into over the Yulara development project. The Auditor-General argued that the government's variable lease rental arrangement amounted to a contingent liability of some \$70m which this government did not report in its public accounts. Similar arrangements have been entered into with the Darwin Sheraton. Something

similar - although we may never find out what; it is like pulling teeth - probably has been entered into for the casino deal. Will these be reported honestly or will the government continue to hold the view that the former Treasurer held - that the Auditor-General's view is just another view of things? Regardless of the government's policy on the issue of public accounting of contingent liabilities, one must raise the question of its ability to provide such accounts.

The Auditor-General noted that, since no central record of guarantees or indemnities existed, and since Treasury had no formal mechanism for ensuring that the public accounts were complete on this issue, he was unable to audit the accounts fully. We are talking about the accounts of the people of the Northern Territory. At the end of 1983-84, by the government's own estimate, we are talking about some \$69.6m. The Auditor-General's assessment of the amount of money involved was some \$140m. We are not talking nickels and dimes. It can be safely said that, by the end of 1985-86, the Auditor-General will have to come back and say the amount is some \$200m. I believe that this alone provides sufficient grounds for an expenditure committee of this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I have highlighted a number of issues involving public expenditure of more than \$200m. This relates only to the events of the last 9 to 10 months and does not delve into the deep, dark, murky past of the Northern Territory and its financial transactions. I will refer to a couple of examples, Mr Speaker. There was the Ro-Ro facility and the absolutely extraordinary contractual arrangements that were developed around that. There were the government's very generous leasing arrangements in relation to the Marrakai Apartments. Then, of course, there was Gardens Hill. What a delight that was supposed to be for everybody in the Northern Territory. How far has it developed, Mr Speaker?

Mr Perron: Do you know where it is?

Mr LEO: I have found out where it is and I have seen this magnificent structure that is being plastered on the landscape.

Mr Speaker, the financial affairs of the Northern Territory are complex. Unfortunately, they seem to be managed by simpletons and are recorded in an accounting system that is insufficient to provide adequate details of expenditure. I will give an example. Last year, in the debate on the Appropriation Bill, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the inadequacy of the information on government expenditure presented to the Legislative Assembly. One of the specific issues he raised was the matter of transfers of appropriations from one division to another. He received a response from the then Minister for Transport and Works who said that the information was, in fact, in the budget documents and that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should open his eyes. The truth of the matter was that details of transfers of funds between divisions and subdivisions were not included in the budget documents. I do not wish to dwell on the minister's mistake. He has paid a hideously high price for his mistakes and I think that he probably recognises that with his new Chief Minister. The point is that the information was not available and, indeed, our experienced minister was not aware of it.

Mr Speaker, if we want an unbiased and far-reaching view of the Territory's public accounts, I suggest that the Grants Commission's fourth report makes interesting reading. Briefly, it stated that it encountered problems in applying its budget analysis and preferred methodology and that, in part, these problems were the result of the structure of the Territory's accounts. Indeed,

the Grants Commission is probably a body that everybody in the Assembly should take very close note of. The last time that I spoke to a similar motion, I referred particularly to the need for this Assembly to be able to say to the Grants Commission, which influences our lives so very much in the Northern Territory, that we have a committee of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, comprised of members from both sides of this Assembly, to review public expenditure in the Northern Territory. The need for that committee is more essential than ever. One would have to be blind not to realise that persons in other places are indeed scrutinising and examining the Territory's finances very closely. It is not hard for anybody to see that that is the case. We are faced with continuous allegations and continuous mismanagement of funds in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, make no bones about it, people are very well aware of it and we are the subject of considerable public scrutiny throughout Australia.

I saw a commercial last night for a Four Corners program. The whole casino issue is to be dragged through the public media again. We are being scrutinised very closely indeed. In fact, watching television last night, I gained a very good idea of the role of a public accounts committee. There was a Liberal senator from Tasmania who, for many years, has been on the public accounts committee of the federal parliament questioning, if not criticising, the the ABC for some of its expenditure on a new program that it is now offering. That is very much the role of a public accounts committee. This senator was doing it quite publicly as part of his role on the public accounts committee.

It is interesting to note that there are only 2 legislatures in the whole of Australia that do not have some form of public accounts committee. They are the only legislatures without a bicameral system: Queensland and the Northern Territory. Quite frankly, the Territory can do without some of the scathing remarks that have been made about Queensland. Queensland is not to be envied at all. I would hope that the government recognises that. We do not live in cloud cuckoo land. The money comes from somewhere. The public of Australia expects the legislators in Australia, and indeed the spenders of public money in Australia, to act with increasing responsibility. It is an obligation of this Assembly to examine increasingly and with more thoroughness the expenditure of funds in the Northern Territory.

I hope that all members opposite will support this motion for a public expenditure committee. If not all members opposite, at least the backbenchers opposite should support this call to involve themselves in reviewing the expenditure of funds in the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I do not know about other honourable members who have been in this Assembly for a few terms but I am becoming pretty tired of this debate. One feels like simply tabling the last one because the arguments have not changed.

One thing that has changed is that, for the first time, the member for Nhulunbuy has sponsored the motion. Perhaps it will be shuffled around the 6 members opposite.

Mr Leo: That is not right.

Mr PERRON: He says that he has sponsored it before. That makes this point even more relevant. He tells us that it was last night on television that he learned the reasons for a public accounts committee. That is terrific. He told us he sponsored the motion in the Assembly a few years ago and he has just sponsored it again. The opposition gave notice of it at the last sittings. Last night, just in time, he found out exactly what he wanted to tell us.

Mr Speaker, as has been said many times, the opportunities for the opposition to solicit information in this Assembly are extensive. I will run through a few of them quite quickly. The purpose of the motion to set up a committee is to obtain information from the government. There is opportunity to ask questions on notice and questions without notice. Matters can be raised in the Assembly. There are the adjournment debates. Letters can be sent to ministers. Briefings can be obtained from departments. There is the Auditor-General's report, which I might touch on in more detail in a minute. There are annual reports by departments and statutory authorities, most of which I am sure are not even looked at; they are tabled in this Assembly by the dozens every year. They contain detailed information on what those departments and statutory authorities are doing. The quarterly financial reports of the government's accounts are gazetted regularly. Of course, the member for Nhulunbuy indicated another document containing interesting information. I commend it to honourable members: the Grants Commission report on the Northern Territory. Indeed, there are also submissions to the Grants Commission by the Territory government containing a wealth of financial and costs-related information on the Northern Territory. In addition, we have budget debates. In the past, the opposition's contribution to those debates has been very shallow. The opposition has the opportunity to raise matters of public importance on just about any day it cares to. Most of the matters it brings forward are not very relevant but it has that opportunity under standing orders.

What we are discussing here is a motion aimed at doing the work for the 6 members opposite. No one on this side of the Assembly wants it or needs it. We are talking about a committee for the opposition. It appears that the Leader of the Opposition, who carries his 5 colleagues in the Assembly, cannot cope with the workload. Perhaps the workload is getting a little too much for him. I think he should ginger up his mates to do some work instead of proposing a system which will cost us and the public service time and money to do the job for them.

Let us look at what the committee proposes to do: '(1)(a) consider any papers on public expenditure presented to the Legislative Assembly and such of the estimates as it sees fit to examine'. The very role of this Assembly is to consider and examine papers tabled in the Assembly. That is exactly what we are here for. This proposed committee would be merely a subordinate committee of this Assembly to do the work of the Assembly.

Paragraph (1)(b) states: 'consider estimates and figures of expenditure and make recommendations concerning ways in which programs may be carried out more efficiently'. The opposition is free to make recommendations to the government and this Assembly any time it wants on ways that the government might do things more efficiently. Such suggestions are often made in various debates, including adjournment debates. So they should be. We should expect all parliamentarians to offer advice to government and to recommend to government ways in which it can do things better. We are certainly interested in their views.

Paragraph (1)(c) states: 'examine the relationship between the costs and benefits of implementing government programs'. This matter was addressed in detail in former debates. The relationship between costs and benefits of any government programs are, by and large, subjective. How does one make those judgments on a whole range of government expenditures other than by exercising individual bias and prejudice? How do you examine the cost benefits of subsidies to a performing arts centre? If you ask a dozen different people,

they will give you a dozen different answers. That is only one example from the thousands that could be put forward. What about a cost-benefit analysis of the very committee that is being proposed? It would cost a lot of money if it were ever established. Certainly, it would take up a great deal of the time of public servants and politicians. We have done pretty well without it over the last 6 years. The first item on the committee's agenda could be to examine the cost benefits of its own existence. You don't need a standing committee to examine those cost benefits.

Paragraph (1)(d) states: 'inquire into and report on any question in connection with public expenditure which is referred to it by the Legislative Assembly'. Mr Deputy Speaker, you do not need a standing committee to cover (d). This Assembly can refer any question to a committee that it establishes at any time it wants to. There is absolutely no necessity for a standing committee under (d).

Those are the 4 items that the committee proposes to take on board as its functions. The terms of reference have not changed inasmuch as they empower the committee to form a subcommittee of 3 persons of which subcommittee a majority of persons shall form a quorum. Thus, there is the ability for 2 parliamentarians to be formed into a subcommittee which can be vested with any or all of the powers of the standing committee itself. The standing committee's powers are quite wide-ranging and strong and, certainly, I would not support the vesting of such powers in any 2 people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the federal parliament has a great many committees. As all honourable members would be aware, these are formally established with terms of reference, powers and functions to watchdog the federal parliament. However, it seems that they have not served the taxpayer very well in a number of areas that come to mind such as the expense to the taxpayer through the purchase of uranium destined for France. This is to be stockpiled in Australia so that the federal Labor Party can appease its conscience and its left wing. It is probably doing the French government a favour by buying uranium contracted to France at times of high world prices and refusing to supply it under that contract and thereby relieving France of the problem of buying highly-priced uranium. Probably, the French are giggling to themselves, picking up uranium on world markets at \$25 a pound and avoiding a contract which was probably written in the days when it was nearly \$40 a pound. Of course, France will never have to take any uranium that is withheld from it under its contract. Rather than hurting France, I think we are doing the opposite.

\$19m was spent on the Darwin Airport. The parliamentary accounts and expenditure committees of the federal government have not done a thing to help in that situation.

Mr B. Collins: But I got those down last week. What is wrong with you?

Mr PERRON: They happened to be there.

I have further examples of expense which will elicit a giggle out of the opposition: the use of F111s to take spy photos of the Franklin Dam; the bureaucracy required to administer the assets test which, we are told, is likely to cost more than it will return; and the use of \$100 000 a year of taxpayers' funds to rent back Ayers Rock so that Australians can all feel proud that it is a part of their assets. In those exercises, where has the expenditure committee protested to government about such expenditure? What has it done to stop those things happening? It seems that it has done very little indeed.

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy mentioned a number of matters pretty close to home that he felt a parliamentary expenditure committee would help avoid. It would help the opposition to get to the bottom of them and stop them. The casino affair was the first one. If the honourable member thinks that this government would be able to negotiate with private enterprise, other governments or whomever, with the opposition sitting at its shoulder picking at all the proposals discussed between parties, he is very wrong. The government would never reach any conclusion that way. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, knowing the way the opposition uses information that comes into its hands, that is just not on.

The significant losses that the TIO has incurred in inwards reinsurance and in the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme were mentioned. I noticed that the member for Nhulunbuy restated something that was said by the Leader of the Opposition last year. It was totally untrue and he knew it was untrue. He said that we would be using taxpayers' funds to prop up the TIO. That was said last year and repeated today. What a load of nonsense! It is a totally unfounded statement.

Mr B. Collins: You mean you are not going to underpin the TIO?

Mr PERRON: We have no information whatsoever that the government will ever need to write out cheques to the TIO to support its outgoings.

Contingent liability was another area that the honourable member referred to. He said that the Auditor-General commented in his last report that there was more contingent liability held by the government than was shown in the accounts. It was an appropriate matter for debate under the Auditor-General's report. Why do we need a committee? Perhaps part of the idea is that we will not have to debate the Auditor-General's report because we will have an expenditure committee to do it for us. It will be able to do it all behind closed doors, between sittings. Obviously, honourable members are aware that the Auditor-General reports directly to this Assembly, as he should, and his report will be debated openly every year - hopefully by all members.

Pay rises were mentioned as part of this government's activities in which a parliamentary expenditure committee would take some interest. That was not elaborated upon. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition could tell us what the role of a parliamentary expenditure committee would be in consideration of future pay rises and reports by the Remuneration Tribunal because I would be interested to know.

Executive development courses were mentioned as well. I guess that is a pretty typical example of where we differ on the value of certain things. It is a subjective judgment. What are the costs related to benefits of sending people to development courses? Clearly, it is one of those things that we will disagree on and that is that. You can have all the committees in the world but the cost benefits of such things are purely subjective and we are all entitled to our own opinions.

Marrakai Apartments and the Gardens Hill development were mentioned. I do not know what on earth the expenditure committee is supposed to do about those things. If the government commits its resources to assist development in the Northern Territory, so be it. We make those commitments publicly and we stand by them. If we had followed the snivelling, bitching methods of the opposition over the last 6 years, there would have been very little done in the Northern Territory. As I said during the debate on the casinos, the opposition rants

about the tax and new systems of taxation. We would not even have casinos if the opposition had been in power. We would not have them nor the last 6 years of employment and taxes that have been gained. Instead of recognising that, the opposition keeps bitching about the fact that the taxation regime has been changed recently by the government.

The Grants Commission was mentioned as having trouble applying its standard methodology to Northern Territory accounting. Of course it has. One of the arguments we have put forward persistently to the Grants Commission ever since it has been empowered to inquire into the Northern Territory is that the administration of the Northern Territory is completely different from the states. The Grants Commission has reaffirmed time after time that the methodology for the states does not fit the Northern Territory. I believe that view will be confirmed when the Grants Commission reports on its Australian relativities review in which it was asked to compare the Northern Territory with the states or advise whether that could not be done and whether the Northern Territory needs to be treated separately from the states. I believe it will find the latter because the Northern Territory is not a state and the problems that arise in government administration in the Northern Territory are very different from those in the states. The Grants Commission has recognised that.

Mr Speaker, committees of the Legislative Assembly should be established to perform useful functions and not to satisfy a whim. I oppose the motion.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, it is always interesting and a pleasure to follow the Minister for Mines and Energy in a debate like this because all his worst characteristics come to the fore. I suspect, Mr Speaker, it is a combination of some of his own personal characteristics and also the fact that he has had, in a sense, a very privileged parliamentary life. He has always been part of the government and has not had the opportunity to experience the frustrations of an opposition attempting to come to grips with what the government is proposing.

Mr Perron: I don't think I ever will.

Mr SMITH: I am pleased that the minister has indicated quite clearly that he will not be standing at the next election.

Unfortunately, once again today, we have had the minister adopt the same very defensive position on behalf of the government. I suspect the minister does not really have a proper understanding of what a public expenditure committee can do and what its limits are. I make it clear that there are very real limits. We are not interested in setting up an open-ended structure which will be given a brief to cut a swathe through any government department at will. Obviously, that is in no one's interest, particularly not in our interest when we become the government. The federal parliament has found that its public accounts committee is a tool for better government. It provides an opportunity for a group of the parliament to sit down and, in a non-political way, make assessments on the operations of the government. The best indication that such committees operate in a non-political way is that it is very rare for them to come down with majority and minority reports. On most occasions, such committee committees produce unanimous recommendations on the matters that they have been examining.

One of the matters that the federal public expenditure committee has examined recently was referred to by way of interjection by the member for Leanyer: the Medicare fraud. The public expenditure committee of the federal parliament decided that Medicare needed thorough investigation. That

investigation was undertaken by that committee and it made a unanimous recommendation to the parliament. As a result of that committee's work, the federal government has been saved about \$100m. The committee was able to identify very precisely where fraud was being conducted in the Medicare system and the government was able to take action to stamp it out. If it did not have that committee, the government would have been unable to stop the Medicare fraud.

The public expenditure committee also reviewed the operations of Telecom. I am sure we would all agree that the operations of Telecom did need review. As a result of that review, a number of recommendations were made for the government to consider.

Mr Speaker, obviously, there are opportunities within this Assembly for such a committee to operate. Let us forget for a moment the political matters such as the Gardens Hill development which I will come to a bit later. There are operations of various government departments that can be assessed, not in the heat of controversy, but as part of an ongoing process by such a committee. It would enable accurate judgments to be made and enable recommendations to be given to this Assembly on their operations. I think that any member of this Assembly would find it very difficult to deny that there are government departments which need a thorough examination which the minister and the government in general does not have the time to undertake. I am sure that this could be done in a non-political way. This motion is designed to provide better government in the Northern Territory. It is our view that there is a gap at present and that that gap will be filled by the establishment of such a committee.

Mr Speaker, the minister talked about the opportunities that are available to members to gain information from the government. He mentioned the opportunities that we have to ask questions on notice or without notice. As a demonstration of the difficulty that the opposition sometimes has in gaining information by questions without notice, I want to give 2 examples. One example concerns the minister himself when he had responsibility for the TIO. After the report of the TIO was presented in February or March last year, I posed a series of questions on notice to the then Treasurer concerning the operations of the TIO. I think that was in April. By the time the June sittings came around, I still had not received a response. That was a period of 8 weeks. At the June sittings of the Legislative Assembly, we were debating the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme. The questions that I had asked were designed to obtain information that was to be an extremely important part of my contribution. Unfortunately, the answers to the questions did not arrive in time for my contribution in the second-reading debate.

I am pleased to say that, when this was pointed out to the minister, he provided the answers to the questions in time for the third reading. As I was able to point out in my third-reading speech, there were some errors in the information that had been supplied. I pointed this out. The smart Alec response of the minister went like this:

I suspect that the honourable member for Millner asked some lawyer to draw him up a set of questions and then could not make head nor tail of the answers. Quite clearly, he asked the wrong questions for the sort of information that he was trying to obtain.

Mr Speaker, after the sitting on 15 June, I wrote to the minister and sought clarification of some of the answers that he had given me. On 25 June, the minister wrote back:

I refer to your letter of 15 June 1984. Regrettably, it appears that there were some errors in replies given to questions on notice Nos 22 and 23.

We had a situation where the minister first of all delayed in providing me the information that I required for that debate. Secondly, he provided me with wrong information. Thirdly, he acted very indignantly when it was pointed out to him in the Assembly that he had supplied wrong information. The final point about this particular episode is that, even then, the information which he supplied was not correct and there is still one point outstanding on this particular matter. I wrote to him on 26 June pointing out this one point. To this day, I still have not received a clarification. We have heard much from the minister about the opportunities that are available to us through questions on notice. That is an example of how the government does not pay due and proper regard to the well-established procedures that apply in this Assembly.

A second demonstration is the fate of a series of questions that I placed on notice in October last year. These questions were not insubstantial. There was a series of questions on the Gardens Hill development:

How much will the Housing Commission pay for the pensioner units that will be constructed in stage 1 of the Gardens Hill development? When will the Housing Commission be taking over these units? Who called for the tenders on the development? What will be the developers' contribution to the upgrading of services in the area? What is the component of land cost in the total cost of \$1.985m quoted by the minister in his speech of 29 August 1984?

Another series of questions related to the acquisition of land at Myilly Point:

What are the details of the arrangements made with the Paspaley family and associated companies for the acquisition of their landholdings within the area of the proposed casino complex at Myilly Point? What alternative land has been offered as part of these arrangements? Have arrangements been made and are they being negotiated with other landholders within that area and, if so, what are the details.

Mr Speaker, at the time of the proroguing of this Assembly, I had had no response to those questions. There were 6 or 7 of them. That was a period of 3 or 4 months. I raised this matter at the last Assembly sittings and pointed out my concern that this government had failed to respond to these questions. The answer from the Deputy Chief Minister outside this Assembly was: 'Don't worry about it Terry, I will take it on board and you will get an answer soon'. That was 6 weeks ago. I still do not have an answer to these questions. It is an essential part of the Westminster system and this government is not paying due and proper regard to it. That is why the opposition is not satisfied with the existing procedures that apply in this Assembly and why it wants to introduce not a revolutionary new procedure but a procedure that occurs in many western democracies and applies in all Australian states except Queensland. It applies also at the federal level.

Mr Speaker, a public accounts committee is essential for any parliament. The honourable member for Nhulunbuy and I have demonstrated that, without a public accounts committee, it is too easy for the government, either by design or by pressures of work or even by omission, to get away with doing less than the best for the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory deserves the best.

In the next few years the Territory will face a financial challenge that it has not had to face so far. Everybody agrees that money will be tighter, at least in the next financial year. The Northern Territory will have to make some very tough decisions about where it puts its money. I would have thought that an essential part of the process of making those tough decisions was to ensure that money was spent effectively and efficiently and that we were getting a maximum value for the dollar. That, in my view, is an essential role for a public accounts committee. I stress again that I am not referring to controversial political matters such as the casino and Gardens Hill etc because, from a government's point of view, there are limits to what a public expenditure committee can and cannot do. The government will have a majority of members on the committee. If members have fears that the government will be dragged constantly into the headlines over those issues, those are unreal fears. There would be a positive opportunity for a committee of this Assembly to show that the Assembly itself was interested in the efficient and the effective running of this Territory. It is a shame that the government does not seem to be prepared to take on this challenge. We will continue to put up this proposition because it is an essentially sensible one. It will probably have to wait until Labor is in government before its introduction and then the CLP in opposition will welcome it with open arms. I have no doubt that, when that time comes, we will have a unanimous vote to establish such a committee because, in opposition, you see the need for it and that it leads to a better and a more efficient functioning of government. It does not pose any real threat to a government that is functioning effectively; it helps it out. I would urge the government to reconsider its position on this matter.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief because, frankly, I think this matter has been flogged to death in this Assembly over a number of years now. The motion talks about a standing committee on expenditure and the member opposite referred to a public accounts committee. But, by whatever name, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition obviously sees this committee as the be-all and end-all of what is now an ineffective opposition. It sees this as a tool to be used negatively rather than positively as it tries to put it across to the people of the Northern Territory. It has proved so many times that it is nothing more and nothing less than an arm of the Australian Labor Party in the Northern Territory. It wants to gather as much information as it can and run back to Canberra with it so that Canberra can continue to flog the backsides of Territorians financially.

I believe that this motion ought to be withdrawn until such time as the opposition can place some credibility on what it is talking about by placing before this Assembly a copy of the report from the federal public accounts committee and so give this Assembly, and the people of the Northern Territory, a report on exactly what has occurred in respect of Darwin Airport. I believe that that will not be forthcoming to the people of the Northern Territory. I refer to the 6 opposition members, not just its merry leader, who is the only one who shows any constructive attitude towards the Northern Territory; I am talking about the 6 of them. There is no doubt that, if they were to have this committee established, their cancerous attitudes would have a real effect on the public service in the Northern Territory. Their ability to report without fear or favour to the Northern Territory government and to this Legislative Assembly would be placed under threat because they know that the members of the opposition have a penchant for grabbing snippets of information and running off to the media on behalf of their buddies in the Australian Labor Party in Canberra.

Mr Speaker, there is a classic example of that. I am a member of the Committee on the Environment. We had a briefing from officers the other day on water retention or - what do you call it?

A member: Water retention.

Mr DALE: The member for Stuart is also a member of that committee and received the briefing. Lo and behold, at no time during that meeting did he express anything like the comments that he expressed to the media. He simply sat through a committee meeting, gained the information he wanted and then ran off to try to earn his Brownie points. The opposition in the Northern Territory is ineffective and everybody is aware of that including the federal government. Let us not give the opposition a tool that will do its job for it.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the one practical result of this debate always is that it really does flush them out. That is a fact. Even though the government places no particular value on this exercise because it always votes against it, the debate always draws out those members of the government who have a particularly individual approach as to how governments should run. They always come out and I dare say a few more of them will speak in this debate.

Mr Speaker, just as an aside, because I cannot let it pass, it does not distinguish the honourable member who has just spoken to advise the Assembly that he is a member of an extremely important committee and then display to the Assembly that he is entirely ignorant of the subject matter that comes before that committee. If a public accounts committee were ever established, the members on it would have to demonstrate the same degree of professionalism and competence that the Liberal Senator Rae does and for which he is famous in Canberra. He has been a superb chairman of the expenditure committee for many years. The honourable member for Wanguri referred to 'water releases or whatever you call them' at Ranger. If he knows so little about what goes on at those committee meetings, he should not take the trouble to advertise the fact in the Legislative Assembly. Mr Speaker, I believe the Minister for Mines and Energy - I give him the benefit of the doubt - is truly ignorant of how committees function and what they are for. He is not simply putting it on for the benefit of the Assembly; I believe he does not know how they work and his ignorance is truly profound. Although he seems to be mellowing somewhat lately, the minister has demonstrated over the years that it is not simply the committee system that he holds in complete contempt but the parliamentary system as well. The minister does not know how the committee system works for the simple reason that he does not want to know. That is fair enough. I am not suggesting that every member of parliament should be an advocate of the committee system.

Senator Gareth Evans made a speech on the committee system a number of years ago. He demonstrated his flair for expression and I enjoyed reading the speech. He talked about the entire committee system in the federal parliament and how effective it had been. During that speech, he talked about detractors of the committee system. He said that some people would like to believe that members of federal parliamentary committees were the Portnoys of the parliamentary system in that they were engaged in activity which was physically debilitating, only marginally satisfying and entirely unproductive. He went on to refute that position and pointed out - and it would do some honourable members opposite good to read the speech - the practical results of the committee system in operation in Canberra.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has given enough pertinent examples to give the lie to the nonsense the Minister for Mines and Energy dropped on the Assembly this morning. He continues to make broad-brush statements on these matters from a profound ignorance of the facts. The honourable minister said authoritatively this morning that these committees were a complete waste of time, had never produced anything of any benefit to anybody, consumed enormous

amounts of public money and so on. I ask the minister to explain why his government saw the desirability, supported by the opposition, I might add, of setting up the Communications Technology Committee. The reason it has done so, and it is a very good reason, is to obtain the benefit of the committee system.

The committee system is a tool of the parliament but the government seems to ignore that completely, particularly the honourable minister. It is not in competition with parliament. It is not an alternative structure which opposes parliament or which is set up to destroy the government or anything else. That is not how it operates, particularly in the federal parliament. It is a fact - and there are some members opposite who know it - that the majority of committee members recognise the essential element of being a member of a committee. All the committees here work to the rule that members cannot be partisan. Once members start being party political on committees, they break down. It is a convention of the parliamentary system, which is honoured largely by committee members from all parties, that the majority of the work, 95% of the work - the stuff that the public does not often hear about - is done in a routine and proficient manner, and party politics are left in the parliament. The committee, as a tool of the parliament, reports back to parliament.

If the minister would like to refer to some of the public accounts committees' reports or the reports of the Auditors-General in the states and the federal parliament, he would find out just how much essential hackwork was done by those committees to serve the public better, to make sure that parliamentarians performed their jobs better, to produce better legislation and to keep a better eye on how the public services operated. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition offered some examples of where extremely substantial amounts of money had been saved. There are numerous examples of work done by federal parliamentary committees that have led to the restructuring of entire government departments. That is because committees can operate outside of the strictures of parliament. That is their very purpose. They ensure that, instead of the parliament sitting for 21 or 26 days a year, it is on the job, through its committees, 365 days a year and is engaged in productive work.

But the government seems to be entirely ignorant of the fact that that is the very purpose of parliamentary committees. The Minister for Mines and Energy sees them simply as a method of attacking the government and criticising the government. That flies in the face of all the evidence on how those committees work.

The Minister for Mines and Energy established an excellent case for why the committee should operate in the federal parliament. If the question of the Darwin Airport does not go before the federal parliamentary public accounts and expenditure committee, then his colleagues in the federal parliament are very slack operators indeed. I would have to say that, if it eventuates that there is no reference to the public accounts committee of the federal parliament by the opposition members in Canberra, then the government of the Northern Territory is not doing its job either. If it does not, it had better answer why in here. If it cannot organise for its political colleagues in Canberra to ensure that the powers of that committee are used, to make sure that there is a full public disclosure of the nuts and bolts and the details of how much money has been spent at Darwin and is likely to be wasted, then it is not doing its job either. That applies, without getting into the ins and outs of the policy involved, to the whole question of Nabarlek uranium as well. The minister spent 15 minutes of his speech, the majority of it, making a very solid case as to why such committees should exist.

Without labouring the point, Mr Speaker, there is no question at all

that the whole affair of the casino is a matter which should properly have come before a committee. The honourable minister is fond of trotting out what he sees as evidence of the lack of use that the opposition makes of the procedures in the Assembly. I do not think anybody can seriously put up a case that the opposition has not made as effective a use of question time in this Assembly as anybody could. If honourable members would like to take a trip down to Canberra and sit in on question time, they might just find out how effective question time in this Assembly really is by comparison. I think yesterday's question time was a classic example of that.

However, what happens in question time is that, when we have the government on the run and in trouble, it bails out, as it did again this morning, and says: 'Put it on notice'. It is easy. That option is always available to the government. Not all government ministers use it, I must say. One of the things that question time has established is just how good some government ministers are and how bad others are. Question time is a testing time. All of the rabbits run into their holes when it gets too hot and have the questions put on notice. Mr Speaker, have a look at the Hansard. How could anybody doubt that?

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has indicated how ineffective questions on notice can be. When the information you end up getting is incorrect, you are rubbished and told the only thing that is wrong is the question and not the answer. Subsequently, you receive written advice admitting that the information was in error. What is the impact of that? The impact of it is quite simple, Mr Speaker. The delay in the receipt of the advice and a result of the false information finally obtained meant that this Assembly was not able to scrutinise the government's performance in the manner in which ministers always tell us that it can, because of their promptness in replying to questions on notice and the accuracy of their answers.

Mr Speaker, there is no need to go over all this ground, but I will point out again that the members of the government in the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly have a completely wrong perception of how the committee system works and the benefits that can flow from it. It is not a political tool, Mr Speaker. For the majority of the work that is done by the committees of the federal parliament, it has not been used as such. Certainly, in the 8 years that I have been here, we have had a limited ability to give examples of that in the Northern Territory, but I would like some members opposite to give examples of how the committees which operate in the Legislative Assembly have been used in a partisan-political way by members or former members of this opposition. I would like to hear some concrete examples of how often the parliamentary convention of working on committees - I am not scoring points on them - has been let down by any committees that have operated for this Assembly. If parliamentary committees do not provide a useful function, then why not disband the ones we have already? What was the point of setting up the committees that we have at present if they are not useful work tools?

Committees fulfill a very important role. I think that it is fair to say that a case can be established easily that we have a greater need for the committee system to operate, and a greater opportunity for it to operate for our benefit and the public good, in the Northern Territory than anywhere else in Australia. There is one very significant reason for that: we are a unicameral parliament, not a bicameral parliament, and we sit on very few sitting days a year. Therefore, we have the opportunity in terms of members - and that can no longer be used as an excuse and I note that it has not been used as an excuse lately. The former honourable Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham, always relied on the fact that we did not have enough members in this Assembly for a committee system to operate. What nonsense that was when you consider how many days of the year we do not sit.

I finish by saying that we have an opportunity in the Northern Territory which should be used for the public benefit, not for political point scoring. Honourable members opposite will note, of course, that the government would have a majority on this committee, as it has on all committees of the Assembly. Mr Speaker, instead of standing up here and knocking it every time it comes up, why don't the government members have a look at the way in which the committee system operates elsewhere? They could examine some of the specific examples cited by the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and some of the departmental restructuring that has been engineered by federal parliamentary committees, with cooperation from both sides of the parliament, to the public benefit. They could then come back into this Legislative Assembly and debate this on the basis of some real knowledge instead of profound ignorance.

Mr Speaker, the committee system does not compete with parliament. It is a slave of the parliament. It is a servant of the parliament and it is very effective elsewhere. It is a workhorse of the parliament that can provide us all with a great deal of assistance. This Legislative Assembly has a lousy library. It is not worth 2 bob or the effort required to put your head around the door. We have no organised system of parliamentary papers in this Assembly. The question of a new parliament house is one thing, but what I complain about consistently is the complete and utter lack of any of the research resources necessary to make politicians in the Northern Territory more effective than they are. None of this is available here.

Mr Speaker, when those facts are taken together with the number of sitting days on which we sit and the fact that we have no house of review in the Northern Territory to review legislation, a better - not a worse - case can be made for establishing these committees in the Northern Territory than anywhere else in Australia. Committees are of enormous assistance to the operations of an efficient parliament. I am prepared to cop the blame on the opposition side as well as that of the government because we demonstrate, again and again, how inefficient we can be on occasions. Those committees would operate to cut a lot of that work out for us and to make sure the homework does get done.

The government itself has set up a backbench committee, on a party basis, to review its own legislation before it comes into the Assembly. Yet its members stand up in the Legislative Assembly and cry down the same kind of committee system. May I assure the honourable members opposite that a parliamentary committee is able to provide as much assistance to a parliament as a CLP backbench committee can provide to the government party in this Legislative Assembly. Why doesn't the government give to the Assembly what it gives to itself? Why provide for the government what it is prepared to deny to the Assembly?

A committee system does not compete with a parliament. Personally, I would like to look forward to a day when I could rely on getting the homework done by parliamentary committees of this Assembly, with a majority of government members on them, so that we would not need to tie up the time of the Assembly - and very limited time it is - in committee stages of bills and question time in order to deal with these matters.

Mr Speaker, I ask honourable members opposite simply to show us all the courtesy of doing a little bit of homework before this debate comes on again - as it will. In the Northern Territory our facilities for supplying our honourable members opposite with information are limited. However, the staff members of the Legislative Assembly, whilst few in number, are, in fact, proficient and professional. I can assure honourable members opposite that, if they would take the trouble to use the staff of the Assembly for the purpose for

which they are provided and ask a few, little, technical questions about how these committees work, then this debate could be a lot more interesting than it is.

In the last sittings of the Legislative Assembly, I remember that the honourable Minister for Transport and Works based his entire argument on the premiss that we did not need an expenditure committee in the Northern Territory due to the existence of a body, connected with the public service, which did not even exist in the Northern Territory. I am sure the honourable minister will remember that. I look forward to hearing him again, during this debate.

Mr Speaker, in the context of this debate, all honourable members in this Assembly have shown consistently their profound ignorance of parliamentary practice and the benefits to the parliament and to the people of any democratic society of the committee system. What it does, as I said, is to ensure that a parliament, with very few resources, which sits for only 26 days of the year, is on the job as a parliament for 365 days of the year.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I did not intend to speak in this debate but, after that totally unwarranted attack on the member for Wanguri, who is a member of the Sessional Committee on the Environment of which I am chairman, I felt that I should rise and defend him a little. It is not that he is unable to defend himself; he will not have another chance to speak in this debate. He has been a keen and questioning member both at meetings and outside of them and, just because he happened to forget the name of the particular person from the Water Division who, along with Mr Roger Watters, came and addressed us on the RP4 and RP1 water situation, he has been roundly abused in the aggressive manner for which the Leader of the Opposition is renowned. He is very good at his bluff and blustering. We saw it yesterday when he said 6.8% was 6.7%. By sheer bluff and bluster, he forced that through.

For the benefit of the member for Stuart, who knows that there is to be a meeting tomorrow of the committee during which RP2 and Nabarlek water will be discussed, the committee will be fully informed. The honourable member for Stuart has had every opportunity to ask his questions at those meetings.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): A point of order, Mr Speaker! I think this has gone far enough. I think the honourable member is straying completely from the point of the debate. We allowed him considerable flexibility to answer the point that he did, but making announcements about committee meetings that are to be held tomorrow is getting right off the rails.

MR SPEAKER: Will the honourable member for Sadadeen confine his comments to the terms of the motion before the Assembly?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that he would like some examples of where the committee system had failed and where his side had let it down. I am about to give him one. I hope that the member for Stuart, who has not been here all that long, will appreciate what his own leader has said about the committee system because I believe he has let the committee down.

After we were briefed at the last sittings on the situation with water management, the problems and proposals, and had had every opportunity to discuss them, the Minister for Mines and Energy provided me with a private letter to show to all the committee members, including the honourable member for Stuart, on a confidential basis. It dealt with conditions which were being proposed for the release of water. In fact, on 8 March, the member for Stuart read it on the

plane going back to Alice Springs. Later I received a letter dated 25 March from the member for Stuart saying that he was gravely concerned about the water release situation and asking if I would call a public meeting so that all the people in the world could have a 'yang' on this particular matter. That was 17 days after he had read it and 14 days after the minister had actually agreed to it.

I wrote to him saying that I did not feel he gave me any reason to call such a meeting. I sent a copy of my letter to all the other members of the committee with a covering letter saying that this request had been received, this was my reply but, being democratic, we would vote upon it and I would contact them. I contacted the members except for one on the opposition side. Finally, I was able to get hold of him. He still has not come back to me with his reply. On Wednesday last week I received an urgent telegram: 'You have not come back with your reply to my request for a general "yang" from the public'.

Mr B. Collins: Would you stop using that word?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I do not see anything wrong with it.

Mr B. Collins: Go ahead.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: He seemed to be very perturbed as to why I had not got back to him. I wanted to get definite answers from all members before I gave him a reply.

On Friday, we learnt the reason why he was so interested. A press release was issued with a heading: 'Northern Territory may be in great danger'. He went on to say that the CLP members of the committee would not agree to this seminar etc. There was much innuendo. It was a load of nonsense. It was designed to put fear into the community and to try and score him a few Brownie points. It did the committee no good at all.

It was exactly the sort of thing that the Leader of the Opposition was looking for. 'Give us examples', he said. That is an example of the Sessional Committee on the Environment. There is the member for Stuart. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will take him in hand and have him operate through the committee in a proper manner rather than in the manner in which he has been behaving.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I am not going to 'yong' to his 'yang' or 'yang' to whatever it is. Mr Speaker, you know full well that being a member of a committee does not restrict one's right or obligation to speak out on matters of concern to the people of the Northern Territory. If the intention of placing me on that committee was that I would never talk about the waters of the uranium province in public again, it certainly was not my understanding of the committee system. It demonstrates once again the misunderstanding of various people opposite as to what the function of a committee is in relation to this Assembly. In fact, I think that the members opposite do not have a very good understanding of how the checks and balances fit together.

If the Territory has a particular reason for being different from the rest of Australia in this regard, it certainly has not been brought out in this debate. Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria all have committees of this nature. So have Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Nothing has been pointed out so far as to why we are so different from those particular countries.

I will come back to my experience with them as a public servant. First of all, I would like to go through a few of the more notable events of the last 6 or 7 years. I am not saying that a public accounts committee or a standing committee on expenditure or whatever would have been able to prevent these things occurring. However, it would have ensured that the parliament had carried out its proper role and investigated these occurrences. Hopefully, by doing that, it might have made this government think twice before it went ahead.

We have talked about the casino debacle at great length. Only this morning we found out that we still have not gotten to the bottom of it. Unfortunately, I am not certain that a standing committee on expenditure would have been able to get the whole story either. Certainly, it would have been able to work its way through a lot of information that it has taken us many months to get. It would have had that basic information instead of going through all the agony we have been through.

There is a tendency for people to forget about some of the earlier ventures like the Willeroo project, for which \$150 000 was advanced by the government. That was back in the good old days when we only had rip-offs in the hundreds of thousands; now we are into the millions. They were the good old days. A security was advanced by the government. As members will recall, the project collapsed and the creditors were not paid. Unfortunately, that one was compounded by the very contradictory answers given by various members of the then frontbench. It took some time before we were able to get to the bottom of that one.

More recently, we had the housing loan interest waivers. Some members of the public had made quite significant gains through having their penalty payments waived. Eventually, the minister was advised that 4 discharges for exemption had been made without any justification. Some legislative changes resulted from that action, as well as a certain minister losing her frontbench position and moving to the back. I believe it was the wrong minister. The point is that it is quite possible that the legislative changes that were made were unnecessary. There was a fairly significant overreaction by the government to the embarrassment that it was placed in, and quite rightly so. However, that overreaction resulted in legislation which I believe went too far. If the matter had been before a public accounts committee, probably members from both sides would have worked out a recommendation for a system which would have allowed the original process to continue without the abuses that occurred during the period when the now Deputy Chief Minister held the portfolio.

The member for Millner discussed the Gardens Hill land dealings. There we had an example of a favoured interest doing particularly well at the hands of this government. I am sure that honourable members will recall that one. A direct land grant was made at a bargain price. It was subject to certain conditions which would have taken many years to meet. As I understand it, at the moment the requirement has been reduced substantially from luxury accommodation to basic Housing Commission accommodation. The project is still not completely finished. Possibly, I will be corrected on that. However, it was another example of the government using taxpayers' money in a way that a public accounts committee could have blown open, and then the government would not have gone ahead with its next deal, the Marrakai Apartments, which it justified on the basis that, if it purchased all the \$150 000 apartments, it would help the building industry. It stated also, at the time, that the accommodation would help to attract top public servants. We found out that only 4 of the apartments were allocated to senior public servants. The others were on the normal public service housing list.

By that stage, we were getting into larger amounts of money. The amount involved was \$2.4m which was donated to a particular grateful party member.

Mr Dondas: We paid only \$90 000 interest. Now we make a profit of \$2m.

Mr EDE: You sold it? Mr Speaker, I do not think that the Deputy Chief Minister has heard of one of the basic rules of making money. You do not make a profit until you sell. As I understand it, they have not been sold yet.

I will not go into the ADMA arrangements when underwriting was not provided which put many people down there in trouble. We talked earlier about contingent liabilities and the problems there. The Grants Commission criticised the Northern Territory government's accounting system. The performing arts centre is another example. Another that we could go into a bit further is the crane and the purchase of the Ro-Ro facility. This Assembly debated government incompetence in relation to that. The cost overruns were in the order of \$900 000. The point I would make is that the minister conceded that we finished up a little behind the 8-ball, that it was not the Port Authority's fault and that it had learned from that particular experience.

Unfortunately, after going through this litany of the government's failures, I have been unable to ascertain that it is actually learning from its experiences. A public accounts committee, because of its nature and the kind of advice that it could provide, would be able to assist this government with its handling of major projects so that it would not get itself into the enormous mess that it has in the past. I will not go into detail on B-TEC funding. However, I will recall the discussion about the purchase of Metro Airliners and the upgrading of various airstrips under the guise of a community development program. Various airline fiascos continue to this day as we have seen with the aero-medical service which we discussed a couple of sittings ago.

Those are the more public types of activities which such a committee might become involved in. However, to speak only of those does not acknowledge the basic day-to-day work which these committees do. During the period in which I was Assistant Commissioner of Finance to the Office of Local Government in Papua New Guinea, I well remember that the one watchdog that really worried us as public servants, and the one that we really wanted to impress, was the public accounts committee. There were various audit requirements and so on but one of the things about an auditor is that, as long as you go through the forms correctly and abide by the procedures, you are normally fairly right. It is not his function to determine whether an expenditure of the funds is rational.

On one occasion, the public accounts committee examined one budget allocation. We got into considerable trouble because we had a number of people on our staff who were called finance inspectors. Their job was to inspect the finances of local government councils. Over some 3 or 4 years, the function of the finance inspectors located at headquarters had changed gradually from that of high-level inspectors to one of drawing up financial regulations and training manuals. We thought we were getting value for money but the public accounts committee pointed out that the amount of time that the finance inspectors spent doing their job in the field was about 10 days a year. Very rightly, the committee pulled us up and said: 'If you want to use them as training officers or as drafters of financial memoranda, that is fine. However, the system requires that you ask for a change in their function. As a divisional head, you do not have the ability to change the function of those staff. Either you utilise them for the purpose for which the funds were provided through the parliament or you apply for an amendment'.

That was very good advice, Mr Speaker. As shadow minister for mines and energy, it is not my function to go to the minister's staff and ask: 'How often do you get out bush'?

Mr Hatton: What did you do with that problem?

Mr EDE: You give evidence on oath before the committee. The problem is...

Mr Hatton: You said it was a good idea. What did you do?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Stuart will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr EDE: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I stand rightly condemned.

The point that I am making is that there is a difference between the role of a shadow minister and that of a member of the opposition as a member of a committee on expenditure. If a committee on expenditure finds anomalies in the accounts of a particular department, it can ask the public servants involved to account directly to it, whereas we can function only if we get an inkling that something is wrong and then start asking questions about it. Immediately, that creates a situation of government versus opposition in which it is often very difficult for us to offer advice which we believe will solve the problem in a simple and quiet manner. We tend to have to come on fairly heavily because ministers become very defensive when we offer advice on how they should be running their departments. I do not know why they adopt that attitude. Possibly it is because they know that they are not terribly good at handling their responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, I would see that down-to-earth role of a committee on expenditure as the most effective one in so far as this Assembly is concerned. Certainly, it could lead to our having a leaner, more hungry and more efficient public service and I think that really that is what we are all trying to achieve. If members opposite read a bit more on the principles behind the committee system so that they understand how it operates in practice, I am sure that they would lose some of their fears and see it as one more part of the total system of democracy which we are developing for the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a couple of comments. I had not intended to speak in this debate but I have listened with fascination to some of the comments of honourable members opposite.

I think the member for Stuart has effectively destroyed the opposition's argument. He outlined a series of matters that he said could have been dealt with by way of a public accounts committee. The fact is that the opposition knew about all of those matters and most of them had been the subject of extensive debate in the Assembly. There is, and has been, plenty of opportunity for the opposition to find out what is going on in relation to the casino issue, the Gardens Hill development and other projects. Since I have been in this Assembly, it seems that one or more of those issues has been raised every second day either in question time, in adjournment debates or by way of MPIs or censure motions.

Mr Speaker, the functions that opposition members have talked about are already available in this Assembly. What does the member for Stuart think he will achieve through this accounts committee that is not already being achieved? He gave an example relating to finance inspectors. I would still love to know

what the end result was. Was it that the public servants asked for a change of classification and work proceeded as it had before but under a different name?

Mr Speaker, a point was made in relation to B-TEC activities. I take the opportunity to assure people that the review studies have been completed and none of the allegations have been found to be true. It is quite an extensive report which gives a great deal of detail on what occurred. It shows quite clearly that there has been no malpractice or misappropriation of funds.

Mr Speaker, I believe that, if we formed this committee, rather than creating a 'leaner, more hungry and more efficient government', we would create more work and more administrative procedures in government. It reminds me of that famous television program 'Yes Minister'. We will find what Sir James Hacker found when he sought to keep a leaner, more hungry and more efficient government by introducing a series of procedures and rules. In that particular case, they had to appoint another 800 public servants to administer it. That light-hearted example illustrates that, every time you try to tighten up and provide more checking of procedures, you end up with more public servants, more money being spent and a slowing down of administrative procedures. It might provide more accountability but it will not result in a more efficient public service but rather a more bureaucratic and inefficient public service and a slowing down in government activity because of the required political processes. Let us face facts. No matter how much we think public servants respect or disrespect the activities of politicians, it will make them very wary and it will result in their being less and less prepared to take responsible decisions. They will try to protect their positions against the ravages of politicians seeking to score points.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I will speak very briefly to this motion. The particular point I wish to make relates to the very surprising attitude the government continues to adopt in the face of constructive suggestions from the opposition in this regard. I found the comments of the member for Stuart particularly enlightening, because he has had first-hand experience of such a public accounts committee. His comments were in stark contrast to those of the government speakers on whose idiocy I do not propose to dwell this afternoon.

The constructive aspect of a public accounts committee is self-evident. Quite clearly, as the honourable member for Stuart said, the object of it is leaner, hungrier and more efficient government administration. It would also provide more open government and give increased access to the people's elected representatives to the machinations of the public service and its activities, legitimate or otherwise.

Such concepts of open government are obviously very productive. I find the government's opposition to this type of open government particularly surprising in view of its support of measures for open government in other regards. I refer specifically to its hearty endorsement of the freedom of information legislation of the federal government and its persistent use of it. I must admit that its fulsome endorsement of that sort of open government legislation sits rather oddly with its opposition to this particular move. The Minister for Health, formerly Minister for Transport and Works, created great media waves in that regard. I think his successor has done much the same thing with regard to the use of the federal freedom of information legislation in order to obtain documentation relating to the Hill Report on the Alice Springs to Darwin railway.

In passing, I ask whether it is the government's intention to legislate similarly for freedom of information in the Northern Territory so that the

bounties, the joys and the freedoms of open government, in which it quite clearly glories at the federal level, will be available also to the residents of the Northern Territory and those who take an interest in public life here. Somehow I doubt that it will do so. I fear that its attitude to such freedom of information legislation will be exactly the same as its secretive attitude towards this particularly constructive proposition by the opposition. I wish to place on record that I think it extraordinarily sad that, once again, the government finds itself unable to endorse this very positive suggestion.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, like the previous 12 speakers, I did not intend to speak on this particular motion but I cannot let the statements of the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart go unanswered.

The statement of the member for Stuart indeed was most enlightening. The member for Stuart pointed out that most of his time in the public service in New Guinea was spent in trying to impress the parliamentary public accounts committee. That is exactly what we do not want public servants in the Northern Territory spending half their working lives trying to do. The public servants in the Northern Territory, for the benefit of the member for Stuart, are probably the most efficient, hard-working and best public servants in Australia. You can ask any of the heads of business houses and captains of industry throughout Australia who have had to deal with the Northern Territory Public Service and they will endorse those statements wholeheartedly.

Mr Speaker, another aspect of the Northern Territory Public Service is the ability and the willingness of the ministers of the Crown to delegate their powers and responsibilities under the statutory provisions under which government operates. The impost of a public accounts committee on the public service would force public servants to cloister themselves with regulations. It would discourage public servants from accepting any of the powers delegated to them. It would bring public servants to a point where they would not be prepared to make a decision. Every little day-to-day decision, taken by public servants at the moment, would be thrust up through the system to the minister.

Mr Speaker, the role of the public service is to provide the best advice it can, through the secretary of each department, to the ministers. Much of that advice is confidential, I suppose because much of it touches on very sensitive subjects. I think a better television series upon which to examine a public accounts committee would be *Clochemerle*. We would get a very 'Clochemerlian' public service - closest to the bull is the decision and let's hide behind it.

The member for MacDonnell spoke about open government. The railway issue is a classic example of the nice socialist approach to open government: open government when it suits you. The working papers for the Hill Report were not given openly to the Northern Territory government. The Northern Territory government had to resort - and I say 'resort' - to the Freedom of Information Act. If that is open government, I am lost for words to describe it.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe a public accounts committee in the Northern Territory would serve any purpose other than to destroy the good working relationship this government has with its public servants.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, unlike many of the previous speakers, I did intend to speak this afternoon. Also, unlike some of the previous speakers, I do not intend to be brief. In fact, I give no guarantee as to how much of the 20 minutes will be left.

The Leader of the Opposition, in a comment directed to the Minister for

Primary Production, suggested that he had missed the point. With due respect, I suggest that all previous speakers have missed the point. We have already a committee on public expenditure. It has 25 members on it. Thereon I rest my case.

Mr Speaker, I have one other small point to make. I was waiting to hear what new aspects the opposition would bring forward on this occasion, only 9 months since its last effort. I have found the entire debate fairly boring. As far as I could see, not only were no new points raised by the opposition members but they tended to repeat each other. Time and time again we heard that this committee would mean better and more efficient government. The point that the opposition was trying to make was that this was supposed to be a constructive move leading towards more efficient government. We heard from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that it was not about major issues that have been referred to time and time again today, such as the casino, the Marrakai Apartments, Gardens Hill etc. However, the Leader of the Opposition then said that the casino was a typical example of a matter that he would see such a committee investigating.

The Leader of the Opposition asked us to go away and do our homework. I suggest that the opposition should do its homework before coming in and wasting a full day of this Assembly's time. We have an opposition that crows about the lack of sitting days; the lack of days for general business. Yet here it is wasting a whole day again within 9 months of raising this very same issue. Is it so lax in its own efforts or does it not have, as I suspect, any viable issues to bring forward in this Assembly? What is new in this motion? None of the arguments put forward in the debate today were new. Maybe my opinion has changed during the last 9 months. I am more convinced now that the proposals put forward have absolutely no merit. In fact, all of the constructive arguments that might be put forward are already answered within the facilities available to honourable members inside and outside this Assembly. A number of examples have been given of situations that such a committee might investigate but absolutely none of them have had any constructive or potentially productive nature about them.

Paragraph (1)(a) of the motion indicated that one of the prime functions would be to review estimates, implying an assessment of viability before projects proceed. Might I suggest that neither the opposition nor any committee could improve on the efficiency with which estimates are prepared at present prior to implementation.

The second suggestion was that such a committee would consider estimates and figures of expenditure and make recommendations concerning ways in which programs could be carried out more efficiently. There is duplication there. Such a committee would require a great deal of technical assistance. I cannot envisage how any 2 of the members opposite could improve the efficiency of such works. The members of the opposition have given absolutely no indication of their capacity to contribute to cost control effectiveness and problem solving during today's debate or at any other time to my knowledge.

Mr Speaker, most of the points that could possibly be raised in regard to this have already been discussed. At all phases of implementation of government programs, members of the opposition and the public have ample opportunity to contribute to their increased efficiency and effectiveness. Initially, suggestions or requests from the community or departmental officials are put before government as proposals for its consideration. Opposition members have ample opportunity to take propositions direct to government and have them considered. The government then sets priorities and that is rightfully a matter for government. The government sells its policies to the community at times of

election. That is where the ultimate committee of review lies. The community of the Northern Territory has adjudged the efficiency of this government by giving it a 19 to 6 majority in the Assembly.

Within the limits of budgetary constraints, the government establishes which projects will or will not be proceeded with. Preliminary estimates, design documentation etc undergo a very thorough investigation by a multitude of professional people from within and without the public service. Following such exhaustive and comprehensive reviews, there is very little chance, at that stage, that projects have not been detailed as efficiently and effectively as possible.

During the implementation of programs, departmental and consultancy people are involved in a supervisory role, thus ensuring efficiency. The projects are reviewed not only by departmental people but by ministers who call for progress reports. When extra expenditure is involved, Treasury officers enter the picture. I understand there are about 160 most efficient Treasury officers employed by the government to ensure that the government's money is expended properly and productively. Mr Speaker, during these processes, not only the opposition but all backbenchers get a great deal of informal feedback from within the departments and from private contractors if there is the slightest hint that works are not being completed in the manner that was intended or in an inefficient manner. I am sure honourable members often receive representations and draw the government's attention to such matters. Departments have their own cost controllers. They have internal audit systems in some cases. The Auditor-General's office not only has 9 highly professional people working for it but also pays large sums of money - \$0.75m this current year - for consulting firms to oversee and audit performance on government projects. By statutory requirements, annual reports and other documents are placed before this Assembly. We all have access to comment on these programs as they proceed.

Members opposite have ample opportunity to obtain information and offer criticism on government expenditure through question time, through general debate, questions on notice, direct representation to ministers, public exposure via the media and by many other means. However, there is a fundamental principle that honourable members ought to reflect on: basic decisions on policy and direction are a matter for governments and governments only. It would seem to me that opposition members, quite understandably, are most jealous of that facility and would like to see the implementation of this public accounts committee to meet that end on their behalf.

There is no point in our talking about assessing the economic viability or the efficiency of projects after the horse has bolted. I am quite sure that, through its various departments, the government has ample opportunity to ensure that the planning and implementation of its various construction and welfare programs is done in the most expeditious and efficient way possible. This government is different from governments elsewhere in Australia. We have been asked why we do not examine what happens elsewhere. We do not have the populous electorates that exist elsewhere. Not only do members of the opposition have far easier access to government ministers, the general public enjoys it too. Mr Speaker, it might be understandable if South Australia has an expenditure accounts committee because of the sheer size of the parliament there. Parliamentary members have very little opportunity to put questions during question time or to debate issues of public concern. They have very limited access to their ministers, even on the government side. It is understandable that they might have such a committee. But when we look at what they actually do, we can see that they are not about efficiency at all. They review government policies. Clearly, that is none of their business, Mr Speaker. That business

rightfully belongs with the government of the day, whatever it may be. And therein lie some of the differences.

This government has been extremely fortunate in that, having had a short life of only 8 years, it has been able to do things that apply to the Territory, in its own individual way. This government has been extremely successful in implementing the policies that it has had over the years. It has been effective and innovative and it has been able to operate without some of the constraints of historical ties through committees and earlier traditions, if you like. Mr Speaker, the moves promoted by the opposition could be absolutely nothing but counter productive to the good work that has been completed and which continues to be done by this government.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the federal government already has a committee on expenditure and we were asked what the federal opposition has done about some of the major issues that have been raised. When you get to the crunch, though, once the horse has gone, what can you do about it? Once a government has decided that it will no longer expend money on a major project, such as the airport, there is no point in talking about efficiencies anymore; efficiencies are at 100% zero.

Mr Speaker, could I just close by suggesting that, before members of the opposition come back again on this - hopefully not within 9 months, as they did this time - could they do their homework and look realistically at what they hope to achieve by a proliferation of further committees. Mr Speaker, I am all for committees as long as they are productive. Perhaps the opposition members would like to review their position completely and come back at a time when a committee on public expenditure might be viable.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would just like to make a point for the benefit of the honourable member that, in my view, our Assembly of 25 members is too small and at this stage of our development the proposal is premature. When compared to the size of other parliaments, and the bicameral systems that exist in the states, there is no need for us to have a committee here as has been proposed by the honourable member for Nhulunbuy. In effect, the proposed terms of reference set out by the honourable member would duplicate the work of the Auditor-General and the Audit Division in the government. I would like to make the point that, at the time of our budget, we provide more briefing notes on the budget than does the Commonwealth parliament.

Mr Speaker, I would make the further point that the proposal that the honourable member has put forward would increase the bureaucracy by 5 to 10 people, and there is some doubt about the wisdom of that. I would also say that members can seek briefings, if they want them, and I cannot recall the honourable member seeking a briefing from me in 6 months. Members of the opposition can ask questions, and they do that from time to time. They can make submissions, but they do not. I believe that the honourable member has felt a need to fill up his general business day and he has dug up a motion, which has been used 3 times in this Assembly, to do just that.

Mr Smith: And he has succeeded very well.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as the honourable member for Wagaman said, indeed, nothing has changed in 9 months, nothing has changed at all. The motion that I put on behalf of the opposition this morning is precisely the same as that which was put 9 months ago. The response today from the government has been precisely the same as it was 9 months ago. The government does not want

it and so it is prepared to use almost any means and arguments, rational or otherwise, to see it out of this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I think perhaps the clearest indicator of the government's thinking came from the now Attorney-General and former Treasurer. Indeed, I suspect that it is his opinion that to question incompetence in any way or to fail to indicate that you are prepared to condone incompetence in this Assembly is tantamount to treason. In the good minister's opinion, all members are supposed to sit in this Assembly without questioning absolute, blind incompetence. At least there were a few more speakers from the backbench on the other side this time round. The contributions were much the same as that offered by the only government speaker last year. I will address myself to a number of comments made by various speakers.

Mr Speaker, as has been said by the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, perhaps the Attorney-General advanced the best case for having a public expenditure committee in the Northern Territory. Indeed, large sums of money are wasted by the federal government and those matters are duly and correctly investigated by a committee of either or both houses of that parliament. No such committee exists here and, despite what the Chief Minister has said, I suspect that none will exist whilst this government is in power, irrespective of the size of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, the members for Wagaman and Leanyer seemed to have some difficulty in being responsible to the people whom they were elected to represent. Public servants are paid out of the public purse and they are responsible to this Assembly. Decisions are not made by the government. Although the government may have the numbers in this Assembly, it is the Assembly that makes decisions, not the government. While I appreciate that the Chief Minister has many personal afflictions, I wish he would not display them in here.

The government does not make decisions; this Assembly makes decisions. Of course, the government has the numbers in this Assembly and it uses those numbers to implement its decisions. Despite the member for Leanyer and despite the honourable member for Wagaman, governments do not make decisions. In fact, democracy demands that this Assembly make decisions.

A committee of this Assembly would serve this Assembly. I can appreciate that there are some very dodgy ministers on the other side who are a little reluctant about rocking the boats of their departmental heads too often because they are quite incompetent themselves to handle anything that might pass in front of them. The degree to which this is carried on in the Northern Territory is breathtaking. Those people do not represent the public that elects them; they represent their own damn bureaucracies, their own bloody public servants.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Nhulunbuy to withdraw his last remark.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that last remark unreservedly.

Mr Speaker, no parliament in the world would behave like that, with the exception, I would suspect, of the real political colleagues of this government in that parliament just across the border in the lovely state of Queensland. Mr Speaker, I have never seen a display like it. None of the ministers...

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing order 55 says that no member shall use offensive words against the Assembly, or any

member or against any house or member of another parliament. I believe that that is exactly what we have just heard and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We sit in this Assembly and we do not hear even a hint of this government, or even any member of this government, representing, or even attempting to represent, the people of the Northern Territory to their departments. They get up here and apologise continuously to their departments. And, to their eternal shame, their backbenchers go along with it. Indeed, they condone it openly and publicly. They condone that activity. Mr Speaker, that is absolutely incredible behaviour, particularly from the backbench. I can understand shaky ministers doing it. They need somebody to cover their backs. But for a member of the backbench, a responsible member of this Assembly to do such a thing, is breathtaking, Mr Speaker, absolutely breathtaking.

Mr Speaker, we have heard all of this nonsense about the scrutiny of public servants and how easy they are to scrutinise. I would ask anybody, including you, Mr Speaker, and the Clerk, if he can give me a ruling. I can haul a public servant in here now and ask him to give me evidence under oath, while this Assembly is sitting, and thank you, Mr Speaker, the answer is no. I am prepared to be corrected by anybody. I will be corrected quite easily. However, a public expenditure committee of the type that operates throughout Australia can do precisely that. In fact, it can ask departmental heads to give evidence under oath. We have no requirement for that in the Northern Territory, none at all. That we cannot get accurate answers has been demonstrated by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition; that is, if we get any answers, as the Leader of the Opposition said. We have no mechanism. This Assembly has no mechanism for getting that information, Mr Speaker. It is absolutely breathtaking.

Mr Speaker, if any of those people are in any doubt about the worth of the committee system, I suggest that they put it to their political colleagues in New South Wales that the committee system in that state should be abandoned; that the public expenditure committee system should be abandoned. Perhaps their colleagues in Victoria could be asked the same question - or their colleagues in South Australia or their colleagues in Western Australia - whether or not the public expenditure committees in those parliaments should be abandoned. I would be surprised if they agreed with this government's view of it. I suggest that they go and ask their colleagues in Tasmania, where they happen to be in government, how they would feel about abandoning their committee system.

Mr Speaker, I would be very surprised if their political colleagues in other states would agree with that. Therefore, one must speculate as to the motivation of these ministers, indeed the motivation of this government. Are they just too damn shy or have they got so much under the carpet that they do not want to hang out because the public of the Northern Territory might be able to ascertain finally, for its own sake, the suspected incompetence of this government? Otherwise, they would come out lily-white and everything would be fine. Either they are being a little bit cute about that or they sit in here - not only the ministers, the backbenchers also - and defend departmental heads and departments to the public of the Northern Territory rather than represent the public of the Northern Territory to departments. It is quite the reverse with this government and its backbenchers. It is absolutely breathtaking, Mr Speaker.

There is very little more to add to this debate. Certainly, I shall not

resile from continuing to pursue this matter in this Assembly. I do not care how often I am accused of wasting the time of this Assembly, because I happen to think it is a worthwhile pursuit, Mr Speaker, for this Assembly, even if a collection of gutless backbenchers do not...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: I withdraw that adjective, Mr Speaker. Even if a collection of government backbenchers do not think that it is worth while, I think it is worth while and I will continue to press the matter.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr Manzie
Mr McCarthy
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Equal Opportunities and Status of Women

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly is of the opinion that:

- (1) *the Territory government should take whatever action necessary to re-establish the national status of the Territory's input into the important consultative and decision-making process affecting women; and*
- (2) *the Territory government should make a firm policy statement regarding its future plans for ensuring that both women and men have equal choice and opportunity in all aspects of Territory life.*

Mr Speaker, when motions such as this come before the Assembly, I always feel personal regret that a number of very distinguished women who have been members of this Assembly are no longer here to participate in the debate and in all other debates in this Legislative Assembly. A number of them could put a case such as this far more succinctly than I can.

Mr Speaker, honourable members may remember that, on the last general business day in June last year, the opposition raised the issue of the need for

the Territory to have its own sex discrimination legislation to complement the federal legislation. As honourable members know, a number of governments have moved to do this. In the context of that debate, we gave due credit to the Everingham government's initiatives in the area of increasing the status of and the opportunities for women in the Territory. There is no need for me to canvass the support that we gave to the government because it is in the Parliamentary Record.

At the time, we were asking the Everingham government to go one step further and to introduce legislation which would ensure that Territory women benefited fully from the provisions of the federal act. It is a sorry indictment on this new government that the first thing that we have to ask it to do is to take a step back in order to restore the status quo that the Everingham government had put into place so that we can once again move forward from there. I am referring to the Chief Minister's arbitrary and ill-considered decision last December to take the unit of women's affairs and the Women's Adviser to the Chief Minister out of the Department of the Chief Minister and place them with the government's most junior minister, the Minister for Community Development. I am sure that that honourable minister will realise that this is no personal reflection on him whatsoever. It simply is a question of what is known publicly to be the order of seniority of ministers of the government. It was a most unfortunate move. Whatever kind of complexion the government wants to place on it, the fact is that it is there and it has happened.

As honourable members should be aware, this is the last year of the official United Nations Decade of Women, a year in which women and society in general are taking stock of the achievements that women have gained over the last 10 years. I was interested to place before the Assembly - as it happened, coincidentally with the member for Victoria River - a note of some of the remarkable and largely unrecognised achievements and contributions that Territory women have made. In fact, a member of my own staff is a Territory historian of some note. Later on this year, she intends to collate all of the material that she has been collecting over the last 10 or 15 years and to attempt to put history right in respect of the contribution Territory women have made and which has gone unrecognised. Having seen some drafts of it, I can indicate that it will be a very interesting book.

Mr Speaker, it is depressing and demoralising to realise that the Territory government has decided to celebrate the last year of this decade of women by taking us backwards both in practical and in psychological terms. I want to deal first with one of the important practical effects of the new Chief Minister's actions: the issue of voting rights for the Territory. As I mentioned during the last sittings, Northern Territory women, along with their colleagues in South Australia, were the first women in Australia to be enfranchised. That was in 1894. I suspect that the people who fought so hard for that right would be somewhat dismayed to find that the Northern Territory government, some 90 years later, was making moves which would result in the Territory's vote on national issues affecting women being removed from a vital national forum which has direct access to the Prime Minister. I refer to the relatively new but influential and important body of Commonwealth-state women's advisers, which includes all women's advisers to governments in Australia and which, I believe, meets quarterly, and more often when necessary, to discuss issues of concern to Australian women. As I understand it, that body is administered and serviced through the National Office of the Status of Women, headed by Dr Anne Summers. Through that office, it gives advice and recommendations directly to the Prime Minister of Australia.

Mr Speaker, a qualification for voting privileges on that body is that the official status of each state or territory women's adviser attending the

meetings is that it be attached to the relevant Premier's Department or, in the case of the Territory, the Chief Minister's department. That is simply an indication of what women elsewhere and governments elsewhere perceive to be the status of this role. They attach such importance to it that, if that basic requirement is not complied with, the representative cannot vote on that body.

I give the Northern Territory's Chief Minister the benefit of the doubt. He made the administrative changes during what I imagine was a fairly intensive period for him and the government. We support many of these changes. However, perhaps through the pressure of that time, he did not consider the effects that some of the changes would have; the substantial and, unfortunately, very regrettable effects on the Northern Territory's national voice.

Mr Speaker, removing the Women's Adviser and the Office of Women's Affairs from his own department, and making them responsible to the government's most junior minister, has not only diminished the role and the status of women in the Territory but it has removed the Territory's right to participate in these national meetings as a voting member. I do not see how the government can indicate that that is not a retrograde step for the Territory. Thanks to the actions of the government, the Territory has been reduced to observer status which, of course, means that our input will be minimal and thus relatively ineffective.

This is strange behaviour indeed from a government which rams down our throats the great strides the Territory has made since self-government and constantly rightly stresses the importance of the Territory putting forward its strongest possible case in the federal arena. I would say to the Chief Minister, and I would be surprised if he disagreed, that I would cheerfully swap half the places in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in exchange for 4 or 5 more federal members in Canberra so as to put some strength and muscle into the influence that the Territory has nationally. I am sure that I would get no disagreement from the government on that point. Yet, the government has effectively removed a national voting right in an extremely important area. It has gone.

Mr Speaker, the last meeting - and I made some inquiries about this - of that national body discussed extremely important bicentenary projects, involving considerable sums of money I might add, which would affect women in terms of the bicentenary celebrations. Those matters were voted on in terms of priorities, and recommendations on the spending of that money which will be made to the federal government. It is not a political matter. It would not matter which government were in power. The fact is that a number of important projects, specifically aimed at the role of women in the community, involving considerable sums of money, are to be decided upon by the federal government. Federal funds are involved. It will, without the slightest doubt, rely on the bodies that are advising it as to what priority they give that spending. Thanks to the actions of this government, when that came up for discussion, we did not have a vote.

I understand that the next meeting of this influential body, which will be held, I believe, in June this year, will discuss the all-important issue of taxation. That will be in preparation for the forthcoming national tax summit. That important and influential body, which I know the Chief Minister will have to acknowledge, has received the recognition of all political parties in Australia, irrespective of their colour. It will make a formal submission to, and it will have a formal role at, the tax summit. However, the Territory has been denied a vote and a voice in the decisions that will be made in June this year on taxation.

Mr Speaker, if the Chief Minister is serious about the Northern Territory having maximum input into the federal economic arena, which he claims to advocate and on which he seeks bipartisan support from this side of the Assembly, then he must regard voting and membership rights for the Territory on this body as important. This group of senior women's advisers to governments is a vital link in the consultative process between the states and the Commonwealth on issues affecting women. The group's advice and recommendations are passed directly to the Prime Minister. The removal of voting rights and full membership on this body is of serious consequence. I give the Chief Minister credit for saying perhaps that it was unforeseen, but it is a consequence of the Chief Minister's downgrading of the NT Women's Adviser and Office of Women's Affairs. No amount of rhetoric or rationalisation will give us our vote back. The only thing that will change it is to relocate responsibility with the head of the government, as it is elsewhere.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to look back on what the current Chief Minister said in the debate last June when the opposition asked the Everingham government to introduce complementary sex discrimination legislation. In that debate, the current Chief Minister was very quick indeed to defend the government in its initiative to help enhance the status of women. I refer the Chief Minister to the debate. He pointed out then that we had nothing to complain about because the government had a Women's Adviser who reported directly to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and a Women's Advisory Unit within the Department of the Chief Minister. I emphasise that the key point he made was not simply that the Territory had a Women's Adviser and a Women's Advisory Unit but that they reported directly to the head of the government and were responsible to the head of the government. In defending the government's decision not to introduce sex discrimination legislation, he said: 'I believe the challenge for us is not so much to have this framed in law; it is what we do that is important rather than what we say'. I can only agree with him that actions speak far louder than words and the noise that is coming from the government in terms of this downgrading is very loud at the moment indeed.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's recent action in downgrading the status of women has done nothing to enhance this government's record or to encourage a belief in Territory women that they can rely on the government's real support for and understanding of issues of particular concern to them.

Mr Speaker, my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, will deal with the second part of this motion, which calls on the government to make some firm policy statements regarding the future of the status of women in the Territory. I would like to dwell a little longer on the impact of what the government has done.

One aspect of the rearrangement that I found interesting, in terms of the government's justification for its moves, was the decision to put the children's and homemaking services under the responsibility of the Women's Affairs Division. I understand that this has received some national comment as well. The Minister for Community Development described this move as being: 'an expansion of the responsibilities of the Women's Affairs Division'. I imagine that the more enlightened people in our society will see that move not as an expansion but rather as a reinforcement of an unfortunate and stereotyped attitude, particularly among men, about the role of women in society. The thing that enlightened governments are trying to achieve is the breakdown of stereotype role models and a more equal distribution of choices and opportunities for both men and women.

It is certainly true that child care, in particular, has been regarded traditionally in our society as the responsibility primarily of women. I have

to say to you that women who put this view to me on occasion offend me greatly. I find it extremely offensive. I get very defensive when people try to tell me that it is a women's prerogative to concern herself, to the exclusion of men, with what happens to children in a family. Some members of the government are aware that the current national situation in respect to supporting single parents - I will not be held to this because it is off the top of my head - is that something like 17% of supporting single parents are men. Most have chosen to take that role. They find it difficult to be a supporting single parent. It is a very hard job indeed but, thank God for the children concerned, people are adopting that role these days rather than having them fostered or put into the care of the government. A very substantial number of the parents who have chosen that role are men. It is an increasing percentage.

In 1985, it is an anachronism to regard child care as a sole responsibility of women and to say that men are free and clear on that issue and have no responsibility at all. There is only one reasonable interpretation to place on what the government has done in respect of this matter and that is that it subscribes to that view. It has now enshrined it in its administrative arrangements for 1985. That is a retrograde step indeed. It is difficult to break down these attitudes. It is a really tough job to break down these stereotypes. Governments must provide leadership. I went to a function the other night at which government members were conspicuous by their total absence. It was a function organised for the newly-appointed Ombudsman for South Australia, who is a woman and was formerly a commissioner of the South Australian Public Service Board. I spoke at that function and gave an example of the problems with equal opportunity for both men and women in our society because of stereotype attitudes.

I worked for an organisation a number of years ago which started a training scheme for Aboriginal park rangers. There was professional training in both laboratory techniques for biological research and field management techniques. This was burnt on my brain. I remember our biggest problem was the usual one: to offer the successful graduates employment after they graduated. The situation has changed dramatically, I concede, but I can still remember my shock when the head of this particular department went to the Northern Territory government department and was told officially that it was not interested in employing Aboriginals in the Northern Territory parks service. That was not so many years ago. I stress that it was prior to self-government. Commendably, those attitudes have changed.

When we were employing the applicants, this organisation, which did not trust the Northern Territory hicks to have sufficient judgment to employ Aboriginal applicants, flew up some big gun personnel managers from down south to carry out the interviews. The Northern Territory staff were allowed to sit in. I remember that those interviewed for the positions were all asked the same question. The interviewers said to each one of them: 'Look, you realise that, if you are successful and you get this job, you are going to have a considerable amount of money. You are going to be earning anything up to the staggering figure of \$150 a week. What are you going to do with the money?' After the third or fourth repetition of this, the local representative asked: 'Why are you asking these applicants how they are going to spend their money?' The reply was, of course: 'Well, we all know that these people are extremely irresponsible and cannot be trusted. Obviously, the people who are going to spend their money in the most responsible manner will get the jobs'. That is a factual story from not many years ago. Those ranger training programs initiated by the Commonwealth have now been acknowledged as successful by the Territory government which, commendably, is following suit. However, the person responsible for that scheme was met with a flat refusal to employ a single

graduate. So stereotyped attitudes are difficult to break down and it does not help the government's case to enshrine them in administrative arrangements.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to underrate the importance of issues such as this. As far as child care is concerned, I would urge the government to make children's services a separate division of the government with enough resources for its effective administration. But please, in the face of community attitudes, lead instead of follow and do not enshrine these stereotypes in the administrative arrangements of the Northern Territory government in 1985. I would hope that the creation of a separate division would include a concerted effort to encourage more men to enter the field of child care, both as a career path and in the domestic situation.

The main point I am making is that the government, by putting this and the homemaking services into the Women's Affairs Division, has in effect made a public statement about its real attitude towards women. The public perception will be that this government regards child care and homemaking duties as a prime responsibility of women and that is the very perception on which other people are trying to re-educate society.

The other aspect of this downgrading and the retrograde steps taken by this government in regard to the status of women is the very important psychological and morale aspect that I mentioned. By this I mean the effect that it has on the morale of the very people the government claims it is trying to assist - women - and the public's perception of the government's attitude.

Jocelyn Scott, Commissioner of the Victorian Law Reform Commission, and a key speaker at the recent Northern Territory Child-care Conference in Alice Springs, put this very point in an interview she gave on the ABC. She said that, apart from the practical ramifications I have just covered, the government's downgrading of this area was important in terms of the public perception of the Northern Territory government's priorities. As I said before, the government's moves in this direction attracted national comment. That is how people see us in the Northern Territory. The status which a government gives to any particular area is perceived as an indication of that government's general commitment to that area. Unfortunately, the government has indicated to 50% of the Northern Territory's population that its commitment to looking after their concerns is to make them the responsibility of the Northern Territory government's most junior minister. It is important that the Chief Minister confer status and authority on this important function of government which inevitably involves sensitive consultation with other ministers and their departments.

Speaking of sensitivity, I think it is also important for all government members to be aware that their own attitudes and behaviour in regard to the status of women is very often seen by the public as representative of the government's attitude. In this regard, unfortunately, most members on this side of the Assembly have received complaints about the attitude and the behaviour of 3 government backbenchers who attended, uninvited, a function organised for the Child-care Conference in Alice Springs recently. I never raise matters like this lightly. It was a national conference and the Northern Territory was on show nationally because delegates from every state in Australia were present. Because of the complaints that I received, particularly from some of the interstate delegates, I stress that we do not do ourselves a favour by simply confirming what many people already suspect. I received complaints from quite a number of sources before I paid even the slightest attention to them. A considerable number of people said that the attitude and behaviour involved did nothing to enhance the status of the government in the eyes of the many women

attending that conference. One of them was a member of my own staff whose opinion I respect entirely.

Another matter which did not augur well for the government was the total absence of any government minister or, indeed, any government backbencher at the recent function which was addressed by the newly-appointed South Australian Ombudsman, Mary Beazely, who spoke on the important issue of affirmative action for both men and women. I mention such examples because this entire issue is really about changing people's attitudes to ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities and choices in our society.

The government has an important role to play in setting an example and showing some degree of leadership. It should remember what happened to the Fraser government after it downgraded the status of women within the government. I am not suggesting that it was such a simplistic equation but I suggest seriously that it was a contributing factor to the national loss of support for that government. Political analysts have said that, because of that downgrading, the government experienced a political backlash from a very large proportion of that 50% of the Australian population who are women. Mr Speaker, I would think that that should provide some kind of incentive for this Chief Minister to reassess his initial actions and, as he has done recently in regard to the pay increases, take some note of what other people are saying. I urge the government to indicate that it is concerned about increasing the status of Territory women both within the Territory and at the national level. I urge the government to reconsider the changes that it has made and, if for no other reason than to restore once again the important and influential vote that we had at the national women's forum, to reinstate both the Women's Adviser and the Women's Advisory Council so that they are directly responsible to the head of the Northern Territory government again.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is one of the few times that I have risen to speak on this subject but I feel that today I should say a few words about the business of equal opportunities and equality between men and women.

Mr Bell: You have been downgraded yourself, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You just hang on and wait a minute.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before we even consider this motion, we have to consider basically what women think about equality. Women cannot be forced to be equal; they must know that they are. Either they know they are equal or they know they are not. Personally, I have always felt more than equal to a man. I feel rather ambivalent speaking on this subject, to be perfectly honest, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also recognise the fact that, even today, a woman has to run twice as fast as a male to get to her destination in the same time.

The honourable member for MacDonnell implied that I was only speaking today because I was demoted from being a minister. I considered previously, and I still do, that a woman must stand or fall on her own merits and not because of the fact that she is a woman and has a certain gonad makeup in her body. I think that many of the women who are interested in feminist movements these days are not what I would call strong women. To put it in the vernacular, they are a lot of sooky sheilas. They want opportunities to be made available to them simply by virtue of the fact that they are women. They want equality and then they want a bit more than equality. There are certain things at which, mainly because of her physical strength, a woman is not equal to a man but she more than makes up for that with what is in her head. However, because of certain

inequalities in bodily makeup, these women want advantages which put their ideas of equality over the 50% mark.

Judging from their outpourings in the media, many of these women seem to be whingeing all the time. They are saying, in effect: 'It is not fair. You are doing it to us only because we are women'. Many of these females lose sight of the fact that there is equal opportunity for them in the community provided they are prepared to work for it. If they are knocked back because they happen to be women, it is time they asked themselves whether they are really equal to the situation. They have to consider the fact that, as with everything else, you have to be the right person in the right place at the right time. This applies to everybody, male or female.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe in equality. In fact, I went along to the first Women's Electoral Lobby meetings and I was very interested when they were first conducted in the Territory. I will say that there is discrimination in our community and there is discrimination among honourable members in this Assembly. There is discrimination among honourable members of my party. However, it is discrimination that cannot be legislated for or against. You can call it social discrimination or sexual discrimination of a social nature, but you cannot legislate for or against it.

In a way, I believe in better recognition of the fact that I am a female. I do not want to be considered as some anonymous or amorphous form such as a 'bloke'. I am a woman and I am pleased to be a woman; I do not want to be considered a man. I consider that, in my lifetime, I have had equal opportunities. Anything that I have obtained and any position that I have attained in this community, I have attained because of the particular or the peculiar talents that I have. I am not blowing my own trumpet but I did not get those things because I was a woman. In my dealings in the electorate, I have never canvassed the views solely of women. In the electorate, there are roughly 50% men and 50% women and I represent the views of men and women equally. I have never got onto the feminist bandwagon.

The strong views put forward by the feminist movement regarding women's shopfront services, women's council meetings and women's seminars indicate that those women, and the women that they are hoping to help, cannot manage their everyday affairs in competition with men. This implies a weakness which I do not think women have. However, there are many women in the community who want to enlarge their power base because they feel somehow deficient. To increase their own power base, they must have somebody relying on them, so they encourage other women to lean on their shoulders rather than encouraging these women to stand on their own 2 feet. The implication is that women are less intelligent, less energetic and always want a shoulder to cry on. Personally, I think that, if you are going to cry, you should go and cry by yourself and forget about the blokes.

I feel sad for women who experience violence or rape. I also know there are weak women in the community who cannot help themselves because that is their makeup. Instead of continually encouraging these poor unfortunate women to keep crying about what happened to them and continually seeking handouts from the government for the proliferation of these shopfront services, the women in power should encourage these women to get in there and fight the males who did it to them. Probably I would not fit in with these shopfront organisations because, if somebody did any injustice to me, I would get in there and fight him rather than whinge about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition about the position of women in 1884, when the women of South Australia and the

Northern Territory attained equality of voting opportunities, was very apt. Without drawing too long a bow, I think women in those days were very similar to the aggressive feminists of today. In those days, women were looking for equal representation, and they got it. Today, women are looking for equality of opportunity, and they have it. It is up to the women themselves to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. They should not expect to be taken by the hand, up the stairs, to success at the top. I did not expect that. I have 4 daughters and they are not doing too badly in their chosen fields of employment. Over the years I have encouraged them not to expect different treatment in the workplace because they are women. They have grown up and most of them have taken situations in the workplace recently and they are not entirely unsuccessful. I have tried to teach them that, if they encounter knockbacks in their lives, they should look first to their personal expertise on the subject, not to the fact that they are females.

The women of the 1880s and 1890s, when equality of voting opportunities was brought in, I would call the fragile females of the 1880s and the 1890s. Yet when I compare them with the aggressive females of today, both consider only their own sex situation in isolation, without regard for that other sex, the male. I am the first to concede that the male is good for 1 or 2 things. In the 1880s, the female was expected, generally, to be completely docile and submissive. And she was. To be anybody, she had to be associated with a male and she needed that male helping hand. As a prototype for the modern woman, I suggest the aggressive, tattooed female, but she still seems to need that helping hand of the male to get anywhere. It seems to me that she is not prepared to get there on her own merits.

I am getting sick and tired of women whingeing all the time about not being equal, and that the world is against them and that the government does not give them enough money for this or that project. I feel that it is up to the women themselves to get out there and do something about it instead of talking continually.

I will disagree a bit in relation to what the honourable Leader of the Opposition said. I think it is a case of 'me thinketh he protesteth too strongly'. It has been my experience and my observation, over the years that I have been interested in this subject, that those men who protest most strongly that women are not receiving equal opportunities are usually those who will pay lip service to the idea of equality provided that it does not affect their male ego, their comfort or their private, personal view of their own status. Mr Deputy Speaker, you might say that I am a cynical old so-and-so for putting forward those views but I have held them over the years and I think that I am correct.

Turning to another realistic approach to the subject, this annoys me a bit also. Many people, women and men, both for and against equality for women on both sides of this Assembly, have tended to sound off on this subject. They have put forward airy-fairy views both for and against, but none of them has seemed to touch on the realism of the situation. The honourable Leader of the Opposition talked about what he saw as a downgrading of the children's services in association with women's services under the community development umbrella. That may not reflect the idealistic view of equality, because I would agree that men should have an equal voice and, more importantly, an equal responsibility in bringing up children, especially those that they bring into the world themselves. However, the fact is that most males are often too lazy or incompetent, or they think that the mundane day-to-day care of children is beneath them and, realistically, the women are left to raise the children - and I bet they will be doing it for some time.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I do not feel it to be incumbent on me to defend ministers, because they are quite capable of doing that for themselves - especially the Minister for Community Development - I do not think the suggestion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition was correct that a downgrading of the Office of Women's Affairs has been demonstrated because the Chief Minister does not have it under his competence now and it is the responsibility of the honourable Minister for Community Development. In the system of Cabinet considerations, there is a Cabinet equality and ministers accept equal responsibility for equal parts of their portfolios. Consequently, it does not really matter which minister has it. All ministers are much the same one way or another. Also, I think it was rather unfair of the Leader of the Opposition to say that the honourable Minister for Community Development was not sensitive. He is as sensitive as the next person, even the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, possibly my ideas on the subject of women's equality are a mish-mash, for and against. However, I believe that women have been accorded equal opportunities. Admittedly, I have not been the subject of inequality. I know that inequality still exists, perhaps for young women in the work place. I know that middle-aged men in Darwin, and elsewhere in the Territory, still put the hard word on young girls in the work place, although I do not know what they hope to gain by it. When you consider their paunches and their jowls and the little that they have to offer, I do not know what a young girl would find attractive in most of them. However, I have it on good authority that that does occur. Several well-known men in the community have put the hard word on girls. Men might think that they have the freemasonry of the men's locker room in which to discuss females but, believe you me, Mr Deputy Speaker, women talk about these things more than men do. This is not exactly a warning to blokes who may be listening to this or may hear about it later on, but there is not much that goes on in Darwin regarding this sort of thing that is not known to quite a few women around regardless of their age which is no barrier between women when it comes to knowing what goes on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, discrimination exists and I think it will exist for some time. However, it is the sort of discrimination that cannot be legislated against successfully so I think we should stop hitting our heads against a brick wall. Equality of opportunity exists for women who are prepared to take it.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had not intended to participate in this particular debate but, as some allegations were made by the honourable Leader of the Opposition, I wish to defend the situation because I have learned in my life that there are always 2 sides to a story. I refer to the allegations that 3 backbenchers attended a meeting in Alice Springs recently at which, it was said, some people from interstate and some other delegates were insulted by the behaviour of myself and 2 other backbenchers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to put things into perspective. First of all, I would like to put my own personal public record. I was a member of the Northern Territory Police Force for 11 years and had an impeccable record in that police force as far as behaviour was concerned. In fact, I received a commendation in each of the 3 police forces in which I served. Over my 8 years as an elected person, on local government and for 1½ years at this level, my record stands just as clear as it was when I was a member of the police force. I can assure all honourable members of this Assembly that I did not take time out from that record when I went to Alice Springs to behave in the way that I believe has been alleged to the Leader of the Opposition, some members of the media and, of course, to our own senior party members and members of the government.

On the Friday night we attended a barbecue, a social occasion that was held by the people who were down there for that particular conference. It was by way of invitation. It was a courteous gesture, as we thought, to go along and do exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has criticised us for in relation to the Ombudsman's function. In fact, we went along there to show support from the Northern Territory government. During the evening, we participated in a couple of beers and the barbecue that was there and we got into discussions on a number of issues. One of the issues that we touched on, Mr Deputy Speaker, was a very delicate one: incest. For about 6 months, I have been involved on behalf of the Northern Territory government in investigating ways and means by which we may become better informed about all aspects of the abominable crime of incest. The discussion touched on this subject during the course of the evening. I spoke to members of the Rotary Club which had provided the barbecue that night and also to some of the women. During the discussion, a woman said to me that it was not the role of the Northern Territory government, a member of parliament, and insinuated, a male, to be investigating a matter like incest. To put it bluntly, I disagreed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to take this point any further because I appreciate the delicacy of the subject I am talking about and I probably know it better than most of the women who were there. I replied to that particular comment and, as I have said, I responded very strongly. I know that the comments I made upset some of the women there. I pulled one lady aside when the discussion had finished and I said to her: 'Do you think I ought to apologise to anybody here who feels that I have offended her? I would be quite pleased to do so, and give her some further background on my comments'. She said: 'No your comments were well put. They were very much to the point but, unfortunately, some people get upset when points are put so strongly'. I said, 'okay' and that was it. The 3 of us were driven to the casino that night by 2 ladies. They left us at the front door and we went on with our evening from there. I am not going to give you the rest of it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we attended another social function the following evening. We paid \$18 each to go to the dinner and passed quite a pleasant evening, apart from the fact that a couple of the ladies there were obviously put out. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not go on. I just wanted to put the different perspective that there is to the allegations that have been made against what I believe to be 3 fine, upstanding members of this Assembly. I believe that the record of each of us is there and well in place and I do not think that any criticism has been levelled against any 1 of the 3 of us in the past.

I do not intend to withdraw from the investigations I am carrying out on behalf of the Northern Territory government. To put it bluntly, I do not believe that males, females, or any other group, has some God-given right to be the sole investigators into anything. Such an investigation would result in a biased perspective that would make it difficult to establish the fundamental causes and thence of ways of rehabilitating the unfortunate people involved in such a thing as incest. This Northern Territory government wants to be informed on the horrific situation that exists in the community as a result of incest. We will not withdraw from that situation and, certainly, I shall not personally.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I feel obliged to start by making some reference to the comments of the previous speaker. I must say that I have never had such a response about parliamentarians' behaviour. In fact, it is probably the first response I have had from people about the behaviour of members of parliament. Not only does it create concern that particular members of this Assembly have been reported to have behaved in a particular manner but it casts

reflections on the rest of us. I suspect that in fact we have heard only half the story from the previous speaker.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Kooyllpinyah is the type of person who causes advocates of the women's movement to tear out their hair because she serves as a role model for what it is possible for women to achieve and, at the same time, pours scorn on the efforts of other women who are attempting to achieve what she has been able to achieve. Of course, the honourable member is only one of a number of prominent personalities, including people like Professor Leonie Kramer, who through their own ability and to some extent, I would suspect, through circumstances have been able to make it in a man's world basically on men's terms. I think all admiration must go to those people. Certainly, it must be acknowledged that the honourable member for Kooyllpinyah has demonstrated that she can compete equally with the rest of us here. All admiration to her.

However, the point is that we live in a world where discrimination against women is institutionalised in all sorts of ways. You do not have to look any further than the representation of women in this Assembly. If there was equality in opportunity, 51% of members of this Assembly would be women. The only alternative to that argument, if you believe there is equality of opportunity, is to believe that women are less capable than men are of being politicians. Of course, that is not acceptable and no one puts that argument forward. Institutionalised discrimination in society and in the operations of the CLP and the ALP has made it practically impossible for women to get through the ruck to win preselection, particularly for safe seats. My own party has discovered that, on an Australia-wide basis, it has been free and easy in the past and has put women up for difficult seats. But it is a much harder job to give women preselection for safe seats which will ensure their representation in parliament. Even so, Australia-wide, the Labor Party's record is much better than the record of the Liberal Party, the National Party and the CLP in that regard.

Mr Speaker, this institutionalised discrimination is seen also in the public service. Even in professions that are dominated by women in terms of numbers, they are severely under-represented in the top levels. To take the one I know best, the teaching profession, women comprise 50% to 60% of the total number of teachers yet the number of women principals is certainly well under 50%. The number of women in the top administrative positions is probably well under 20%. There is institutionalised discrimination. In this 20th century, it is the role of governments to attempt to do something about it.

We are not arguing that the problem can be solved by legislation because obviously it cannot be. We can legislate until the cows come home. What we have to do is to change attitudes. When talking about changing attitudes, the person in government who has that responsibility makes a difference. The Chief Minister, because of his position, has more oomph and power to help determine a change in attitudes than a junior minister has. The Prime Minister has more power than a minister of his government. That is why the Prime Minister has the status of women division report directly to him and not to a junior minister or even a senior minister in his Cabinet. His personal imprimatur on that matter gives it more oomph and makes people sit up and take it more seriously.

The previous Chief Minister who, we all accepted, was an extremely competent politician, recognised that. That was why, once he became convinced of the need to have a women's adviser and a women's unit, he put it under his personal control. Unfortunately, what we have now, as the honourable Leader of the Opposition has pointed out very clearly, is a significant downgrading in the

public perception of the importance that this government attaches to changing community attitudes about the status of women in the Territory. We are not talking about legislation but about attitudes. When the Chief Minister takes that responsibility from the most important person in the government, and gives it to the eighth person on the totem pole, he is saying something very clear and very significant to the general public of the Northern Territory about the priorities that the government attaches to that particular matter. That is why women and men in this community have become so concerned about what has happened.

Mr Speaker, this motion and this debate are not just about asking the government to restore the status of women in the Territory to its previous level; it is also about getting some firm statements and commitments from the Tuxworth government about what it intends doing in the future regarding this important issue. The Everingham government gave a reasonable indication of its directions in the area of improving the status of women but we have yet to hear from the Tuxworth government on several key areas. I want to touch on several of these today and to urge the government to make public statements on them as soon as possible. Mr Speaker, in doing so I intend, where appropriate, to refer to Labor's policies as well so that the public is aware of the initiatives that we would introduce or, in some instances, maintain or expand were we in government. The Labor Party, at both the federal and Territory levels, has long been committed to ensuring that the special needs of women in our society are met. Only by improving the status of women and ensuring that equal opportunities exist for men and women, can we achieve our broader aim of developing the full potential of men and women.

The federal Labor government has already indicated the high priority it gives to this aim by acting quickly to upgrade the Office of Women's Affairs, by changing its name and moving it back into the Prime Minister's Department, and by introducing federal sex discrimination legislation. A Territory Labor government would be committed to making similar changes here to bring the Territory into line with other parts of Australia. We are not asking the Tuxworth government to do anything we are not prepared to do. We are committed to supporting, upgrading and expanding the existing Division of Women's Affairs. In fact, I would like to suggest that the government should consider introducing what may seem to some a cosmetic change to the division but which I think is important for the reasons outlined by the Leader of the Opposition. The suggestion is that the name of the division be changed to the Division of the Status of Women as I think that reflects more accurately what the function of that division should be.

I think we are all trying, or should be, to equalise opportunities for men and women. In most cases, at the moment anyway, that usually means first increasing the status of women. As I said, the suggested change of name may seem cosmetic but I think it would help clarify the functions of the office and also remove the stereotype stigma which perhaps is associated with the name of 'Office of Women's Affairs'. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, we believe it is essential for the government to return the office, under whatever name, to the Department of the Chief Minister and we ask for a commitment from the government in that regard.

The other initiative on which we seek a clear policy statement from the government is Territory sex discrimination legislation. I do not intend to canvass again all the reasons why we believe such legislation is necessary as we did that in some detail during our last general business day. I simply call on the Tuxworth government to make a clear statement about its intention in this area. I reiterate that I accept that legislation, on its own, is not going to change attitudes and it is the changing of attitudes that we are talking about

here. It is in the overall context of a government commitment to change attitudes that sex discrimination legislation has a part to play. The Everingham government indicated that it would introduce a bill of rights or appropriate sex discrimination legislation eventually and, even though it never made such moves, the public is entitled to know what the Tuxworth government's intention is in that regard.

Mr Speaker, another area of concern which has been dealt with effectively at a federal level, and on which we would like to see the Territory government initiate similar action, is the impact of various aspects of the Territory budget on women. Honourable members may have seen the federal document to which I refer: 'Women's Budget Program - An Assessment of the Impact on Women of the 1984-85 Budget'. The document provides a check list of 1984-85 budget initiatives of significance to women in each of the priority areas. In fact, I think it goes further than that - in each of the areas of government. These initiatives are then presented in terms of how they impact on women in the community in different situations and in terms of each of the federal government departments' various program priorities.

Mr Speaker, this is an excellent way for any government to make clear its priorities in regard to women's needs in each area of government responsibility. It makes it easy for people to see the general direction the government is taking in terms of backing policies with financial resources. The Labor Party would welcome a commitment from the Territory government that it would be prepared to adopt a similar approach in relation to its next budget.

Whilst on the subject of financial resources and priorities, I would like to mention an issue which is causing some concern to the community and on which I ask the government to make a clear statement in the context of this debate. I refer to the 20% child-care subsidy that the NT government provides to supplement the federal subsidy. Quite a strong rumour has been circulating - and I understand that it was raised quite forcibly at the recent child-care conference - that the Territory government intends to abolish the subsidy. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, child-care services are essential in achieving the aim of providing men and women with equal opportunities. Obviously, abolition of the 20% subsidy would disadvantage everyone concerned with child care and I ask the government today to make clear its commitment to the continuation of that subsidy. Also, I join with the Leader of the Opposition in asking the government to indicate its future direction in relation to the involvement of more men in the area of child care.

A commitment about the planned expansion of resources in the Children's Services Bureau would also be welcome as it is only with adequate resources that it can function effectively. I understand there is a particular need for increased staff resources to be made available in the areas outside Darwin. It goes without saying that all the relevant offices, including that of women's affairs, need adequate resources, but there is one particular resource-associated issue I would like to raise briefly. An important government commitment, which the Labor Party acknowledges has been largely honoured, is the establishment of women's information shopfronts. It is important because it is a very visible expression of support for women and because it provides an important 2-way flow of communication. It is important that the shopfronts be staffed sufficiently to allow them to function more effectively, particularly during this first year when they are getting known. I raise this particular issue because members on this side of the Assembly have been lobbied by users of the Alice Springs shopfront in particular. I am told that the centre has 1 full-time and 1 part-time staff member both of whom, I believe, are doing an excellent job. But I am told that, for the centre to function most effectively, serving as it does

Australia's currently fastest growing town, 1 more full-time staff member is required. This would enable at least 1 of the staff to be out in the community making people aware of the centre's existence and getting community feedback on issues affecting women. I know that government resources are finite but I ask the government to give this issue some consideration when it is allocating finance.

I would also ask the government to consider the establishment of more women's refuges, especially in Katherine. As we all know, Katherine is due for rapid expansion with the development of Tindal. I think that part of the essential preplanning of that must be the establishment of a women's refuge. Given the present Chief Minister's track record in this area, it is reasonable for the public to ask just what the government's policy and commitment are. Rape crisis centres, or at least the provision of adequate facilities at the hospital, are another issue on which the government has given no clear statement to my knowledge at this stage.

Mr Speaker, I have been dealing for the past few moments with the issue of appropriate resources to provide the support services needed to increase the status of women in the Territory and I look forward to hearing government commitments on those. However, I would now like to turn to another vital area, that of ensuring that equal opportunities are provided for both men and women in all aspects of life. It is essential that the government set an example in this regard. The Everingham government took a very important step in creating an equal employment opportunity section within the Public Service Commissioner's Office. That was a move to which a Labor government was already committed and which we, on this side of the Assembly, very much welcomed. Although still in an embryonic stage in the Territory, this section is already making important inroads.

One of the initiatives taken recently in association with the Women's Advisory Council was the sponsorship of a series of top speakers on important and relevant issues such as equal opportunity and affirmative action. The equal opportunity section is a very important initiative in ensuring that women have equal opportunities at all levels in the public service. It is essential that this government make a clear and unequivocal commitment to maintaining that section within the Office of the Public Service Commissioner and to its present administrative priority. I think the question is particularly relevant because, as we all know, the present head of the equal opportunity section has been selected as a new Public Service Commissioner in South Australia and we shall have a vacancy in that position. There is genuine concern in the community. If you look at what might happen to that position in the light of other actions that the government has taken in recent days in terms of women's affairs, there is a genuine concern that that position may be downgraded. In the light of that background, I urge the government to make clear its commitment to this important issue which particularly affects the status of women.

In closing, I urge the government to support this motion, to do as it asks and to make a clear policy statement on the general areas I have mentioned. The full participation of women in any society depends not only on encouraging individual women to take up positions of responsibility and influence but, equally importantly, the ordering of public affairs in such a way that the voices of women are heard. Because of the breadth and complexity of the issues involved, no government policy in this area can be exhaustive nor would we want it to be because it is in the interests of democratic government that continuing consultation and deliberation refine the policy-making process. It is incumbent upon us to recognise that our most important resource is the human one and that women comprise half of that resource. We must ensure that we make full use of their knowledge, skills and talents. We cannot afford to do otherwise.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, it was interesting to see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition read from a prepared speech almost verbatim and not lift his head from the desk once during that time. It illustrates the depth of the personal commitment he has to this particular subject. In fact, he did not refer to any personal experience. He read straight from a prepared speech. I believe this issue needs a personal touch. It needs somebody who is involved and committed to address this very important concern of ensuring that women receive a fair go in the Northern Territory.

It has been mentioned that I am a junior minister. I cannot help the year I was born. I did not have much to do with that. However, I would like to clarify for the Assembly just what is referred to as a junior minister. I will give an example. People like Clyde Holding and Tom Uren are junior ministers. Those ministers are not in the inner Cabinet. They are on the outside. On such a vital issue as Aboriginal Affairs, the inner Cabinet does not have a representative when the decisions are being made.

The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has a proven background of concern in the area of family studies and the status of women. I refer honourable members to a recent publication from the Institute of Family Studies, which I received just recently. In it was an opening address given by our Chief Minister on policies to protect and enhance the contribution of family life to society. His commitment to that is evident and his track record in that field is unblemished. That was one of the reasons why he decided to address the issue of women's affairs in the manner that he did on 21 December.

It has been mentioned that South Australia and, therefore, the Northern Territory was in front when it came to giving women the vote in 1894. It is also in front in the way that it has delegated its responsibilities, in this case from the Chief Minister to the Minister for Community Development. I refer to the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in Victoria. Recently, under a Labor government, he moved this division from the Premier's Department to the Attorney-General's Department. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, what is important is what we do, not what we say. It is no good having the status of being part of the Department of the Chief Minister or the Premier's Department if you cannot do anything. That is what the Chief Minister addressed on 21 December when he decided to move the office over to the Department of Community Development. It seems to be very difficult to get the message across that what we have in fact is a significant upgrading of the Office of Women's Affairs not a downgrading.

Can I address another rumour that has been spread around which would have it that, in fact, the adviser on women's affairs had received a downgrading in her position. Some people were even going around saying that she had been downgraded to an A7. In fact, as a result of the administrative arrangements established on 21 December, her salary was increased to the top of the E1 level. She received first-class air fares to travel and she received a car and home garaging as well. These were all part of the package to ensure that there was an upgrading not only of the division, which became the Women's Affairs Division, but also for the people we have advising us. Those were the priorities of the Chief Minister when he increased the status of women at that particular stage.

What is needed is a department that can respond to the needs of women in society. That is what we set out to create in this particular case. We provided a secretariat, a research analysis division, that could properly look after the Women's Advisory Council, that extraordinarily dedicated group of voluntary workers who have a personal commitment to lift the status of women

right throughout the Northern Territory. It needed a research organisation because of the tremendous workload which was placed on it. That is why the Office of Women's Affairs was given the role to research and analyse work for the Women's Advisory Council and report, not to a minister, but straight to Cabinet through information papers. The highest decision-making body in this Territory has made itself directly accessible to the Women's Advisory Council. That is what I mean by having an organisation that can establish policies and put them through for discussion at Cabinet level.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the child welfare and children's services in the Northern Territory perhaps should be in a discrete unit. That is where it belongs. Certainly, it does not belong in a welfare division. Because the Office of Women's Affairs now has a research and analysis organisation, a secretariat, that can report to Cabinet, child care has been moved to that division to enable it to report directly to Cabinet also. I admit that there are many men who may be interested and may perhaps find it offensive to have to make inquiries to the Children's Services Bureau through the Office of Women's Affairs but the ratio is 4:100. At the Child-care Conference in Alice Springs in March, the ratio was something like 4 men to 100 women. It is still predominantly a women's issue. I am not saying that is right and I am not saying that the stereotype is healthy for our children but we lack the involvement of males in child-care services. The status of that is well recognised by the Northern Territory government. We are working towards enhancing opportunities for our children in the 0-6 years-of-age group, as we are for all our children.

To this end, a representative from the Children's Services Bureau is travelling in Australia to seek out various policies and programs that the Northern Territory can become involved in in terms of offering extended day care, 24-hour-day care and casual-day care centres throughout the Northern Territory. Currently, under the 20% subsidy, which was a Northern Territory initiative some years back, we have funded about \$500 000 annually towards child-care services, to private organisations and to government-run facilities. The federal government discriminates against private enterprise inasmuch as it funds 75% of government child-care facilities but private enterprise misses out. And what clearer demonstration of discrimination could there be than that, when we go to Canberra, it is with observer status only? Remember that we are talking about equal opportunities. Why do we have to be relegated to observer status when we are talking about equal opportunities? It is absolutely ridiculous. I do not support that in any way at all. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we should be working to ensure that that situation does not continue.

I turn to the subject of women's information services. Alice Springs is a rapidly growing town and we opened a women's information shopfront service there recently. There are many other issues that have to be addressed in that town as well. The need for a representative from the Children's Services Bureau is being considered by my department at the moment. Marriage guidance counselling is also a necessity there. These are all matters that are under consideration by my department. I am totally committed to developing these types of facilities and I will ensure that these are implemented as soon as possible. The women's information service in Darwin is also working at Casuarina and we soon hope to open a women's shopfront service on a part-time basis in the rapidly expanding town of Palmerston.

Mr Speaker, if you want to go back to the grassroots and find out how effective the Homemaker Service is, a good example would be that run by Georgina Edwards at Howard Springs. She established that service to help the

Filipino ladies, sometimes referred to as 'Asian brides', who reside in the Howard Springs area. She found that there was a need for this type of service amongst these women. Another lady for whom I have the utmost respect, June Tuzewski of the NT Women's Advisory Council, also mentioned the fact that women do not enjoy the facilities of an extended family in the Northern Territory. The Homemaker Service makes a very worthwhile contribution as a surrogate for that. I know this full well from my own electorate at Palmerston. People need somebody to talk to. Many of the young babies have no dad or auntie and uncle. I have seen the Homemaker Service in operation and it is well received by women in the community. It is being serviced quite well by the Department of Community Development at the moment. It is planned to devolve that particular service to local government organisations to allow it to spread throughout the Territory.

Katherine is another good example of a rapidly expanding area where children's services are required to meet the fantastic growth rate that we have in the Territory. According to the latest ABS figures, the growth rates are 4.4% in the Darwin area, 6.4% in Alice Springs and something like 297% in the Palmerston area.

Jocelyn Scott was mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker. I had the opportunity of sitting beside her at the Child-care Conference in Alice Springs. I respected her opinion on some of the things that she brought to my attention. I believe that it is necessary to consider the opinions of everybody who is involved on these particular projects. She is a lady whom I hold in high esteem. I believe that we can go much further than we have in offering a higher status to women in the Northern Territory but I also say that we are still leaders in Australia.

I bring to honourable members' attention the conference for the end of the Decade of Women which is to be held in Nairobi soon. I did a comparative analysis with other states on how many representatives they were sending. We intend to send 2 representatives and I can assure members that, on a per capita basis, that is an extreme advantage in the Northern Territory's favour in terms of the commitment of other areas to sending representatives to such an important conference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the new arrangements should be given a chance to work and not subjected to the negative attacks which are being made in certain quarters at the moment. I am sure that, in 12 months, when they have become fully operational, the administrative arrangements established by the Chief Minister on 21 December will work because they will have had the commitment of the junior minister. I will ensure that my total commitment to these projects will achieve the desired aims that were thought out in great detail before they were enacted by the Chief Minister.

As far as I am concerned, women's affairs are less about ideological argument and more about equal opportunity for women, and the effective delivery of government services to women in the community. In other words, we give a fair go to women of the Territory and find out exactly what women require from the department. That can now be done at the grassroots level by having the Children's Service Bureau, the Homemaker Service, the Women's Information Service and the Women's Advisory Council under one umbrella and reporting directly to Cabinet. It is not something that a minister puts under his arm and does in a panic: 'This will become politically sensible - sorry, sensitive - so let us do something about it'. It will not be that sort of kneejerk reaction or Red Adair approach as happens in other states. It will be properly thought out and implemented in such a way that we can achieve meaningful results in the

Northern Territory. I am suffering now a little bit with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's habit of reading from prepared notes but I think that I have demonstrated here today the commitment of the Northern Territory government to improving the status of women.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the percentage of single male parents as 17%. I tried to find the current figures. The most current figures available to me were 1978-79 figures. I do not believe that we have up-to-date figures. If we look at the last census of 1981, we do not really understand the magnitude of this problem. I have asked the Department of Community Development to look at the community profile in the southern and northern regions of the Northern Territory and to address the needs of male single parents. I believe the number in my own electorate is high but figures are not available. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that these figures need to be established and the needs of men considered. We should not be developing a department to the exclusion of men. They suffer similar problems in relation to such things as child care, casual care and sickness care and we need to address those problems.

I want to make it clear that, under the new arrangement, a formal mechanism has been set up to allow access for women in the community to Cabinet decisions as they are being made. The old arrangements had no such formal pattern. What existed was a rather loose or ad hoc approach with no guarantee at all that women's viewpoints would be put before Cabinet. At the moment, they have the research organisation to do the analysis and to become the secretariat. The Women's Advisory Council is in place and I pay tribute once again to that extraordinary group of dedicated volunteers. The Northern Territory government's financial commitment to the Women's Advisory Council is also substantial. I do not believe that there has been a downgrading of this service in any way, shape or form. As I said in my address-in-reply speech, the services have been upgraded and it is to this government's credit that it has done that. I believe that we have a fair way to go yet to achieve the status that is necessary to enhance the quality of life for women in the Northern Territory and I pledge myself to that end.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the speakers from the government side have completely missed the point of this whole debate. In the Northern Territory, we have function-based departments. Departmentalisation can be identified by various methods such as geographic etc, but ours is function-based. That is a fairly common method. The idea is that a department develops an ethos which is what it sees as the role in which it carries out its total operation and how it expects the rest of society to see it. By the move that this government has made, it is saying something to women in this society. It is saying that it sees them within the context of community development. We believe that is the basic mistake that it has made. We have asked it not to see women in that context but at the very highest level. Women's input should not be seen as being only on women's issues but as part of the natural process of government developing all its policies so that, in our bureaucratic system, we have a means of ensuring that women's attitudes to any particular policy are taken into account as that policy is developed.

This is required now more than ever. We have only 1 woman in this Assembly and it is incumbent on the government to find another means of achieving a balance. That is what we are asking the government to do. We are asking it to take special measures to ensure that the imbalance which has been created because of, I hope, short-term factors will be redressed by the very strong role that the division plays in having input at the very highest level, that of the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Community Development lamented the fact that they only have observer status in Canberra. As I understand it, the reason they have observer status in Canberra is simply because the government has made this change whilst that body is set up as a body comprising advisers to the heads of government. By taking that person out of that category and putting her in the category of an adviser to the Minister for Community Development, the government has effectively moved her outside of the category within which she would have that full status. The way to get around observer status is to move her back again.

Mr Speaker, probably the most telling statement was the Freudian slip of the Minister for Community Development who said that he was not going to make politically sensible decisions. He will come to realise that having division within his own portfolio will place him in an invidious position. If women are to have input in all policy areas and not be limited to community development issues, he will have to take that input around to the various other ministers and will cut across their portfolio areas. That will make him unpopular politically among his colleagues and will make it very difficult for him to be able to carry out his other functions.

Mr Speaker, I was happy to hear that information papers can be prepared by this group and that they can be submitted directly to the Cabinet. Unless this government works on a rather strange system, from what I recall, information papers are fairly small beer. I would be interested to find out what happens with the actual policy documentation which, from what the minister was saying, we can assume will still go through the Minister for Community Development and be presented by him in Cabinet. That is where it has been downgraded once again. I presume that previously that would have been brought in by the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, it is clear that this government has downgraded the status of this division. It is clear that it has told women in the Northern Territory that it does not regard them as being as important a component in policy development as was recognised by the previous Chief Minister. There is still time for the government to do something about this. Personally, I will not say another word if it turns around and says: 'It was a blue. We should not have done it. We will put it back again'. I am not going to crow about that one; I think it is too important for that. I believe that it will have to move the group back to the Department of the Chief Minister within the next year or so. I just hope that it will do the right thing by making that move sooner rather than later.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to start off by saying that I strongly support the proposition put by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon. In all fairness, how could anyone do anything else but support that the Territory government should take whatever action might be necessary to re-establish the national status of the Territory's input into the important consultative and decision-making process affecting women and that the Territory should make a firm policy statement regarding its future plans for ensuring that both women and men have equal choice and opportunity in all aspects of Territory life.

Mr Speaker, I will address most of the issues raised this afternoon in one form or another. I would like to say that the Northern Territory government is concerned. I am concerned about the national status of the Territory's input into the important consultative decision-making process affecting women. The decision to give the Northern Territory observer status at the national level

was, in my view, a politically vindictive and arbitrary one taken against the Northern Territory because our administrative arrangements did not happen to conform with the requirements or the attitudes of the Prime Minister. That is all very well for the Prime Minister but the reality is that the Northern Territory is not as big as the states and we cannot afford the luxury of doing things the way other people think they ought to be done.

Mr Speaker, I would just like to elaborate on that a little bit. The point was raised that the Victorians made some changes to their administrative arrangements whereby they moved offices into the office of the Attorney-General from the Premier's Department. I will be watching with great interest to see whether the Victorians now receive observer status at the federal level. I think it is one of the rights of the states to be able to organise their internal administrative arrangements without being dictated to by the Commonwealth. In a particular letter that the Prime Minister wrote to me, he said: 'I want you to send Mrs Smith as your delegate to the conference'. I think the Leader of the Opposition would concede the point that that really is overstepping the boundaries of common decency yet that is exactly the role that the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister have started to play.

I support the motion because the Prime Minister can return to the Northern Territory the status it had prior to December simply by writing another letter to say that we are reinstated. Talk about discrimination! There is discrimination against Territory women because the Prime Minister does not agree with the administrative arrangements in the Northern Territory. That really is drawing a long bow. If he were so concerned for the affairs of women, he would not discriminate against them. I reiterate that I will be watching with great interest to see how the Victorians are viewed by the Commonwealth after the moves that they have made. I believe that it is the prerogative of the Victorian government to reorganise its administrative arrangements to its satisfaction in terms of what it believes is good for Victoria.

Mr Speaker, I would just like to deny the suggestion that there is some great conspiracy on my part to ensure that women are downgraded and not given a fair go in the Northern Territory. Any such interpretation of the reorganisation that was made in December is totally unfair and perhaps misunderstood. Before the reorganisation took place, we had the Women's Advisory Council. As my colleague said, it consists of a group of staunch Territory women from a wide cross-section of the community and from as many centres as possible, working mainly on a voluntary basis and putting in long hours in community representation. They were isolated. They told me at a meeting that they felt that their message was not getting through, that they were not getting administrative support from the government and that they never found out what happened to their recommendations.

Setting aside the facts of any of that, that was their perception and I felt greatly for them if they believed that all the work they were putting in was not achieving results and they were not being supported by the government. I then raised the matter of the Office of Women's Affairs. The Women's Advisory Council said: 'We do not have a lot to do with them. We are not too sure what they do but they do not do much for us'. I then had to address the issue of the minister's adviser and the relationship of the adviser to these organisations. It seemed to me to be perfectly logical that the Office of Women's Affairs, which had considerable resources and staff numbers and the necessary administrative arrangements, would be a good executive development research group for the Women's Advisory Council. It is my belief that the Women's Advisory Council should be the predominant adviser to the government on women's affairs and that one of the roles of the Office of Women's Affairs should be to

supply to the Women's Advisory Council data, information and papers needed to prepare recommendations to the government. Having assessed all of that between the government, the Office of Women's Affairs and the Women's Advisory Council, there needs to be communication in terms of the Women's Adviser.

Mr Speaker, that was the situation I found and I believed that relating those 2 organisations in one position would create a very effective administrative support role for the Women's Advisory Council. It would give it a second wind so that its attention was not taken up with postage and letter writing and it could get on with the business of assessing some of the important community issues and report to the government on them.

The other thing that I believed very important in relation to the advice coming from the Women's Advisory Council was that it should not just be a report to the Chief Minister but that that advice and the recommendations should go to Cabinet, be considered by Cabinet formally and replied to by the government. One of the points raised with me was that the council had made representations to the government and, quite often, did not receive a response. I do not think it was a case of people not wanting to respond. The system just did not have any ginger in it to send a response back.

The other part of this that is really essential in my view is that it is one thing for the Women's Advisory Council to advise the Chief Minister but that what is most important is that that advice should be used by the whole government. Without any intention to reflect, I can say that, during the period I spent in the Departments of Primary Production and Mines and Energy in the last year or 2, I cannot recall receiving any advice on women's issues. One does not have much to do with women's issues in those departments per se but perhaps there were decisions about employment or terms and conditions or the status of women in those departments. For that reason, I believe that the recommendations of the Women's Advisory Council will go to Cabinet. They will be considered and they will be responded to by the government. There may be times when we have to say that we do not have the money or it is not practical to do something in all centres. At least, we will give a formal response. I think that is important.

I would just like to touch on another point that was made about the Women's Adviser to the Chief Minister and the allegation that, at some stage, there was a downgrading. The first thing I did when I became Chief Minister was to provide additional travel, vehicle and remuneration concessions for the person holding the job because I believed that was fair and reasonable. When the request came forward, it was granted straight away. For the benefit of the honourable members opposite, I would like to stress that I want women in the Northern Territory to be strongly represented by the Women's Advisory Council. I want that council to have strong administrative support. I would like the council to show leadership to women of the Northern Territory in the things that it does and in the propositions that it puts forward to government. Like the honourable member's motion, that might sound like motherhood and apple pie. But I believe that, at the end of this year, all things being well, we will have created an administrative structure for women's affairs that will be very beneficial to the whole community.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition went on to canvass the issues of equal opportunity. He raised the issue of equal opportunity legislation in the Northern Territory and the need to have legislation complementary to that of the Commonwealth. My advice is that the Commonwealth legislation covers the Northern Territory adequately. There is no need for additional legislation in the Northern Territory because there are very comprehensive provisions in the

Public Service Act to cover equal opportunity. As the honourable member said, I spoke at some length on this in the last debate. I still feel very strongly about the need for equal opportunity to be a perception as much as a legal requirement.

I will repeat the story I told about the introduction I had to equal opportunity legislation which is currently in place in America. America now has legislation which says that so many members of the company's work force must be black, Hispanic or whatever and that you cannot discriminate against people because they are Jewish, Catholic or whatever. In fact, it has gone past that. You must now have a certain number from each of these groups within your employ. At the time, I spoke to a mining company group about the implementation of this type of legislation. It would seem to me to be pretty difficult for a mining company that is very heavily into oil and gas exploration and production, or uranium enrichment, to employ a requisite number of skilled employees of any ethnic group just because the law says so. I asked the company how it dealt with this problem and it said that it was easy. They bought a black basketball team. I asked how does that work out and they said that it works very well. They said: 'They play lots of games and make lots of money for the firm'.

My idea of equal opportunity legislation is that people would be taken into a firm, trained and given opportunities in different jobs. That company's way of providing equal opportunity was to buy a professional basketball team. Because it was all black, it complied with the law. It was good because it won many games and earned plenty of money for the company. Now that to me was a great leveller about the benefit of equal opportunity legislation. It is a nonsense and denigrates everybody who becomes involved.

I did not support the equal opportunity legislation proposition before for that reason. I still hold to that view. But I accept the premiss that, in terms of equal opportunity, attitude is what is most important. If we can embody in the administrative areas of government the attitude of equal opportunity, then that would be the biggest win that we could possibly have. It would be worth 100 bills that do not have the support of the administration. My commitment is to try to embody in the public service, and indeed encourage amongst my colleagues, a positive attitude towards equal opportunity for men and women, ethnic groups and disadvantaged people. I believe that is a very important issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, about 2 years ago, there was an advertisement in the paper for a switchboard operator for a department in the Northern Territory. I was approached by a handicapped person who had spent, and will spend, most of his life in a wheelchair. I rang the secretary of the department and said: 'Look, this job has been advertised and this person has approached me. This person thinks he can do the job but he knows that, if he goes for an interview in a wheelchair, it will be pretty tough getting up. I am ringing you to say that the person is coming and you might like to give a little bit of thought to how he can get a fair interview'. The secretary rang back and said: 'It's going to be really difficult to give that person in the wheelchair a go to do that job because that person also makes the coffee. You cannot get a wheelchair in and out of the kitchen'. That was an attitudinal problem. It had nothing to do with legislation. It was in the head. It was thick. That is what must change.

Another area that I am very interested in addressing is the development of ethnic groups, and I refer particularly to Aborigines. There is a desperate need in the Northern Territory to develop Aboriginal executives, not just in government but in the community generally - in corporate board rooms, in legal organisations, in land councils etc. I hold the view that a fair amount of the

trouble and strife that we have in the Northern Territory at the moment comes from the fact that transients - people I call 'yellow fellows' - are giving advice and telling Aborigines how to lead their lives. We now need to move in the direction of Aborigines running their own organisations, making their own decisions, representing themselves and progressing without all the rest of us telling them how to do it. That is what development is about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we desperately need to introduce an executive development training system within the Territory for the benefit of government and business.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move for an extension of time for the honourable Chief Minister.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, recently, I was approached by a member of one of Australia's largest companies. He said: 'Look, we do a lot of business in the Northern Territory. We do a lot of business with Aborigines. We are going to have a continuing interest in the Northern Territory. We want to get an Aboriginal onto our board but it is absolutely essential that that Aboriginal is not a token person and that he can perform a very productive and efficient role in the boardroom of our company. Can you give us any names?' I pursued that with the company and it was a matter for it. When you get to the bottom line, after 30 years of formal education for Aborigines in our community, we now need to create a group of Aboriginal executives in the Northern Territory for involvement in government, commerce and industry in the rest of this century.

I would like to conclude by touching on the issues raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition concerning the administrative relationship of groups within government. He said that, because we have put women's affairs next to children's services or homemakers, we have denigrated the women's affairs issue. In our small government, the relationship of the various administrative arms of government is always very difficult to put together. There are 25 of us. There are 8 ministers. In any other government the numbers would be double that. Our opportunities to get further compartmentalisation of administrative arrangements are very slight. I could say that the connection between police, fire brigade and emergency services is not regarded as ideal. Because of our size, we do not have many options. For instance, we took prisons away from community development because the relationship was not ideal. It needed to be broken. I am troubled by the fact that equal opportunity is with the Office of the Public Service Commissioner and women's affairs is with community development. I would prefer that those 2 areas of government were more closely related. It is easy to say, but the administrative nuts and bolts of doing it is a little harder. That is the challenge that lies before us. I think we will meet the challenge. We will identify how we can improve on the administrative arrangements of the government for the benefit of all the people of the Northern Territory, rather than 1 or 2 groups.

I conclude by saying that I support the motion of the Leader of the Opposition. So far as the re-establishment of our status is concerned, the Prime Minister can achieve that tomorrow by being non-discriminatory and sending up another letter to say that we are again the same as all other Australians.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is not any point in prolonging this debate all that much further but a number of comments

were made that I wish to comment on. First of all, can I say that, after some consideration, the opposition deliberately couched this motion in general terms. I refer honourable members to the terms of the motion. By doing that, we deliberately invited support from the government. I am pleased to hear from the honourable Chief Minister that the government will indeed be supporting this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as far as the comments made by the member for Koolpinyah are concerned, can I say that over a number of years the member for Koolpinyah and I have agreed to disagree on approaches to issues such as this. In my view the member for Koolpinyah has, and always has had, an extremely elitist attitude towards this issue. I can say that with some authority because I understand the internal structural problems in both of the Territory's major political parties for women at all levels within them. The member herself referred to that problem. It is very commendable and invites admiration when somebody fights against an acknowledged handicap and makes it. However, her attitude is that, now that she has reached the top of the mountain, she is certainly not going to put any guided walks up the side to make it just a little easier for everybody else to climb. They must do it the same way she did. I do not think that that is a reasonable or fair attitude. I do not think that the member can see the forest for the trees.

She also said that her opinion was that the men who protest about problems such as this are the worst offenders. That statement exemplifies what I find personally offensive about those attitudes. It is the province of both men and women to talk about any subject under the sun. I reject that attitude utterly. The women with whom I had a close political association, and whose absence I regret almost daily, acknowledged no subject under the sun on which they were of the opinion that they were not entitled to speak. That operates across the board to everybody's mutual benefit. I reject that attitude.

Despite interjections from the member for Jingili among others, there are structural barriers to women in politics which are real and not imagined. I have been at decision-making conferences over the years, in terms of my own organisation, and in respect of proposals to remove some of the barriers to women achieving a more equal role in the organisation, I have heard people in authority say: 'That will be done over my dead body'. It is just silly even to pretend that those structural barriers do not exist.

At the moment, we have a situation where the premier of a state in Australia is clearly intending to create structural barriers in respect of electoral divisions which will very strongly favour a particular political party. If he gets away with it and his government is re-elected, it will not be because the majority of opinion in that particular state favours his government. It will be in the position of being a permanent minority government to a greater extent than it is now. It would be just as silly to say that, because of what that particular government was able to organise in terms of electoral divisions and so become elected, that popular opinion favoured that particular system of government. If anyone wants to question that, he should have a look at the numbers, not just for the last election, but particularly for the 2 or 3 before it. Clearly, those sorts of things are possible.

I know that, in my own organisation and in the union movement, that kind of behaviour goes on constantly, as I have no doubt it does in the CLP. For the benefit of the honourable member for Jingili, I would suggest that all he has to do is have a look - and I am making no excuses for my own party - at the number of women that were fielded for the 25 seats by his party at the last election. We have nothing to be proud about either. From personal experience, I know it

is not simply accidental, the luck of the draw or because the electorate does not want it. It may happen in certain circumstances that that is the reason but I can assure you that there is a very strong lobby at all levels in politics, business, the public service and everything else which will ensure that that situation will not change if the current structure of the system can be maintained.

The reason I make that point is that it is a foolish argument, and one that does not stand up to examination, to say: 'Look, you are simply talking about an attitudinal problem. Therefore, we should not do anything about it because you cannot change people's attitudes'. Plainly, that is not true. I offer the following example. There is a problem currently in respect of truancy. In a lot of cases, that is largely due to attitudinal problems on the part of the children concerned. That is a fact. It is a problem with all manner of people and not necessarily because they come from broken homes, although that is true in a lot of cases. A lot of it is because of attitudinal problems on the part of teachers, students, parents and everyone else. If the government were to apply the same overwhelming logic to that situation on the same grounds, it would say that, because it is attitudinal, the government has an excuse - which seems to operate very effectively in respect of women's issues - to do nothing about it. We must just put moral pressure on. Clearly, the government is not doing that, and neither should it. It is not an argument that stands up for too long.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to say anything at all about the content of what the member for Wanguri said except that, in my opinion and with respect, what he said was extremely foolish.

I largely agreed with the minister's contribution. I want to take issue with a number of things he said. They were also stated by the Chief Minister. He appears to have missed the point altogether about the reduction of status in the national body. I have some inside information which will not come as any surprise to the government. That decision was taken by the national body on the basis of advice that was received from the women who advise the Prime Minister on women's affairs. The decision was taken very deliberately and as a matter of policy. Can I say that I support the decision. It so happens that a policy decision was taken that it is absolutely vital, for the kind of impetus that needs to be given to these kinds of issues, to have that kind of advice available at the head-of-government level. At a national level, that situation is an absolute requirement in terms of voting. That was done deliberately on the advice that was received. I support that decision utterly. I think it was a wise decision in respect of the Victorian Labor government or any other government.

Can I also give a piece of inside advice to the government on how that decision was arrived at? It was arrived at without the slightest political overtones because, at the time that it was taken, there was no indication whatsoever of what Labor governments might do in the future. The people who advise the Prime Minister decided deliberately to place equal political pressure on all state governments to do what the federal government elected to do and place that kind of political - and that is what it is - emphasis on that role. Labor, Liberal or CLP governments can choose to agree to or oppose that policy decision as they see fit. I do not dispute the right of the organisation to lay down the ground rules because I think that that kind of political emphasis is required even though this government does not.

Despite what he said, the minister has some particular sensitivity about his role as junior minister. In fact, in order to make that graphic, I have

written down here 'junior minister' with 3 exclamation marks following and I have underlined it because that was the way it was delivered. I make no personal reflections on his capabilities or his ability to administer at all. I do not see him as being junior because he has the most junior portfolio, but I assure him that a great many people in the Northern Territory - both men and women - see him as the final result of what has happened with that department.

The Chief Minister dwelt at length upon the attitudinal problems that he has had trouble with over the years. Could I suggest, with respect, that he appears to have a few himself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have found it intriguing that, since the change of Chief Ministers, one way and another we have continued to receive some interesting insights into how the previous government of the Northern Territory operated. We received another good one in the Chief Minister's previous statement. He said that, despite the fact that the former Chief Minister had made the move, which he supported strongly in June last year, of placing the Office of Women's Affairs in the Department of the Chief Minister, and the Women's Advisory Council in his own department, he could say, with authority I should imagine, that none of that ever got through to Cabinet. I take the Chief Minister at his word on that. I do not doubt that it is absolutely true. I dare say that it was not only in respect of women's affairs that that problem occurred in the Cabinet. In respect of schools being closed and money being loaned and deals done, the incoming Chief Minister was happy to say at his first press conference that he knew nothing about any of that. I remember the statement: 'Ask me in 2 weeks and I may be able to give you an answer'.

The Chief Minister then said precisely what the minister said: all of these problems are attitudinal problems and you cannot legislate for them. That is palpable nonsense because governments can and do precisely that every day a parliament sits. Not just here but around the world governments do precisely that. He then made some very interesting observations on a story which we have heard in the Assembly before about how big mining companies in the United States pull rorts and get around legislation designed to encourage equal participation in the work force. The most extraordinary thing about that statement by the Chief Minister was that he was using that as an example of why that legislation should be removed and why it should not be introduced here. I can tell the Chief Minister that rorts are being pulled - and I know that this will come as a great shock to everybody - every single day of the week in this country in respect of every social service which is provided by every government in this country. Rorts are pulled with old-age pensions and in respect of invalid pensions in the same way that this company in America pulled a rort with equal opportunity. Rorts are pulled with war pensions, supporting mothers' benefits and allowances of all kinds that come from the government. Again, applying the same blinding logic that the Chief Minister uses, his solution to that would be to abolish them all tomorrow. I dare say that a few government backbenchers would say that that should be done. I do not think that it should be done because a grave injustice would be done to everybody.

Many people complain about income tax. The problem with any of us leaping up and saying that income tax should be abolished overnight is that none of us would be here unless we came here, like the Women's Advisory Council, as enthusiastic volunteers. Rorts are pulled in Australia today, and some of them very publicly - in terms of the business that it brings them no doubt - by people who will tell you that, by pulling rorts you can avoid income tax completely. Is that argument going to be used by the Chief Minister with the same blinding logic to abolish all Territory taxes tomorrow? It is just a very foolish argument. He seems to have missed the point completely.

He then talked about attitudinal problems in respect of those dreadful 'yellow fellows' - and I am quoting him - 'who come to the Northern Territory and tell our black fellows how to live'. There is an attitudinal problem about that too, which I think the Chief Minister is going to have to come to grips with. It is a problem that I had to come to grips with personally. It is interesting to go over to the other side of the fence. People who have these attitudes - and I was one - find unimpeachable logic attached to saying that those people are not entitled to consider themselves to be Aboriginal. There is a problem about that. The more you associate with the very large part-Aboriginal population that lives right here in the Northern Territory, the more you find out that a lot of those people - and there were many of them in the public gallery this morning - have the absolute hide and audacity to identify themselves not as 'yellow fellows' but in fact as Aboriginal people. I happen to have one at home: a live-in yellow fellow who in fact speaks fluent Tiwi and has the hide to think that he is an Aboriginal. He also speaks impeccable English. I do not intend, for a few years anyway, to disabuse him about that.

I understand these attitudes. I used to have them myself after many years of association with people who lived in a tribal environment only. There is a reason why that has happened. It is because society's attitudes have changed over the last 10 years in respect of people of all descriptions who now have the opportunity to find an identity they were never given the opportunity of having formerly. They are standing up to claim that right to have that identity. It should not be for us to decry them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Tabling of Papers Relating to the Darwin Casino

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I look forward to achieving the same level of success with this motion as I did with the last one.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 216, there be laid on the table of the Assembly the papers referred to by the Chief Minister during question time on Tuesday, 16 April 1985, relating to the Darwin casino, copies of which were given to the Hon P.A.E. Everingham MP, federal member for the Northern Territory, but which have not been previously tabled in the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not see any need for this to be a long debate because the facts that need to be introduced, whilst compelling enough to warrant raising it in this manner, will not take long to canvass. Most of them have been canvassed before.

I must confess that I am heartily sick of the whole casino business. I am fed up to the back teeth with it. I would dearly have loved to have been able to lay this entire thing to rest much earlier than this for the Territory's benefit and for my own personal benefit. I was silly enough to believe last year that I might have been able to do that. I was silly enough to believe what the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory told me and a lot of other people. I found out very quickly that the statement that was issued in November was not true. Earlier this week I found out to my surprise that a second statement, as deliberately and as unambiguously phrased as the first, was also untrue.

On Tuesday morning, I could have been accused of going on a bit of a fishing expedition in question time. I was probably as surprised as everybody

else when I ended up catching a barramundi and a beauty at that. Can I assure the honourable Chief Minister that that happens to be the unvarnished truth. I had not the slightest intention of raising again the whole business surrounding the casino. It would be impossible, having compared the answers given on Tuesday morning to a statement issued in January, not to do so. It appears also that the story has changed substantially overnight. I will point that out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 29 January this year, the Chief Minister issued a press statement which said in its first paragraph: 'The Chief Minister, Mr Ian Tuxworth, said today that all documents concerning the casino takeover would be tabled next month at the sittings of the Legislative Assembly'. Since this was discussed in the Assembly on Tuesday, the Chief Minister has sought, as he is constantly prone to do, to insert words and meanings that are not there, into what was a very clear statement. He inserted the word 'relevant' which was not contained in the statement. It is important to place this January statement in its correct context because there is not the slightest doubt that it was not a slip of the pen that caused the statement to be drafted that way. It was not because the word 'relevant' was left out accidentally. The statement was deliberately and carefully constructed to contain precisely the meaning that it did.

I do not want to get into the appalling, legalistic, hair-splitting interpretation which the Chief Minister tried to place on his November press release. The Chief Minister knows as well as I do that, when politicians make public statements, the public is entitled to interpret those words in the way that the normal man in the street - the man on the Clapham omnibus, as lawyers refer to him - would interpret them; that is, the simple English meaning which those words are clearly meant to convey. There is an old English expression which sums it up very very well indeed. It would be very nice if, when politicians made statements of fact, the public of the Northern Territory, along with the public of Australia, were able to take them at their word. It is old English expression and it conveys only too well the trouble that the Northern Territory is having with the Chief Minister. People are entitled to make that observation.

In terms of what has been said about promises on railways and other promises that have been broken by other politicians, can I say that there is a huge gulf between statements that are made by politicians in political promises and statements that are made by politicians as matters of fact.

I will just nail this down a little more tightly in terms of putting this statement in the context in which it was meant to be believed. The Deputy Chief Minister made an unfortunate foray into the casino debate. It was the only one he made. I remember it very well because he issued a press statement on 1 February 1985. He told the Darwin press that he would be available to be interviewed on the basis of that press release but, having been kicked around the head for some of the silly things it contained, he dived into his hole and refused to be interviewed. I was not surprised. That press statement said:

Acting Chief Minister, Mr Nick Dondas, today accused Labor leader, Bob Collins, of grandstanding on the casino takeover. 'As soon as all documents concerning the takeover are tabled in the Assembly in 3 weeks, Mr Collins will be left standing like a shag on a rock', he said. Mr Dondas said that allegations by Mr Collins that Territory taxpayers put \$2.1m into the casino acquisition are completely untrue.

The same press statement then went on to say that - and I was interested in

this bit of it and I commented on it publicly - the government was also eager to settle the affair because it could have jeopardised the Territory's position on the interstate and international investment scene. As I pointed out at the time, that was in stark contrast to what was being said by other government ministers to the effect that it was having no influence or impact on the Territory at all. In fact, it confirmed and supported the statements we were making that it might well have been. The key thing was that the Acting Chief Minister confirmed once again, clear as a bell, that all documents would be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister had more to say about this, just in case anyone still had any lingering doubts about it. The Chief Minister said that he would 'bury the opposition in paper in the Legislative Assembly'. He said; and it was a clear intention of the government that it be believed, that this was a new-broom government. I would like to see him even attempt to deny that. There was no question of 'relevant' documents being tabled in the Legislative Assembly for one simple reason: the honourable Chief Minister knew perfectly well that, if he had made a statement as equivocal as that, he would have had it wrapped around his ears not by the Labor opposition but by the Northern Territory electorate. After a parade of truths, half-truths and downright untruths, the Territory electorate was sick and tired of the obfuscation of the government and the fact that it had been led up the garden path by the government. What it wanted was certainty and truth. The Chief Minister promised - and no journalist in Darwin who attended that press conference would dispute this - that he would lay all the cards on the table and all would be revealed. He said: 'This would finally be put at rest. There would be nothing to show'. As Channel 8 news said when it heard about the Coonawarra Unit Trust: 'The statement by Henry and Walker has filled in some of the gaps that appeared in the casino deal. We were told by the Chief Minister that there were not any gaps to fill'. That is not simply the interpretation that Channel 8 placed on this; it is the interpretation everybody placed on it.

I think that Northern Territorians are entitled to take the Chief Minister at his word. I do not think it is too much to ask when he issues statements of fact. We now know that we cannot and it is a sorry track record. There have been 2 statements issued now which have been proven to be false. In fact, in the context in which they were each delivered - with supporting statements from other government ministers, from the Chief Minister himself and from public servants too - there is no question at all but that they knew the statements were false when they issued them. There was never any intention of the government to table all documents pertaining to this casino deal in the Legislative Assembly. Clearly now, it has not done so, although it told us that it would.

Mr Deputy Speaker, can I assure you that the first time the word 'relevant' - and I think we all accept that the question of relevance is a very subjective matter indeed - was introduced into this debate, it was inside the Assembly. I had a look and it was interesting. If honourable members refer to the honourable Chief Minister's major casino statement, he opened by saying - as he knew he had to - very carefully: 'I will now table all relevant documents in the Legislative Assembly'. That was just as deliberate. The honourable Chief Minister knows full well that there is a difference, as far as parliamentary convention is concerned - and if anybody doubts this, I would ask him to refer to Pettifer or Erskine May - in relation to censure motions. As far as convention is concerned, it is obligatory for a head of government to accept as a censure motion, a motion about misleading the parliament. The difference is very distinct here. There is no such compulsion on ministers of the government to accept any such motion if it refers to misleading people outside the parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been in here long enough to know that that was deliberate and not accidental at all. So, it was perfectly all right for the honourable Chief Minister to slip in the extra word carefully in the Assembly so that, technically, we cannot say that he has misled the Assembly because, technically, he did not. The word 'relevant' appeared for the first time in Hansard. However, it was perfectly all right to lead everybody else in the Northern Territory deliberately up the garden path, which is what he did by leaving that word out of the press release.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on any interpretation, in English the words 'all documents' mean all documents, and they were meant to. Then we get to the answers to questions that were delivered in this Assembly and I reiterate to the members that we are not recanvassing the casino issue at all in here. I see no point in doing that. We are talking about something else entirely, Mr Deputy Speaker, and that is the capacity of the honourable Chief Minister to issue press statements which now, on his record, Northern Territory people are entitled to disbelieve whenever they are issued from here on in.

An interesting discrepancy in emphasis occurred between Tuesday and the interview the honourable Chief Minister gave this morning on Northern Territory radio. These documents have a different complexion now altogether. On the current record of the Chief Minister, I will accept that the statements made by him in this Assembly were more authoritative - and unfortunately I have to use that expression now - more authoritative than the statements issued on public radio this morning. In answer to my first question, the Chief Minister said quite clearly that documents relating to the casino issue had been provided already, on a private basis, to the federal member for his use, because he was being attacked in the federal House. I refer honourable members to the answer given to the first question. There was no equivocation about that. They were casino papers, to do with the casino deal, provided deliberately for the use of the federal member because he was under attack in the federal parliament. Then we had all this nonsense later on, when the Chief Minister managed to get his act together, about confidentiality. The honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a few words to say about the problem with confidential briefing.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, I wonder if the honourable Chief Minister would explain to me how it would be possible for the federal member for the Northern Territory to defend himself in the House of Representatives with documents obtained in confidence. It is a pretty strange sort of process. What will he do - whisper the facts or tell people that, if they would like to come outside, he will tell them in the toilet? I am not making nonsense out of this; it is nonsense. How is the federal member supposed to use those documents confidentially to defend himself against an attack in the House of Representatives? It is nonsense. That was just an extra word slipped in later on during the day by the honourable Chief Minister and now nailed down this morning on the ABC radio. Now the emphasis has shifted entirely. I will quote him: 'They are personal documents, some of them, along with a confidential report that the government has done in relation to the transaction but they are not part of the transaction and there is no way that I will be tabling them'. And again, 'A lot of them are Paul's personal papers'.

I will not waste any more time by reading out the whole transcript, Mr Deputy Speaker. I shall not load up Hansard by tabling it. The honourable Chief Minister knows what he said. If any honourable members of the Assembly are concerned that I may have taken this out of context, here is the transcript if they wish to read the whole of it. This morning, on ABC radio, the honourable Chief Minister went to a great deal of trouble to say that the majority of the papers included were Paul's personal papers that he had simply

left in the office when he had gone and they had nothing to do with the casino deal. The honourable Chief Minister is nodding his head in agreement. Could the honourable Chief Minister explain to me how he reconciles that statement with the statement that he made on Tuesday morning, in question time, that the documents were casino papers? I refer the honourable Chief Minister to the question which was: 'Are you going to respond to the call by the federal member for further documents on the casino transaction to be released?' They were casino papers given to the honourable member to defend himself against attacks on the casino issue in the parliament.

It is real Animal Farm stuff. I mean, you slip out during the night, rub it off the blackboard, chalk up some new stuff and it is there as Holy Writ the next day. The honourable Chief Minister has been specialising in that of late. Gradually, between Tuesday morning and now, there has been a shift in emphasis on those documents. They are now 'Paul's personal papers' that he left in the office. Mr Deputy Speaker, I say to you that, as far as some of those documents are concerned, I do not believe that for a minute. I accept as authoritative the answer given in this Assembly by the honourable Chief Minister in question time on Tuesday morning that those documents, or at least some very key ones, related to the casino issue. They were given to the former Chief Minister for the purpose described by the new Chief Minister in this Assembly - to enable him to defend himself against attacks in the federal parliament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the main thrust of our federal member's defence in the federal parliament was an attack on the current Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. That was the main thrust. I have not seen another word from the honourable former Chief Minister - who I now understand has been made honourable for life so I guess we have to refer to him as that - in the federal parliament. I can only assume that these papers have not been used for that purpose and I would like to ask the honourable Chief Minister to tell me why. Mr Deputy Speaker, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the content of those papers would prove very embarrassing indeed to the Northern Territory government if they were released.

I ask honourable members to exercise their memories. When all of the documents were revealed in the great casino debate in this Assembly, when all of the information was so frankly given by the Northern Territory government, does anyone recall hearing about the Coonawarra Unit Trust? Does anyone recall hearing the fact that, because of a total investment from its own assets of \$10 000, a company was able to go out on to the loan market and raise loan funds which I believe - because we do not know - but I believe to have been in excess of \$16m. We now know from public statements that the company also borrowed sufficient capital to service the loan for the first 2 years so it would have to be considerably more than \$16m, probably closer to \$20m. That was all expressed accurately in the Business Review Weekly in a story it composed. The Business Review Weekly got on to the Coonawarra Unit Trust and I confess that I did not. Did any of us hear anything about that? No, we did not. That had to be discovered afterwards. Mr Deputy Speaker, hot on the heels of that, on Tuesday morning it was revealed in the Assembly that a private arrangement had been entered into between the Chief Minister and the former Chief Minister concerning documents, some of which, at least, the Chief Minister is prepared to concede, were related to the casino issue and were not Paul's personal papers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion in this debate - and the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition is going to take up the problem that we have with confidential briefings - could I just say this very deliberately to the honourable Chief Minister: I do not want the papers on a confidential basis, as the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition will explain shortly. I think

the whole Territory is sick of the confidentiality exercised in respect of public funds. Can I assure the Chief Minister that, having watched this government, honestly I have to say that there is not a greater champion of private enterprise in this Assembly, personally and ideologically, than me in comparison with the attitude of the government. I would support the right of any private company to keep any of its business confidential if it did not involve any activities of the government or the public purse. Unfortunately, it is a regrettable fact that the current owners of the casino are not in a position where they can do that. All honourable members will remember that, once upon a time, this government wanted to preserve the confidentiality of all of the people who were in receipt of NTDC loans. Because of a couple of major scandals - and one in respect of Buntine Roadways was a disgrace; no one mentioned that this morning in the debate on the public accounts committee - concerning the loss of public money, the government was forced into doing what it had to acknowledge was the right thing. It now publishes, as part of the NTDC's annual report, the names of all businessmen who are in receipt of public money, in many cases at preferred rates of interest.

Nobody on the government side would stand up now and say that that should be repealed and that we should go back to the old system. The former member for Sanderson, June D'Rozario, raised that issue at sittings after sittings until the government finally conceded, when the Buntine Roadways scandal hit the fan, that it was essential that it be done. We all acknowledge, including the government as shown by its action in respect of the NTDC, that, when companies receive assistance in the form of public funds, they lose the right to retain the normal level of business confidentiality they would enjoy if they went along to the bank and organised their own affairs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this has been not only a sorry saga of maladministration and misuse of public money but, in respect of the current government, it has been an even sorrier tale of deliberate deception. That has not occurred in the Assembly because I concede that, on 2 occasions, the Chief Minister has been scrupulous in injecting the correct English into the debates in the Assembly so that he cannot be hanged on a charge of misleading the Assembly because technically he has not done so. However, he has no such reservations about leading everyone else up the garden path when he is outside the Legislative Assembly. It is about time he is called to a halt on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I conclude by saying that, on the basis of the Chief Minister's own words, I will accept that some of the documents are Paul's personal papers. I have no interest in Paul's personal papers and neither has this Legislative Assembly. I will gladly accept an amendment to the motion to restrict the access of this Assembly to all of the documentation that was given to our representative in the federal House, which relates to government business, but which is not Paul's personal papers.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Not a single government speaker?

Mr Tuxworth: Yes, there is. I am going to speak. Go on.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a most unusual occurrence and indicates that, even at this late stage, probably the government is still trying to get a line of argument together.

Mr Deputy Speaker, almost from day 1, the whole casino saga, as it has now become, has been a farago of misinformation from the government and, at times, disinformation. It has squirmed constantly and shifted its line on different aspects of the casino operation. If we go back to day 1 when the big

announcement was made, with all the fanfare that the Northern Territory government could muster, which is headlined here, 'Casino sold in huge deal; hospital for \$200m complex', the reason given for it and the reason why Federal Hotels agreed at that stage was, of course, that selling the casinos was the key to the Myilly Point development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when that fell in the hole, as it did very quickly, there was a dramatic turn of events and the reason for taking the casinos from Federal Hotels suddenly became, not the Myilly Point development, but a claim that Federal Hotels was not doing the job, and worse, Federal Hotels was about to fold on the Northern Territory and leave it in a big hole. Right from the very beginning, the government changed its tack when its original course of action, which obviously had not been thought out, went bad.

Mr Deputy Speaker, after he took over, almost from the first day of his new regime, the honourable Chief Minister began to feed a whole lot of misinformation and, in fact, downright wrong information to us. I quote from a press release of 28 November 1984:

The Chief Minister, Mr Tuxworth, today refuted claims made by Mr John Reeves that the Northern Territory government had diverted funds from its budget to purchase the casinos.

Without going into that debate again, we know that that was another example, and perhaps the first in this debate, of the honourable Chief Minister playing with words to try and hide what has really happened. All honourable members who were here for that last debate will remember the pathetic attempts used by the honourable Chief Minister to try to justify that statement which, in fact, turned out to be wrong. Not only did we have that statement in the press release of 28 November 1984, we had also the statement that the casinos were owned by a private trust and not the Northern Territory government. Mr Deputy Speaker, go out and try to convince the people in the electorate that the Northern Territory government did not own the casinos for a number of months in a very real sense. You will not have much luck in that because they understand plain English and they understand what the government was doing in those 3 or 4 months. They are not fooled by the sleight of hand that the Chief Minister continually tries to put across, particularly in this Assembly but also in public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I come to the question of the confidential briefings that are becoming a favourite ploy of the Chief Minister and other members of his government. The problem with confidential briefings is that they can be used by an unscrupulous government to attempt to prevent the opposition from obtaining information that is both relevant and essential to the continuation of debates. Unfortunately, we find ourselves in that position. We will not accept a confidential briefing on this particular issue for 2 reasons. We believe that the papers ought to be tabled so that the public of the Northern Territory can gain a fuller understanding of the casino debate. It is quite clear that we do not have the full story; we probably do not have half the story. It is hoped that the tabling of these papers will lead to a fuller understanding of what the exact situation is. Also, we had a bitter experience after accepting a confidential briefing from the Minister for Industry and Small Business in the last sittings. I will just take some time to refresh members' memory.

At the last sittings, I argued that the discounted value of the difference between the taxation to be paid by Pratts and Aspinalls and that that would have been paid by Federal Hotels would have been \$5.7m over 15 years. I made that estimate on the basis of the limited information available to me at that time.

I put forward the case because I was interested that, in his contribution to that debate, the Chief Minister referred consistently to an absolute benefit of \$30m under the new arrangements but refused to give a discounted value benefit because he argued that it was confidential commercial information. When I put forward my estimate of \$5.7m, the Chief Minister sat over there and indulged in a piece of cheap politics; he pooh-pooed the idea. When given the invitation to provide us with an accurate indication of what the true situation was, he hid behind this cloak of confidentiality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, without breaking the confidentiality of the briefing, when we got in, we found that we had grossly overstated the discounted value that the Northern Territory would get. We estimated that it would be \$5.7m; it was overstated by a factor of 2. On the government's own figures, supplied to us under some duress, after 15 years we will not be \$5.7m better off, in real terms, under this new arrangement; we will be somewhat less than \$5.7m better off. If we had known that - and I think the public is entitled to know that - it would have added even greater weight to our case at that time about the dubious benefits to the Northern Territory of the new casino arrangements, even over a 15-year period. That is the reason why we are not going to accept a confidential briefing on this particular matter. Last time, the Northern Territory government attempted to make political capital out of its confidential briefing. If it is going to offer confidential briefings in that sort of vein in future, it can stick them up its jumper.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have moved this motion because, from the comments of the Chief Minister, it has now become very clear indeed that there are further documents that are relevant to this debate. Despite the assurances, given by the Chief Minister on 29 January, that all documents would be tabled and despite the flowery language of the Deputy Chief Minister in early February that we would be swamped with documents and all would be revealed, and the Leader of the Opposition would be left standing like a shag on a rock, we know that a number of important documents have not been tabled and that the federal member has been given access to them. With the exception of Paul's personal papers, the best that the Northern Territory government can do is to provide access to the documents for the rest of us mere mortals. We mere mortals in the Northern Territory have a continuing interest in the casino deal. It is a deal that has struck home to the ordinary citizen. The one good thing that can be said about the casino deal is that it has made more people politically aware in the Northern Territory than any other issue since self-government. It is a matter of continuing interest and concern amongst the public of the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some of the questions that we do not know the answers to, and one hopes that this unrevealed information will throw light on, are these: (1) the extent of savings to the Northern Territory Property Trust which arose because of the Northern Territory Development Corporation's \$2.1m bridging finance being used instead of extending the Australia Bank loan; (2) the details relating to the negotiations leading up to the provision of the \$2.1m bridging loan; (3) the details of efforts made by the Northern Territory government to renegotiate earlier arrangements on tax rates, guarantees etc in a manner more advantageous to the Territory; (4) the details of financial investigations into all the participants in the NT Property Trust; (5) any involvement with and knowledge of the Northern Territory government in efforts by Henry and Walker to sell part or all of its shares in the Northern Territory Property Trust; (6) details of taxes relating to the casinos and details of the net value calculations of the tax advantage estimated under the new arrangements; (7) documents relating to advice, which have been referred to by both the federal member and the Chief Minister, that there would be no FIRB problems; and (8) details of the arrangements of the Northern Territory Property Trust in so far

as they relate to arrangements under the FIRB regulations, which the Deputy Chief Minister referred to, and whether this was the result of formal advice from the FIRB.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those are serious questions. They are questions which, hopefully, when answered will lead to a much fuller understanding by this Assembly and by the public in general of what the government has been up to in the casino saga. That information will also enable the public to make a much fairer judgment on whether the government was right or wrong in this particular matter. Most importantly, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a principle involved here: the honesty of this government in its dealings with both this Assembly and the public. On a number of occasions, the government made clear and unequivocal statements that it would reveal all documents - not all relevant documents but all documents - relating to the casino issue. We now know that it has been less than honest with the Northern Territory public. We invite it to take this opportunity to come clean and to table all documents relating to the casino affair.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, after the tabling of the papers in the last sittings, I would not have thought there was another political mile to be squeezed out of the casino issue. I can accept that it is the job of the opposition to try to squeeze one out if it thinks that there is one there. I would like to go on record as saying that, so far as I am concerned, the tabling of all the relevant documents at the last sittings, and the debate that ensued, satisfied me and the electorate so far as the casino issue was concerned. I will not be supporting the motion and neither will I be tabling the papers that he seeks. I say again that the file is made up of Paul's personal papers and some confidential reports compiled for the government. They shall remain confidential reports and Paul's papers will remain his business. That is the end of the issue so far as I am concerned.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the track record of the Chief Minister from a number of occasions when this kind of matter has come before the Assembly indicated to me only too clearly that he would respond today in precisely the manner that he did. The reason why the Chief Minister has nothing to say whatsoever on this matter is that he knows only too well that the charges that have been laid against him by the opposition are totally substantiated, as they were on the previous occasion. I am grateful to the Chief Minister for what he has done this afternoon. At least, he has not attempted to clothe the same kind of nonsense as he put forward in respect of his previous false statement with 20 minutes of verbiage. He has been as succinct as he has today because there really is nothing else to say.

The Chief Minister said this afternoon in reply: 'As far as I am concerned, I have tabled everything I consider to be relevant in respect of the casino issue and that is the end of the matter'. I say again to the Chief Minister that nobody would have been more grateful than myself to have been able to lay this matter to rest. The government's appalling behaviour in respect of this matter has given me absolutely no option but to pursue it. Once again, the position that the opposition has taken in this Assembly on this particular matter has been totally vindicated by the response of the Chief Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to indicate with some degree of feeling what I think about the government's record on providing confidential briefings. I have said in this Assembly on previous occasions that I accept confidential briefings only with very great reluctance. Over the years, I have chosen on a number of occasions not to accept them because, in respect of the operations of the Assembly, to do so places a great obligation on the people who receive them to

respect the confidentiality. On all occasions, I have done that. Mr Deputy Speaker, when I accepted the confidential nature of the meetings I was to have with the overseas principals of the companies involved in the casino deal, it was very tempting indeed to come back to the Northern Territory with the information I was given by those people and call a press conference. But I did not do it because I had undertaken to keep it confidential. But now that the Chief Minister has made it public, why shouldn't I say it? As a result of that early trip overseas, I knew that, if the overseas partners had to pay 1c more for the deal, they would walk out on it. There was no doubt about that because they had done their sums and knew they could not make any money if they had to pay any more. It was a simple business decision. That has since been made public by the Chief Minister in a statement to the Assembly. I knew that months before and I had to shut up about it. It was a shock to me on that trip overseas to find that, when I started talking about Myilly Point, the principals of those companies did not know what I was talking about. That is the problem with confidential briefings. Unfortunately, to a great degree, they have the effect of preventing certain matters being aired in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I came back to the Northern Territory - and I say this, not as a politician but as a Territorian - very worried by what I had found out overseas. I did not need the tabling of the telexes with the messages from Ray McHenry back to the then Chief Minister about the attitude that the company had about going down the track of the marvellous legislation that was lumped onto us. I agree wholeheartedly with the present Chief Minister that it would have been a total disaster for the Northern Territory, as we said at the time, if that legislation had been implemented. I have no hesitation in saying that the former Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham, set a brand new low in the federal parliament in terms of political ethics in Australia. We have come to expect very little from politicians in this country but I think that the federal spokesman for black, white and the ownership of big rocks set a brand new low in terms of ethics with his complete lack of hesitation in standing up in the federal parliament, where it hurt us most, and saying to the Territory's detractors - not his detractors - by inference: 'You are right. It is a lousy, rotten deal but do not blame me for it because it all happened after I left'. That is what he said when he called for more papers to be delivered. I thought that contemptible, even from a CLP politician. There is no question at all that it will be raised again. They are not all mugs down there. That was a statement by inference that confirmed every criticism the federal government had been making about how we have handled our financial affairs. I did not think that was very good for the Territory, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Nevertheless, I found out about that very early in the piece. I knew that we faced a potential nightmare and I have said that in public statements. I had no response from the then government but my remarks were later confirmed. If we had implemented that legislation and had gone back to those people overseas, who know how to run casinos, and told them they had to pay this amount of money, all the fears expressed in Ray McHenry's telexes would have come true. We would have been left with the nightmare of having 2 casinos after having booted out the only domestic operators who knew how to run them. The Northern Territory government would have been left holding a very big baby indeed. I agree with the current Chief Minister that it would have been a nightmare if that legislation had been proceeded with and I said that at the last sittings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister made the only decision that he could make responsibly in the Northern Territory's interest. It would have been really nice for the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to have had 2 casinos that it did not know how to run and did not want anyway. I could imagine the government going to John Haddad and saying: 'Look John, we have a

little problem. Do you think you might be inclined to help us out?' The attitude of Federal Hotels was so bitter against the Northern Territory, and with some good reason, that I knew what their answer would have been. I was only speculating but I believed it would have transcended any business decisions they might have taken in respect of their company. That was the position we were in and I did not dispute that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we did our sums on the figures that were available to us and that was the position we were in despite the continuing statements of the Minister for Mines and Energy and former Treasurer. We had to deal with the information we had managed to extract from the government which was like drawing blood from a stone. In fact, the majority of it we obtained through our own investigations. We had to estimate the eventual position - that is, the actual position - that the Territory would be in at the end of the 15 years. The cold hard facts are that the current government has an obligation to try to put the best face on it that it can but we have a lousy deal as far as the casinos are concerned and we are stuck with it. I will be the first one to admit there is no going back.

Our speculation was that, in 15 years' time, we would be about \$5.7m in front of where we would have been under the arrangement with Federal Hotels. The Chief Minister shouted us down and said: 'What a lot of nonsense! You blokes don't know how to add up. If you could see the private computer sheets that we have over here, you would realise what a lot of nonsense that is'. Mug that I am, I said: 'All right, we will have a confidential briefing and we will retire in confusion'. In fact, we found that we had grossly overestimated the discounted figure that we would be in front at the end of the road. If everything hangs together and nothing goes wrong, at the end of 15 years, and after having gone through the worst consistent public relations campaign we have had since self-government, we will end up without much difference between what would have happened if Federals had stayed.

Mr Robertson: That is not true.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, let us have another confidential briefing. You had better update your computer sheets. We have another government minister saying that it is not true. In that case, I would ask the responsible minister to table the computer printouts in the Assembly because I am sick of going through this. It was not disputed at the briefing that the discounted figure was substantially less than the figure we quoted. That is a fact.

Mr Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, for the benefit of the Northern Territory public, I will have to place a new interpretation on what I consider to be a confidential briefing. I have adhered scrupulously to the terms of confidential briefings across the board in the past. If I am offered a confidential briefing by the government in future on a matter which has not been raised in the Legislative Assembly, then that will be an across-the-board confidential briefing; I will say nothing about it at all under any circumstances. However, if the opposition levels charges at the government on matters of fact which the government says will be put to rest by a confidential briefing, I will accept that confidential briefing, only on the proviso that, having had the briefing, we discover in fact - and I make it 'in fact', not a political interpretation - that we were wrong. Silence will be construed as our agreement that we were wrong and that the confidential briefing laid our fears to rest.

We are in an impossible position. We say something in the Assembly and, publicly, we are made to look as if we have got it all wrong. We are provided with a confidential briefing and we find out that we are more than substantially

right. Because we have accepted it on a confidential basis - and that has happened up to now - we have to shut our mouths and say nothing. The impression remains that we did not know and we were wrong. In future, if we accept confidential briefings from the government on matters of fact that have arisen out of debate in this Assembly and we discover that we were right, that matter will be relayed back to the Legislative Assembly. I make it clear that they are the only conditions upon which I will accept confidential briefings in the future. If that is not acceptable to the government, then so be it.

In closing, I refer again to the answers given on Tuesday morning by the Chief Minister. The first question was:

At the last sittings of the federal parliament, the federal member for the Northern Territory, in seeking to justify his position on the casino affair, called upon the Northern Territory government for the release of further documents relating to the casino. Does the Chief Minister intend to respond to that request from the federal member and produce the documents?

I am not sure how much more specific one can be than that. The answer was:

The question of the propriety of documents being made available to persons who are no longer members of the government is difficult to address. When anyone goes out of parliament, there is always a level of discretion in relation to what documents should be made available to that person. However, I believe the federal member should have every opportunity to be conversant with the details of these documents so that he can fully defend his position and the position of our government against all the charges that have been made, charges we do not have any truck with at all.

How else can one interpret that except as meaning: we have provided the honourable member with these documents so that, in the federal House, he can defend himself and our government in the Northern Territory against these charges that have been laid against him and us? In response to a later question, the honourable Chief Minister said: 'It is more than reasonable that he have access to the documents so that he can defend himself in the federal House of Representatives'. But he then said, and I quote from the same series of questions: 'The information, Mr Speaker, that has been provided to him is confidential and will not be made available to the members of the Legislative Assembly'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I suggest to all thinking members on the other side of the Assembly that one simply cannot put those answers together and make any sense out of them whatsoever. They conflict, and the Chief Minister knows it. They are also totally at odds with the public statement that the Chief Minister issued on 29 January this year which was deliberately couched in unambiguous terms. If anyone doubts the political effect of this, he should insert the truth for the falsehood in the statement made by the Chief Minister. The statement that was eagerly awaited by most people and certainly by every journalist in the Northern Territory was that all would be revealed in the Legislative Assembly. He said that 'all documents concerning the casino takeover would be tabled next month at the sittings of the Legislative Assembly'. If you insert the words that he was able to use this afternoon at the dispatch box in the Legislative Assembly, his statement would have read: 'The Chief Minister, Mr Ian Tuxworth, said that, at the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly, so far as he was concerned, all of the relevant documents would be

tabled in the Legislative Assembly'. Can anyone doubt how much effect that would have had on the Northern Territory electorate?

The comparison is absolute. The Chief Minister knows full well the precise difference between a false statement issued as Chief Minister in here and whatever he wants to say to the mugs out there - because that is obviously how he regards them. He knows that. Have a look at the record. At the beginning of the casino debate, and I hope this is the end of it, he said that all relevant documents would be tabled. He said at the dispatch box this afternoon: 'So far as I am concerned, all of the relevant documents will be tabled and nothing else will be'. It was good enough for the Chief Minister, knowing what the rules are, to draft his statement carefully so that, technically, he did not mislead the Assembly but those same reservations, as far as he was concerned, did not apply outside. He may see that as being acceptable; I am convinced that the majority of Territorians will not.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Hatton
Mr Manzie
Mr McCarthy
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 51)

Continued from 14 June 1984.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak against this amendment to the Electoral Act, introduced by the honourable member for MacDonnell. There are a number of things in the proposed legislation which concern me and some which are quite unnecessary. The main purpose of the bill is to alter the dates for the closure of rolls, the issue of writs and the closure of nominations etc.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell stated in his second-reading speech that the early closure of the roll denied many people the right to vote in the last Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election. What he failed to say was that those people had the right to enrol at any time during the 3 or 4-year period leading up to the election. He went on to say that the people who were most disadvantaged were those in the bush areas. Many of the people who live in those bush areas are long-term residents and have had more access to enrolment

than, say, newcomers, who tend to move into the bigger towns throughout the Northern Territory. He ignored the fact that, during a non-election period, officers of the Electoral Office, various Aboriginal organisations and, indeed, certain members of the Assembly are at pains to enrol constituents as they move into the electorates. The honourable member also inferred that, had the rolls been open for a longer period, the results would have been considerably different from those which were obtained in 1983. I dare say he is right in that matter; they would have gone from bad to worse in so far as the Australian Labor Party was concerned. Mr Speaker, there is sufficient flexibility in the act pertaining to the closure of the rolls, the issue of writs and the closure of nominations without the amendment proposed by the member for MacDonnell.

The member for MacDonnell was also very critical of the shortness of the election campaign. He referred to it as one of the shortest in Australian history. What he did not know when he made his speech was that, a few short weeks later, the New South Wales Premier, a member of his own political party, would have a campaign over exactly the same length of time - 3 weeks. I venture the comment that long election campaigns are most unpopular. The shorter the election campaign, the more popular it will be within the community. In fact, I dare say that, if he checked with the Prime Minister, he would have that fact confirmed.

Mr Speaker, I am the first to acknowledge that certain administrative problems were involved with the mobile booths during the 1983 election. However, no amendment is needed to fix those problems because the Chief Electoral Officer has adequate facilities within the act to resolve them. I dare say that the member for MacDonnell, and other members, myself included, wrote or spoke to the Chief Electoral Officer after the 1983 election to point out some of the problems. I sympathise with people such as those residents at Willowra who expected a polling booth on a given day when, in fact, it arrived a day early. Most certainly, some of the administrative problems should be addressed and overcome before the next election.

If there is an electoral act that needs amending, it is not the Northern Territory one. I believe that it is in fairly good shape given the experience we have had in recent years in the Northern Territory. Certainly, the federal act needs drastic review given the problems that occurred during the last federal elections when postal votes were posted to residents in all outlying areas and a few weeks later the mobile booths followed them out. Of course, that caused total confusion and created a danger that people might have voted twice quite unintentionally.

I dare say that the main reason for this proposed legislation was that, for the first time in many years, the Aboriginal votes in the bush communities swung heavily against the Australian Labor Party. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly suffered a 24% swing against him in 1983 over the figures that he polled in 1980. The member for MacDonnell, the sponsor of this bill, held his seat by less than 100 votes, after the distribution of preferences.

Mr Speaker, it is quite obvious that this legislation is not needed at this time and I am opposed to it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am extremely disappointed at that attitude. We have talked at various times this week about getting together and working out a bipartisan approach to various problems. The attitude being adopted by the government to what is clearly a most constructive approach by my colleague is extremely disappointing. I would like a member from the opposite

side to stand up and tell us in which point here he actually finds something which is wrong.

We heard the ramblings of the member for Braitling regarding some plot by the opposition to try and seize power by rewriting the Electoral Act. All we would like to do is make it a bit more democratic. We wish to insert a few provisions which will ensure that it is not just up to electoral officials to do the right thing. They would be required under the act to do the right thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer to you a situation which could occur at the moment. I am not saying that we have people in the electoral office who would do this. However, it is possible under the current law and there is nothing that we can do about it afterwards. It is possible for them to close nominations on 1 day and then go 250 km up the road from Alice Springs into my electorate to 1 particular community and, with no notification whatsoever, they could declare the election open. They could hold the election for half an hour. They could close it down and then head off to Birdsville for the races. There would be nothing that I could do about that under the current act. I could not appeal it because it would be perfectly legal. The residing officers would have the power to make those variations regarding the time and place that they would hold it because in my seat, last time, there were no fixed booths; they were all mobile. If they were to continue along that way, as is allowed under the current act, they could have 1 mobile booth held for 1 hour at 1 particular place, 1 day after the close of nominations. If any member opposite can say that does not require amendment, I challenge him to stand up and say so now because he will look fairly stupid after he has had that pointed out to him.

Let us go on to some of the other provisions in here: close of rolls 7 days after the date of the writ. The member for Braitling has asked why we seek to do that because, after all, if people wanted to get themselves organised beforehand, they could do so. What incredible stupidity. This legislation would make it easier for people to get on to the roll. He is saying that it is possible for them to do it the other way. Are we going to cut out the other means that we have used to try and assist people to get on the roll, purely on the basis that, if somebody really wanted to, he could? The next thing we will have him saying is: 'Open it for 1 day at 1 particular spot and, if people do not avail themselves of it, that is their fault'. Is that a democratic attitude? It is just not good enough.

The next point is the date that is fixed for the nomination of candidates: it shall not be less than 11 nor more than 28 days after the date of the writ. That is a provision under the federal act. I see a lot of timing advantages in the provisions being the same in our act as they are in the federal act. Being members of this Assembly, we tend to work out when the various days are. We tend to have a fairly keen interest. I must admit that, in my electorate, there are many people who, basically, do not have the interest to work out what all those various days are and what the requirements are. I find it very hard to blame them for that. I feel that it is incumbent upon us to make the democratic procedure as straightforward as we possibly can. If we can do that by making the periods that are required the same in our act as those in the federal act, then we should do it.

I have no problem with the period we are talking about: the date fixed for polling shall be not less than 22 days nor more than 30 days after the date of the nomination. The member for MacDonnell, my colleague, has placed another stipulation in there that, from the close of nominations, there will be a period of at least 10 days before the start of mobile polling. That would eliminate the risk of people holding a false election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these provisions did not just suddenly appear in the federal act. They were put in place after the best period of consultation that I have been involved with over an electoral act. Letters went from the federal government to various members around the place asking them how the system would work in a rural setting; how it would work in a small country town and how it would work in the major urban areas. The federal government went to a great deal of effort and spent a considerable amount of time working out a system which would be just to all concerned. It had the benefit of the mobile polling system which was put in here by the Northern Territory government. I will give the kudos due to the Northern Territory government for having set up that mobile system. It is a good system and I am in favour of it. I think that it fits the Northern Territory situation. I do not think that it should be abused to the extent where large communities of more than 250 electors should manage without a fixed booth on the day. However, the 2 working together, a mobile booth going around the week before and coming back to the central place for the static booth on the date, is an excellent way to conduct an election in the Northern Territory. And, as I said, the kudos will go where it is due; that is, to the Northern Territory government, for setting it up.

However, why stop now having had a basically good idea? The federal government amended its act to go along with ours and took it a step further by fixing up some of the various and obvious limitations that existed in the Territory act at the time, which we found during the last elections. Why not now make the sensible move by adopting this amendment which will take the Northern Territory into the forefront of electoral reform again? I just cannot see why there is this reluctance on the part of the government. It has the ability right now, tonight, to get itself into the forefront again, to be the standard bearer that it was some time back. But for some reason it appears that the government is not going to do that. I heard a couple of its members describe our approach as carping, blind criticism. I think those were the words that I heard from them, Mr Deputy Speaker. Or was it carping, blind, disloyal opposition, something along those lines? What is it now from them? Does it bear some other name because suddenly it is the members of the government who are talking about rejecting this bill? They acknowledge, in their hearts, that what we are doing is the right thing to do. I hope that the member for Braitling was talking off his own bat and not reflecting the government's attitude. I hope that that was the case. If it was not, and if that is the way that we are going to run on this bill, it is, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, a very sorry time for this Assembly and it is most disappointing.

The Electoral Act is the foundation upon which this whole edifice rests and, if we cannot combine to make it just and equitable and something we are proud of, where can we combine?

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, as things stand, the rolls close at 6 o'clock on the day on which the writs for an election are issued. The opposition would like the rolls to remain open for a further 7 days.

In the 3 December election period, when I travelled around my electorate, which is purely urban, I estimated that I might have lost something in the order of 300 votes because people were not on the roll. The issues involved in that election were such that people were very animated about it and many said to me: 'I am really sorry but we just didn't get on the roll, so we didn't vote for you, but what can we do?' So it is not only the members who have Aboriginal electorates who can claim that they were disadvantaged.

Mr Ede: Yes, so change it.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: As I said to those people, and I do not think it can be made simpler: the onus was on them to have their names placed on the roll.

Mr Ede: Isn't the onus on us to get a good act?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: The onus is on people to have themselves placed on the roll. The honourable member wants a simple system; that is the simplest - the onus is on each person.

Mr Ede: The simplest is contained in this bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: No, the bill would give people 7 days and so forth and so on. It would not make it any simpler. Just remember that Mr Mick Young tried to simplify the federal election too and I think he shot his foot in the process. The law is clear. The onus is on the elector to enrol. I would support the distribution of occasional reminders from the Electoral Office over radio and TV. In the more remote places, perhaps signs could be placed in stores, at police stations, hospitals and medical centres, or whatever forms the appropriate meeting place, with information as to where the appropriate forms can be obtained to fill out. However, I still maintain that the onus is on the elector.

New residents had moved into Sadadeen stage 1 and, in the little electorate newsletter which I delivered around the traps, I mentioned to people that the onus to enrol was on them. They should get enrolled. I told them where they could pick up the forms and reminded them that, even if they had lived on the other side of town, it was important that they should register their change of address. If they had moved from flat no 2 to flat no 3, they should register the change, as the act required, because a review of the electoral roll could wipe them off and they could be disadvantaged. But, in spite of that, this happened. I did not know when the election would be held. I knew the date no earlier than anybody else, and people just did not make the effort. I believe we can pamper them too much. We want a simple system. The law is clear and the onus is on the elector. The people whom I spoke to accepted that fact.

The opposition would have our agreement that nominations should be made between 11 and 28 days compared to the 7 to 21 days after the roll is closed which is presently provided for in the act. It also seeks to set polling 22 to 30 days after nominations, compared to the 7 to 30 days presently legislated for. As it stands now, we have a minimum of 14 days from the issue of the writs to the election, to a maximum of 51 days. That gives a fairly wide range of flexibility and I will explain shortly why I believe that is important. The opposition would have a minimum of 33 days and a maximum of 58 days.

The point I would make on that goes right back to the timing of the election on 3 December. The issue that was the straw that broke the camel's back, shall we say, was that of broken federal government promises over the railway and so forth. They were all issues on which the former Chief Minister must have been tempted to run an election, but of course the Ayers Rock issue provided the spur. However, the timing was such that, if he had set the election later than 3 December it would have taken place during the school holiday period and, of course, I am sure the opposition would have loved that. He announced it on about 14 November. The school holiday period would have been a really great time for the opposition and I can see them smirking over there. They understood just as well as I did that it had to be a quick election. Friday 9 December was the start of the school holidays for Territorians and many of them leave before the school holidays start. Under the honourable member's scheme, it would have been 13 more days than was actually taken and the

nearest Saturday would have been 17 December, just before Christmas. That would have been a very popular time for the opposition, a jolly great nuisance and people would have tended to vote against the government. If the honourable member thinks we are that naive, then let him think again. The issues were right and we are not going to lose that flexibility.

A scenario was painted for us of the way in which a mobile polling booth could be used under the present act. I think the honourable member suggested that it could go out unannounced, open the polling station the following day and then shoot off to Queensland or something.

Mr Ede: The races.

Mr Bell: It happened, Denis. Did you read what I said in my second-reading speech?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I read your second-reading speech.

Mr Bell: Obviously, not very carefully.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I consider the scenario that was painted a real insult to the Electoral Office. I believe that, in the very short time that it had to run this election and mobilise the booths, it did an excellent job. I really mean that. There were problems but I believe that they were just as bad for us as they were for the opposition. In fact, with often many more people on the ground out bush, they were possibly in a better position. I know that when we have requested, because changes had to be made because of weather, emergency flights with helicopters etc, that we be informed as early as possible, it applied to both sides. I am sure that that will be taken on board. I refute any imputation that the Electoral Office acted with bias to manipulate the election, as has been implied. It did an excellent job under difficult circumstances.

I could compare the job that the Electoral Office did with just one incident that I came across in the federal campaign, which must have been the longest campaign that Australia has seen. Certainly, it seemed a mighty long one which started many weeks before the actual election. I was detailed to go to Ti Tree to act as a scrutineer for our party at 1 of the mobile booths. I was at Ti Tree a few days beforehand and I happened to mention that I would be there on a certain day for the election. The person I was talking to said: 'That is the first we have heard about it'. He went up to the Ti Tree roadhouse, which is the local watering hole and mentioned it there. I then received a phone call from a Mr Ken Fogg who, I am sure, the honourable member for Stuart knows, and he wanted to know what was going on. I said: 'Hold hard, it is a federal matter and this is where you get hold of the bloke concerned'. He had a very expensive telephone conversation telling the Electoral Office in Darwin just what he thought of things. If I had not let that slip, completely accidentally, I think that there would have been no knowledge that the polling booth would go to that town.

When I returned a few days later on the actual polling day, there was more concern in the town because normally polling was conducted at the school. Eventually, we found that the polling people had set up in the park close by the roadhouse, which was quite contrary to the expectations of people. People ran around the town to let other people know just what was going on. Apparently, a couple of posters had been sent out with a request that they be displayed in the roadhouse. Why they had not tried the Police Station as well I really do not

know. They were addressed to Mr Greg Dick. Normally, Mr Dick only visits the roadhouse at weekends and so they had not been opened. They were discovered in the roadhouse afterwards. So, you can have one heck of a lot of time, but with poor organisation like that, you get a far worse result than our electoral people did.

I am really surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, by the fact that the honourable member for MacDonnell, of all people, should have put the proposal to us that he wanted a longer election. As he said, with the time that elapsed between members being nominated and getting out into the field, and the elections, particularly with the mobile booths that were used in MacDonnell, our candidate had no more than 10 days. It takes a while to get things organised, to get papers and so forth. As I have said before in this Assembly, our scrutineers looked very carefully at the votes for the third candidate in that election, Mr Hampton, to see how his second preferences were going and I had it on reliable information that, had distribution of those preferences occurred, there would have been less than 100 between the honourable member for MacDonnell and our candidate, who had something like 10 days out in the bush. It is a huge electorate to service. Now, 100 votes, of course, does not mean that 100 people have to change their minds. It only means that 50 people have to change their minds, and I would say that, at the rate at which Mr McKinlay was changing people's minds, it might have only taken 1 more day. With another week, or 13 days, which would have been the minimum under the proposal of the member for MacDonnell, that honourable member would have done himself out of a job. I think that we should try to save him from himself and leave things exactly as they are.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not said this for a while but I will now. I will be brief, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is late in the evening and I understand that the government has a legislative program and the future of this amendment seems to be fairly clearly written judging by the attitude of various government members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the intention of this amendment to the Electoral Act is not in any way to confer a benefit or some advantage on any candidate or any interested person at all. The intention of this amendment is to require some form of rational electoral activity through legislation, once writs have been issued. The need for rational elections, where all issues can be canvassed by relevant candidates, no matter who they are and no matter what electorate they are in, is a fundamental part of democracy. Democracy cannot work unless issues can be canvassed adequately. It is also the responsibility of any democracy to allow any person who wants to vote, the opportunity to vote; to confer on them not only the right to vote but also the opportunity to vote.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the member for MacDonnell, has canvassed in this Assembly the difficulties that were encountered on these points in a previous election and I think he did so quite successfully. It is not a matter of trying to seek some advantage or disadvantage. Indeed, the federal government, I suppose to everybody's surprise, because of amendments that it had made to the federal Electoral Act, incurred quite a disadvantage by requiring an adequate time between the issue of the writ and the date when the election was to be held.

The strength of a democracy is not which party is in power or who is elected. The strength of a democracy is the participation of electors, and the ability of electors to make rational decisions on polling day. One of the facts of history is that governments come and go. But it is the right and the need of electors to make rational decisions based upon adequate information.

Information can only be imparted over time. It is considered by this opposition that the time allowed is simply not sufficient to disseminate the mass of information which electors need to absorb to make a rational decision at the polling booth.

I appreciate that this amendment will fail this evening, but I hope that government members will not look just to their own electoral advantage. I appreciate their needs. Indeed, I suppose all members of this Assembly seek to stay in this Assembly via one means or another. But I ask them to think a little more deeply about the strength of democracy, the need for democracy to survive and the growing demands that are placed upon electors within this democracy. When future elections are called, instead of just going gung-ho to the polling booth in the hope of achieving some electoral advantage, members must think of those electors out there who require considerably more information now than they have had in the past. They might also consider that those electors, because of their very remote localities, are placed at some disadvantage compared to most of the people who live in urban areas.

It was those principal problems that this amendment was aimed at. It certainly was not aimed at trying to achieve any electoral advantage. As I have said, the federal government has found, to its sorrow, that conferring a longer election period does not necessarily impart any particular political advantage. However, it does allow electors to make a decision based upon a lot more information than would otherwise be made available.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I too will be very brief.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt at all that there will always be some disadvantage to the people in the bush when it comes to getting any sort of information to them, whether it be election information or just general news. There are always some disadvantages to the people living out there. I agree with the honourable member for Sadadeen in this regard. If anyone misses out on being placed on the roll, and he has lived in an area for any length of time, the onus is on him. I would be very surprised if there were very many people in the bush who were not on the roll. Certainly, in Victoria River, that was not the case. The average person in the electorate of Victoria River was on the roll. There were not too many new names on the roll for the federal election at the end of 1984. So I have no doubt at all that most people were already enrolled. People had done their work out there. I do not think that they were really disadvantaged in that way.

Personally, I was very happy about the short election campaign in 1983. I thought there were many advantages to it. It did not bore people to death. Last year, with the federal election, people were obviously bored to death by the length of the campaign. A 58-day campaign is most boring. It is very difficult to keep any sort of rational interest alive in the community over a period of that length. I would be disappointed to think that we would consider having election campaigns of anything like that length.

Mr Bell: That is not suggested, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: It might not be suggested but the option would be there.

The availability of mobile polling booths had many advantages for me. All candidates campaigning in bush areas were very fortunate to have mobile polling booths because they were able to be there on the day of polling. I think that was a great advantage to all candidates. I would support their continued use in many communities. I thought that they were good. The numbers voting on a week

day at a mobile polling booth at Port Keats in December 1983 were greater than the numbers that turned up on the Saturday for the federal election last year. There was a rather disappointing turnout for the election last year.

It is proposed that section 32(3) of the principal act be amended by omitting 'after 6 pm on the day of the issue of the writ for the election' and substituting 'after the day fixed under section 43(2)(aa) for the close of the rolls'. When that is added, paragraph (aa) reads, 'the close of the rolls which shall be 7 days after the date of issue of the writ'. There is no time of day, which indicates to me that somebody would need to decide when to accept new enrolments. It might be 4.21 or 6 o'clock or midnight. It seems to me that no time was allowed for there. Perhaps it should have been, although it may be unnecessary.

The looseness of arrangements for mobile polling may have caused a few hassles in some places. I could name a few places where hassles were caused by arrangements for mobile polling, but there were a lot of advantages as well. I could state one case. At Yarralin, there was not supposed to be a booth. It was to be at VRD where voting had always been conducted in the past. But because numbers of people were at Yarralin, the returning officer was able to make the decision to take the polling booth out to Yarralin and poll there. It was taken there very late in the day but, as a consequence, it was able to pick up the whole of the Yarralin community, which would not have been the case had the polling been held at VRD.

Perhaps the discretion that was available to the returning officers on mobile booths for the Territory election was a little tighter than it was last year for the federal election. In fact, the discretion with the mobiles in the federal election was a little too loose and they were able to make decisions in that election that at times were questionable.

I would just like to say here that I think the opposition should not point the finger at vote manipulation in Aboriginal communities.

Mr B. Collins: Nobody has.

Mr Bell: Oh come on! Concentrate on the bill, Terry, concentrate on the bill.

Mr McCARTHY: I do not think they should do it because they are masters of the art of deception in this regard. They really are. I think this is very relevant. Some tactics were used in the Victoria River electorate in 1983 that were typical of the red-ragger methods of divide, confuse and take advantage. We talk about taking advantage of Aboriginal people in remote communities through the mobile booths. Some of the methods used out there took advantage of people who were confused by the election anyway. I saw a number of instances where representatives for the ALP candidate drove wedges between couples in the community - particularly couples who were from different races. I was disgusted by it.

In last year's federal election, the chance was taken to pick up postal votes because of the problem of getting postage back. A particular person from Borroloola travelled throughout my electorate with applications for postal voting. He had applications picked up from a number of communities. He took them back to Darwin and lodged them with...

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): A point of order, Mr Speaker! We are discussing principles. The member could at least oblige by confining his comments to the

principles involved in the bill. The honourable member for Victoria River is certainly not doing that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order! I do not believe there is a point of order on this particular occasion.

Mr McCARTHY: These applications were brought back and lodged with the Electoral Office. The postal votes were sent out. That person was back in the community a week later. He was able to pick up the votes and deliver them back to Darwin in plenty of time. Other people had to go through the whole operation of applying for a postal vote, receiving it and posting it back which took up to 5 weeks and therefore arrived too late. There was that sort of manipulation too. That particular person was an active member of the ALP. The new rules for assisted voters last year provided many opportunities for skullduggery. I saw a number of cases of that.

The provisions in the Territory act have worked very well, in my opinion. I think there is some honing up to be done on the mobile booths. Certainly, some improvements could be made there. With those improvements, I believe it will work exceptionally well. I do not see any need for any changes to the act at this time. I do not propose to support this bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): I am appalled and disgusted, Mr Speaker. What a depressing display. Nobody from the frontbench of the government has sufficient interest in the electoral process in the Northern Territory to get up and speak to this bill. Here we have a group of people who suggest that they are vaguely interested in the processes of democracy. We have 2 frontbenchers and a gaggle of hoons on the backbench.

Mr VALE (Braitling): A point of order, Mr Speaker! I regard the word 'hoon' as being most unparliamentary and request the honourable member to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, since the honourable member for Braitling leapt to his feet, let me start with him. Let me just commence with him. This character is a staunch supporter of the need to compensate people living in isolated circumstances but here we have him actively attacking an attempt to make such isolation less severe. I am entirely appalled by the stance the government has taken in this matter. I will return to the comments of the member for Braitling. I am not sure whether I will bother with the member for Sadadeen. Certainly, some of the comments from the member for Victoria River were somewhat more pertinent before he went off the rails.

Let me just put on record with simple reason what actually is proposed here. I am sorry that there are aspects of the bill that nobody in the government has bothered to concentrate on. The first intention of this bill is to give a greater chance for people to enrol so that, when they hear that an election is to be called, they will have 7 days to enrol. The honourable member for Sadadeen, with an electorate that you could walk across in 5 minutes, said that people in his electorate were not able to be enrolled. The Electoral Office is in the honourable member's electorate. It is not very difficult for people to be there and to enrol when they hear that an election is in the air, particularly when it is announced that the writs are going to be issued and they are issued within 24 hours of the announcement. Just bear a thought for the people who live at Kintore and who are keen to get enrolled but are disenfranchised by that.

Mr Vale: Why weren't they enrolled?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, even the member for Braitling and a few of the other hoons on the backbench should be able to appreciate that there would be a rather greater inspiration to enrol if people knew that an election was to be held soon thereafter. Since the object of the exercise would be to get as many people to vote as possible, I would have thought that that was one measure at least that the government would support. One could imagine that it was actually setting out to have as few people vote as possible.

The next clause of this bill refers to the limitation of dates. No members of the backbench who addressed this matter pointed that out. All we are asking in terms of limitations on dates is precisely what is in the Commonwealth Electoral Act now. The Commonwealth Electoral Act, for some of those people with tunnel vision over there, is designed so that everybody in this fair land can vote wherever they may live. Even the members opposite will accept that it is more difficult to collect votes when you are living in an isolated place. It is more difficult to get your vote registered when you live in an isolated place, be it by postal vote, by mobile polling or a static booth. If the Commonwealth Electoral Act can bear to put up with those circumstances, I find it fairly difficult to see why the government cannot support these particular limitations. One is forced to the conclusion that its motives in rejecting them are malign in the extreme. I dare say the member for Braitling will object to that as unparliamentary.

Mr Speaker, we also had a few of those fools over there trying to suggest...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order! The member for MacDonnell will resume his seat. I do not need any help at all from the members of the government in deciding the practices of the Assembly. I am prepared to be at all times lenient and flexible and allow people what can be considered, in Australian terms, a fair go. But if this madness continues, I might even leave the Chair. The member for MacDonnell has the floor.

Mr BELL: I appreciate your solicitous regard, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the problems that you have to deal with.

Mr Speaker, those characters over there suggested that I was in some way seeking to criticise the actions of the Electoral Office in general. I had specific criticisms of the Electoral Office during the 1983 election. I am delighted to hear that I am joined by the member for Braitling in finding some of those actions unacceptable. I do not think that that is a point at issue. We seek to amend the phrase 'necessary or convenient' which is the adjectival phrase that describes the actions that may be taken by the mobile polling team leader. In the 1983 election, as I said when I was introducing this bill, in a couple of instances which I cited at that time, the mobile polling team leader had a rather greater interest in convenience than in the need for people to exercise their franchise.

In case honourable members have failed to read my second-reading speech, or have short memories, let me just instance one. I refer specifically to Willowra. The circumstances at Willowra were that a mobile polling booth was advertised for the Wednesday preceding polling day. There was rain during that time and mobile polling teams had to be diverted. Do you know when that mobile polling team turned up at Willowra, because of convenience? It turned up on the day before the advertised polling time. If it had turned up after the

advertised polling time, that would have not been so bad. One could appreciate that as a reasonable decision on their part. But turning up before the advertised polling time is pushing convenience to the point of disenfranchisement. That is unacceptable and that is why these extraordinary democrats, these extraordinary champions of isolated people, should support this very bill. I am disgusted and appalled that they are not doing it.

Let me return to a few of the specific and idiotic examples that some of these people have given. Let me start with the member for Braitling. He had the gall to say that it was easier for people to enrol in the bush. What absolute nonsense!

Mr Vale: That is not what I said at all.

Mr BELL: The member for Braitling said that, if people were living in the bush, they had all sorts of people tracking out there and trying to enrol them or they could get into town. Goodness me! What sort of a brain has the man got?

Mr Vale: That is not what I said.

Mr BELL: At least, Mr Speaker, I was more polite than his colleague, the member for Victoria River, who disagreed with him. Maybe they should get together next time we have a general business day or whenever they intend to debate so that they have the same line between them. At least the member for Victoria River had the decency to say that there were disadvantages to people in isolated communities. There were difficulties of communication, and heaven only knows, we have the honourable member for Braitling belly-aching about roads all around the flat. I would have thought that he would take a slightly more sympathetic attitude in this regard.

Mr Vale: You would get lost on a bush road. You would not know the name of it and you do not have a compass or, if you did, you would not know how to use it.

Mr BELL: The member for Sadadeen suggested that I said that, if the rolls had been open longer, there would have been a different result. I was not saying that there would have been a difference in the result of that particular election campaign. I do not think that I suggested that. In fact, I am sure that I did not suggest it in my second-reading speech. In case anybody has that impression now, let me hasten to dispel it. I am not crying 'foul' with regard to the whole result. I am saying that, if these measures are accepted by the government, more people would vote next time. There would be a slightly better chance of considering the issues.

The member for Sadadeen might very well be right. Perhaps I am cutting my own throat. But at least I would be satisfied that it was because people had a better consideration of the issues. That is what the game is about. It is a cut-throat game come election time. We all know that. I am prepared to cop it. All I say is that, given the disadvantages of communications and given the vastness of the Territory, people should be given a chance to consider those issues. The campaign lasted 18 days. There were no newspapers, no radio and no TV. There was not a chance for the poor beggars in my electorate to hear anything about what the election was about. I appreciate the risks a person runs as a political candidate; we all do. But that should not prevent people from having the opportunity to consider issues or having more than 2½ weeks in which to do it.

The member for Braitling made an idiotic comparison with New South Wales. He said: 'Well, if you think the Territory campaign was a short one, what about New South Wales?' I just remind him that, in New South Wales, 30% of the seats are not decided on the basis of mobile polling. Perhaps he should take that to heart and think about it again before he cites examples. In case those comments could be construed as support for a short election campaign in New South Wales, they should not be so construed. I believed that a campaign like that for the last federal election, when everybody went to sleep halfway through, was absurd. That is the other end of the spectrum. I think 18 days was equally absurd. An ideal time would be somewhere between 3 or 4 weeks, particularly in the Territory where mobile polling is commenced a week before.

That brings me to a further amendment which I regard as constructive: mobile polling should start 12 days before an election. It was absolutely chaotic, Mr Speaker. I do not know what it was like in Elsey or the Top End but down in the Centre there were buckets of rain, and that made it chaotic. That was the reason for the mess at Willowra. If they had had 12 days, they would not have had to jam it in so quickly. They could even have polled those places after polling day, though I appreciate that that has problems.

I really think there is a strong argument for these particular amendments. I am just appalled and disgusted that this crowd can actually oppose them. They were intended constructively. They were not intended to confer any advantage on me or any other member of the opposition. As somebody who knows the bush a bit, Mr Speaker, you would appreciate the difficulties of polling in isolated places. That is why I am so disappointed with the member for Braitling. I mean, the mug who represents Sadadeen, I can understand. But I really cannot understand them opposing what has been put up quite constructively so that people will have a better chance to vote. I digress, Mr Speaker, but I honestly thought this bill would be accepted. I am genuinely upset, and I think with justification, that it has been rejected in this out-of-hand, mindless sort of fashion.

The honourable member for Braitling said that he had said that there were problems with the mobile polling booths. I would be very interested to hear more details of that. If he is reluctant to address those problems in an adjournment debate, I would be very interested to see the sort of comments that he made to the Electoral Office. I believe that a sharing of information in this regard can only be of advantage to all of us in the Territory.

The comments from the honourable member for Victoria River were slightly more constructive until he went off the rails and spoke about electoral manipulation...

Mr Robertson: You are talking about getting off the rails. Try Bob Hawke.

Mr BELL: I see that the Minister for Health has come back to the Chamber. It is a shame that he did not dignify the second-reading debate with his presence or an offering. It might have been of assistance to us all. He might have allowed a slightly greater degree of tolerance to prevail which was, unfortunately, sadly lacking.

The member for Victoria River referred to the disadvantages of communication in the bush. As I remarked earlier, it is pleasing to hear that somebody on the government benches is somewhat more sympathetic to those sorts of problems. I noted that he referred to the fact that, at Port Keats, more people voted at a mobile booth on a weekday in the Territory election than voted at a static booth on a Saturday in the federal election. I do not know the Port Keats area at all well, Mr Speaker, but I would suggest, from my experience with

communities in my electorate, that there is a considerable fluctuation in where people vote and in fact where people are living at any particular time. Numbers can vary considerably in that regard. I am not sure that that is necessarily an argument against mobile polling booths being restricted, as this bill suggests, to communities where there are fewer than 250 voters.

The member for Victoria River made another point in relation to the closure of rolls. He suggested that there was some problem with the period of 7 days. That was not a particularly sensible criticism of this bill. When most of us went to school, a day lasted 24 hours and I do not think that has changed. Thus, it is 7 24-hour periods from the issue of writs. If the member would read the legislation carefully, he would see that the issue of writs is deemed to occur at 6 pm on a particular day. Thus, it is 7 24-hour periods from 6 pm on the day of the issue of writs.

The other delusion under which the honourable member was operating was that these amendments would have somehow circumscribed the mobile polling team leader from actually getting out to Yarralin to collect votes when he decided that it was necessary to do so. Of course, that was nonsense. Again, I refer the honourable member to both the principal act and this bill. In no way would the amendments in this bill have circumscribed the actions of the mobile polling team leader in that regard.

I think I have established fairly consummately that there can be absolutely no criticism of this bill. The honourable member for Victoria River made what he believed to be a sensible contribution and I trust I have shown him the error of his ways in that regard. The member for Sadadeen contributed mere persiflage as did the member for Braitling. There can be no doubt in any member's mind that a case in favour of this bill has been well and truly established. Let me say in closing that, so far as I am concerned, this bill is put forward in a constructive spirit to enfranchise Territorians and to raise the level of political debate in the Territory through overcoming the difficulties of communication by extending electoral periods. That is the essential amendment in this bill and, for the cause of democracy, I find it rather disappointing that it will be rejected.

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Publications Committee Report on a Parliamentary Papers Series

Continued from 26 February 1985.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, inherent in the motion for the adoption of the Report of the Publications Committee on a Parliamentary Papers Series for the Legislative Assembly is the adoption of the recommendations of the committee contained in paragraph 12.1 of the report through subparagraphs (a) to (i). For the information of the Assembly, I will go through these recommendations one by one.

First, the committee recommended that a parliamentary papers series for the Northern Territory be commenced immediately. The Northern Territory Legislative Assembly is the only parliament in Australia which does not have a parliamentary papers series as an historical record. Arrangements are made between other parliaments, and state and federal tertiary libraries, for the lodgement of parliamentary papers in those libraries. Reciprocal arrangements exist between parliaments so that each parliament may have, at short notice, information on the administration and policy of state and federal governments, and it is of

importance to researchers now, and in the future, that such primary sources be available to them.

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory has an arrangement with one of the state parliaments whereby its parliamentary papers are lodged with our library. However, since we have no parliamentary papers series, this arrangement does not exist with the remaining parliamentary libraries. Consequently, it is most difficult for honourable members to undertake research into what other states may be doing, or may have done, in particular areas of government when considering what should be done in the Northern Territory. Of even more significance to the Legislative Assembly and its members, however, is the lack of an available historical record for honourable members to discover why certain decisions were made by government, to discover what the aims of government departments and statutory authorities were when they were established, to discover why certain policy decisions were made in the past and the effectiveness of the administration in implementing policy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the future it will be even more difficult for members who will then be sitting in our legislative Chamber to research matters relating to the Northern Territory if documents, such as annual reports of departments and statutory authorities, are not readily available to them in the parliamentary library. Admittedly, there is 1 set of tabled papers in the Legislative Assembly and it is in the custody of the Clerk. It is the set of original tabled papers. Pursuant to standing order 218, these papers may be inspected at the Legislative Assembly by members and, with the permission of the Speaker, by other persons, and copies thereof, or extracts therefrom, may be made. This is both a cumbersome and time-wasting procedure for members who wish to study important papers which would be readily available to them in any other parliament in Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer honourable members to paragraph 4.1 of your committee's report which reads:

The rationale behind the establishment of a parliamentary paper series is to preserve, in a permanent, convenient and accessible form, those papers presented to parliament which have particular importance as part of the state or national record and to enable any member of parliament or any ordinary citizen to refer to such documents without any undue difficulty despite any lapse of time since initial publication.

I believe it essential that a parliamentary paper series be introduced in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and that copies of such parliamentary papers be readily available to honourable members on demand. In addition, I believe it essential that researchers should have ready access to reports of government departments, be they reports tabled in a current session or reports tabled shortly after self-government. Otherwise, the history of self-government in the Northern Territory may tend to be lost, or distorted, through time and ignorance and decisions that are made in the future will not necessarily be made with certainty about what happened in the past and why it happened.

Mr Deputy Speaker, recommendations (b), (c), (d) and (e) relate to standardisation of papers presented to the Legislative Assembly. Recommendation (b) reads:

that the government instruct its departments and statutory authorities to prepare all documents to be presented to the

Legislative Assembly in a standard format on standard B5 sized paper. This size paper is currently in use for the production of the Northern Territory acts, bylaws and the Parliamentary Record, as well as documents which emanate from the Commonwealth parliament and certain of the state parliaments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if the Assembly agrees to the introduction of a parliamentary papers series, it is essential that the cost of printing such papers be kept to a minimum. Commonwealth departments and statutory authorities prepare papers which will be presented to parliament in a standard size. Together with the Australian Government Publishing Service, they liaise closely with officers of both Houses of Parliament on the preparation of the papers to be tabled. The Government Printer puts aside an agreed number of copies of each report so that, when a report is tabled and ordered to be printed, it is necessary only to print, and attach, appropriate covers to those copies which have been put aside to become part of the parliamentary papers series. In the main then, the cost of the federal parliamentary paper series is little more than the cost of run-on copies of papers previously printed by departments and statutory authorities. Certainly, some papers have to be printed and there are additional binding and distribution costs. However, the introduction of this system has kept the cost of the parliamentary papers series to a minimum.

Your committee envisages the introduction of a similar system in the Northern Territory and, for such a system to be successful, it will be necessary for a standard report size to be adopted. Mr Deputy Speaker, the Parliamentary Record is printed on B5 size paper as are acts and regulations, rules and bylaws. The Government Printer supports the introduction of the standard size report. Experience in the Commonwealth has been that the introduction of a standard size for reports has produced economy in the Government Printing Office and in real terms has reduced the overall cost of government printing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, recommendation (c) refers to the weight of paper to be used in the preparation of documents to be tabled in the Assembly. Currently, the Government Printer uses 63 gsm paper, and it is the recommendation of this committee that this paper, although relatively light in weight, should continue to be used wherever possible for all departmental and statutory authority reports. Of course, your committee recognises that at times there can be a noticeable see-through capacity with such paper and in some cases the use of such paper may not be advisable.

In subparagraph (d) the committee recommends that an interdepartmental committee be established to make recommendations to government on the standards to be observed in departmental publications, and those publications that may be recommended for printing as parliamentary papers by future Publications Committees. In making this recommendation, Mr Deputy Speaker, your committee was aware that standardisation in the format of papers would produce savings in cost, as will establishment of guidelines on what should be permissible in departmental publications and publications of statutory authorities. For example, it may be considered that reports of such bodies such as the Tourist Commission or the Northern Territory Development Corporation should be printed on high gloss paper and have incorporated in them appropriate colour photographs for public relations reasons. On the other hand, it may be considered that, because of the cost involved, annual reports of departments and most other statutory authorities should not incorporate photographs or complicated graphs unless some special reason is shown. Therefore, your committee has recommended in subparagraph (e) that the interdepartmental committee make recommendations to the government on the procedures to be followed in the preparation of papers to be presented to the Legislative Assembly with a view to limiting the cost of

the publication of the papers as well as ensuring, wherever possible, that the cost of the printing of the parliamentary papers be only the run-on cost together with the cost of the covers.

At subparagraph (f) your committee recommends that the Publications Committee be given a continuing role in reviewing the functioning of the parliamentary papers series. If this recommendation is agreed to, Mr Deputy Speaker, your committee will be vigilant in its oversight of the functioning of the parliamentary papers series and will make every effort to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when you referred the matter of the desirability of the introduction of a parliamentary papers series to your committee, you requested the committee to consider also: 'the desirability of the printing, as part of such a series, of appropriate papers presented to the Assembly since self-government or since the first sittings of the Assembly on 20 November 1974'. Mr Deputy Speaker, your committee has considered the question of the commencing date for the series and considered that the most appropriate date was that of the first sitting day after self-government in the Territory, and has so recommended in subparagraph (g). However, your committee is also aware that, amongst academics and researchers, there is a certain amount of interest in the movement towards self-government and believes that this interest will strengthen as the Northern Territory approaches statehood. Therefore, your committee has recommended at subparagraph (h) that the parliamentary papers series be augmented by incorporating in it documents presented to the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, prior to self-government, which relate specifically to the movement towards self-government. At subparagraph (i) it recommends that the Publications Committee be empowered to examine such papers and make recommendations for their printing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before closing, I believe it only fair that I should make reference to the cost of the introduction of this series. I refer honourable members to chapter 7 and to paragraph 9.3 of the report. Your committee believes that papers tabled in the Legislative Assembly, which relate to the workings of parliament and the workings of government, should be readily available to members of the Assembly, to members of the public and to researchers. Your committee believes that the cost of making such documents available will be of the order of \$110 000 per year and is of the opinion that this is not too great a cost. Your committee has considered the cost of commencing the series at self-government and has estimated that it will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$800 000 to \$950 000. Whilst this may appear to be a large cost, the series would be incomplete if it were not taken back to that date.

Your committee has also pointed out that it would not be possible to print all of the papers which it would recommend be printed from self-government all at one time, and that it would require a catch-up period of, say, 5 years. Therefore, the additional cost would be spread over 5 years and perhaps even longer. Your committee believes that this would not create an inordinate drain on the public purse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I recommend the adoption of the report.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for the motion to adopt the report. In doing so, I would like to thank the honourable member for demonstrating in such a very clear way the complete efficacy and desirability of the committee system as it operates in this Assembly.

I am relieved to hear that the committee has taken such prompt and decisive action in forestalling the dreadful problem of printing the records of this Assembly on see-through paper. Mr Deputy Speaker, I agree absolutely that, if there were the slightest risk of anybody seeing through some of the things that went on in here, it would be a total disaster and I am glad that that has been avoided.

The reason that I have risen to speak in the debate is that I did not realise this morning that this would be the content of the report and I was interested to hear it following on some of the comments I made today about the lack of research facilities in the Legislative Assembly. It answers 1 of the problems with the Assembly, and perhaps the 2 got together, but certainly it would take priority, in my view, over the fabric of a new parliament house. If that cannot be organised immediately, this will certainly make some arrangement for the proper storage of, and access to, the series of parliamentary papers and other research material. As the honourable member pointed out in presenting the report of the committee, it is the research aspect, as well as the historical aspect, which is important with such a series.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to some people the cost may appear to be excessive. Perhaps it is unfortunate that it has not been done before this. However, I believe that, if it is not done, Territorians and, indeed, all Australians, will live to regret the decision. The Territory's history is important to the history of the whole of Australia and the parliamentary papers of every state and the Commonwealth constitute an absolutely vital means of tracing that history, particularly as it relates to political and constitutional development. I am pleased to hear that action has been taken and I do not think the cost excessive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the time has come for members of the Legislative Assembly - particularly those in the government because it will provide the money - to have a look at the possibility of supporting some kind of action which could be implemented to upgrade the research facilities of the existing Assembly. It may seem a trifling example, but I give it, that this should be directed at the same kind of additional equipment for the Legislative Assembly as the time clocks in the Chamber. In other words, we should consider expenditure on items which can be transferred easily to a new parliament house, should such a thing eventuate, with no loss of taxpayers' money spent on facilities which would have to remain with this current building when it is pulled down. That was a very proper consideration when the installation of these clocks was discussed. Unfortunately, because of the relatively high cost of the equipment, it took us years of discussion before we got them. They cost \$16 000. However, I do not think that any honourable member of this Assembly would try to put a case that those clocks are not extremely useful to everybody. They are. The cost has come up on the positive. There is no question that they assist in regulating the business of the Assembly and provide for a better standard of debate overall.

Mr Robertson: The trouble is they are not going fast enough at the moment.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is a matter that can be organised from time to time by the Deputy Clerk. On many occasions I have been of the view that the mechanism of the clocks has broken down completely.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that it is an overwhelming problem to consider some of the things that could be done here which could be transferred easily to a new facility. I would suggest one immediately. In respect of the parliamentary papers and the Northern Territory Hansard, I believe that we

should have a look at the possibility of having that entire body of paperwork computerised. The reason why I make this suggestion is very appropriate at the moment. A great many things are put on computer needlessly and, in fact, very many people own computers needlessly. I would say that 90% of personal-computer owners do not know the actual capacity of the machines they own; let alone have any real need or use for them. But there is one thing that I have to do at every sittings, and I am sure that there is not an honourable member in this Assembly who does not do it. As matters come before the Assembly, we make reference constantly to the Parliamentary Record to what has been said and done in previous sittings, and it is useless, duplicated work all the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my brain, floppy as it is, is not nearly as efficient as a floppy disc. The fact is that I, and my staff, spend time uselessly prior to every sittings duplicating searches through one volume at a time. You know that something has been said on a particular subject. You can remember clearly that, in a previous debate, there has been some record of it. You cannot remember whether it was a bill, a question on notice or whatever, so you plough through the indexes and you do all that. I know that some of my technologically-minded friends on this side of the Assembly, and some on the other, are thinking about installing computer equipment in their offices. I am not opposing that. They are contemplating using the extraordinary ability of very cheap computers; to be specific, computers such as the Apple Macintosh which, whilst it is cheap, has incredible capability in that it can be plugged into the IBM government mainframe computer. It can be used as a telex terminal and is being used now as a character reader. Through it you have an attachment to a \$4000-computer which can feed masses of printed information simply by waving a wand across a printed page. There is a problem with that. The problem is that it always happens that, if we start getting into the business of duplicating information in each individual member's office, when there is no need to do so, we will waste a lot of money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, personally, I am severely tempted to have that low-cost equipment installed in my own office. I know that other people are considering doing it too, if for no other reason than the one I mentioned, because this is a regular routine. As we all know, that is where computers shine. It is precisely where computers work best. You simply feed key words into the computer and it does all the work for you and comes up with the printed result. It picks out any debate in which those key words occur. However, it would be far more appropriate for that kind of equipment, which would be far more efficient than the individual, small, personal computers that we might use in our offices, to be installed here at the Legislative Assembly and for our Parliamentary Record to be placed on a computer bank here at the Assembly. Perhaps it could be investigated. Probably it would be feasible. I do not know the details.

I know that an Apple Macintosh can be plugged into the government's IBM mainframe so perhaps there is a system by which only a terminal would be required here at the Assembly, and the actual material could go into the IBM mainframe. It may be more convenient for the Assembly to have its own computer. However, I make this suggestion very seriously. There is no reason why we cannot look at doing it now, so that none of us will have to go through the procedure of ploughing through indexes before each sittings. We would be able to come to the Assembly, or go somewhere else, and say to a member of the staff: 'This is what I want dug out. This is what I am looking for; can you please put it on my desk'. That is what happens in the federal parliament. We do not have to do it. They would go to the computer, key in the words, and extract the matter in half an hour at the outside - every single

reference that has been made in the Assembly to that particular matter. We could do with that right now, thank you very much. I would like the government to have a look at that.

Coincidentally, I discussed this with the Clerk today, without realising that this report would be tabled in the Assembly tonight. However, I would just like to caution everybody - before we all get into the business of equipping our offices with personal computers - to have a look at the relative cost benefit of providing a central facility that will do a far better job, I would suggest, with far more efficient equipment that will be beyond the limits of something like an Apple Macintosh and will provide us all with that service, courtesy of the Assembly. I have spoken about this before. In the federal parliament, it is all done through that extraordinary facility in the parliamentary library down there and the research service it provides. Many politicians do not like to admit it but it is a fact that some of the best speeches delivered in the federal parliament have been delivered courtesy of somebody in the parliamentary library. They do not mind that. In fact, they like seeing the work they do used in that way, because the service is superb.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Department of Law here in Darwin...

Mr Robertson: Oh, you have just stolen it.

Mr B. COLLINS: Sorry. This service has only just recently become available nationally and the Department of Law in Darwin is plugged into the national computer bank on which are stored all of the Commonwealth Law Reports. I know that plans are afoot to extend that service into the English court records which are used. However, the main source used is decisions of the High Court in Australia. All of the Commonwealth Law Reports are now on computer and it is not necessary to go through this very tedious business of looking up all those authorities. The law service has the entire range of decisions, from the inception of the High Court to the present day, on every conceivable subject under the sun, and that information is brought up in about 60 seconds flat.

If the Department of Law in Darwin can have that service, Mr Deputy Speaker, I suggest that we should be able to have it in terms of our own Parliamentary Record. It will save a lot of hack work which we go through at every sittings. I am sure that everyone is in the same position as I am on this matter. Perhaps we could have some indication in this debate from somebody on the government frontbench on this. Before each of us leaps to obtain a computer, let us have a look at the cost benefit of providing a central facility, well planned, here at the Assembly or at some other appropriate place. It would do a better job at half the cost, I suspect.

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, with that title I feel quite inadequate to talk on this sort of thing. However, I noted the invitation from the honourable Leader of the Opposition. Of course, the government supports the recommendations in the report before us. However, we must all recognise that normal budgetary constraints and considerations would come into the actual implementation of those recommendations. If I could speak on behalf of the government which, of course, I do I suppose, I would place a caveat, at least, upon those recommendations in so far as the budgetary conditions are concerned. As the honourable chairman of the committee reported to us, the backlog itself will cost between \$800 000 and \$950 000 which, just in the catch-up phase, is equivalent to about 20 homes for Territorians if one can assume the average cost of producing a home. I am not decrying the project, Mr Deputy Speaker. I believe it is highly desirable that these documents be made available, not only to members of this Assembly now but to members who may come in later and to the general public.

The question of keeping currency upon parliamentary records at about \$110 000 a year, with the budget scope that we enact in this place, is probably within our capacity. Nonetheless, it will be a question of year-to-year consideration of our capacity to fund that. The difficulty will be the capacity of the Northern Territory government over the years to provide \$800 000 to \$950 000 for the backlog.

I noted with some interest what the honourable Leader of the Opposition said. The honourable Leader of the Opposition and I have been involved on the Standing Orders Committee and have received tremendous help from the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. The Leader of the Opposition would be ready to agree, as would the Clerk and the Speaker, as chairman, that it had to be done manually. I had the benefit in the work that I did on that committee of having a word processor, so my side of it was made relatively easy through the work of a very primitive but, nevertheless, very effective word processor. That committee will be reporting, Sir, to this Assembly, probably in the next sittings. Whilst I could still have contributed to its work, it would have been far more difficult without that sort of electronic gadgetry.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed up the need for rapid recall systems in the modern world, and he is absolutely correct. To me, it is false economy to say that we must consider only the capital value of this sort of equipment. If we are to be efficient and if we are to produce the goods quickly and competently, then we have to look also at recurrent costs which are obviously inherent in doing these sorts of recalls manually. While it is all very fine to say that we can build a sophisticated system and ignore the capital cost, because we will get the money back in the long term, any government, as does any business, corporation or family, obviously has to have sufficient money available in a certain time frame. I say confidently that the government will look at the proposition put forward so reasonably by the Leader of the Opposition. The age of technology is something that no legislature can ignore if it is to continue to deliver rapid and proper service to the public that it is supposed to serve. One must look at the whole range of information that we should be providing for research people and for posterity.

If I may diversify a bit, an example comes readily to mind. There are no printed judgments of our Supreme Court. In my time as Attorney-General, I found this regrettable. Of course, we have typewritten sheets giving reasons for judgment but we have no equivalent of things like the ALR and CLR. They are not bound. They are not available. They are not even indexed. The Leader of the Opposition referred specifically to the CLRs which are available via recall systems to the Department of Law. Indeed, it goes beyond that. We have installed those recall systems within the judges' chambers so that they have that facility.

Of course, the real lead that the Territory has had in this sort of technology comes through things like PROMISE, LIST and the MAPNET systems. The PROMISE system was developed by Geoff Fanning, who unfortunately has left us, and Peter Campbell, who assisted him later. It is regarded now in world-wide terms as the most advanced of prosecutions information systems in the world. Without any doubt, we lead this country in that software technology and that is something of which we ought to be proud. It seems to me that, because of the scale on which we embarked upon the endeavour, the scope that we had to deal with, the Territory was able to home in, in a very concentrated manner, on that type of software technology. It was taken from something that was originally designed by the Capitol Hill in the United States which we translated here under contract.

I would like to put on record the gratitude that we all must extend to Mr Fanning, a man with tremendous capacity. He has gone now, as a result of what he did. In other words, no government of our size could afford to keep a man like that when the heavies came along. Incidentally, he has gone back to the people who sold us the system originally. He has developed it so far that we are likely to end up buying back the product. I do not mind that. The man is excellent. Peter Campbell has gone with him.

In this way we have developed world leadership here in legal recall systems. There is no reason in my mind, subject to money and time, why we should not seek to lead in parliamentary recall. I think it would be a commendable target. It may take time but it is something that the government will certainly look at. I support what the Leader of the Opposition has said and I certainly support the committee's report. I repeat that there is the caveat on dollars and cents. With that, I take a great deal of pleasure in supporting what the chairman has put forward and, at least, the broad sentiments put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Motion agreed to.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 106)

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to present the Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 106) on behalf of the Chief Minister.

Leave granted.

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, in 1983, amendments were made to section 166AA of the Police Administration Act to provide for a member who was suitable in every other respect for promotion or transfer to undergo a medical evaluation before being so promoted or transferred. It was considered that, should the only reason for the commissioner not to promote or transfer be that the member failed the medical examination - that is, that no other member was involved - that member could appeal. Recently, it has been found that the act does not in fact provide for the right of such an appeal. This bill seeks to correct this omission, thus giving effect to the original intention of the legislature when providing for medical examination of members under section 166AA of the act.

The bill also provides that, where there is an appeal against promotion or a decision of the commissioner, which involves another person, a person otherwise qualified to appeal is not debarred from making that appeal by reason only that he has failed a medical examination. Other associated amendments are provided by the bill such as the time limitations for such appeals and to permit the Police Promotions Board to make a promotion irrespective of a successful applicant's failure to pass a medical examination. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 109)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Although it has been a little time since the last Statute Law Revision Bill was introduced into the Assembly, that does not mean that our source of supply has dried up. Minor matters for adjustment are being recorded constantly and will continue to be put forward for consideration by this Assembly as the number or urgency of the bill requires. The present bill is a little different from the run-of-the-mill statute law revision bills in that the bulk of it consists of a list of South Australian statutes to be repealed in their application to the Northern Territory as laws of the Territory. Honourable members will recall that, in recent debates, both the Minister for Community Development and the member for Wanguri alluded to the possibility of this happening. The passing of the Sources of the Law Bill during the last sittings was the first step in the exercise of removing the redundant statutes.

Schedule 2 of the bill lists only those statutes which can obviously be repealed. There are a number of others which are being examined further with a view to their repeal at a later date. The remainder of the bill, apart from matters I will mention specifically, repeals several acts, the repeal of which was overlooked at the time of introducing new legislation, such as the Building Act, corrects inaccurate or redundant cross-references, removes duplication in the numbering of some provisions and makes the familiar style changes as part of the ongoing exercise commenced some years ago.

Other amendments, such as those suggested to the Marine Act, reflect recent changes in administrative arrangements. The proposed amendment to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act reflects the reality of self-government and is included with the concurrence of the Commonwealth. The same applies to the proposed amendment to the Evidence Act which refers to a Commonwealth rather than the relevant equivalent Territory office. The need for the change was overlooked at the time of self-government.

During the drafting of the Local Government Bill, a quirk was noticed in that section of the Interpretation Act setting out procedure for the making of regulations and bylaws. It would appear that, because of the definition of 'statutory corporation' elsewhere in the act, it could be argued that one small but convenient aspect of the procedures envisaged in that section is denied to municipal councils. I am sure that that was not intended originally and certainly it is not intended now with the restructuring of the local government system. The proposed amendment will put the matter beyond doubt.

On previous occasions when statute law revision bills have been introduced, honourable members have been invited to seek from the parliamentary counsel an explanation of any proposed amendment on which they had a query. Again, I invite honourable members to do that. Honourable members will also find rather amusing some of the titles listed in the schedule. I think they make interesting reading and no doubt some of them have a most fascinating history behind them. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 97)

Continued from 25 March 1985.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I advise that the opposition supports this bill in principle. However, we are concerned by clause 5 which amends section 24 of the act to allow the inspection by a board of the hospital to become a mere formality as opposed to a necessary and a pertinent function of the board. For this reason, I will be moving amendments standing against schedule number 29 which were circulated today. The effect of these amendments would be to ensure that inspections of hospitals by the appropriate boards would be conducted by at least a quorum of the board. The opposition sees this as being necessary in the interests of maintaining the integrity and the function of a vital part of the board's work. I ask all members of the Assembly to support these amendments when they are proposed in committee.

I believe that, if boards are to be established, their functions and activities should not be seen as a mere facade but should serve a vital role for the community and the region for which they are responsible. With those few comments, I repeat that the opposition supports the bill and seeks the support of the Assembly for the passage of the opposition's proposed amendments.

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his contribution. It is rather awkward when we have to discuss amendment schedules in the second reading. Because the honourable member said nothing else that I can comment on, I will have to confine myself to what would normally be discussed in committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that the proposition to have the head of the Department of Health make these inspections in the presence of the board once a year is considered and reasonable. The problem with it is that it requires, by way of statute, an officer of the public service to do something which he ought normally to do by way of normal administration. Only on rare occasions is any person who is employed by the public service, as a public servant, required by statute to carry out a function which is of an administrative nature. The only instances of that that I can bring to mind relate to chief executive officers. The amendment introduced to the Education Act recently by the Minister for Education required the executive officer of the Council of Higher Education to provide a service. I know of no equivalent in legislation where an officer of the public service is required to carry out what is normally regarded as an administrative function.

I know that the motivation behind the amendment is a proper one: the secretary of the department certainly ought to make regular visits to hospitals to carry out inspections. Indeed, he carries out inspections many more times than once a year. In the last 3 weeks, the secretary of the department and I have done just that at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It took us 3 mornings to cover the whole hospital. However, it is the government's view, as it is mine, that it would be inappropriate to enshrine that sort of matter in legislation. If we were to do that, we would need legislation to provide for the secretary of the department responsible for correctional services to be required to carry out official inspections of all prisons at least once a year.

We could extend that to a requirement on the Secretary of the Department of Education, in conjunction with the school councils, to visit each and every school once a year. It is not done that way. As I see it, the responsibility of the head of the Department of Health, who is subject to the direction of his

minister, is to carry out more than 1 inspection per year of the hospitals for which he is responsible through me to this Assembly. However, to enshrine that in law would be an inappropriate use of legislation. That is not to say that I do not support the sentiment put forward by the shadow spokesman for health.

The government cannot support the amendment circulated by the honourable member. Nonetheless, I will be quite happy to give an assurance to the honourable member that, as long as I am Minister for Health, the secretary will fulfil the sentiments contained in the proposed amendment.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I invite the defeat of clause 5 so that I can move the amendments as circulated.

The opposition believes it desirable to require at least a quorum of members of the board to help carry out inspections of hospitals in the Northern Territory.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, in answer to the minister's observations, there is a provision in the act that requires that the hospitals be inspected every year in the month of June. The honourable member's proposal is not inconsistent with the act. As a matter of fact, it is a requirement at the present moment. I have in front of me the Royal Darwin Hospital Management Board's report for the year. I have been scraping around for the other management board reports which were given to us at the last sittings but I just cannot find them. However, this report indicates quite clearly that inspections were carried out on a quarterly basis and an annual inspection was conducted in June 1984. It indicates the wards that were inspected and states that Dr J.V. Quinn, Assistant Secretary, accompanied the board members on the annual inspection. What the honourable member is proposing is in fact a requirement of the act now.

The member is proposing that a quorum of the board shall be part of this inspection procedure. I do not think it unreasonable that a quorum of the board, as opposed to a committee or a person selected by the board, should participate in these inspections. The minister said in his second-reading speech that it was difficult to get board members to go on these inspections. I submit that perhaps the real problem lies in the composition of those boards. Perhaps he should look at the people who are on those boards. If they are not willing to participate in an active manner, they should be replaced by people who are. I can appreciate his difficulty. If boards are not working, then something has to be done. I would suggest that the role of the board is very important in the operation of a hospital. In fact, the problem may not be with the legislation and I would submit that the problem is not with the legislation but that, in fact, quite probably it is in the composition of the boards of the hospitals. If that is the case, then the honourable minister should address that matter.

The opposition has a very clear and distinct feeling that, if a board is to be functional, it should not be able to appoint a person and say: 'Well, you are not doing anything next week, Joe, so you go on the inspection tour'. The board should play a very vital part in the operation of the hospital. The substantive

part of the honourable member's amendment is that at least a quorum of that board should participate in the inspection of the hospital, Mr Chairman.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Chairman, I must admit that, if one is merely to tack on to proposed new section 24 subsection (4) the substantive part, as the honourable member has put it...

Mr Leo: Yes, it is.

Mr ROBERTSON: ...there is some merit in what he says. I must admit that. As I recall it, the proposition which was put to us resulted from a conference of boards from around the Territory. I might say, Mr Chairman, that the members on the boards that I have met with since I have been Minister for Health take their task very seriously. It is all very well to say that, if the members of a board are not prepared to carry out functions which are required in the legislation, then we ought to find another board. That is not so easy to do in places like Tennant Creek, Katherine, or indeed the place that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy comes from, in all circumstances. I think there is some merit in the proposition that a quorum is required. The question I was addressing myself to was a piece of legislation saying that an officer of the public service shall be conducted once a year around the hospitals.

The legislation could be stood over, but rather than delay it, Mr Chairman, can I take it on board to review the matter? I will undertake to do that. If it is deemed to be - to use a Hawke-ism - a consensus of view, then perhaps we can come back at a later stage and take up the point. I think it has been put properly and that perhaps we ought to be thinking in terms of quorums. After all, we have to in this place and I think there is some merit in that argument. I am not all that fussed about it.

Mr Chairman, if the committee is firmly of the view that it is something I ought to seek advice on before we enact this piece of legislation, then I am prepared to do that. If the committee is of a mind to do so, we can let this run through with my undertaking that I will definitely review it and bring it back, if that is deemed appropriate, at a later time.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Chairman, that would seem to be an eminently reasonable solution to this problem. It was necessary to go back to the old section of the act in relation to section 24(1), (2) and (3) to amend (4) to achieve the effect we sought with this amendment. We agree that it is very difficult if an inspection is arranged and one person does not turn up. In effect, under the act, that is not illegal but it is not an inspection for the purposes of the act. We agree that that is ridiculous. However, we do not want it to go back to where it was with just 1 or 2 people. We want a quorum. To me, that seems to offer a solution to our problem.

The basic idea of these management boards is to have community input. If we have a look at Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy, he maintained that the ability of a bureaucracy to make certain refinements of policy below parliamentary level was within a certain set of guidelines. He established that the most important of them was that the bureaucracy that was making the decision was, in fact, representative of the people upon whom the decision would take effect. Given that degree of representation within the bureaucracy, it would be able to make decisions which, in the main, would have been those that the people would have made themselves. For practical purposes, however, this is extremely difficult when we talk of places like hospitals which involve specialists and so on. It could be argued that they are not representative of the clientele of Alice Springs Hospital for example.

This is where we get into the idea of management boards etc. Various devices are used to overcome this particular problem of representation in the management structure or the bureaucratic structure. The one we use here is the hospital management board. However, it is essential that that hospital management board should represent the clientele of the hospital where it is located - places like Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. It would be very easy to say: 'Let it represent one part of that segment'. Unfortunately, as a result of the way in which representation on hospital management boards has moved, we have had a rather ridiculous situation in Alice Springs recently...

Mr Perron: Are they all going to be on crutches or in wheelchairs?

Mr EDE: I am afraid the honourable minister's level of intelligence is not terribly high.

It was stated there that the board asked visitors to be reasonably dressed. One was asked to have footwear and men were to wear shirts or T-shirts. I do not think that that was a reasonable decision for a board to make when you consider the clientele of the hospital in Alice Springs. When it moves into the area of dress regulations, it is obvious that the board is no longer representing the clientele effectively.

I think the 2 main elements are that the board be representative and responsible. As I have often said, Mr Deputy Chairman, I do not believe that there is such a thing as power without responsibility. I believe that, if this board is to have the powers which we will be very happy to see given to it with regard to fund-raising and disbursement, it should also have responsibility.

I am happy to leave it there. When the minister reviews the bill, my colleagues and I and other members will be available if he wishes to discuss this further with a view to getting a hospital management structure in the Northern Territory which is the most effective we can possibly achieve.

Mr E. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Chairman, it is obvious the minister is in agreement with us as to the obvious desirability for as substantial a number of the actual board as possible to conduct an extremely important task, which is the physical, on site inspection of the hospital. There seems to be no disagreement on that. Perhaps the honourable minister will give an indication that he is prepared to investigate the practicalities of introducing that into the legislation in a workable way, if that is desirable, or effecting it by other administrative means which would be equally efficient. He could then indicate that he would advise the Assembly at the next sittings on that. I would indicate that the opposition would then withdraw the amendment.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Chairman, I will so undertake.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 95)

Continued from 27 February 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no problem with this bill and we will be supporting it. However, there are a couple of points that I wish to make. The first is the issue of cash bidding which will not be affected within the particular area because we are talking about the territorial area. However, it affects the industry in general. Cash bidding is to be introduced for auctioning of prospective areas in the Timor Sea. There has been considerable talk about it in the industry. I am pleased that some of the industry's problems have been acknowledged by the federal government and that adjustments have been made to that particular system. I must say, however, that I find the general principle of market bidding highly acceptable and I believe that those opposite would support such a principle.

With regard to the actual bill that we have before us, at first sight it is a fairly draconian piece of legislation. However, the environmental risk of rigs being damaged accidentally at sea is so horrendous that we believe it is essential that it be made absolutely clear by a strong law that shipping must steer clear of rigs. People approaching a rig should know that they are committing a very serious offence. The people on the rig can find out whether an approaching ship has some particular problem or whether its intent is less than benign.

It has been canvassed in various reports that there is a danger of blackmail. Somebody could attempt to seize a production rig to use that rig as an environmental bomb to extract benefits. For that reason, we believe that a very high level of deterrence is required.

There is another possibility that we in north Australia must countenance and that is what is termed a level 1 threat to Australia. A level 1 threat is generally classified as a form of non-official terrorism. People who have unofficial support from an unfriendly government actually create acts of terrorism on another country's soil or its assets as a means of putting that country in a position where they believe they will be able to negotiate for some particular item which is the subject of disagreement between the 2 countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at the moment, we enjoy very friendly relationships with countries to our near north. However, it is obvious that this is another of those areas where we need to put laws into effect so that anybody who thinks that this is an acceptable form of international diplomacy, and attempts to make a move on something as environmentally sensitive as an oil rig, knows the dangers of ignoring the law. The Northern Territory government has taken a very stern position on terrorism and any kind of approach to rigs which could cause damage.

The act also allows for the Northern Territory government to require variations in oil flow or variations in production rates from a structure governed by the requirements of the government for revenue, which is something which we agree with. However, we have some worry that there could possibly be a commonality of interest between a miner and the government where a miner might wish to extract say 60% of a resource in a 10-year period whereas 80% could have been extracted over a 15-year period. In certain economic circumstances, that could be in the government's and the miner's interests. However, it might not be in the interests of maximum recovery of the product from that source. It is another reason why I was disappointed that we did not agree to the public accounts committee this morning because it is obviously within the nature of a committee such as that to check on that sort of thing.

However, I think that, while that is a possible danger, it is overridden by the very real benefits, and the very real necessity, for the government to be in

actual control of the rate of production. Obviously, it must take into account its revenue requirements over that period; as stated in the bill, the requirements for good oil production and the good management of oil structures. We are confident that, with the passage of this bill, people will feel that they can proceed with confidence knowing that the Northern Territory has done its bit to ensure their security and that they are in no doubt as to the ability of the Northern Territory government to regulate production on the basis of its revenue requirements.

Mr VALE (Braitling): I also wish to speak in support of this legislation which is complementary to the federal act. It is to meet a problem shared by the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory concerning offshore petroleum areas. Of course, as the member for Stuart said, there are 2 main purposes to this bill. One is to control production through revenue considerations and the other is safety control around offshore rigs and installations.

The member for Stuart indicated that the revenue requirements could be used to satisfy the financial needs of either the company or the government. I believe that the minister would assure us that that would be the last consideration. The first and highest priority would be the requirement that production should support long life in the field; that is, set an optimum production rate based on reasonable characteristics to maximise fuel production over the shortest possible period without damaging any of the wells in the field. That should be the one and only consideration. Revenue considerations should be disregarded in that respect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, God forbid that a public accounts committee as proposed by the opposition might extend its tentacles into private industry. I can just see what would happen to private industry in the Northern Territory if that should occur.

Safety controls around offshore rigs and installations are vital. The most frightening words in oil industry language are 'Red Adair'. Fortunately in Australia, we have only needed him on one occasion. If any exploration firm receives a telegram from its field office saying, 'Send Red Adair', it knows it has a big problem, and sends for him regardless of what his fees may be for killing a blowout and or gas or oilwell fires. Mr Deputy Speaker, when Red Adair was at Gippsland in the late 1960s, the company I worked for had problems with a wildcat well it was drilling mud in, which subsequently proved to be a dry hole. With the constant tripping to change the bits out, we had stripped the side out of the casing and the Bureau of Mineral Resources shut us down. We attempted to move drilling mud and casing in from all around Australia. I am only raising this to indicate the high costs that people such as Red Adair create for companies. All around Australia, he had state and Commonwealth trains and big road trucks standing by loaded up with hundreds of tonnes of drilling mud, casing, gelignite and everything else that he would have needed had that gas well offshore from Gippsland blown out. The Northern Territory was very fortunate last year that the fire in the Mereenie field was not as severe as was believed originally. There was no loss of life and, whilst it was a very expensive accident for the companies, it gave warning of the dangers that can exist both on and offshore and in the drilling and production operation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I am speaking on offshore legislation, I refer to the proposal of the federal government to go ahead with its plans to auction offshore petroleum permits in blocks. I am totally opposed to this for a number of reasons. In the short term, it will be a revenue-raising source for the federal government because it will get millions of dollars from the big

companies which will be all out to purchase the sites. However, it is a very short-term policy because it will mean that the companies that spend money to purchase the blocks rather than obtaining them under the existing work permit proposal may be in a position where they will not have the money to go immediately into geological, geophysical and, ultimately, drilling operations.

The other concern that I have with the auction proposal is that it is not in Australia's long-term interest because it will tend to drive out those companies that have played such an important role in the development of our oil industry onshore in recent years - the smaller and independent oil companies. Magellan and Oilmin, operating out of central Australia, and many others have played a vital role in at least keeping the majors or, as the Leader of the Opposition refers to them, the 'Seven Sisters' honest. What occurred in America in the late 1950s and the 1960s was a tragedy. The big oil companies, through government favours, ultimately forced out of business most of the small independent companies who had played an honest broker's role in that industry. I hope the time will never come when that history repeats itself in Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, offshore discoveries and development are vital to Australia's future if we are to maintain any degree of self-sufficiency in this decade and the decades ahead in terms of crude oil. We are now facing a critical period in the oil and natural gas industry. Continued wildcat drilling and the development of our offshore resources and onshore fields will be vital in the years ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my opposition to the auction proposal is shared by the Premiers of all the states, whether Labor or Liberal. I believe the latest to come out in opposition to this is Premier Burke from Western Australia. The federal government has shown in the past that it can listen on odd occasions to rational arguments concerning the industry. I hope that, on this occasion, it will listen to what the state Premiers and the oil industry have to say concerning the auction system. With those few words, I indicate my support for this legislation.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the cash bidding proposals by the Commonwealth which, as the honourable member opposite said, are not really affecting the areas covered by this legislation, are strongly opposed by all the states. At the last Mining Ministers' Council - my first Mining Ministers' Council meeting - all states expressed to the federal minister their opposition to the concept. Their opposition is commonly based on 2 things. First, there are only so many dollars in the exploration market. Any cash bidding that goes towards the purchase of a prospective block will have an effect on the exploration program that occurs subsequently on that block. The amount of funds the company had to pay to the federal government to buy the block will have an effect on the subsequent program. All the states believe that all the dollars should go into exploration because that will get results.

The other argument was mentioned by the member for Braitling. There is a belief that the big international and Australian companies will manage to squeeze out the smaller and medium-sized companies. That was not thought of generally as a good thing for the industry in the long term. Notwithstanding that pressure, the federal government clearly believes that its policy to introduce cash bidding is very important. It has made a few amendments to it, not that I have kept up with them, but it clearly proposes to proceed with it and I think we just have to accept that.

The member for Stuart referred to good oilfield practice. I really cannot see a government adopting other than expert advice on that sort of thing. I

could not conceive of a situation where the royalty income from one field, or even a couple of fields, would be of such proportions that a government would risk losing a portion of the maximum recoverable reserves for the income. I guess it is hard to foresee every possible situation but it is one of those areas where ministers really just sort of lie down and say: 'Show me the consultant's report on what is a sensible recovery rate for this particular deposit'. That advice may come from within the department if it has experts. The Mines Division certainly has some of those. If it is a more difficult problem, you go to outside internationally-recognised consultants. It is the sort of thing on which you are really quite defenceless. You accept their recommendations because you really cannot argue with them so I do not think there is much of a worry in that regard.

I thank honourable members for their support for this legislation which is really complementary to the Commonwealth legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

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, tonight I would like to discuss briefly a subject that has been very topical recently, particularly in my electorate. I refer to the recent headlines in some newspapers regarding the concern expressed by people of Greek origin that the Pine Gap base near Alice Springs is spying on Greece. These people of Greek origin were very concerned that they were being spied on by the Americans. If we had any Greeks living in the rural area, they would be even more concerned because any spying by the Americans at Pine Gap is nothing compared to the spying that I think is being carried out by public servants on the people in the rural area.

For some time now, there has been an increase in the number of light aircraft in the rural area and in the number of helicopters. In fact, every time I see a light aircraft or helicopter, I regard it with some...

Members interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, it seems to me from my inquiries that every government department that has any business out in the rural area is hell bent on finding out what we are doing, how we are doing it, when we are doing it and all the rest of it. I know for a fact that these light aircraft and helicopters are used by the officers of the Department of Lands, the Building Board, planning people, transport and works people, the police, the Bushfires Council, production people, mines and energy people and also the fire brigade. I do not have any evidence that they are doing this.

I do not have any objection to the police looking for wrongdoers in the rural area or using this sort of surveillance, provided they do not go overboard. I do not have any objection to the bushfires personnel using aerial surveys to help them in their work and also to help us. I do have quite a strong objection, and so do my constituents, to being spied on continually and having

our work and living pried into by all these other people who visit us from the air. Not only do we have light aircraft and helicopters flying over us but we are also under surveillance from satellites.

About 3 weeks ago, an aircraft flew down our road. Whether they were having a peep to see what we were doing at our place or not I do not know. But I would hazard a guess that they were flying at the lowest possible height. They were going straight down our road, which is a pretty unusual path for a light aircraft to take. I do not reckon they would have been more than about 500 feet up. I do not know what they were looking for but they did not find it.

I am pressing my concern at this invasion of privacy because one of my constituents came to visit me. He said that the previous week he had put 2 sheets of new corrugated iron on his bushhouse. Within 2 days of his doing this, a certain public servant asked if he was building on his block. He said that he was not. The public servant then said: 'Well, I have seen a blown-up satellite photograph which shows that you have put some new iron on something on your block'. I think that is a little bit over the odds. I mean 2 sheets of iron on a bushhouse and he is now under scrutiny by a public servant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am wondering if the people in the rural area are supporting a local industry: the public service of Darwin. Are we the reason for the existence of the public servants involved in this scrutiny out our way? I would like to know what is done with all the information that is collected. Considering the number of visits by these people in the air, they must have collected a hell of a lot of information about us over the last couple of years. What happens to this information? Is it just done for the sake of keeping people employed? Is it put on paper? Is it filed away to employ more people to move it from one filing cabinet to another? What happens with it?

I am left with the sneaking feeling that people in the rural area are still regarded as rather unusual in that they got to where they are now before the town planners had a go at it. We went to the rural area before the town planners had their go at the place. I think they have been pretty sour on us ever since. Things are going mostly our way out in the rural area. Some public servants cannot get over this and the abrogation of their authority over the people who live there. They are now trying actively to put us all back into a system, like the townies, and they are doing this by spying on us. In a way, it is good to know that we are worth looking at.

I am wondering if all this spying is really worth while. Is it cost effective? I am wondering, as are my constituents, whether it is really what our government is all about? Why is big brother spying on people out in the rural area?

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief but I wish to place on record 2 matters. I spoke yesterday about roads in my electorate. The roads there are extraordinarily extensive. Let me assure you that my offering this evening will be far less extensive.

I will not go over the areas that I referred to yesterday. I appreciate the undertakings given to me by the Minister for Transport and Works in respect of information about the expenditure on roads that I referred to then. I did not have time yesterday to make a reference to another road about which I have received consistent representations. I refer to the old south road. That particular track - for transport and works - travels along the old railway line down to Maryvale. It is the site of the Finke Desert race, one of the important fixtures in the itinerary and one, I dare say, that attracts many visitors to the Northern Territory.

Since the railway line is no longer used, this particular route has fallen into sad disrepair. It is of interest not only to motor-cyclists, in that regard, but also to the people who live at the communities of Finke and Maryvale and to some of the station people in that area as well. It is of importance because it is the only direct route joining those 2 communities and communities further north from Maryvale. There are considerable family connections through those places and the representations that are being made to me in that regard have been made because people have been concerned that they have not been able to get to funerals that have been held in different communities for close relations. That is because of the circuitous route they must take because this road is no longer accessible except to the most rugged vehicles. That is a further development in that area that the honourable minister should take on board.

May I suggest what might prove to be a solution to this problem? Perhaps the need to keep them open, on one hand, and the need to provide employment for people in those communities on the other could be put together. Some sort of community employment project might be suitable in that regard. I float that as a possible idea.

The other matter I wish to address this evening is that of the road into the Mereenie oilfield. I believe I would be derelict in my duty as a member for this particular area if I were not to place on record the concerns that have been expressed, not only by residents in my electorate but by a number of people involved in the petroleum industry, in the development of the Mereenie oilfield. They are concerned that the production from the Mereenie oilfield has had to be cut back because of the poor maintenance of that particular stretch of road. I made representations to the predecessor of the Minister for Transport and Works. That must have been in September last year. I said to him at that stage that I was writing in relation particularly to the unsealed section of that road. I might read this letter into Hansard. I wrote it on 24 September 1984:

My Dear Minister,

I write in relation to the road from the Mereenie oilfield to Alice Springs, particularly in relation to the unsealed section. As you are no doubt aware, there will be a significant increase in the amount of traffic along this road because of its use for transport of oil from the Mereenie field. This traffic will be in addition to the current traffic road servicing communities at Aeryonga and Hermannsburg, various outstations and tourist use. Under these circumstances, it would appear to be necessary to upgrade the maintenance program on this road in order to maintain it in a safe and serviceable condition. I am writing, therefore, to inquire whether such upgrading of the maintenance program will be carried out and I will look forward to your response in due course.

I received not 1 but 2 replies, identical in text. One was from the minister and 1 from the acting minister. I will again read into Hansard:

Dear Mr Bell,

Your letter dated 24 September 1984 suggested an upgraded maintenance program on the road from the Mereenie oilfield to Alice Springs in view of the anticipated increase in traffic. My department is fully aware of the situation and provision has been made in current and future programs for the increased usage of the section under its

control between Alice Springs and Katapata Gap. Extensive maintenance was carried out on this section last financial year and the road is now in quite reasonable condition. The situation will continue to be monitored and the necessary maintenance provided to ensure adequate serviceability.

A continuation of the staged upgrading of Larapinta Drive is also under way with construction and sealing of further substantial lengths scheduled to commence later this financial year. An additional stage which will extend the seal to Hermannsburg, currently proposed in our forward program, will be included as funds become available.

A number of aspects of that are quite interesting. They become interesting in the light of a recent concern that production has had to be decreased from the oilfield because that road has not been maintained as was undertaken. You will no doubt have heard, keeping a keen ear yourself to the offerings from that esteemed current affairs program of the Northern Territory, the Territory Extra program, that Mr Hiscock, the Operations Manager of Moonie Oil, bewailed the fact that the road had not been maintained and his company was forced to decrease the amount of oil that it was able to transport out of the field. That was this year.

Last year, we had this undertaking. I think it is a matter of serious concern, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that maintenance program has not been maintained. I suggest that, as local member, I deserve - as the producers, Moonie Oil deserve and the Territory public, who stand to gain from production in that regard, also deserve - some explanation from the honourable minister. With those few comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, I bid you and all honourable members remaining, good night.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to delay the Assembly unduly. A question was asked this morning in respect of the Emily Hills area and I have a response. Apparently, following the floods of March 1983, the Emily Hills drainage study was commissioned with the object of ascertaining the causes of flooding and arriving at possible trunk-drainage solutions. One general conclusion was that further development proposals to the south and east of the Emily Hills subdivision should be subject to the rationalisation of the trunk-drainage scheme within this study catchment. As a result of this study, the Department of Transport and Works requested the Department of Lands to acquire land from lots 5534 and 5781. Negotiations for such acquisition are well advanced and are expected to be completed within the next 2 weeks. I am advised by the Minister for Transport and Works that it anticipates letting a contract in the order of \$195 000 for the carrying out of that work some time within the next 12 weeks.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

URGENCY

Co-operative Societies Amendment Bill
(Serial 112)

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I received a letter from the Chief Minister requesting that, pursuant to standing order 153, I declare the Co-operative Societies Amendment Bill 1985 to be an urgent bill. The letter reads:

The Attorney-General proposes to introduce the Co-operative Societies Amendment Bill into the current sittings of the Legislative Assembly. The bill seeks to allow the minister to consent to the use of the word 'co-operative' or any word importing a similar meaning in the name of an organisation other than a society for the purposes of the Co-operative Societies Act. If the bill was to be considered pursuant to standing order 152, hardship could result. The Co-operative Insurance Company Limited, a long-established southern company, wishes to open an office in the Northern Territory, an office that would employ several persons and offer additional insurance services to Northern Territory residents. Because of the total prohibition on the use of the word 'co-operative' in its name, it cannot become registered as a foreign company here or be approved by the Insurance Commissioner which are the prerequisites to commencing operation. If the minister had discretion, he could consent to the use of the word 'co-operative' in the company's name. I would, accordingly, request that, pursuant to standing order 153 you declare this bill to be an urgent bill to enable consideration in full at the current sittings.

*Yours sincerely,
Ian Tuxworth
Chief Minister.*

Honourable members, I have considered the request of the Chief Minister and, pursuant to standing order 153, I declare the Co-operative Societies Amendment Bill 1985 to be an urgent bill.

PETITION

Classification of Certain Video Material

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 24 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth our belief that, because it causes serious harm to the community, the Legislative Assembly should make illegal and should not legalise, regardless of how the material is classified, the possession, sale, hire or supply of any

publication or video tape, video disc, slide or any other recording which consists of or contains a pornographic visual image or from which a pornographic visual image can be produced being an image which displays: (a) degradation of any man, woman, child or animal; (b) scenes of explicit sexual relations or showing genitalia detail or unduly emphasising, prolonging, repeating or dwelling upon real or simulated sexual activity; (c) sodomy, bestiality, sadism, masochism, mutilation or any other form of sexual perversion; (d) the use and effect of illicit drug taking; (e) blasphemy, indecency or obscenity; (f) unnecessary, excessive or unduly prolonged or repeated violence, horror, crime, crudeness or coarseness; or (g) matters that are likely to cause offence, distress or harm to any reasonable, mature person. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

TABLED PAPER

Review into Northern Territory Correctional Services - 1984

Mr COULTER (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the Review into Northern Territory Correctional Services - 1984.

Mr Speaker, my colleague, the honourable Minister for Transport and Works, gave an undertaking in September 1984 that the government would review the delivery of correctional services in the Northern Territory. The initiative followed a review of the Department of Community Development of which correctional services was then a division. I am pleased to table the review of correctional services which was conducted by a 7-member team, headed by Mr Barry Apsey, Director of Prisons in Victoria.

I would like to place on record the gratitude of the Northern Territory government to the Victorian government for making Mr Apsey's services available to conduct this significant and important review, and to the members of the review team for their commendable effort.

The government deemed it appropriate and timely to undertake this review principally because of its overriding concern to maintain a highly-efficient administration, and also through the understanding that, despite major achievements in correctional services since self-government, it was not clear whether some of the programs and facilities had evolved from properly-enunciated correctional policies and philosophies.

The report is very comprehensive and it discusses an extremely broad range of issues. While not providing - and it was not necessarily intended that the report provide a blueprint - for the future development of correctional services in the Northern Territory, the theme of the report is: a clear definition of the sophisticated and complex nature of the service; the excellent standards already achieved; and those areas where further improvement and development could be focused. The government considers the report to be a valuable resource document which will greatly assist in strategic planning of correctional services over the next 5 to 10 years.

The most significant recommendation is for the establishment of a separate autonomous department of correctional services. Honourable members are well aware that the government, in maintaining its high level of

initiative and its innovative and enlightened approach to the provision of essential services to the community, by virtue of the administrative arrangements order of 21 December 1984, has already implemented the recommendation. I am pleased to report that a high level of professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication of officers of the Department of Correctional Services is being maintained, which I find personally gratifying.

The review report will provide considerable guidance to the government in meeting the expectations and aspirations of those people who administer our correctional services programs, their clients and the community generally.

While on the subject of community involvement in correctional services, the government is also vitally interested in the views of community members generally and of those organisations with an involvement in correctional services. In the extensive consultative process which led to the production of this report, the review team received a comparatively large number of submissions from such people, and I believe the government will find it particularly helpful to have a response from those people who made submissions to the review team, as well as from the community in general. I am therefore specifically inviting anybody with an interest in this report to submit views on it to the government through the Department of Correctional Services.

Unfortunately, correctional services is a growth industry, both in terms of client numbers and spiralling costs. The government is highly concerned to contain costs while providing an effective, efficient and viable correctional service commensurate with a high level of community protection from continued criminal and antisocial behaviour.

With that view in mind, the government will be examining in detail, through an interdepartmental committee of senior officers, the cost implications of various options presented in the review report so that the resultant development initiatives can be considered in the 1985-86 budget context.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned before, the Apsey report is an excellent resource document and I commend it to the attention of honourable members. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Gas Pipeline Construction

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in the June sittings last year, the member for Barkly, as Minister for Mines and Energy, provided honourable members with an outline of the background to the Amadeus to Darwin gas pipeline project. On 6 March this year, I provided an update on the project. I would like to take this opportunity to inform honourable members of the events that have taken place regarding the project since that time.

In his ministerial statement of 7 June 1984, the then Minister for Mines and Energy provided valuable background information on the project. He indicated that a decision for or against natural gas power generation basically depended on the answers to 2 questions: firstly, are there adequate gas reserves in the Amadeus Basin and, secondly, what is the economic viability of transporting this gas to Darwin?

In regard to the question of gas reserves, considerable effort has been directed towards assessing gas reserves in the Palm Valley field. These

reserves have been evaluated by Magellan, the Department of Mines and Energy, a number of international consultants and the Bureau of Mineral Resources. Amadeus Basin gas reserves will be able to supply Darwin's currently predicted gas requirements to the year 2005.

In regard to the question on the economics of gas transportation to Darwin, NTEC, the Department of Mines and Energy and Treasury have been responsible for evaluating the economics of the project. The government has commissioned the Royal Bank of Canada, an internationally recognised expert on gas field and gas transportation economics, to evaluate the economics of the proposed pipeline. I use this opportunity to give honourable members some indication of the likely economics of the proposal.

From an overview, the gas project has a \$400m net present value (NPV) advantage over the coal project. This NPV advantage is to be divided amongst the participating groups in the project - the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth of Australia, the consortium and the gas producers. The NPV will be shared amongst these groups depending upon the respective tariffs, the gas purchase price and the level of Commonwealth taxation and support. Of course, this analysis depends to a certain extent on the assumptions associated with the modelling employed by the Royal Bank and will only be accurately assessable once the entire contractual arrangement is formalised. It is clear, however, that the project provides substantial benefits in which we will all be able to share.

It is in this light that the Territory has engaged in negotiations on the project to date. There have been 4 distinct avenues which we have pursued in bringing about the realisation of the project: negotiations with the consortium to finalise the transportation agreement; negotiations with the producers to finalise the gas purchase agreement; negotiations with the Commonwealth to finalise the transfer of the capital grant on the coal-fired option to the gas-fired option; and pursuing every other avenue to ensure the construction timetable - which, at the outset, provided little room for delay - is met.

In regard to negotiations for the consortium of the gas producers, it is expected that contracts will be finalised in mid to late May and executed as soon as possible thereafter. The negotiations with the Westpac consortium have proved to be most complex and have frustrated our attempts for earlier signing. We still await word from the Commonwealth on its treatment of the capital grant but are hopeful that the full or near full commitment of the allocated funding for the coal project will be transferred to gas. Such a transfer would hasten a reduction in real electricity costs in the Territory. This real reduction in electricity generating costs will result in a reduction in the Commonwealth's electricity operating subsidy and therefore result in a greater degree of financial independence for the Territory.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the project's status to date related to the more physical development of the project. In this regard, I can advise honourable members that Cabinet has opted for a mix of combined and open-cycle gas turbine units as the generating strategy for Channel Island. This mix will allow maximum flexibility during peak loading while taking advantage of the greater efficiency of the less flexible combined-cycle units.

In regard to the pipeline itself, a pipeline permit application was lodged with the Department of Mines and Energy on 4 April 1985. This application is awaiting the notification of landholders and occupiers affected by the application before it can proceed. The permit will give the applicant the right to enter on land for the purpose of conducting surveys for the pipeline

route. With a grant of this application, it can be expected that the process of consultation with landholders, Aboriginal custodians, land councils and land occupants, for clearance of a route which is acceptable to all parties, will proceed apace. Indeed, this process of consultation has been under way for some time and will step up appreciably in the near future. In particular, the consortium has adopted a procedure for clearing a route free of Aboriginal sacred sites based on tripartite consultation with Aboriginal custodians and Aboriginal statutory bodies. This procedure will allow a maximum of community input into the sites clearance process while allowing land councils and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority to participate according to their specific expertise and resource availability.

The second central feature of the sites clearance process is that there will be no attempt to pry into the location or meaning of sites. Custodians will simply be asked to indicate whether a proposed route is free of sites. There will be no attempt to record or document sites unless this is the wish of the custodians. This approach has been adopted in the belief that extensive consultation early in the project will allow the route clearance process to be completed within the very short time available.

I can also inform honourable members that, on 3 April 1985, CSR placed an order for some \$13m worth of pipe for the Darwin to Mataranka leg of the pipeline project. This order was underwritten by the Territory in the now unlikely event that contract negotiations with the consortium were unsuccessful. Without such underwriting, the physical schedule of the pipeline construction would have been delayed and the completion schedule seriously threatened.

A coating contract should be similarly let in early May 1985 and pipe deliveries will commence to Alice Springs in mid-July 1985. Construction of the pipeline from Darwin to Mataranka should start south of Darwin in early August and continue until such time as the wet season makes further progress impossible. The remainder of the pipeline will commence construction as soon as weather conditions permit in the dry season 1986. The entire project should be completed by 31 December 1986 with commissioning commencing shortly thereafter.

In his statement in June of last year, the then Minister for Mines and Energy noted that there may be substantial advantage to all if gas was also to be supplied to Nabalco at Gove. The impact of Gove using Territory gas are manifold and include: the reduction of cost of transporting gas to Darwin; distancing of Gove from the vagaries of the international oil market by producing a stable and predictably-priced fuel supply; reduction of the Territory's and Australia's bill for imported petroleum products; development of central Australian gas fields; flow of additional royalty income to the Territory; and the possibility of improved international competitiveness of processed products from Gove. To this end, the Westpac consortium and Amadeus Basin producers are currently engaged in negotiations with the Nabalco interests to bring them into the project.

Mr Speaker, we are about to step into an era of Territory history where the delivered real price of energy to all points north of Alice Springs will fall over time. The way in which this era will impact on the structure of the Northern Territory over the next 20, 30 or even 50 years is certainly unknown to us all but, when this Assembly looks back on its achievements at the time of its 20th anniversary in another decade, I am confident that the provision of a north-south energy spine will be very central among those significant achievements.

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

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aboriginal Residential Areas on Pastoral Properties

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Territory government has twice introduced legislation to provide for excisions from pastoral leases to be granted to Aboriginal communities as residential areas. The legislation has been intensively discussed with all interested parties over the past 2 years and it is now evident that no bill is likely to emerge which will satisfy both the pastoralists and the land councils. For this reason, the government will not proceed with the Aboriginal Community Living Areas Bill at this time..

Mr Speaker, I am confident that, with good will on both sides, most of the requests for excisions that have come in can be settled through negotiation. I have therefore asked the Minister for Lands to attach a high priority to arranging these negotiations and concluding them as quickly as possible. The government would like to see significant progress in this area over the next 6 months. The Department of Lands has therefore drawn up new procedures which will accelerate the handling of excision negotiations so that they can be brought to the minister for decision with a minimum of delay.

Mr Speaker, the negotiations and arrangements for excisions will take place in accordance with procedures and guidelines which I now put before the Assembly. These guidelines have been prepared in consultation with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association because the cooperation of association members is essential if we are to avoid legislation and compulsory acquisition in every case. I have given a copy of these guidelines to the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I must make it clear from the outset that the government's objective is to provide certain Aboriginal groups with secure tenure of land sufficient to meet their reasonable living and residential needs. The following Aboriginal groups will be eligible to make an application for land under this scheme: groups now lawfully resident on pastoral properties or who have been resident within the past 10 years and any other group with the consent of the lessee. In the event of dispute over eligibility, the minister will be guided by the facts and circumstances of each case. The scheme is not, however, intended to provide for a new form of Aboriginal land claim, and the following persons or groups would not be eligible as applicants under the scheme: groups who base their requests on traditional or historical links with the land, groups who left the pastoral property more than 10 years ago, groups who base their request on past residence by their parents or grandparents etc, groups who have moved onto the pastoral lease recently not for the purposes of employment but to establish a presence on the land, and groups who own or have an interest in land elsewhere or who already lease or rent land or housing in town.

Mr Speaker, applications should be directed to the Department of Lands in the first instance. They may be oral or written but, if oral, must be confirmed in writing as soon as practicable. Applications may be made by interested Aboriginals or solicitors or other persons acting on their behalf or by pastoralists. The Department of Lands will advise a pastoralist immediately an application is received in respect of his or her property. In addition, an adjoining pastoralist will be notified in cases where the proposed excision is near his or her boundary and is likely to have some effect on his or her

property. Applications must contain information as to the number of applicants involved and their names. The Department of Lands will consult with the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Community Development, together with other interested parties such as land councils, pastoralists etc, to determine the eligibility of applicants.

In the event of a dispute over eligibility, the Department of Lands will put the facts to its minister for decision. The facts which the minister will consider will include: the number and names of applicants; whether any or all of the applicants have been permanently resident on the pastoral lease in question; if not permanently resident, for what period they have been resident; if not permanently resident now, the approximate date or time when they ceased to be resident and the reason why they left the property; and whether or not the group has any interest in land elsewhere or owns or rents housing elsewhere.

Mr Speaker, if the minister rules a group is ineligible, the interested parties will be notified and no further action will be taken on the application. It is the policy of the Territory government that, wherever possible, excisions should be achieved as a result of negotiated agreements between the interested Aboriginal group and pastoralist. Where an application is received and negotiations have not already begun, the Department of Lands will either directly or indirectly - for example, through DAA or DCD - bring the parties together.

In negotiating an excision, the parties involved will take account of the following factors: the number of people who live or intend to live on the land; future population growth; the needs of the group for education, health and other community services; road access; and reasonable needs of the group for recreational areas.

Mr Speaker, no excision will be granted which will adversely affect the viability of a pastoral lease or adversely affect its operations. The government will prohibit by planning instrument any activities on the excision which would conflict with the pastoral operations in the area. Cattle may only be run on an excised area with the consent of the adjoining pastoralist and the Department of Primary Production.

Only 1 excision from a pastoral lease will normally be approved by the minister. More than 1 excision may only be approved where the pastoralist agrees to it.

As noted previously, wherever possible, excisions will be achieved through negotiated agreements and the land acquired under the provisions of the Lands Acquisition Act. If, however, a pastoralist refuses to negotiate with an eligible applicant or will not accede to a reasonable request - 'reasonable' being in the opinion of the minister - the minister may proceed to acquire land on just terms.

Pastoralists will be compensated for the loss of land or improvements resulting from an excision. They will not be liable for fencing, installation of grids, gates or any other costs required for an excision. It will be the responsibility of a successful applicant to fence the area excised from the pastoral lease to a standard approved by the minister and install such gates and or bridges as necessary. It will be the further responsibility of the applicant to construct and maintain adequate firebreaks along the boundaries of the excised area.

Successful applicants will be granted a Crown lease over the excised area for a period of 5 years during which the applicants must demonstrate

permanent residence and meet certain development covenants. At the end of that time, if the covenants have been complied with, the title may be converted to freehold. The minister will not grant title to an excised area until he is satisfied that the applicants have the financial capacity to fence the excised area, install all the necessary grids and gates etc and meet the development costs which will apply to the lease. Applications for land under this scheme must be lodged within 3 years of the date of formal promulgation of the scheme by the minister and applications will not be accepted thereafter.

Mr Speaker, the government is aware that this procedure will not meet the demands of all Aboriginal groups that have been seeking title to land in pastoral areas. We accept that it will be viewed as too restrictive by land councils and other Aboriginal organisations which are committed to obtaining as much land as possible for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I have discussed this matter, however, and agree that our primary aim must be to give secure title of land to Aboriginal groups who have remained permanently resident on pastoral properties or those who have been permanently resident until recently. I look forward to the support of all members of the Assembly in achieving our objective of granting secure title to land for residential purposes to those Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties who have been seeking such security for many years.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, without doubt the latest position being taken by the government is the worst that we have seen in what has been a long saga of proposals and counter proposals. At the beginning of this year, when the Assembly reconvened, some legislation, with which we had problems because its acceptance was made conditional on other pieces of legislation, was withdrawn. Apart from that, the positions adopted in the legislation with regard to who was eligible to make the claim and the forms etc gave us some hope that this government was at last moving towards providing some method by which some form of justice would be gained for what we all know to be the most disadvantaged people in the Northern Territory.

I am afraid that the statement that we now have before us indicates that the government has pulled right back from that position. It says that it is confident that, with goodwill on both sides, most of these requests for excisions can be settled. It is very hard to see how this government could be so naive as to believe that it is doing anything to promote goodwill when it acknowledges in its own proposals that it has capitulated abysmally to one side in this very difficult and emotive area. It has decided that it will take no cognisance of the views of the land councils and no cognisance of the views of the Aboriginal people who wanted to get that land. It has simply done a deal, as was stated, with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association.

Mr Speaker, as have other members on this side of the Assembly, I have talked to officials and ordinary members of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. We were hopeful too that we were moving some way towards a fair and just solution to this problem. It is unfortunate that the government's decision to capitulate has made it virtually impossible to reach that negotiated position at this stage. However, later in this debate, I will be talking about the basis upon which we were negotiating and I am sure members will accept it as being a far more reasonable and just basis.

This statement differs markedly from the legislation that was introduced by the previous Chief Minister in that the present Chief Minister is saying that only those people who have been lawfully resident on pastoral

properties or who have been resident within the past 10 years shall be able to enter into negotiations to obtain one of these leases. He is denying one of the most unfortunate occurrences in the Territory's history. After award wages were granted to Aboriginal ringers on pastoral properties, large numbers were pushed off the properties into the towns. Mr Speaker, as you yourself would know, many of those people represent one of the worst examples of cultural contact. I refer to what can happen when a group is entirely out of its element. The people to whom I am referring have found it extremely difficult to find another form of lifestyle in the towns away from the stations where they were an essential part of the work force for so many years. In many cases, but not in all cases, they were working on land with which they had a traditional relationship. However, they worked that property for 20 to 30 years in some instances. Having been pushed off, they now live like fish out of water around the larger towns. The vast majority of that group would like nothing more than to return to a small excision on the property where they grew up and where they worked for the vast majority of their working life. They believe that, in that setting, they can re-establish themselves with some form of pride and bring up what are now their grandchildren in many instances away from an environment with which they have found it almost impossible to cope. I am afraid that this particular group has been completely wiped as far as this statement is concerned.

Mr Speaker, we have a list of groups who definitely cannot make a claim or become involved in these negotiations. It states, for example, that groups who own or have an interest in land elsewhere, or who are leasing or renting housing in the town, will not be eligible as applicants under the scheme. It would appear that, if a group had been kicked off some 2 or 3 years ago after generations of living on and working with the people on a station, if they were to rent a house in one of the town camps around Alice Springs or Tennant Creek, for some strange reason, because of the fact that they rented a house somewhere, they no longer will be able to become applicants under the scheme. I hope that we will receive some justification for the reasoning behind such a ridiculous provision.

It continues with a succession of statements which make it patently clear that this paper was written only after consultation with the pastoralists. It takes in a number of suppositions which are completely incorrect and untrue. For example, it states: 'Cattle may only be run on an excised area with the consent of adjoining pastoralists and the Department of Primary Production'. It would appear that the belief has grown up that people granted excision under the legislation have some desire to set up mini cattle industries and become mini cattle barons on their 40 or 50 acres. Mr Speaker, you and I know that that is patently absurd. However, to turn around and cut off all ability of a group to run cattle unless it goes cap in hand is ridiculous. It is like the serf going up to the feudal lord and saying: 'Please, sir, do you mind if I run a couple of killers'. There are laws in the Territory which govern the control of disease etc. We have no objection to those applying on these blocks of land as they apply on all land throughout the Northern Territory. We do not see why this particular group should be singled out for special attention and its ability to run cattle restricted.

On that point, it is interesting to see the reference to the factors that will be taken into account when working out the area. At no stage is anything stated with regard to the people's ability to obtain any form of economic viability in their community or indeed to be able to set up, for example, subsistence gardens. There is no provision there for them to have enough land for that. There is no provision that, if the people have a form of economic activity, they will be able to bring that before the department to justify their application for a particular area of land.

Mr Speaker, it states that one excision will normally be approved by the minister and more than one excision may only be approved where the pastoralist agrees to it. I find this statement particularly irritating because it shows the lack of depth that the government has put into addressing this problem. What is the real problem? If, for example, the pastoralist was talking about giving up 20 km², what is the difference between giving 1 block of 20 km² or 2 blocks of 10 km², given that there is already the ability to negotiate the location of those blocks to ensure that they do not affect the viability of the property or whatever? If there are 2 distinct tribal groups which have been resident on a property, as happens in quite a number of instances, the use of this provision to force people onto the same block as being their only option in being able to obtain a block somewhere close to their own land will put us into the situation where we will develop further the very worst aspects of some of the old communities. You yourself will know, Mr Speaker, that the worst of those communities, the ones where there was a real breakdown, was where a number of different tribal groups were forced together into the same community. I cannot see why a government with any idea about that would make a provision like this.

I am worried by the fact that the minister will not grant title to an excised area until he is satisfied the applicants have the capacity to provide fences, cattle grids and gates and to fulfil development covenants etc. What has not been realised by the government is that we are talking about people who are living in abject poverty. We are talking about groups of people who, because they have been unable to get any access to funds, have no fixed assets. In many instances, they have no water and no housing. They have nothing. In that situation, they do not have the financial ability to be able to convince the minister that they can fence an area, install grids and the gates and undertake whatever development covenants he puts on the lease. I find that extremely offensive.

It looks as though the deal that he has done with the Cattlemen's Association is one for groups that can do a deal with the pastoralist. In other words, it is the old situation that I keep coming across in my electorate. Unfortunately, still today people refer to the good blackfellows. They say: 'Well, these are my blackfellows. They are good fellows. I will look after them but not that other mob over there. No, they are a bad mob'. It looks as though, knowingly or unknowingly, the government has allowed itself to be conned into a deal where the good ones, the ones who are rated by the pastoralists to be okay, will be able to get their lease because they will be able to satisfy the minister that they can meet the development covenants. All others, who out bush would have various other epithets attached to them, would not be able to satisfy them.

Mr Speaker, I would like to propose to this Assembly an alternative method of granting excisions from pastoral properties which would ensure that there is justice and that there is an end to the invidious situation in which these people find themselves. We worked this out on the following basis; that traditional rights in residence or usage of stations or an adjoining station by a person or his parents should be the basis upon which a person may make an application for an excision. Pastoralists or other Aboriginal groups would have the ability to object on the basis of fact. If they stated that it was incorrect that the particular group that was applying had satisfied those particular conditions, they would be able to make their objection. This provision talks about a 3-year limitation. We propose a 5-year limitation given that there is a very lengthy process involved in going through the total exercise. We want there to be enough time so that people can see what comes out the other end. If, for example, a group made an application within that 5-year

period and then, for a technical reason, did not achieve its end during the 5-year period, it would be allowed a further 2 years during which it could reapply on the same station or an adjoining station.

We had considerable problems with the idea of size. It is not really a matter of stipulating 5 acres or 0.5 acre or whatever because there is an enormous variation in the ability of land in the Northern Territory to provide some form of an economic base. We believe, however, that 2% of a property should provide some form of economic base and that 2% should be able to be discussed in this context without the provision of economic viability being brought in. If 100% of a property means it is viable, 98% will not cause it to be non-viable. There are many other factors that have more effect than that one.

However, we suggest various provisions regarding the location, the shape and the number of excisions. We believe that pastoralists should be able to lodge an objection about the location of the block that people are asking for, the shape of that block and the number of blocks on the basis of, firstly, the economic viability of the property. While it would be agreed, for example, that 2% was available, the location, the size and the number of blocks that made up that 2% would be able to be negotiated on the basis of economic viability. For example, we do not intend these to be used as a means of peacocking or picking the eyes out of a run so that people can take a number of blocks, picking up all the best part of the land and, in that way, affecting the viability of the property. Our proposal would ensure that that does not occur.

Mr Speaker, the next point is that management is not made substantially more difficult. For example, if a group attempted to have a very long, thin excision which, in effect, would make it difficult for the pastoralist to manage his property, we would be willing to have that application refused.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move an extension of time so that the member for Stuart may complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The next element that we believe the pastoralists should be able to object on is privacy. Obviously, the pastoralist has a right to privacy for his own homestead and the area immediately around it. We would be quite willing to allow him to object if, for example, the location or the shape of the excisions was such that they would affect that privacy. We believe also that the government should have an ability to object if the location, shape or number of the excisions was such that the provision of services was made substantially more difficult. For example, a group might decide that it wanted a family excision: 'I want that one over there. This one wants it over there. However, we all want government services'. In that instance, we would allow the government to object on the basis that that was ridiculous and far too expensive to implement.

Mr Speaker, we agreed that compensation should be payable on the basis of current usage and that fences have to be erected together with roads and grids from the excision to the nearest public road. We would be willing to back the Northern Territory government in approaches to the federal government to have special funding made available for that purpose. However, we do not

believe that a particular group should prove that it has the funds to carry out those works before it can make an application for an excision.

We believe that the activities that are carried out on those excisions should be subject to normal Territory and federal laws. The idea that people must go to the pastoralist for permission to run some goats or a couple of killers or a store is positively feudal and repugnant to the principle of equality of status of people in the Territory. We believe that normal Territory and federal laws should apply to the land that these people are on, just as they apply to pastoralists or people further up or down the road.

Mr Speaker, we believe that, after 5 years of continuous abandonment, the pastoralists, or other Aboriginal groups who were originally entitled to apply, should be able to apply for that land. The pastoralists could say: 'It is not being used for the original purpose. I would like the land back again'. If, however, there is another excision on the property which, because of numbers, is not large enough for a group's original purposes, it could say: 'We are crowded because we have not got the land that we originally required. We have demonstrated to everybody that we are staying on this land and are running our lives quite satisfactorily. We would like to have that extra area'.

Mr Speaker, access is not addressed in this statement. We believe that access should be the same as for Aboriginal land. We believe that this provision would allow people to try to redevelop their lives. We believe that the access provisions were placed in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act for that purpose and we believe that their application to these particular pieces of land would assist in that. We propose that objections and appeals should go to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. We believe that he should have the ability to arbitrate and make decisions. The tribunal which would be working for that would be similarly constituted to the one that was in the former Chief Minister's legislation last year. However, I believe that the length of service of the proposed barrister is too short. I believe that it should be somebody with significantly longer than 5 years' experience at the bar.

Mr Speaker, it is all very nice for the Chief Minister to say: 'Let us do nothing. Let us hope that everybody negotiates and we will work around the edges. We will not threaten any legislation and we will go along with everything they have put up'. I would like to believe that that would result in a clear and equitable solution. It is very attractive on the face of it: 'We will sit back and everybody will do things nicely'. However, from what I have heard, that will not be the case.

Previously, I hesitated suggesting one scenario to the Assembly in case I induced more people into thinking about it and going ahead with it. However, it is already widely canvassed and can be done under Territory legislation or under the federal legislation which also had a provision for a 1-year period after which, if everybody sorted it out, the government would not interfere. The scenario results from a giant loophole in the provisions. During the period in which a negotiated settlement can be achieved, a pastoralist need only find a group that he can work out a deal with and say: 'There is a piece of land there'. Afterwards, he can turn around to everybody and say: 'Haven't I done a wonderful thing? I have given up 5% of my property'. Mr Speaker, as you know, many of the pastoralists or the owner-operators in my area, and no doubt in yours, have many part-Aboriginal relations, ex-employees etc who live permanently and quite happily in town and have no wish to move back on to the property. The pastoralist goes to this group and he says: 'Look mate, get us out of a bit of trouble. What I will do is that I will grant you an excision of about 5% of the property. You have on the back of this thing, which I will hold, an undated transfer back to me'. Having subleased it out to this

group, the group who are actually living on the property, living down the creek, and who have been there for generations, will get nothing because it has already been given to a group which has no intention of living on it. The pastoralist will simply wait until the abandonment clause comes into effect in 5 years' time or 2 years' time or whenever and then he will get his property back. He will say: 'Thanks Bill, I'll buy you a beer some time. You have done us a beauty. We have stopped those blackfellows getting that land'.

Debate adjourned.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS Financial Arrangements for Casinos

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition asked 2 questions relating to a legal opinion, extracts of which I quoted to the Assembly. In addition to the information provided, I undertook to provide information during the course of the sittings.

In respect of the first question, the Leader of the Opposition asked whether the Treasurer's minute of 12 November 1984 authorised the arrangements for the method of payment pursuant to the agreement finalised on 8 November 1984 with Federal Hotels, the funds for which needed to be paid before 14 November 1984. The minute in fact authorised arrangements for the payment of the funds through moneys already appropriated to the Northern Territory Development Corporation which would either be reimbursed in full or adjusted according to the needs of the corporation in the first budget review.

In respect of the second question, the Leader of the Opposition asked about the agreement with Federal Hotels of 8 November 1984. The Territory's liability under the agreement of 8 November 1984 refers to the terms of the settlement with Federals pursuant to the Federal Hotels Casinos (Compensation) Act. The terms of the agreement were adequately covered in the statement made by the Chief Minister to the Legislative Assembly on 27 February 1985.

The liabilities to the Territory were pursuant to the arrangements set out in the Federal Hotels Casinos (Compensation) Act and it was not considered necessary then to table the document. However, I am quite happy to make it available to the honourable member for his information but it will add nothing to the joint public announcement made by the Chairman of Federal Hotels, Mr Farrell, and the Chief Minister on 8 November 1984, which was tabled as Attachment A to the Chief Minister's statement.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE Member for Ludmilla

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this day be granted to the honourable member for Ludmilla who is absent interstate on government business.

Motion agreed to.

FIRE SERVICES ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL ACT REPEAL BILL (Serial 108)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the Fire Services Arbitral Tribunal Act was originally introduced in 1965 to provide an independent tribunal to determine terms and conditions of employment for employees of the then Northern Territory Fire Brigade. The jurisdiction of that tribunal was preserved under section 53 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978. However, in September 1983, a federal award was ratified by consent between the parties and, simply put, the arbitral tribunal act is now seen as virtually redundant and should be repealed.

Mr Speaker, it is the government's intention, once this bill is passed by this Assembly, to delay the commencement of the act. This is necessary because of the need to seek Commonwealth regulatory action to permit unfettered jurisdiction over these employees by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Without going into the technicalities, the new provisions in the Conciliation and Arbitration Act at division 1A provide for regulations to issue to ensure that the Australian Industrial Commission continues to have jurisdiction with respect to these employees.

I have already written to the federal minister seeking the appropriate regulations and, once these have been issued, the commencement of this repealing legislation can proceed.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION BILL (Serial 107)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to provide a new Commercial Arbitration Act that will be uniform with legislation introduced Australia-wide. The process of arbitration and the principles governing it are complex. The law governing commercial arbitration tends to be a mixture of common law and statute law, as augmented by the terms of the particular contract which has given rise to the need for arbitration. The present law is contained in the South Australia Arbitration Act of 1891. The need for reform in this area of the law has been recognised, and there have been reports by various law reform commissions in a number of Australian jurisdictions: South Australia (1969); Victoria considered the matter twice (1974 and 1977); Queensland (1970); ACT (1974); Western Australia (1974); and New South Wales (1976). This degree of concern over the subject led the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General to begin examining the matter, with a view to the passage of a uniform law, in 1974.

As a result, a uniform bill has been agreed to. The bill was settled following extensive comment by bodies interested in arbitration and commercial disputes, particularly builders' associations, and deliberations by ministers, officers, parliamentary counsels' committee and a special committee of standing committee officers.

The uniform bill has been enacted in both New South Wales and Victoria and is expected to be introduced in all other states. The bill is quite large and many of its provisions relate purely to procedural matters. The primary

advantage in adopting the uniform legislation is that commercial arbitration law will be uniform throughout Australia and all concerned organisations have been consulted and have contributed to the exercise. Commercial contracts will be able to be drawn up to include a reference to arbitration in the event of a dispute and the parties will be assured that the law will be consistently applied throughout Australia.

Mr Speaker, I mention now some of the more important provisions of the bill. The Supreme Court will have primary jurisdiction in matters related to commercial arbitration. The bill makes provision for the court to appoint an arbitrator or arbitrators where an arbitration agreement is silent as to who should arbitrate or where a person dies or otherwise ceases or fails to act. The court may replace an arbitrator. Apart from this role, the possibility for court intervention is kept to a minimum.

The arbitrator will have a wide discretion as to the manner in which arbitrations are conducted. He or she must act according to law but may otherwise conduct proceedings as he or she thinks fit. On application to the court, a party to an arbitration will be able to obtain a writ or summons requiring any person to appear or to produce documents. Parties to an arbitration shall appear in person and may only be legally represented where the arbitrator is satisfied that a party would otherwise be unfairly disadvantaged.

An arbitrator will have power to make interim awards. This is frequently necessary in order to preserve the status quo, to safeguard property or to protect the interests of a party pending a full hearing. An arbitrator will have the power to order specific performance of an agreement in circumstances in which such a remedy would be available in the court.

Awards made in arbitration proceedings will be final and binding. Unless the arbitration agreement makes specific provision as to costs, the arbitrator will have a discretion as to ordering by whom costs will be paid. There is also provision for an interest component to be included in the award and for interest to be paid on any sum ordered to be paid by a party so that the aggrieved party can receive interest on any sum owed from the date on which the dispute arose until payment is made. Such a provision takes account of commercial interests and recognises the need for the law in this area to operate in a commercially-realistic fashion.

There will be no jurisdiction in the court to set aside an arbitrator's award on the ground of error of fact or law on the face of the award. The new commercial arbitration system is intended to supplant the jurisdiction of the court where an agreement permits arbitration as a means of dispute resolution. It will encourage the development of a speedy and economical means for resolution of disputes by experts in their field. To appeal from an arbitrator's award, consent of the parties is required or the leave of the court must be obtained. The court will, however, have strong powers to deal with instances of deliberate delay by a party and incompetence on the part of an arbitrator.

The proposed arbitration system is specifically intended to encourage arbitration in settlement of disputes arising under international agreements. Parties from countries which are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards will be encouraged to arbitrate in Australia, and the court will have the power to enforce arbitral awards made overseas. Mr Speaker, I commend this most important piece of legislation to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 112)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This short bill is designed to allow the minister to consent to the use of the word 'co-operative' in the name or title of an organisation other than a co-operative registered under the act. It will also enable the minister to consent to the use of a word imparting a similar meaning. Section 32, as it stands, imposes a total prohibition on the use of the word 'co-operative' other than in societies registered under the act. This is to prevent unscrupulous operators from fraudulently gaining an advantage by making out to the public that they have special co-operative status. However, there are clearly situations where an organisation is not purporting to be a co-operative but, for genuine historical or other reasons, has the word 'co-operative' or a word of like nature in its name. In such cases, the minister should be able to consider the matter and, if appropriate, consent to the use of the word 'co-operative'. This is the main area where ministerial discretion will be exercised.

The amendment is prompted by the desire of a long-established, reputable southern company to establish a Territory office. The company, which has the word 'co-operative' as part of its name, is prevented from gaining registration as a foreign company. I do not see this situation happening on a regular basis. I would also point out to members that proposals for further amendments of the Co-operative Societies Act are being considered and one of the areas to be addressed is penalties. I hope to have another bill before the Assembly later on in the year.

Mr Speaker, you declared that this piece of legislation may be processed through the Assembly during this sittings on the grounds of hardship. The company has made considerable representation to us in order that it may register in the Northern Territory and provide its valuable services to the citizens of the Northern Territory. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has no objection to that course of action. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 98)

Continued from 6 March 1985..

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this bill is generally supported by the opposition. However, we would like the minister to answer a few questions. The bill provides that, once the minister declares an area to be an electricity supply distribution extension area, the cost of connection immediately becomes a charge on the land whether or not the owner elects to have electricity supplied. An owner may choose whether or not to have the supply connected but, if he chooses to sell the land, there is no choice at all as far as paying for the cost of connection is concerned.

While this bill is supported, it is of concern to us in a couple of areas.

It is arguable that the charges made should not be arbitrary but should relate to the actual cost of providing the service; that is, an arbitrary figure of, say, \$5000 may not be appropriate for all areas. In some areas, \$5000 may be excessive while, in others, it may be inadequate.

If NTEC is intending to subsidise operations in an area by loading the charges on another, that information should be made public. NTEC should account properly for the charges it makes. It has been suggested to me that, in relation to a particular rural subdivision, the total charges at a rate of \$5000 per block adds up to about twice the value of the contract let to provide the service. I understand that the costs in relation to the actual reticulation of the electricity, the powerpoles, the lines etc are not the total costs. There could be additional costs relating back to the power-station if power has to be raised to a higher kilowatt capacity and then dropped again because of extra usage being made in the area. However, when there is a factor of twice the cost in relation to a subdivision, we believe that some detail should be given of where the additional money will be utilised. We would be grateful if the minister could clarify in this debate the basis on which the actual \$5000 would be determined.

Mr Speaker, as the bill stands, there is no specific amount to be charged for the connection of electricity supply. No doubt, that will be a matter for regulation. Also, there is some concern within the community at the possible imposition of interest charges which may apply to the sum nominally owed to NTEC for the provision of the service. As I understand it, there is some doubt as to the legality of charging interest because the legislation makes no provision for this. Depending on the rate of interest and the time involved, the accumulated sum owed could add up to a very sizeable burden when the property is transferred. Prospective consumers should be made well aware of what they will be up for in years to come.

There appears to be a general view in the community that all rural block holders belong to the wealthy elite. That is not the case. Many of them are real battlers. Some of them are living in what would generally be considered substandard housing because a block and a tent out there is cheaper than a house and land in Darwin. Many of these people live subsistence or semi-subsistence lifestyles depending to a large extent upon the food they grow to live. A family in a situation like this cannot afford electricity. They can possibly survive for now, as they have in the past. However, we wonder about the situation if, in 10 to 15 years time, the breadwinner, being the nominal owner of the block, were to die. Before the block that they lived or existed on could be transferred to the widow and children, they would have to pay the full amount including interest charges. It is very important that the interest charge position be clarified together with the amount of money that would be involved because, for the periods that I am talking about, if a 10% rate were to be applied, the amount would not be \$5000 but in the vicinity of \$35 000 to \$60 000.

Mr Speaker, we have misgivings and we hope that the minister will address those during the course of this debate. We would have liked to be able to say that we have a you-beaut system which will provide electricity to all different situations in the rural area. I am afraid that my discussions around the various states have not unearthed a system which is better than the one which the government has come up with. I do, however, highlight once again that, if interest rates are charged, the amount could build up and cause excessive hardship and the possibility of people having to leave the family block because they are unable to effect the transfer from the breadwinner to his successors.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I have very few reservations at all about this proposed legislation. I think it is timely and should have been in place a long time ago. It has been a matter of some concern to me that we have been allowing rural blocks in the proximity of towns to be subdivided without making any provision for power supply as a part of the subdivision. It was obvious that, somewhere along the way, somebody was going to have to wear the costs because people would be looking for power.

I noted some of the things that the honourable member for Stuart said. I think it would present serious problems if we were to vary figures for different blocks. Personally, I think \$5000 is good. Most people can afford that amount. That \$5000 will immediately increase the value of the land by at least that much. For any block in the rural area or at any place all, be it Batchelor or on the western side of Darwin Harbour, that \$5000 value would be added to the block as soon as power was made available. I do not see any reason why that should be a gift. People do not have to take on power if they do not want it. They can live on the block forever provided that they do not sell it or transfer it in anyway.

I have seen somewhere a proposal that the terms, in some cases anyway, would be interest free over 2 years. I think that is extremely reasonable. I do not think that anyone could expect a better deal. There would be some people who could not afford it but there would not be too many.

No doubt the government has in mind that these areas will extend to include areas well outside the Darwin rural areas and the rural areas of the other major towns. Certainly, the rural areas in my own electorate are looking for this sort of thing. I have not heard one complaint about that cost of \$5000. Everybody is ready to grab it if he can. Unfortunately, in some places, there is nobody within the 5 km limit. Sometimes the rural areas start 7 km or 10 km out and it is difficult to get that initial jump from the distribution point. I think this \$5000 deal is extremely generous. It will probably be the case that, if there is somebody within the 5 km limit and the next person is another 5 km further out, the jump can be made from the first to the second and so on until it gets out quite a distance whereby people will be able to extend on that \$5000 cost. That is a very good deal because it is obvious that people could not afford to do that if they had to pay the actual cost of taking the electricity that far.

I have some very real concerns about the number of blocks that are being subdivided within a reasonable distance of power distribution yet there has been no attempt by the government to insist that the developer obtain access to that power distribution. If somebody is doing a fairly major subdivision involving millions of dollars, and power is only 5 km or 10 km away, he ought to be more than encouraged to put the power on to the blocks initially. I am certain that he could get the extra \$5000 per block anyway. I do not have a great deal more to say about this. I think it is extremely generous; I do not think anyone will have too many complaints about it. I would be surprised if there is anybody, even in the Darwin rural area, who will not take advantage of it.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, listening to what the member for Stuart had to say, I was very tempted to nickname him 'Brian of the Long Bow' because, in the Assembly over the last couple of days, he has drawn very long bows in the possible scenarios that he has painted. He did that this morning in relation to the excisions statement and he has done it again in relation to some poor person who is living in a shanty on a block. That is not the way I read the bill, Mr Speaker. As you are well aware, I have a block

in the Ti Tree area and power is being brought past that block. It is not being connected at this stage although there are moves afoot. I hope that it will be on some time in May. I expect to pay \$5000 for it, which is an extremely fair amount. The determination is that, if you pay the \$5000 in cash, you actually get a 5% discount, making a payment of \$4750. If you wish to pay over 2 years, the \$5000 can be paid without interest. You can negotiate with NTEC for longer periods but you pay 10% interest on the balance which is due. Those are generous conditions.

If I do not bother to put the power on, I could go on forever and owe NTEC nothing. I would not have to pay one cent until the time came when I wanted to sell the block, in which case I would still have an asset which could be sold to realise the \$5000 or whatever the fee was at that time. This is an extremely sensible measure because, in the past, some people have not bothered to connect. They let other people bear the burden of paying the costs of reticulation and, at some later time, obtain it at a far cheaper rate. In Ti Tree, there are just the 2 of us. \$10 000 will be the total cost as against the previous figure of \$53 136. That was the official figure. However, eventually there may be many small farms in the area and the government should be able to recoup the costs.

The member for Victoria River mentioned power to subdivisions. According to the NTEC directions, the subdivider would be charged to bring the power to the subdivision and then reticulation within that subdivision would be his responsibility. Indeed, he would recover his costs from the sale of the land. He would consider all the costs and, if he did not think that the returns would better his costs, he would not even start the subdivision. I think that is a sensible situation. What we have here is a method of covering the bigger blocks. It is a very fair way indeed of allowing NTEC to recover the costs of supplying electricity. It offers many benefits to people in those areas and will allow things to happen which would not happen otherwise.

As I said before, when I checked with NTEC before buying the block at Ti Tree, \$80 000 was the approximate figure. I knew that the Dahlenburgs would not be a part of it because of their situation and I knew I could not come to the party so I dismissed the thought of putting electricity on. My plan was to operate a bore on diesel. Diesel requires someone there all the time and would involve inconvenience and costs. With 24-hour NTEC power, I can put detectors in the ground which will measure the water content. They will trigger mechanisms to start my irrigation. That allows me to be away from the place, as my duties demand.

The bill we have before us will advantage many Territorians and I commend it.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I represent an electorate that does not have any of these rural type allotments. Nonetheless, my interest is just as intense. The bill is quite contrary to the picture painted by the member for Stuart. It is not just a generous scheme for providing electrification to rural allotments at an average figure of \$5000 but it is also about sensible cost recovery of expenditure by government.

Generally, services are provided in these areas for one of a number of reasons. Provision of a service might be of benefit to the community as a whole or it might even be purely to provide a fair share of the taxation purse.

In regard to the overall benefit to the community, there might be return to the community through industry, agriculture, mining or, indirectly, by promotion of smaller communities in isolated areas that would act as decentralised service

bases for a great variety of functions. There is no doubt that all Australians are entitled to their fair return of the taxation dollar. There is no reason why residents of older areas are entitled to any greater share of infra-structural dollars that have been spent in the past as opposed to newer areas. I guess we are fairly familiar with that. The Northern Territory has been disadvantaged over many years in comparison with the established states which have these infrastructural facilities in place.

Mr Speaker, this government has accepted the third criterion a commitment to the economically or otherwise disadvantaged groups throughout our community to provide essential services to ensure that health and acceptable standards of living are attained by all. However, these services go far beyond electricity reticulation. I will mention these only briefly to paint the total picture. Facilities provided to rural allotments include roadworks, water, telephones, schools, bus services etc. All of these services cost money and they cost money disproportionately to the urban areas. This is where I am interested and concerned. I do not wish people who elect to live in remote rural areas to be disadvantaged but I have a responsibility to my constituents to ensure that they also have remaining in the bucket their fair share of the taxation dollar.

We have seen, particularly the Darwin rural area, proliferation of 5-acre blocks over the last 10 or 15 years. I understand there are now thousands of allotments out in that area. People have gone there for a variety of reasons, most of them extremely commendable. Some people want to get away from the hum-drum lifestyle of suburbia. That is a great philosophy indeed. As the member for Stuart said, some people do it because they believe it is an economically feasible move to make. There are people who cannot afford the standard suburban home on a suburban block. There are other people who live out there for productive reasons. In the Darwin rural area, because of the progression of time and the implementation of government policies, there is great variety in the provision of various services. There are the pure bush blocks where people live almost on dirt tracks with absolutely no other facilities through to the bituminised roads that are designed for all-weather purposes. The latter, because of their locality, not only have electricity reticulation but water reticulation as well. I guess those people almost have suburban facilities in a rural atmosphere.

Not only is there a variety of ranges of services provided but also there has been a range in how these services have been paid for. The most recent trend is that the purchaser of an allotment pays for all these services via the purchase of his block from the developer because they are provided as part of the conditions of development. Other people have been a bit more fortunate. They have paid for their cheap block out in the sticks and, because of government policies and pressures, high-cost roads, high-cost power and, in some cases, water, have been taken past their blocks absolutely free of charge. I have no real beef about that either but, sooner or later, we come back to the balance of who gets what for what.

When we look at the cost of providing high-quality bitumen roads and maintaining them over a long period, depending on a variety of factors such as drainage, terrain etc, a ball-park estimate might be \$15 000 to \$20 000. Overhead power can certainly cost up to \$15 000, depending on the transmission lines required, additional transformers etc. Water reticulation, on the other hand, is certainly only available to those who are in the proximity of the trunk main from the dam. By agreement with the Department of Transport and Works, many allotments have been able to connect to reticulated water. That is a definite advantage over paying \$5000 to \$6000 for a bore and paying running

costs over a long period of time. Average costs for water reticulation to a 5-acre block might be in the order of \$3000, plus the hidden costs of the head-works and pumping costs that might very well double or treble that actual reticulation expenditure. As for telephones and other facilities that are provided out of the public purse by federal departments, I do not have any knowledge of the costs involved. However, they all add up to providing facilities out of the public purse. Some of those costs are recovered and some are not.

When you add these figures that I have been mentioning, it is easy to see that it might cost some \$30 000 or even \$40 000 to provide urban-type services to a typical 5-acre rural allotment. The question arises as to who pays and who gains. Quite obviously, the landholder gains by improved facilities, a better lifestyle, lower running costs etc. He also gains by a very obvious and clearly definable increase in the capital value of his property. I have no beef there either; people should be able to realise capital gain on their property. However, there has to be some recompense somewhere along the line. What this bill is all about is that, despite the fact that the government is still subsidising the \$5000 scheme, it should try to regain some of that expenditure at the time of transfer of that allotment when that capital gain is realised. That is what I see as the great benefit of this particular bill.

Mr Speaker, people in the northern suburbs have seen only too clearly over the last week the advantages of electrification and the disadvantages of being off the air for a while. The minister himself was off power for some 36 hours and suffered some losses to his property. The people of the northern suburbs and the member for Jingili, who raised the question of undergrounding power in the northern suburbs, quite correctly see that they are entitled to a fair share of the tax purse and I suggest that maybe some of the return from these \$5000 payments, which is only a token gesture in terms of the many dollars spent on services and improvements in the rural area, could go a long way in the long term to providing underground power in the electorate of Wagaman.

The member for Stuart mentioned that the \$5000 scheme was in fact inequitable in many cases. He mentioned subdivisions where the total recoupment is double what might be expected under tender to extend reticulated power to a particular subdivision. The booklet is readily available to him. I am surprised that he has not got himself across both the provisions of the scheme and the various press releases that have been issued over the last 6 months or more by the minister.

Mr Ede: Every time I read it, they have changed it.

Mr FINCH: It is written in concise English. Even he could understand it.

Might I refer to some of the guidelines of the scheme. There are 4 categories of consumer extensions available within 5 km of an existing electrical distribution system. The first category is for minor consumers, presumably the normal rural residential allotments where consumers take less than 1000 kV.A. The set figure for that is \$5000 per block. However, users, such as those in light industry, would be asked to pay \$5000 plus an additional loading depending on their total requirement. That is only fair and reasonable. For extremely high energy demands - in other words, for major industry - people would need to negotiate an arrangement with NTEC. The fourth category is for subdivisions. I will read it: 'The developer will be required to provide internal reticulation within the subdivision and a contribution of \$5000'. Therefore, if a developer has a 20-block subdivision, he pays what it costs him at best tender price to extend reticulation to those allotments plus a lump sum

of \$5000 which would probably go nowhere near paying for the headworks and the major transmission that is required to back up that small reticulation system.

Not only was the member for Stuart off the mark there but he seemed to have some strange mathematical process whereby he turned a \$5000 contribution into \$35 000 within somebody's lifetime. That is an extraordinary interest rate. The same booklet refers to no interest rate. The bill does not refer to any interest rate. It refers to the guidelines. If the member for Stuart would care to read the booklet - and I am surprised that he has not - he would see that the contribution is a non-refundable capital contribution and it shall be subject to escalation based on annual CPI, and why not? Annual CPI must relate to the improved capital value, valued in some loose form anyway, and that is only fair and reasonable. He is already getting something for nothing. He is so far off the track when he is talking about families. When there is joint ownership on a block, there is no need for the remaining owner to repurchase the allotment. I wonder where he gets these fanciful stories from.

What we have here is quite clearly a sensible, reasonable and fair system of government regaining some small portion of its overall expenditure through improving somebody else's property. I have absolutely no opposition at all to our providing facilities to people who both deserve them and need them. But what I do say is that this government is correct in addressing itself to proper return of those dollars where feasible and reasonable.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the electorate of Wagaman, I commend the bill for its sensibleness.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I have listened with interest to the contributions to this debate by the 4 members before me. I agree with some of the things they have said. Party politics does not come into it. I disagree with other things that they have said.

The member for Stuart said that, instead of having a flat \$5000 rate, we should have different charges in different areas. I thought he would have agreed with our socialist approach to this of having \$5000 payable on every block. It was rather surprising to hear him say it. I must say that the reason for putting the \$5000 charge on each block came out of the frustration that the government had with various schemes over the years. I am not in favour of the sum of \$5000. I am in favour of a sum of money.

Previously, when a subdivision was made - 320 acres for example - there might be 20 blocks for sale. On those 20 blocks might be living only 3 people. They are very interested in having power connected. They approach NTEC and they get a price for the power to be supplied to the 20 blocks. They then try to trace the owners of those other 17 blocks to see if they are interested. NTEC would give a pretty reasonable figure but, one by one in this hypothetical situation, these people drop out. It has happened again and again in subdivisions in the rural area. Eventually, the 3 people living on their blocks are left with an exorbitant sum to pay to get electricity on. Consequently, they do not get their electricity on. They make do with kerosene, small solar appliances and small diesel appliances. This has happened time and time again.

Frustrated with the whole system, the government has come forward with this \$5000 scheme. That is what it is called in the rural area. I think that it may have been a figure plucked from the air. I have had good arguments advanced to me to explain why it was \$5000 but I think it may have been a figure plucked from the air. I have said to people in the rural area that perhaps the government could have reduced the price to \$4500 or \$4000. I have had it put to

me that, when blocks in the rural area, especially on the outer limits, are subdivided, NTEC will make a killing. I have not worked out the details of that but it was put to me by one of my constituents.

I must say that the member for Stuart did exaggerate a wee bit in suggesting that all my constituents lived in tents and grew a few vegetables to support them. A few do live in tents. I know a family of 5 which has lived in a tent for a number of years. They may have a house built this Wet. Again, I do not agree with the member for Wagaman who thinks we have all struck it rich in the rural area and we can all afford to pay this \$5000. Most of the people are in between and would find it a bit difficult to pay \$5000.

Mr Speaker, in this piece of legislation, a couple of parts were unclear to me. I do not have any argument with a block of land attracting this charge of \$5000 that has to be paid when the title is changed some time in the future. I have a problem which I would like the minister to clarify for me. Proposed new subsection 30A(4) says that, before the present owner of a block can sell it, he must pay the \$5000. Out our way, that is pretty unrealistic because there are not many people who would have the odd \$5000 hanging around in the bank. If they have \$5000, they spend it.

Mr Robertson: The payment is on transfer.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Well, it says that the owner of a parcel of land shall not transfer the land to another person unless he has first paid. As the minister has said, it is done simultaneously. If this is the case, I would not have any disagreement with it.

The member for Victoria River was very pleased with the scheme. Probably his constituents would be. But his constituents are not the same as mine. His constituents are like the people in the outlying districts of my electorate: Acacia Hills and down that way. Those people are very pleased because, previously, to have the power on would cost a darn sight more than \$5000. It would cost nearer \$12 000 or \$13 000. If I could cite the case of the people who live at Darwin River and other places closer to town, it will cost them \$5000. Really, I do not think it would have cost them \$5000 but the government has made a decision that it shall be \$5000 per block. The people living further away, like the constituents of the member for Victoria River who has many farming people in his electorate, are very pleased to have the power.

The member for Wagaman implied that we are living pretty high on the hog in the rural area and these poor city people are paying for us to get our power on, to get our roads built, to get water and to get all the other services out there. There are about 4000 people in the rural area. Assuming that is 2000 couples, and using the figure of \$53 000 that the Housing Commission used last year for the lowest possible charge for a house or an apartment, that is about \$100m that housing alone would cost the government if all those people suddenly decided tomorrow to come and live in town. If we are talking about budgetary considerations and if we are talking about the Treasury, we are talking about a sum of money which is used for the community. On the one hand, the people in the rural area are saving the government scads of money. On the other hand, it is being said that we are asking city people for things we do not deserve. I say we do deserve them.

The member talked about the high cost of roads out there. Most people in the rural area are happy to have gravel roads, provided they do not pay rates for them. They are happy with these gravel roads provided they are not destroyed by the extraction of minerals industry. It is the extraction of

minerals industry and the trucks that belong to it that destroy our roads. The member for Wagaman thinks that the people in the rural area should be pleased to have these roads. If we did not have this extraction of minerals industry in the rural area, we would not need some of the expensive roads.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Jingili asked the minister a question regarding underground power. I think he was asking a bit much because Santa Claus does not live in the Department of Mines and Energy. To install underground power would cost even more than the \$5000 that it would cost to put power on in the rural area.

I am concerned with something the member for Stuart raised: the interest on the \$5000. If the \$5000 stands as a charge against the block while the current owner is living on the block, and he does not elect to have electricity, I believe from my reading of the pamphlets that the interest increases with the ordinary CPI indices over the years. I ask the minister whether, if somebody dies 20 years after this scheme comes in, the heirs have to pay an exorbitant amount to get electricity put on. I would be interested to hear what the minister has to say. I do support the basic philosophy of this legislation, although I am not a socialist. It had to come about somehow. However, I would hope that it is not the forerunner of a water planning development scheme of a similar nature in the rural area. If somebody in the rural area uses a generator, which could be worth up to \$7000, he can sell the generator. Assuming his power had been connected by a reputable electrician, he would have only to plug into the mains.

However, if a water planning development scheme is proposed for the future, it is a different thing. Bores are not like generators. You cannot pick up a bore and sell it. You cannot pick up a bore and take it away. You cannot ignore it. If you put a bore down on your block, and you put in place the improvements necessary to draw water from that bore, you are up for about \$7000. If there is a charge on your block to tap into water if the title changes, you are up for a hell of a lot of money - \$7000 is quite a bit of money that you cannot afford to lose if you have been getting perfectly good water from the bore on the block and you have to tap into water on the change of title.

If the Minister for Mines and Energy is considering a water plan for the rural area, I for one would like to know. If there is a water plan for the area, what would be the consequences to the people who have already made their own plans and are drawing water from bores on their blocks at the moment?

Whilst I support the legislation, I would like the minister to answer the question that I asked him regarding the \$5000 attracting interest over a number of years. The people on the outskirts of my electorate are very pleased to have the power. I think the proof of the pudding will be after about a year's running of this scheme. We will see then whether all the people that NTEC expect to tap into the scheme will have indeed tapped into the scheme or whether it will finish up as an extra cost to the taxpayer. In a year's time, it will be very interesting to see if it is a success. I hope it will be a success.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Public Service Superannuation

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, at self-government, Northern Territory public servants were eligible to contribute to the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. This eligibility was also extended to new

appointees. Apart from a small number of statutory authorities' personnel, all permanent public servants have been compulsory contributors to the scheme.

Honourable members will recall that, at the time, the financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the Territory did not provide the necessary financial capacity for the Territory to meet its employer superannuation liability. It was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding that the matter of superannuation and, in particular, our capacity to pay the contribution to superannuation should be considered by a joint Commonwealth-Northern Territory task group.

Prior to the task group's recommendations, the Northern Territory government undertook to implement a Northern Territory superannuation scheme. We proposed a scheme and embodied this in the Superannuation Bill 1982. However, the Commonwealth failed to pass the complementary legislation necessary for this to proceed. This was due to union reluctance to support the proposed scheme on the basis of its being guaranteed by the Territory and not by the Commonwealth. I must also say that, apart from some minor disagreements over detail, the Commonwealth had to date been supportive of these objectives and aims.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the task group considered the matter and reported in June 1984. The Commonwealth and Territory agreed to recommendations of the task group on 25 October 1984. In summary, it was agreed that the Commonwealth would make annual payments to the Northern Territory to allow the Territory to fund the employer-financed benefits of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme on an emerging-cost basis. Secondly, that payment would be in respect of benefits that became payable on or after 1 July 1984 to Territory employees in respect of whom the Territory had not to that date been provided with the financial capacity. The arrangements were so designed to permit the Northern Territory government to facilitate the introduction of a Northern Territory scheme.

I put it to the Assembly that the Northern Territory government has pursued a course of supporting all arrangements made with the Commonwealth to provide comprehensive superannuation cover for our employees. I must now report to the Assembly that the Commonwealth has decided, without any prior consultation and without any notice, to walk away from these arrangements. This means either no superannuation scheme for our public servants or our accepting a continuing contingent liability estimated to be \$50m per annum. This estimate is based on advice that the cost of the Commonwealth scheme, as it relates to Territory employees, is of the order of 17% of salary annually. I now table the letter from the Commonwealth containing its decision and my response.

Honourable members will appreciate the substantial impact of the Commonwealth's unilateral action. The Northern Territory government has not and has never had the capacity to fund any superannuation scheme for the public service. The Commonwealth's decision will inevitably lead to a decline in morale and confidence. This is not only a breach of the Memorandum of Understanding, an understanding witnessed by the signatures of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister, but a breach unilaterally of the clear expressions and intentions of the law of this country. Notwithstanding the note of finality in Senator Walsh's letter, I can give an assurance to all honourable members that we will do everything in our power to have this decision reversed. I plan to have a meeting with the unions involved in this superannuation scheme to advise them of the position and to assure them of the government's support in having the decision reversed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to read into Hansard a series of letters between ministers of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in

relation to this matter. The first letter is dated 25 October 1984 between the Minister for Finance, Mr Dawkins, and myself as Chief Minister:

My dear Chief Minister,

I have received the report of the Joint Task Group on Northern Territory Superannuation concerning the arrangements under which the Territory will meet the employer liability for benefits payable to the employees under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. I agree with the arrangement proposed by the task group as summarised in the attachments to this letter and that they should operate from 1 July 1984. If you agree, I suggest that our officers put the scheme into place as soon as practicable.

On 21 November, I responded to Mr Dawkins:

I have received your letter of 25 October concerning the arrangements under which the Territory would meet the employer liability for benefits payable to the Territory government employees under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. I agree with the arrangements and the operative date of 1 July as proposed by the task group and I have directed my officers to put it in place as soon as possible.

I have since received another letter, dated 4 April, from the new Minister for Finance, Senator Peter Walsh:

My dear Chief Minister,

I refer to my predecessor's letter of 25 October 1984 about the arrangements under which the Territory would meet the employer liability for benefits payable to its employees under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme and to your reply of 21 November 1984. I have reviewed these arrangements and have concluded that they should be varied significantly. Under the revised arrangements that I have agreed with the Prime Minister, the Territory will be required to meet a portion of the emerging cost of employer finance benefits payable to its employees who retired or retire on or after 1 July 1984. The Territory is to meet that part of the liability that relates to the person's employment with the Territory on or after that date. The Territory would not, however, be required to meet any liability in respect of an employee who retired before that date. That liability would continue to be met by the Commonwealth. Also, the Territory will be required to fund employer superannuation contributions from its own resources; that is, no additional financial assistance will be provided by the Commonwealth to the Territory for that purpose.

Should the Territory decide not to pay employer superannuation contributions, action will be taken to terminate membership of Territory employees in the Commonwealth scheme. In that event, and should you so desire, I would be prepared to consider arranging for the preservation of the accrued entitlements of employees affected.

*Yours sincerely,
Peter Walsh.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, it had not been my intention to present this matter publicly at this time but, as a result of concern that developed during the

morning that the contents of these documents were becoming public and causing great concern amongst members of the public service, and as it was likely that it would be some days before I could make a full explanation to the Assembly of the ramifications of the move by the federal Minister for Finance, I have seen fit now to respond in a letter from myself to the Prime Minister concerning this matter:

My dear Prime Minister,

I refer to the letter from the Minister for Finance dated 4 April 1985, dealing with the superannuation arrangements for the Northern Territory from 1 July 1984. In this letter Senator Walsh informed me that the Northern Territory is required to meet that part of the superannuation liability that relates to an officer's employment with the Territory from that date without Commonwealth financial assistance. Senator Walsh's actions set aside the agreement reached in an exchange of letters between the former Minister for Finance and myself in 1984. It is in conflict with the Memorandum of Understanding between our governments. I believe the issues have not been thought through and that the decision is a serious mistake. I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms at the timing and effect of this precipitate and unilateral action by your government.

Before commenting on the implications of Senator Walsh's letter, I feel that it is necessary to recapitulate on events preceding the agreement of 25 October 1984 entered into by Mr Dawkins. I turn first to the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and a self-governing Northern Territory. Under that agreement, Northern Territory public servants are to be eligible to contribute, or to continue to contribute, to the Commonwealth superannuation scheme. No financial capacity was provided to the Territory to enable it to meet its employer superannuation liabilities for the mainstream of employees, now numbering more than 12 000. However, a study by a joint Commonwealth Northern Territory task group, including actuaries, who were to report to ministers on future arrangements was foreshadowed. In the meantime, the Commonwealth met the emerging cost of superannuation benefits. That study was carried out and the arrangements proposed by the task group were agreed to by Mr Dawkins on behalf of the Commonwealth on 25 October 1984. Those arrangements include a formula to calculate the specific purpose grant from the Commonwealth to the Territory each year pursuant to the Territory's agreement to meet the emerging cost of the superannuation liabilities coming into being from 1 July 1984.

On the basis of actuarial advice, the abrogation by your government of that agreement exposes the Northern Territory to an immediate and unfunded actual cost and liability of about \$50m per annum. Funding of superannuation payments on an emerging cost basis would, in the short term, defer the level of cash payments, but would involve very much higher payments in the longer term.

Given the magnitude of these liabilities, the Territory is simply unable to meet the terms now dictated for membership by its employees in the Commonwealth scheme. The emerging cost of employer contributions related to such membership would progressively erode our capacity to discharge the responsibility to provide the basic

range and quality of government services throughout the Territory. This would be negligent in the extreme.

The fundamental protection afforded the Territory via guaranteed access to the Commonwealth Grants Commission under clause 29 of the Memorandum of Understanding, when financial moves are unsatisfied in any year, is effectively repudiated in Senator Walsh's statement that no additional assistance will be provided by the Commonwealth to fund this cost. Such repudiation goes to the very heart of the Territory's financial arrangements and cannot be accepted. It also has significant implications for the states and the Grants Commission.

I should also point out that there are still many compulsory transferees from the Commonwealth Public Service in the Northern Territory Public Service. It is most unlikely that the Territory and the Commonwealth have the power to terminate those officers' membership of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme without some Commonwealth legislative or other action. It is therefore quite unreasonable to suggest that the Territory shall meet the cost of superannuation benefits for such officers without agreement covering appropriate Commonwealth financial assistance.

In view of the obvious severe implications which this decision has for the continued viability of effective self-government in the Territory, I urge you to reconsider this matter and to reinstate the specific financial capacity already agreed.

As I have indicated to you previously, the Northern Territory is happy to discuss any aspect of the existing financial arrangements between our 2 governments which you consider to be in need of review. Any changes, however, should be based on agreement between our 2 governments. Because of the serious implications of Senator Walsh's letter on the Territory's finances, I would like to discuss the matter with you as a matter of urgency.

Mr Speaker, there is a further issue at the centre of this. It relates to the original transfer of employees from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory Public Service. I refer to the agreement between ourselves and the Commonwealth that would protect those interests of employees who transferred in good faith and with the laws of both governments protecting their interests at the time. At the time of self-government, the Commonwealth had to amend its Public Service Act and, in the Northern Territory Public Service Act, we included provisions that would protect the superannuation provisions of employees who transferred. We both passed laws to ensure that the people concerned were protected and that their interests were not set aside in a unilateral manner at any future stage by people who had forgotten what self-government was all about or who never knew what self-government was all about. Mr Speaker, it is of great concern to me that, with the stroke of a pen, the laws of the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory - solemn agreements in terms of the Memorandum of Understanding and letters of exchange between ministers of the Commonwealth government and myself - have been set aside in one letter, and the bill to the extent of \$50m has been sent to the Northern Territory government without any reference to compensation or assistance to meet that bill in any way at all.

Mr Speaker, if the Northern Territory government cannot raise \$50m to meet the employees' superannuation contribution, the alternative is that the scheme

does not exist and people are not covered by superannuation. That is a preposterous and outrageous proposition and, in my view, is the action of the Minister for Finance. That is devastating for those employees of the Northern Territory Public Service, I believe about 7000 of them, who believe they have a superannuation scheme to which they have been contributing for a long time. Now they are to wake up and find that, at the stroke of a ministerial pen in Canberra that sets aside solemn government agreements, they may have no superannuation at all. That is not a fright. It does not give you a lump in the throat. That is like a good boot in the stomach. That is really devastating news for the employees who are involved.

Mr Speaker, to the employees who are involved, the members of our public service who have maintained their part of the bargain with honour and integrity by contributing to the superannuation scheme, to those employees I give a full commitment and an unreserved assurance that I will fight and do whatever I can to ensure that the action by the Commonwealth Minister for Finance is set aside, and that common sense, integrity and natural decency prevail in the Commonwealth Cabinet of this country.

Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I will start with my one negative comment in all of this. It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister has chosen to play politics to some degree on this particular matter. The Chief Minister has been very good about giving the opposition notice of statements that he intends to make and we have appreciated that but, on such a serious matter as this is, it makes it very difficult when it is plonked down in front of us 10 to 15 minutes before the Chief Minister wishes to make his statement. I will not say any more about that because I do not want to distract members' attention from the gravity of the situation that confronts us at this stage.

Mr Speaker, in 1978 at the time of negotiations for self-government, I was an official in the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. Most public servants transferred at that stage and teachers transferred in 1979 from memory. I can remember that the thing that reassured teachers and public servants most at that particular stage was the guarantee that they were going over as compulsory transferees and that their existing conditions were protected by the solemn agreement of both the Northern Territory government and the Australian government which was enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

It is a very serious matter indeed when one party to that Memorandum of Understanding unilaterally, as we have evidence of here, wishes to revoke a part of that memorandum, in this case section 29. I do not think the Chief Minister has overstated in any sense whatsoever the uncertainties the public service will face in this particular matter. I think it is fair to say that public servants and teachers will be very unhappy and very worried about this. Quite justifiably, they will feel very critical of the attitude the Commonwealth government has taken on this matter. This side of the Assembly will join with the government in making the strongest representations possible to attempt to undo the damage that Senator Peter Walsh, who has had a reputation for thinking that the Northern Territory is overfed in a financial sense, has done to us on this occasion.

I must make the point again that the Chief Minister, as I would do in his situation, has put the worst possible case. I may be wrong because I have only had 10 to 15 minutes to come to this opinion but what we are talking about is a

situation that, in the longer term, will create a very considerable disadvantage for the Northern Territory. What we are being asked to do in the Northern Territory is to pick up the government contribution to superannuation costs for our employees from 1 July 1985. We all know that those costs are picked up by all governments in Australia on what is called an emerging costs basis. That basically means that you pick up the costs as they occur. To put it in some sort of context, we are not looking at a figure of \$50m next financial year. The advice that I have been able to gain in the 10 to 15 minutes I have had available is that the cost we are looking at in the next financial year is around \$2.5m to \$3m. That may be wrong but it is the best advice that I have been able to get in the time. However, I do not want to reduce, in any way at all, the long-term impact of what we are talking about. It is the long-term impact that we should be concerned about.

The sentence in the Chief Minister's statement that best summarises it is this: 'The emerging cost of employer contributions related to such membership would progressively erode our capacity to discharge the responsibility to provide the basic range and quality of government services throughout the Northern Territory'. That is undeniably true. If we are expected in the Northern Territory to pick up superannuation costs for our employees from 1 July on an emerging basis, it will cost us more and more each year. If the Commonwealth government will not provide extra financial resources to help us meet that cost, it is undeniable that there is a longer-term threat to the basic range and quality of government services throughout the Northern Territory. I think that is the significant point of this debate. Over the longer term, we are facing a very real threat to the continuing ability of any government in the Northern Territory to provide the range and quality of services that people in the Northern Territory have been accustomed to. I can only conclude by saying that the opposition fully recognises the impact of the letter from Senator Walsh and we will be doing our utmost, both in conjunction with the government and separately, to point out to the honourable senator exactly what he has done to the Northern Territory and exactly what he has done to our hopes and aspirations over the next few years.

Debate adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition reflected on the lack of notice that attached to that statement. I would like to say that I had briefed the Leader of the Opposition on the contents of Senator Walsh's letter this morning and advised him that, as soon as our homework was complete, we would deal with the matter next week. The only reason that the matter was brought on with such haste was that the word was out during the course of the morning. There is no doubt that, in the next 4 or 5 days, particularly with press speculation over the weekend, there would have been no reasonable forum for a comprehensive statement to be made. I thought it was absolutely essential that we nip in the bud any innuendo and falsehoods relating to the matter so that people understood the facts clearly. I regret that the members of the Assembly did not have more notice but the circumstances did not enable it.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 98)

Continued from page 640.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I rise to touch on a few of the matters raised by honourable members. Unfortunately, I will not be able to

clarify matters entirely at this stage but I will do so as the bill is processed through the Assembly.

The member for Stuart felt that we should not pick an arbitrary figure of \$5000 to apply under the scheme whereby various people in the rural areas of the Northern Territory will be able to obtain electricity under arrangements which were not formerly available to them. He implied that there should not really be any cross-subsidisation. I must disagree with that principle and I will refer later to the scheme which operated in the past which caused all sorts of inequities. In the past, governments have accepted that services like water, sewerage, telephones and electricity should be provided to consumers at a fixed figure. Some people will receive services pretty cheaply and others will no doubt pay more than the actual cost.

Looking at it overall, it is fair that everybody pays a flat fee. We are applying that principle here. I do not think it is a great deal different from the way sewerage charges are levied. If you are in an area that has been declared a sewerage zone, you pay the fee annually irrespective of whether you are connected or not. That fee is based on a uniform cost across the whole area. No doubt, some blocks are far more expensive to connect than others. If a street has houses on one side only because there is a park on the other, people on that street should not be expected to pay twice the amount that people pay in streets that have houses on both sides. Quite clearly, there are economies in laying a pipe to connect to twice the number of consumers. That would be an unfair way to apply these sorts of schemes. That is why governments fix a figure and apply it right across the community. There are circumstances where people want a particular service that is quite out of the ordinary and the government will charge more. I think Yulara might have been a good example of that. The Northern Territory government had to foot the bill for some of the telephone connections because Telecom was not inclined to do it when we wanted it.

I dismiss the argument that there should not be cross-subsidisation. I believe it is fairly important. An example would be the people on Cox Peninsula who do not have an electricity supply that is available to be connected to the blocks. However, there are substantial assets such as a cable under the harbour and some transformers which we are negotiating to have transferred to the Northern Territory from the Commonwealth. When we connect the people on Cox Peninsula, one could argue that it will be more expensive than in other areas of rural Darwin and those people should pay more. I do not think so.

The member for Koolpinyah suggested we may have plucked the figure out of the air. It is true that we do not know exactly what it will cost to connect the whole of rural Darwin to electricity. We do not know how many applications will come in. We do not know how many of them will compel us to extend the line 5 km with no consumers in between. NTEC may be carrying the costs of larger capital works with one consumer at the end of the line. The line may pass 20 vacant blocks. After it has been connected to that single consumer, another application may be received from someone 5 km further out. Under our scheme, we would have to extend it to that person as well. It will be quite an expense to supply those customers.

I point out that the funds used for distribution of electricity supply are loan funds which must have interest paid on them. Anyone who cares to look at NTEC's financial statement will see sizeable components for loan repayments. That repayment figure will grow every year as more money is borrowed for these schemes. I do not think the \$5000 was plucked out of the air. It resulted from calculations to try not to disadvantage NTEC over a period. We looked globally

at the rural area of Darwin and then extended it to other areas in the Northern Territory. We bore in mind the fact that reasonably generous terms are available to persons who seek to connect under this scheme. If you pay cash, it is reduced to \$4750 or you can pay it off over 4 years at no interest. That sounds like a pretty attractive deal to me. There is also the option of paying it off over 10 years at 10% interest, with repayments less than \$48 a week. Considering the costs and inconvenience of running generators, I do not think those sums are unreasonable.

I have had people from the rural area argue with me on this matter. They say we are totally unrealistic and claims that people pay \$40 or \$50 a week to keep their generators running are not true. I cannot accept that. There are people in that situation who are absolutely delighted to get power and I do not think that \$5000 is unreasonable. Bear in mind too that the scheme will add \$5000 to every block of land in the rural area that is within 5 km of a line.

As the honourable member for Wagaman pointed out, there are costs in an electricity distribution system which cannot be directly attributed to any particular consumer: the costs of progressively upgrading systems as they get heavier and heavier loads on them. Lines back closer to substations have to be upgraded and indeed substations themselves have to be upgraded at considerable expense. You cannot turn around and bill a half a dozen consumers for that particular work.

Honourable members should also bear in mind that, as a replacement for the previous scheme, this one has to be very attractive. Previously, NTEC provided a \$2000 subsidy towards connection for each block. Where it came undone was that, when a large block of land was subdivided, 1 or 2 people in the subdivision wanted power and others did not because it was too expensive. A couple of people might have power connected at great expense to themselves. Once the line ran past, other people in between would connect for less or virtually nothing. The old scheme bogged down somewhat. There were people who were trying desperately to get power on. They could see powerlines going to other subdivisions but, because they lived in an area where adjoining blocks were owned either by absentee landholders or pure land speculators, they were disadvantaged. Those problems caused this scheme to be developed.

This bill really protects NTEC from people whose land will have electricity past their front door but who elect not to come in on the scheme. To avoid litigation over accounts for their having power past their front door, we have made the debt against the land.

As the member for Koolpinyah said, we should have a hard look at the scheme in about 12 months' time to see how many people have connected and how much it has cost us and perhaps then make some adjustments if necessary. However, I would not advise anyone to hold off applying for electricity in the meantime because it is doubtful that the scheme will become more generous. As it is reviewed in future years and costs rise, it is likely to become less generous.

I undertake to provide honourable members with specific information on interest during committee stages. The distribution system extension policy booklet indicates that the \$5000 shall escalate on the basis of CPI. I want to confirm that.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING BILL
(Serial 102)
RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 103)

Continued from 16 April 1985.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 28.1.

Mr Chairman, all the amendments I shall be proposing are consequential upon one another. As I said in my second-reading speech, it is the opinion of the opposition that this government has to bite the bullet on the question of off-course bookmaking. It is ridiculous to suppose that there can be any offcourse bookmaking alongside a TAB system. The Chief Minister cited Groote Eylandt as an example of a community where perhaps an offcourse licence might be appropriate as opposed to a TAB. In fact, there are 25 junctions connecting Groote Eylandt with other places and there are some 280 services. Telecom feels that that is the approximate percentage ratio between junctions and services offered to any community throughout Australia. That service is monitored by computer and, if any more junctions are required in that community, they will be connected.

The example given by the Chief Minister is not a particularly good one. If there was an offcourse bookmaker operating legally on Groote Eylandt, I would suggest that he would spend far more time on the telephone than any TAB. The example that the Chief Minister gave was unfortunate in that it was inaccurate. I am not convinced that 1 or 2 licensed offcourse bookmakers would be any less demand on a communication service than any subagency or agency may be in that particular community. The point is that the government must bite the bullet on this. There is no getting away from it. There needs to be indicated clearly to the public of the Northern Territory, indeed to the public of Australia, once again what the future of offcourse betting is going to be in the Northern Territory. I would ask the government to support this amendment schedule in its entirety not only because one is consequential upon the other but in the interests of clarity and the future of offcourse betting in the Northern Territory.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I would like to say just a couple of words on what the member for Nhulunbuy has just said to support his amendments. In fact, he is the one who is in error on what goes on at Groote Eylandt and what has gone on at Groote Eylandt in the past. The bookmaker over there had the opportunity to get one call during the day on prices of the horses. Unfortunately, he had to put them up and then stand there for the day and be attacked on those prices because he was not getting fluctuation services during the day. On many occasions, the rogues that we seem to find anywhere in the betting industry would get on another telephone and have their mates from Darwin or wherever else tell them when the big shortener would come through on the call to other betting shops. Then they would rip off this poor fellow with his extended prices that had been there since the early hours of the morning. I can assure members that the communication system over at Groote Eylandt would, in no way, shape or form, support a TAB at this stage.

The fact of the matter is that there are people over there at Groote Eylandt who like to have a bet. If you take the licence off the legalised bookmaker and you cannot put in a TAB, what is going to happen? You are going to have an illegal SP operator. That of course is one of my great fears. That will be the embryo of illegal SP bookmaking throughout the Northern Territory.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the honourable member has put forward a series of amendments that are all related to the principle of not having, under any circumstances, a provision in the bill for offcourse bookmaking. I addressed the matter the other day and I note the honourable member has checked just how Groote Eylandt stands. I would say that anyone who believes a promise of Telecom about what it will provide by way of telephone services and the member for Stuart would know how strong the promises of Telecom are in this regard - is a mug.

Having disposed of that issue, there are other places in the Northern Territory besides Groote Eylandt that do not have anything like telephone communication. It may be that the Racing and Gaming Commissioner and the minister might believe that, for good and social reasons, there ought to be a bookmaker there rather than have an underground activity. I will be opposing the amendments of the honourable member not to be difficult but because of that very important principle that we are going to stick to. Rather than get up every time he puts one forward, I will just speak the once and we will put it to the vote after he has spoken.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will go back to this point. The Chief Minister has an opinion about Telecom that may or may not be shared by other members in this Assembly. I am perfectly ready to concede that some of those members may be members of the opposition. However, I have been assured by Telecom that the percentage ratio between the services provided on Groote and the number of junctions into and out of that community is proportional to the junctions and the services provided around the rest of Australia. If the Chief Minister or indeed the member for Leanyer can produce some technical advice that that is not so, then I would accept it.

I find fairly hair-raising the suggestion that some remote community should have a licensed bookmaker. How is a bookmaker going to make a living in an even smaller community than Alyangula with only 1000 people. He obviously will have to accept telephone bets. He will have to be an illegal operator. It is the only way he can do it. There is no other possibility for him to make a living out of it. He will have to be an illegal bookmaker. He will have to operate illegally. In fact, what the Chief Minister has just advanced is an excellent case for withdrawing licences from offcourse bookmakers. There is no other possible explanation. There is no other way it can operate.

I can see that the government has made up its mind but for all of the wrong reasons. It has certainly been seduced by the member for bookies over there. I would have thought intellect would have prevailed a little more on the government benches. I would have thought that there would have been a little more intellectual involvement on the government benches than the member for bookies. I hope that the government, even at this very late stage, will support these amendments.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I did not really propose to get involved but I guess I cannot help myself. Having had some involvement in this exercise in the past, I really cannot see the member for Nhulunbuy's point that we must somehow stand up and demonstrate some enormous matter of principle by abolishing bookmakers by this law. The fact is that the government has said that the

bookmakers will shut down on 1 July this year and TAB will operate. It is certainly brand new to the Northern Territory. It is very controversial. All sorts of opinions are still coming out of the woodwork as to whether it will ever work. I still get people saying to me that it is the worst decision this government has ever made and it is going to be an absolute disaster and a flop. I do not accept that. I do not believe it. Just the same, we are going to give it a go and we are going to give it a good go. I fully expect to get it up on its feet. In a year or 2, it will be making everybody scads of money and we will all think it is the most marvellous thing we ever did. I am sure that that is the scenario.

In the meantime, the government is proposing to leave the ability to license bookmakers intact in the legislation in the circumstances that the government may one day decide that one or some bookmakers should be licensed for particular purposes or particular places or particular events. The government has decided not to abolish the ability to license a bookmaker but has made a statement that, with the coming of TAB, they will be abolished. Let us suck it and see and decide how to go and maintain the flexibility that this legislation will enable for the next year or 2.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I think that there is one fallacy in the member for Nhulunbuy's logic. He said that some of these areas would be so small that a bookmaker could not make his living there. The possibility is that the bookmaker might have several jobs. As the minister just mentioned, people might be licensed just for a particular event. With that in mind, I think what the member for Nhulunbuy said is a load of nonsense.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I wish to address one point that has escaped the attention of the member for Nhulunbuy in his blind faith in Telecom. Even if Telecom honoured all its promises in the connection of telephonic services so that there would be a capacity to provide telephones by 1990, how does the honourable member expect communities to place bets in the intervening 5-year period in those smaller areas where there are no telephone services? Why should those communities not have the right to have a legalised system to place bets? That is what this legislation will enable.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2 agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 88)

Continued from 28 February 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the amendment is aimed at invalidating any arrangement aimed at avoiding payroll tax. It does this in 2 ways. Firstly, it amends the definition of 'wages' to cover payments, wages, bonuses, commissions, allowances etc made to an employee by someone other than the employer but who is acting under an agreement, expressed or implied, with the employer. Secondly, it empowers the Commissioner of Taxes to disregard any arrangement by which a payment for services is made to someone related or connected to the person who performs the services. It also determines the payment to be wages and taxes it accordingly.

It is probably noteworthy that there is a transitional provision by which these arrangements have retrospective effect from the day they were introduced - 28 February 1985 - with an extension of time for payments, appeals etc equal to the period until the bill is actually passed.

When introducing the amendments, the Treasurer emphasised they would not change the status of bona fide subcontractor or consultancy arrangements but rather would go behind attempts to go outside the employer-employee relationship for the purpose of avoiding payroll tax. There will be a requirement on the commissioner to give written reasons for such determinations. With those few comments, I would indicate that the opposition supports this legislation.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, payroll tax is one of the most iniquitous taxes that we have, particularly in a country which is crying about its high unemployment rate. Payroll tax is one of the things which work against the private, wealth-creating employers taking on people. However, payroll tax is one avenue that the states and territories have for raising revenue. It would be very interesting to have a history of the taxing powers in Australia since the time of the first settlement. Basically, the states opted to give a tax-gathering power to the federal government in most respects and let it have the odium of collecting the taxes. Consequently, we have to go cap-in-hand to Canberra. However, there is a requirement by Canberra that the states and territories must raise some of their revenue and thereby accept some of the odium. I am glad the Northern Territory government is resisting the raising of some of these taxes in the belief that development will result in greater revenue than can be gained by higher taxation.

The member for Millner mentioned the payroll tax threshold. It was good to see that the Chief Minister issued a press release saying that this would be reviewed in the August budget. The existing threshold is affecting the viability of quite a few small businesses. Their owners are less willing to keep them going and that is affecting the Territory.

This bill is about whether a person is in an employer-employee relationship. If a person is an employee, the money paid to him is subject to payroll tax provided the employer is over the minimum threshold. There are legitimate schemes whereby people have contractual arrangements which do not attract payroll tax. However, there are some schemes which do not fit into that relationship. This bill will empower the Commissioner for Taxes to examine a scheme and determine if it really is a contract which does not attract payroll tax. If it is an employer-employee relationship, it will attract payroll tax.

The March edition of the Insurance Council of Australia Bulletin gave 10 points to determine whether a relationship was really one of an employer-employee or a contractual one. I think it would be interesting for the purposes of this bill to read out some of those points. The following questions would indicate if a relationship was that of an employer-employee and would attract the tax. Does the principal have the power to dismiss the employee? Does the principal have the power to give detailed orders on the performance of the work? Does the principal supply the tools and equipment? Does the employee receive remuneration based on an hourly or weekly wage rather than an amount according to results? Do the parties view their relationship as being that of employer-employee? Do the activities of the employee form an integral part of the principal's business operations? If the answer to those questions is yes, it would look very much like an employer-employee relationship. The Commissioner of Taxes would make a judgment in such matters and the employer would have a right to dispute it.

The set of criteria given for a contractual arrangement are as follows. Does the person have a separate business entry in the telephone directory to carry on his business for other than the one principal? Does he keep his own separate books of account? Does he operate a partnership? Does he have the power to employ others to perform the work and have the power to go about his own concerns during what would otherwise be working hours?

Those are some guidelines. They may not be those accepted by the Commissioner of Taxes but they are the ones accepted for the purpose of working out whether a person is an employee for the purpose of workers' compensation insurance. I think it is a reasonable proposition that the Commissioner of Taxes have the right to investigate the relationships between people 'working' one for the other, either contractually or as an employer-employee, and make a decision so that payroll tax, if it is due to the Territory, is indeed paid.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I am not opposed to this bill. It is about time the government tightened up some of the artificial contrivances that are put into place to avoid the payment of taxes such as payroll tax. It is so rare to see governments of the conservative ilk actually making a move in this direction that I believe it is incumbent on us all to applaud whenever we actually see it occurring.

We have also heard that the Chief Minister has agreed to look at the basic exemption level for small businessmen when he is framing his next budget. This level was set at \$150 000 some 6 years ago. Unfortunately, during 4 of the last 6 years, this country has had to put up with a conservative government in Canberra. Mr Speaker, you know that those dark ages were not infamous merely for having been the period of highest unemployment this country had seen since the great depression, but those years also showed us the real meaning of what sustained high inflation can do to every one of the bastions of our society. By my calculation, that figure of \$150 000 that was set 6 years ago, if it had been indexed by inflation, would now be \$250 000. Given that, currently, employers have to pay on a sliding scale between \$150 000 and \$375 000 and given that the basic rate has been substantially eroded by inflation, you can imagine the serious effect that is having on employment generation in the Northern Territory.

Unfortunately, the Chief Minister also said in a recent press release that he thought the number of companies which would be eligible for a payroll tax exemption if the exemption level was lifted would not be large. Mr Speaker, I do not have to remind you that, when you are an employer of labour, it does not matter that there are only 50 other businesses going down the tube with you rather than 1000. The fact is that you and all that you have built up is about to collapse because of inflation-imposed increases in payroll tax. I do not think that I have to explain to anyone the problems in small business when the businessman has a very close relationship with his employees and how hard it is when long-term employees are told that they cannot afford to be kept on any longer.

Payroll tax is certainly not one of my favourite taxes. I realise, however, that taxes, like birth and death, will always be with us. I would prefer to see these taxes more equitably levelled at the top end rather than being extended ever downward into the smaller end of the small business sector. Mr Speaker, may I contrast the efforts of the Chief Minister and the member for Braitling in relation to the exemption limit with their lack of commitment towards a very large gap that has arisen at the top end of the scale. I refer to the section relating to wages in the principal act which the government did not see fit to amend. I refer to section 3(2) of the principal

act which states that the value of meals or sustenance provided by an employer shall be deemed to have a value of \$1.50 per week and the use of premises or water provided by an employer shall be deemed to have a value of 50¢ per week. On the face of it, this may not appear to be a big thing. One might say that I am being inconsistent. I said that I wanted the base level for payroll tax raised and adjusted for inflation and here I am saying that the figures for living quarters and food are too low.

There is a very sound point in my argument here. I believe that it is a matter of equity between large and small business communities. Which employer is more likely to be in a position to be able to provide quarters for his employees? Which type of business is more likely to have a mess where he can organise meals for his employees? Would that be the small contractor employing half a dozen people or have we got here the large, multi-national or interstate company? Which company will pay less payroll tax? It is obvious that the very large company will pay less tax because it is in a better position to be able to reduce its wages bill by providing food and lodging in lieu of wages. This bill allows that to occur.

It would appear to me very clear that this government is not a government for small business. It appears to me to be extremely obvious that it is a government for big business. We have it carrying on about increasing the base level which would assist the small businessmen, which the Chief Minister was doing in his press release, that group that is the backbone of this Territory, and here we have it carrying on about indexing the basic rate for small business payments of payroll tax and yet we have no movement on its part to change the extremely generous exemptions which are given to those large companies which can afford to provide their employees with food and accommodation in lieu of salaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is another area which I would like to take the opportunity to mention. This is an area which I believe is completely inconsistent in its application. The act is inconsistent in its application to organisations in the Northern Territory. I refer here to section 9 which talks about tax exemptions. I would have liked, in talking about this section, to refer back to real cases because they would probably have more clearly illustrated the point I wish to make. However, the majority of those cases are currently sub judice and I ask honourable members to bear with me while I attempt to point this out on a philosophical level.

I believe that we are gradually moving from an age in which the bureaucracy of government was the only acceptable model through which a government delivered its services to the people. I believe we are gradually moving towards a new age where more and more of those services will be delivered by community-controlled groups acting with the power that the people have given them, for the people who gave them that power, under the control of those people in that community who guide the service, delivery and performance of their function. I believe the bureaucracy as we know it today will gradually withdraw from many of the broader community service delivery functions. It will remain as a source of expertise, a source of advice to the minister etc.

In the Northern Territory, we are probably as advanced if not more advanced than anywhere else in Australia in the development of the principles and concept of community-based organisations. However, it is unfortunate, when we have a look at the exemptions from tax under section 9 of this act, that we find that nowhere in that section does the bill clearly and concisely set out that these types of organisations are free from tax. We then have the ridiculous situation that these bodies, which are funded from federal or from Territory

public moneys, have to pay payroll tax back to the government. It would be no more ridiculous if the government were to insist on its own department paying payroll tax. These bodies are, to a large extent, an extension of the department. They are a growth out of the department. They are outsiders. There is a definite move by the people to run the services which they believe their community requires to be delivered in a manner which is appropriate to it. I believe it would be a good move for this government to assist the of these particular types of organisations by making it very clear that those bodies are not liable to pay payroll tax.

It is obvious that there was no specific intention, when this bill was formulated, to exclude this type of body because we see under subsection (b) that hospitals carried on by societies or associations other than for the purpose of profit or gain are exempt. Schools or colleges that are operating again without the purpose of profit or gain, are also exempt. Local government bodies are exempt. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is exempt. Trade commissioners representing Australia in other parts of Her Majesty's dominions are exempt. The Australian and American Education Foundation is exempt, along with various religious, public or benevolent institutions. It is obvious that history has caught up with this act. The type of bodies like the War Graves Commission and the Australian American Education Foundation are not really high profile organisations in the Northern Territory today.

However, the organisations that I am talking about, the community-controlled organisations, are becoming more and more a feature, not just in the Northern Territory but as a move from the impersonal bureaucratic delivery of services in many parts of the world. People are getting back to the situation where they want more control of how those particular services are delivered to them. This brings them more into line with efficiency within the context of service delivery and it is efficient in that it lines up with the desires of the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bill as far as it goes. I hope the minister will take note of the other points that I have raised regarding this act and will, at a later date - not too much later at that - bring in more amendments so that we can improve it along the lines that I have suggested.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is obvious this bill is all about tax evasion. There is no doubt that we all accept that Australians, one and all, need to accept their fair share of the taxation burden. If it were not for the taxation system that we have throughout the country, none of the welfare programs that are carried out in the Northern Territory would be able to be completed.

The amendments address themselves to improper arrangements that are made by employers, such as contract arrangements or other methods of payment, that are obviously designed to avoid the operation of the payroll tax system.

The honourable member for Stuart commenced his delivery with what I interpreted to be an almost ingrown objection to people within the contractual industry. He referred to contract arrangements as being some form of artificial contrivance or whatever. There is no doubt that there are many genuine small businesses that have quite genuinely over the years completed their business by contract or subcontract arrangements with workers, professionals or other deliverers of services. In fact, many of them would not have gone into business in the first place if they had not had access to such arrangements.

I am well aware of the difficulties of establishing a small business in this country. I am pleased that the member for Stuart mentioned bureaucratic

processes because, very often, the large burden of bureaucracy and government legislation has taken the initiative away from people who want to get involved in their own free enterprise business. Aside from the legislation, the difficulties include: the need for heavy capital investment for equipment in the first place; establishing sufficient liquid funds to meet those early day commitments; the cash flow requirements of wages and purchasing materials in the day-to-day operation; and the need to put money up front for rental agreements etc. Creditors, these days more so than ever before, expect a new businessman to put his dollars up front when it comes to arranging initial trading agreements. General taxation, including provisional taxation, which is certainly outside the realm of this government, is most efficiently - one could say tongue in cheek - expedited by the federal government. It is one of the great prohibitors which places an additional burden on the small businessman in his very important initial years of business. Workers' compensation liability insurance is another one. All these expenses, regardless of the problems of just getting out there and trying to build up his product within the marketplace, combine to place an extremely onerous and prohibitive burden upon the small businessman in his early years of trading.

The member for Stuart was quite right in raising the bureaucratic restrictions that exist, mainly as a result of federal governments. I do not mean only this current federal government, although it seems to be expert in its own right at adding bureaucratic controls. The ALP government in Victoria is absolutely expert at it. People come to this town hoping to get away from the legislative and bureaucratic constraints that are most efficiently imposed by the socialist government of Victoria.

The bill allows the Commissioner of Taxes the power to make a decision about whether an employer-employee relationship is proper or not and therefore whether payroll tax is payable. It also provides an opportunity for an employer to appeal against the decision. There is no doubt that many employers have legitimately opted for a contractual arrangement with deliverers of services. In this town, the building industry has many of these genuine people who do not make a great fortune. Because they opt to enter free enterprise and gain the satisfaction of working for themselves, they survive by these arrangements which are still protected under the legislation. They engage consultants, contract draftsmen and contract professionals to fill in gaps in their workload. That is an advantage not only to the employer or the small businessman but also to those professional people. There are many such people in this town and, sadly, I must report that approximately 20 of those will be leaving town over the next month when they finish packing their bags after the Darwin Airport fiasco. I take the opportunity to put in that dig and I will keep putting in many digs, Mr Deputy Speaker, as the days go on.

Reference was made to the rate of payroll tax in the Northern Territory. It may come as a surprise to the member for Stuart that payroll tax in the Northern Territory compares very favourably with that in the states. He mentioned the threshold limit. I ask if he is aware of how few businesses within the Northern Territory fit into that category that he is so concerned about.

Mr Ede: Tell us.

Mr FINCH: I do not have the exact number but I understand that it is certainly less than 10.

The point is that this government will continue to monitor both the rate and the threshold limits of payroll tax and any other charges that it finds

necessary to impose. In the meantime, I am quite sure that business people in Victoria would be delighted if they paid the rate that we pay here in the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: Why don't you go and stand in Victoria?

Mr FINCH: I was going to suggest ...

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

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not mind at all. In fact, it gives ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may not mind, honourable member, but I do.

Mr FINCH: You are in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. I shall take cognisance of your remarks and refrain from reacting to such trivial interjections.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member's views, particularly those relating to reduction of the bureaucracy, could be useful on the federal scene. Maybe he should lobby to enter federal politics elsewhere in Australia. Maybe the socialist state of Victoria might be pleased to have some fresh radical views. He may even care to stand as a state member in Victoria. That would probably suit him down to the ground. There are some issues there that are about to arise that I am sure he could make a valuable contribution to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill correctly addresses itself to ensuring that people pay taxes in a fair and reasonable manner and do not have the opportunity to avoid their obligations. This legislation will bring us into line with legislation in the states.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the member for Wagaman slightly misinterpreted the position regarding payroll tax and firms in the Northern Territory. As I mentioned, I accept that our rate of 4.5% is the lowest payroll tax rate in Australia. However, our exemption level of \$150 000 is also the lowest in Australia. Firms in the Northern Territory with a payroll of up to \$300 000 a year are paying more in payroll tax than firms of that size elsewhere in Australia.

Members of the government said that there were not many firms in the Northern Territory with payrolls of less than \$300 000. Frankly that staggers me. With a payroll of \$300 000, you are talking about 20 to 25 people. In Australia as a whole, 70% to 80% of all businesses are small businesses. I would expect that most firms in the Northern Territory would have fewer than 25 staff. Most Northern Territory firms are paying more in payroll tax than equivalent firms elsewhere in Australia. In the last sittings, I invited the government to address that issue. I hope that, in its next budget, the government will take action to raise the threshold level. I think it is well overdue.

Recently, I had a briefing from the relevant persons in the Northern Territory Development Corporation on the trade development zone. I would like to thank the Chief Minister and the Minister for Industry and Small Business for arranging that. What the government is proposing to do in the trade development zone is very exciting indeed. It is exciting not only from the point of view of attempting to encourage export opportunities for businesses in the Northern Territory by having a zone which will enable them to avoid customs and other duties like that but it also tackles stamp duty and payroll tax in a manner which is very sensible and surely will be a significant incentive in its own right to encourage firms to move into the trade development zone.

The proposal is that there will be a one-off payment which will be struck at a level to cover stamp duty, payroll tax and all other Northern Territory taxes and charges. By making one payment to the trade zone authority, the firms will meet all their responsibilities for Northern Territory taxes and charges. I believe that will prove to be a significant advantage to firms operating in the trade development zone in terms of reducing quite substantially the amount of red tape necessary to meet their obligations to the Northern Territory Treasury.

I do not think there is any doubt that this measure is long overdue. A number of firms and employers have come up with arrangements which are quite beyond the pale in order to avoid payroll tax. I am pleased that the Commissioner of Taxes will be given the authority to investigate these schemes and to make judgments on whether the schemes that have been developed should appropriately result in payroll tax or should properly be exempt. I think that is a very positive step that the government has taken.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Commissioner of Taxes for the efforts that he has made over the last 2 or 3 years to pursue the proper collection of payroll taxes under the existing legislation. There has been a significant increase in the amount of payroll tax collected and that is directly a result of the Commissioner of Taxes making a determined effort to collect more payroll tax. It is one of those cases where, by the employment of additional staff, the increase in revenue gained by the government is quite considerable. There is nothing more upsetting to firms or individuals than to know the level of tax that they are paying is, to some extent, due to the fact that others in their situation are not paying a proper level of tax. That has been one of the main failures of the current workers' compensation scheme. Too many people have slipped through the net of the current workers' compensation scheme and that is one of the reasons why premiums have been raised so high for those people who are in the net. With those few words, I reiterate the opposition's support for the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

Clause 3:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 27.1.

This amendment expands the definition of 'wages' to clarify what payments are included as taxable wages.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

NATIONAL CRIME AUTHORITY (TERRITORY PROVISIONS) BILL (Serial 77)

Continued from 6 March 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this legislation provides for the Territory's participation in the National Crime Authority. It

should be read in conjunction with the federal legislation which came into effect on 1 July last year. The bill is an adaptation of the model bill for states and territories drawn up by the Committee of Parliamentary Counsels. The authority is made up of 3 members with Mr Justice Stewart as the chairman. An intergovernmental committee comprising a Commonwealth minister and ministers for each state and territory oversees the authority. Reference of a matter to the authority requires consultation with the IGC and reference of a state or territory matter is made by that state or territory's minister and can be withdrawn by him at any time.

It should be noted that a reference must specify the general nature of the allegations of criminal activity and set out the purpose of the investigation. It also should be noted that, apart from passing on evidence for use in prosecutions, the authority may make recommendations for reform of both laws and administrative functions. There is also a provision for an exchange of intelligence between the authority and the Territory. The bill sets out the powers of the authority to hold hearings, require production of documents and obtain warrants for search or arrest but it should be noted that these are only exercisable in relation to a special investigation; that is, as a result of a specific reference to the authority. In other words, they are not available for the purposes of general intelligence collection, as the Chief Minister pointed out specifically in his introduction to the bill. There are also various safeguards in relation to personal privacy and so on.

The bill is part of uniform national legislation. As I noted during the address in reply to the Administrator, the indication in his speech that this bill would come before the Assembly signified a significant change between the Everingham government and the Tuxworth government. The former Chief Minister made it clear that, so far as his own personal view on this matter was concerned, the National Crime Authority could serve no useful purpose and that there was no likelihood at that stage of the Northern Territory government participating in it. The reason I raise that is because I share some of the misgivings and reservations that the former Chief Minister had about the potential limitations and usefulness of the organisation. However, the facts are that states are indeed very jealous of their powers. That is one of the political realities of living in the kind of system that we have in Australia, which goes all the way back to federation and the creation of the Senate. However, whilst there may be misgivings about the kinds of provisions that are built in for the retention of ultimate executive control in the states, unfortunately, without those concessions, this body would not have been created. It would not have been agreed to if the federal government had been able to set up this authority with some supreme federal power to intervene, in respect of the states, without any caveat being able to be placed by the states at all. Even with the limitations that have been built in as a result of that, I still believe that the National Crime Authority will serve a useful purpose.

I must say, though, that I think, as do a great many other people around Australia, that it will need to be reviewed from time to time. The National Crime Authority will not be a cheap organisation to run and we must hope that it will not turn out to be a 'toothless tiger' in terms of actual results as, unfortunately, so many royal commissions prove to be. It is interesting that, after all the froth and bubble had died down in respect of various royal commissions held over the last 20 or 30 years, 12 months or 2 years later, very few recommended prosecutions proceeded and very few convictions resulted from those prosecutions. It often comes as quite a shock to find that the reality is a lot less impressive than the impression originally created by the publicity that attached to it. Really, that is the only reservation that I have about this.

Obviously, influential and active bodies, such as the important Public Accounts and Expenditure Committee of the federal parliament, when reviewing what will be the not inconsiderable cost of this organisation, will be looking at what kind of results it has produced after 12 months or so. We all hope that a significant result will be produced, particularly in the area of drug trafficking which must be seen as the major impetus, in my view, for the creation of this body. If this authority obtains a tangible result by lessening the drug trafficking and a significant number of people are convicted as a result of the evidence which is able to be gathered by it, then it will be well justified indeed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I indicate that the opposition supports this bill.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition said, this bill will allow the Northern Territory to participate in the National Crime Authority and enable the authority to investigate organised crime and other relevant criminal activity in the Territory. The National Crime Authority Act establishes the National Crime Authority as a body whose function it is to investigate, collect and analyse information relating to sophisticated or organised crime, and supply that information to state and federal law enforcement agencies. It is monitored by the Intergovernmental Committee. The Chief Minister is our representative on that committee. The IGC consists of a minister from the Commonwealth and each participating state and the Territory or their delegates. The Commonwealth parliament is also required to establish a joint committee to monitor the report on the NCA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my concern is that the National Crime Authority does not take up where the Costigan Commission left off in the area of coordinating a national continuation of investigation into the area of organised crime networks which, according to Costigan, involved illegal SP bookmakers. The sole reason for that is that those investigations do not come under the jurisdiction of the NCA because the offence of SP bookmaking does not carry a penalty of 3 years' imprisonment. In section 4(1) of the Commonwealth act, an interpretation of 'relevant criminal activity' and 'relevant criminal offences' is given. The jurisdiction of the authority is limited to relevant crime activities and relevant offences. Paragraph (g) of that section restricts the power of that authority to act where it says: 'does not include an offence that is not punishable by imprisonment or is punishable by imprisonment for a period of less than 3 years'. There is no doubt that that provision has not been included by accident but is a deliberate attempt by the federal ALP government to put an end to an inquiry that was tightening a noose around the collective neck of that government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory is free of any organised crime at this particular stage. I believe that, if organised crime were to become established in the Northern Territory, it would appear at first in the areas that relate to things like SP bookmaking, conduct of brothels and prostitution. These are the usual lead-ups to organised crime. I would prefer that the resources of the National Crime Authority be used to investigate all matters which might lead to organised crime, particularly those like SP bookmaking networks, brothels, illegal gaming houses and so on. In my opinion, those areas are recognised as forming the embryo of organised crime but none of them attract a 3-year imprisonment penalty.

I am concerned that this restriction imposed by the Labor Party will work in the long term to the detriment of Territorians and harm their interests by

failing to come to grips with the early stages of organised crime. I do not doubt that the authority will have priorities. As the Leader of the Opposition said, the operation of the National Crime Authority will be a very costly exercise and I take that into account when I express my concern about its operation as far as the Northern Territory is concerned. However, I would like to see a little more scope within this authority so that Territorians can maintain their present situation in relation to organised crime.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have much to say about this legislation but I will start by remarking that it contains sloppy drafting. I will cite 2 examples of that. It appears to be a direct lift from the federal legislation. Perhaps the honourable minister will tell me that my worries are groundless.

Mention is made of a Crown law officer in clause 19(5)(b). I am not sure who that Crown law officer is to be. Who is it? Is it the Solicitor-General? Clause 19(7)(b) refers to the production of a 'document or thing' which might tend to prove a person guilty of an offence against a law of the Commonwealth or of another territory. Perhaps the honourable minister could explain to me why only the word 'territory' has been used there. Another territory would be the ACT, Christmas Island or the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Is it the intention to cover territories only or states also? Those are the 2 areas that led to my remark about sloppy drafting.

Some of my constituents have expressed concern about search warrants. I am not sure how the legislation will be implemented realistically. I would like some clarification of this. Where a search warrant is executed in the Territory, I would like to see it executed by the Northern Territory police. However, from my reading of the bill, it appears that a search warrant can be executed in the Northern Territory by state and federal police. That means that members of a state police force or the federal police can come into the Territory and take out a search warrant against a citizen of the Northern Territory in relation to a Northern Territory law. You might say, 'so what?', Mr Deputy Speaker, but I have very clear memories of police from the states in the Territory after Cyclone Tracy.

Mr B. Collins: Shooting dogs.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The Leader of the Opposition said 'shooting dogs' but that was only part of it. A certain group of policemen came from New South Wales to the Northern Territory after Cyclone Tracy and thought that the world was their oyster. They thought that everything was laid on for their convenience. I remember the names of 7 people who described to me some particular instances of their disgraceful behaviour. I have been told that things were stolen from shops. Perhaps I should not speak of these people as members of a police force; perhaps they were just individuals. However, members of this police force accepted red-light activities as something that just sort of fitted in with their presence in the Territory. They expected preferential treatment in their accommodation at a certain hotel which had not been wrecked completely by Cyclone Tracy.

If this same section of the New South Wales Police Force is to come up here and execute search warrants, I would be very concerned. Our own police force does a pretty good job. I think it is held in high regard by the community, probably with the exception of the law breakers.

Mr B. Collins: They would be 10 years older now, Noel. They have probably mellowed a lot.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The Leader of the Opposition said that I have mellowed with the years. I do not think that I have.

Mr B. Collins: No, they may have mellowed is what I said.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Oh, they may have. I keep my ear to the ground and I know pretty well what is going on here and there.

In relation to the federal police, 2 cases were brought to my attention recently, one by a present constituent in my electorate and the second by a lady who used to be one of my constituents. I know that, when the Northern Territory police have occasion to arrest a person who has done something wrong, usually they do not try to grind that person into the dirt in arresting him. Usually they let him keep a little bit of face. They perform their duty with a degree of courtesy. I know that there are probably a few good federal policemen around and that some of them are working with the Northern Territory Police Force in the drug squad but I have my doubts about many of them and especially these people who arrested this particular lady, who is middle-aged and of some standing in the community. She is a law-abiding person and probably I would have reacted as she did. I will not go into the reasons for the arrest.

However, when the police came to see her, she had been working in the garden. She was wearing an old gardening dress and she was barefooted, which is pretty much the way most people up here are when they work in the garden. I am myself. You do not appear at your best. You are a bit grubby. Certainly, you are not really dressed for a garden party at the palace. These federal policemen came along and arrested this woman and literally forced her to go with them just as she was. That was utterly degrading and despicable.

Mr D.W. Collins: Unchristian.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It was more than unchristian. If we are to have people like that and like the members of the New South Wales Police Force operating in the Northern Territory, I say that it will be a sorry day for the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that, originally, there was some resistance from senior members of the police force in the Northern Territory to the idea of a National Crime Authority. I think the concern expressed at the time was that it might usurp the authority of the local police force. Certainly, nobody in the Northern Territory would want that. We have been fighting hard for independent rule for some time and to be taken over - which was the fear of senior members of the police force - would be a retrograde step.

Earlier today I said that I would like to see an assessment of electricity reticulation in the rural area after a year. I would like an assessment to be made in the Northern Territory of the way that this legislation has affected the Territory after 2 or 3 years. I think that would allow a fair time. Forget about the rest of Australia. I would like to see the cost of it to the Northern Territory. I would like to see whether there has been a denial of power to the local police force to carry out its proper duties and an assessment to determine that there has not been overpowering interference in our local affairs by other police forces.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of the bill. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I have reservations in relation to the whole concept of the National Crime Authority. Organised crime is a pretty big issue in Australia today. With good reason, it is something that all

Australians are very concerned about. We have only to open a newspaper, turn on a television set during news time or listen to the radio news and we are informed about the inroads that organised crime has made in relation to our established orders, our companies and our government functions. In places such as NSW, Victoria and Queensland, there definitely appear to be a lot of problems in relation to organised crime and just how far the tentacles of these evil operations have spread. There is also quite a bit of evidence that these organisations have overseas connections. Australia, in this day and age of rapid transport, is being drawn into the organisations that operate overseas.

The economic returns that come to these organisations are mind boggling. There was an article in the Australian the other day which estimated that the drug organisations in Australia reap a benefit of some \$700m from this filthy trade of theirs. It is a situation that all Australians are concerned about. I do not think that Australians are fully aware of just what is occurring and how the lack of action by governments is contributing to the growth of crime in this country.

The member for Wanguri said that, in the Northern Territory, we are very fortunate that there are no major criminal organisations operating. I think we must be aware that there have been attempts by organisations to get started in the Territory. We have only to look back over the last couple of years. I think most people realise that the \$3m worth of cannabis that Donald Tait attempted to fly in was not financed by a single person. Obviously, there was money involved, there was organisation involved and there were some pretty heavy profits to be realised at the end of the trip had it been successful. Fortunately, the offence was discovered, even though it was accidental, and justice was done.

A few years back, a man by the name of Bela Cseidi was growing drugs at Borroloola which were destined for the Sydney market. After the court case and convictions in relation to this matter, it was determined that there was absolutely no connection with any organised crime. This man of some dubious character just happened to pop up to the Territory to plant a few plants for his own use and for a few of his friends. I think that most people realise that there have been attempts and there will be attempts. As the Territory grows larger, as our population increases and as more money moves within the community, there will be greater pressure by organised crime to try to establish itself firmly in the Territory.

Organised crime in this day and age has the ability to use the latest technology. It avails itself of everything that can help it to carry out all the unlawful activities that it is involved in. The people involved in these organisations and these criminal activities do not operate by any rules whatsoever. They just do their own thing. All they try to satisfy is their own greed. They do not care what stands in their way and who stands in their way. They have proven ways and means of getting round the impediments that are put in front of them.

I think it is appropriate to say that, at this moment, the hands of the police are tied in their battle against organised crime. We have changes in legislation that have created problems in investigations. We have a number of groups in the community that are always insisting that the police cannot do this or cannot do that because it might upset somebody. The victims are not thought about. It is the criminal that is either apprehended or under investigation who receives the most loudly-voiced support.

I think it is valid to point out that, in a lot of cases, the police actually know who is doing what and who is involved in what crime. Unfortunately, they are unable to do anything about it. They are unable to carry out investigations to the extent that would result in any sort of prosecution. As a community, we should be concerned about it.

I am probably a bit biased about this but I have no hesitation in saying that the quality of our police force and the members in it would be head and shoulders above any other police force in Australia. Their ability to investigate and to prosecute is far in excess of other police forces in Australia. Legislative constraints and legal practices, such as judges' rules, certain necessary court procedures and higher court rulings, affect how investigations can be carried out. At this stage, it might be appropriate for me to quote a retired Canadian judge who served as a jurist for some 21 years in Canada and who retired from his profession some 6 years before he was required by statute to do so. His name was Justice Les Bewley. I do not know whether any members are aware of what he wrote after he retired but I might just quote some comments from an article that he wrote. Talking about Canada, he said:

We are arriving, as Americans have arrived, at this disgraceful and unendurable state because, over the past 20 years, a spurious, dangerous, one-sided debate about the nature and direction of law, order, crime and punishment has been allowed to go on.

Widely quoted professors of law, political science, humanities, theology, philosophy, sociology, (and almost every other 'ology' which the academic mind, in search of some scientific verisimilitude, had the wit to invent). long on theory and short on experience, had the most advice to offer.

When, frequently, they ran out of breath, the equally vocal civil libertarians, generally unconcerned about the civil rights of victims, filled any void.

The learned judge stated further on:

Conspicuously missing from the 'debate' are those with the least spare time, freedom to speak and the most experience: the victims, police forces and trial judges.

Further he writes:

The inevitable results of this one-sided sales pitch from the dreamers or the schemers has been that well-meaning, eager-to-oblige (admit it - humane, progressive, forward-looking are happier adjectives than reactionary, neanderthal, junkyard-dog mean) legislators, attorneys-general, solicitors-general, ministers of justice - and yes, God help us, some judges and police chiefs - have been well and truly hornswoggled into adopting legislation and policies which have fuelled, not deterred, crime and criminals. And nearly destroyed the third arm of government as an effective institution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the learned justice retired from the bench because he could see that organised crime was growing and the people making the laws, academics and others were creating a situation where the law was unable to cope with those criminals. A situation had been reached which he felt was

detrimental to the people of Canada. I bring that up because I believe that, in Australia, we must be aware of what has occurred in America, we must be aware of what is obviously occurring in Canada and we must be on our guard to ensure that it does not happen in the Northern Territory.

Organised crime is a fact of life in other parts of Australia. It will eventually reach the Northern Territory. We must make sure that the people whom we give the task of protecting our society against such organisations have the weapons and the ability to fight the people who are involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have gone on a bit but, as most members know, I have had a number of years experience in this area. At times I have been frustrated to see criminals getting away with it because certain constraints have prevented any further action being taken.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will touch firstly on the points raised by the member for Koolpinyah. In regard to the search warrant section on page 6, she commented about the ability of federal police or police from another state or another person to obtain a search warrant to undertake investigations and activities in the Northern Territory. That is true and I guess that the best way one can allay her concerns is to say that it does, however, require a warrant from a judge of the Northern Territory, which obviously is a significant point. The judge is empowered to give warrants under strict conditions. The conditions go on for a couple of pages. I think there is a reasonable form of protection there. I do accept personally that we must be mindful in this legislation, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that it is very difficult to get common agreement on any legislation, and legislation such as this is extremely sensitive amongst the states. We must have legislation that can work. I think the protection of satisfying a Territory judge before a warrant can be issued to a person from another state is a reasonable protection.

She also raised a couple of queries about the Crown law officer mentioned in clause 19(5)(b). I am advised that the Crown law officer referred to is in fact the Director of Public Prosecutions, a Commonwealth officer. The information comes from clause 3(2) which refers that interpretation back to a Commonwealth act.

On the question of refusing to answer a question that might incriminate, she raised a query about the term: 'the Commonwealth or of another territory'. This seems out of kilter with other sections of the act which state: 'Commonwealth, state or territory'. The answer to that is that there are 3 separate sections in clause 19 which refer to the question of refusing to answer questions which might incriminate. One talks about a law of the Territory. The other one talks about a law of the Commonwealth or of another territory; for example, the ACT. Over the page, it talks about the law of a state. The 3 components each deal with different sections of the country.

I think that most Australians these days are fairly concerned about what appears to be - if one can gain any truth from the media - an increase in organised crime in Australia. It appears from reports like that of the Costigan Royal Commission that it is on a large scale. Despite his very long and very expensive royal commission, Costigan really only scratched the surface. The investigation started on the activities of one union in Victoria. That led to a spider-web of investigations and suggestions of organised crime in a whole raft of areas, from people involved with drugs to violent crimes.

I think that Australians are concerned that we do not want to become a country where organised crime is so ingrained that it is simply accepted as a part of life that we all hope never touches us, our family or our friends. I think that it is timely and I am very pleased, as an Australian citizen, to see that agreement was reached among the states on setting up the National Crime Authority. I dearly hope that it is a very effective body. We will know in time by the results it produces. If we do not have a really good lash at it now and give the police forces of this country a good go at getting to the bottom of the matter, I am sure that, as years go by, we will progressively reach a situation where it will never be stopped. I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 98)

Continued from page 648.

In committee:

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I take this opportunity to provide a little more information to honourable members in relation to whether or not interest accrues to amounts outstanding under the scheme as was published in NTEC's booklet called Distribution System Extension Policy. I advise that, where blocks are serviced by electricity lines and people do not take up the opportunity to have that electricity connected, when electricity is eventually connected, it will cost \$5000 plus CPI from the time the power was available for that block. That is the explanation that has been given to me.

That situation is slightly different than for those people who apply for electricity under the scheme and opt to pay the \$5000. It is a flat \$5000 unless the government changes it at some time in the future. It is not anticipated that it will rise by the CPI automatically. I hope that is a little clearer to honourable members. No doubt, there is a need for some clarification for the public on this matter and I will be attending to that with NTEC as soon as we have time after this sittings.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

FLAG AND EMBLEM BILL (Serial 96)

Continued from 27 February 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not imagine that the debate on this particular bill will be too prolonged on either side of the Assembly. The bill officially describes the arms and the flag of the Northern Territory and makes provision for an official emblem to be declared later. The use of the arms is restricted to official purposes although the minister may authorise its use for bona fide educational purposes within the

Territory. The penalty provided for unauthorised use is \$500 plus \$100 per day. The use of the flag is not restricted but provision is made for restricting use of the declared emblem without the minister's written authority. There is a similar penalty to that in respect of unauthorised use of the arms. The minister can also prescribe rules for the use of the emblem.

Proceedings for an offence against the legislation requires the written consent of the Northern Territory's Attorney-General. That is sensible because this is the kind of legislation that could provide an opportunity for some capricious use to be made of it. For example, the ALP may become uptight about the proprietorial interest which the CLP seems to have in the Northern Territory flag. Indeed, it has been a feature of political life in the Northern Territory that the CLP has successfully identified itself with the flag of the Northern Territory. I remember a story which has the virtue of being absolutely true, like most of the things which I say from time to time. Soon after self-government, a certain Territory mayor was presenting Northern Territory flags to schools. On this occasion, she turned up with the flag which had been in existence for about 12 months at the time. As a result of the auspiciousness of the occasion, the assembled students were drawn up to attention and the presentation was made to the school captain. In order to relieve the tension a little, the mayor said to the student when she handed the flag over: 'Do you know what this flag is and what it signifies?' The mayor obviously was hoping that the response would be that it was Sturt's desert rose and all the rest of it. This particular child, who obviously had come from a highly-biased family, said: 'Yes, I know what that is. It is the CLP flag'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, because I am not in the fortunate position of owning shirts with detachable collars, I have never been in the business of continuing to rip apart the collars of my shirts by puncturing them with Northern Territory flag badges, as some honourable ministers and members used to do. I remember one occasion when the preoccupation of members opposite with this kind of symbolism reached dizzy heights. There was a debate going on about a certain railway and suddenly the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly was presented with a dazzling array of multi-coloured badges that seemed to be a yard across planted on the front of every member opposite along with the Northern Territory flag badge. Perhaps it is my imagination but there seems to have been a gradual erosion of the practice of this militant mob opposite wearing their little emblems on their collars. I think it is just a matter of their collars having been progressively torn apart. I do not think anything can be read into that.

I wish to take this opportunity to say how much I admire the Northern Territory flag. Like many other people, at first I was not impressed with it. In fact, a number of extremely rude suggestions were made about what the symbol looked like. However, you have only to attend the occasional overseas function such as a CPA conference, where the delegates end up swapping badges like a group of overgrown boy scouts - and I have quite a collection myself - to realise just how striking the Territory's flag is and how popular it is in terms of people seeking it.

One of the most striking things about the Northern Territory flag, as distinct from state flags, is that it does not have the Union Jack on it anywhere. I think it has been very cheeky of the poms. For years, they did not have a flag of their own and they had to cut the corner out of ours and use it. I know the results of the national poll on the flag - 70% were against change at the last poll - but I look forward to seeing a similar bill introducing an Australian flag, and the sooner it happens the better.

It is of interest to me to note the reluctance of Australians to be proud

of their own nationality and country. Without being the slightest bit jingoistic or silly about it, it really intrigued me when I discovered that this country did not even possess its own citizenship act until 50 years after federation. Citizenship was not introduced into this country until 1949. Prior to that, Australians carried British passports with 'Australian citizen' stamped on the front. That was 50 years after we had become a federation. That was not accidental. In fact, on the occasions when the matter was raised, it was howled down just as people are doing now about the prospect of changing the flag: 'How dare you suggest that we should break our ties with Great Britain and be citizens of our own country instead of British citizens'.

I experienced what I regard as one of the most tedious exercises of my life - and I am gritting my teeth at the prospect of having to go to another one this year - when I attended an Australian Constitutional Convention. I was warned by the former Chief Minister, who was my co-delegate, what an enervating experience it would be. It was as bad or worse than he described it. Whilst I would have some dispute with people who would describe participants in the committee system in the federal parliament as being the Portnoys of the Australian parliamentary system, that description certainly applies to the participants at those Australian Constitutional Conventions because it does not take too long to dawn on you that you are doing a great deal of talking for very little result. Some of the silliest things are expressed in speeches made about our links with Great Britain. I wonder how many Australians realise how theoretically strong those links are. I wonder how many Australians realise that our very constitution is subject to imperial acts of the British parliament.

I decry the action of the Labor government during the Whitlam years when, in order to sever some of those constitutional links, a bill was introduced into the federal parliament which, thankfully, was defeated. One of the best speeches made on it in the federal parliament was by Mr Killen who certainly expressed what I thought about the backdoor approach to amend the Australian Constitution without a referendum. That was classic Gough Whitlam stuff. What an extraordinarily dreadful precedent would have been established if that bill had been passed. Many Australians do not know that it would be possible, under the Statute of Westminster, an imperial act, for a government in Australia which happened to coincide with a government of like mind in Great Britain, by application to that government, to have an amendment to the Australian Constitution passed by the House of Commons which would take effect without the need to implement section 128 of the Australian Constitution and have a referendum. That is the situation we are still in.

Why I find this offensive, and I do not hesitate to take this opportunity to say it, is that this country is approaching its bicentennial celebrations in 1988 - 200 years of European settlement in this country and 80-odd years after we federated as a nation - and we are still in a position of having our very constitution subject to acts of the British parliament and the authority of the House of Commons. It is a silly situation to be in. There is no logical reason why we should perpetuate it. Whenever somebody suggests that we should get rid of these anachronistic links with Great Britain which do not impinge upon our historical connection or indeed emotional and racial connection with that country in the slightest, people like the Premier of Queensland, who would be one of the worst offenders, immediately leap up and start saying: 'You are destroying our links with the mother country'. In fact, you are doing nothing of the sort. One of the greatest common law courts in the world - and it is recognised as such by the Privy Council - the Australian High Court, is still in the position of not having the final say in respect of state matters. There is considerable restriction on references being made on Commonwealth matters but

the states can and still do appeal from judgments of the High Court of Australia to the Privy Council of Great Britain. I look forward to the day when we can finally put into action what we all talk about at these constitutional conventions and once and for all sever these totally unnecessary constitutional links with Great Britain. I think an important symbolic act in that respect would be to change Australia's flag.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am proud of the Northern Territory flag. It is a flag that all Australians should be proud of. I commend the government for what I know was a deliberate decision to have a flag developed which simply represented, as best it could, the Northern Territory in its colours and its symbols. That is what we should be doing in Australia.

The reason I raised this is to place on record my preference for a flag. There are some weird and wonderful suggestions around: red koalas and yellow kangaroos and all sorts of things. There is one I do not like because it looks as if it is owned by the Australian Democrats. It is being promoted by a national committee. They have actually prepared little facsimiles of this flag and distributed them all over the country. It is green and gold with a kangaroo and the southern cross. Whilst I think that green and gold are handsome colours and very appropriate for the sporting colours of the country, I would prefer to see the existing colours of red, white and blue retained.

I would prefer to keep the change in the flag as simple as possible. Have a look at some of the flags that have been developed by former colonies of Great Britain which originally had the Union Jack on their flag. In particular, I admire the Canadian flag with its maple leaf design. The flag I would like to see developed is the flag as it exists now without any change except with the Union Jack removed and the stars representing the states simply raised to a central position on the flag and enlarged slightly. In fact, that is one of the suggestions that has been made. There are a number of publications which have colour depictions of all the suggestions that have been made.

I think it is about time for members to start taking some interest in this matter because there is continuing national publicity about it. The ABC will be devoting a special program shortly to the whole question of the movement towards a truly national flag for Australia. I would like to go on record at this early point and say that that is my choice. The current Australian flag is a handsome one. The symbolism and impact of the southern cross on our flag is marvellous. I do not think that we should have kangaroos and koalas on our flag. If we simply remove the Union Jack, move the stars up into a central position and enlarge them, we would have a flag which would be instantly recognisable as being Australian. It is necessary for symbols to be simple so that they can be reproduced easily on logos. At long last, it would give some indication that Australians are not embarrassed or reluctant, without necessarily severing our constitutional or emotional links with the mother country, of simply saying that we are Australian. The reason for that is that the society in Australia now is dramatically different from the society that existed in this country 100 years ago. It is continuing to move that way. I would like to place on record my suggestion as to what we should do about it.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak in support of this legislation but before I begin my speech, I would like to take up the last point of the Leader of the Opposition about the adoption of an Australian flag. If the Union Jack disappears, it will create some fairly severe tremors because all the states have the Union Jack incorporated into their flags. Our flag is the only one without the Union Jack. Given the popularity of our flag, and the move to adopt an Australian flag, it is to be hoped that the federal

government will not move in on us and attempt to interfere in any way with the colour, size or design of our flag.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak in support of this legislation introduced by the Chief Minister which details the purposes for and places in which the Northern Territory flag and the coat-of-arms can be used.

Concerning the flag, I know of no other single factor which emphasises or shows Territorians' acceptance of self-government and their pride in the Northern Territory so clearly. In all honesty, when I first saw the flag, I was aghast at both its colour and its design. But, gradually, the distinctive design and colouring grew on me and, I guess, on many other Territorians.

I remember on 1 July 1978 when the flag was first flown in central Australia. I am not being parochial. 'Flown' is the operative word because it literally went up all over town on that day. The first flag was officially raised in central Australia on the council lawns at 12 noon by the then mayor of Alice Springs, George Smith. It never rains in central Australia but, on 1 July 1978, it poured. But this rain did not deter a large crowd from attending this ceremony. Within hours of this event, Northern Territory flags had been stolen, or should I say souvenired, from the RSL, the Royal Flying Doctor Base, the top of the 2-storey MLAs' office in Alice Springs and, believe it or not, from the Alice Springs Police Station. All of this occurred in broad daylight.

As I said, the flag showed people's pride in the Territory. The request by Northern Territory sporting groups for flags - the large flag and the small lapel badges - when travelling interstate for national competitions, in the last 6 almost 7 years, has been amazing.

There are 2 examples of the national display of this flag which I believe emphasise the distinction between our flag and those of the states. The first was a photograph taken during the Royal visit to the Northern Territory which showed Prince Charles' wife, the Princess of Wales, surrounded by a large group of Northern Territory schoolchildren all holding Northern Territory flags. This photograph, which appeared in colour in almost every national women's magazine, and indeed in other magazines in Australia, and on the front page, again in colour, of the Brisbane Courier Mail, was taken on the lawn outside the School of the Air.

The second example was about 4 years ago at the Sydney Royal Show where the Northern Territory had a display stand. Approximately half an hour before Prince Charles arrived to open the show, there were literally hundreds of people lining the road waiting for the Prince to arrive. Two girls from the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and I walked along the road distributing the small stick-wave flags to the spectators. That night on TV, and in Sydney papers the next day, the Territory flag featured prominently. We found out several days later that the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, was not exactly amused.

It would be interesting to know how many people interstate know the design of their state flags. I am sure that every man, woman and child in the Northern Territory knows and can identify their flag.

There were at least 2 people who played a major role in the birth of the Northern Territory flag. I will pay tribute to those 2 people tonight. I do that for historic purposes if for no other reason. The first was Robert Ingpen, who designed it, and the second was a now-retired senior public servant,

Harry Giese, who recommended to the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, that the Territory should design and adopt its own flag with the advent of self-government.

In relation to the coat-of-arms, I should also pay tribute tonight to the Deputy Chief Minister. He was in Britain in February 1978. He was involved in discussions with the College of Heralds concerning the design and ultimate adoption of the Northern Territory coat-of-arms. An amusing side to that was that I obtained leave of absence for the honourable member for Casuarina so that his seat would not become vacant given his absence from here on X number of days. At the conclusion of the sixth sitting day, jokingly I sent him a telegram advising that I had forgotten and asked him if he was going to contest the by-election. Most of us know that the member for Casuarina, given his ethnic background, has a fairly short fuse. About 2 o'clock one morning, I had a terrible phone call taking me apart for failing to get leave of absence. He said: 'There are 18 other members. Why didn't at least I remember to get leave of absence?' After about 10 minutes of fuming down the line, I assured him that he was still in fact the member for Casuarina and I had obtained leave of absence for him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst the legislation sets out the details concerning the use of both the flag and the coat-of-arms there is no retrospective clause in it. In all seriousness, I know of no one who has used either the flag or the coat-of-arms in a derogatory manner in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I liken the advent of self-government and the flying of the Northern Territory flag in the Territory to places like Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and other places in the Pacific which I was fortunate to visit in 1978. Most of those nations had received or were about to receive self-government. The New Guinea situation was very similar to that of the Northern Territory, given that our flags had been flying almost non-stop since 1 July 1978. New Guinea, which had achieved self-government some years before that, was doing the same thing right throughout the islands, the hills and the mountains. It was interesting that the pride with which the New Guineans viewed their flag was on a par with the pride in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I indicate my support for the legislation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in respect of this bill. I note that both the previous speakers have cut a fairly broad swathe through this particular bill, discussing principles relevant and, by association, of importance to the general idea of flags and emblems and their use.

It is not unreasonable that one stops when there is a bill such as this before the Assembly and considers the purpose of such things. I think it is important that we have these symbols of our identification with a particular place and I would suggest in passing that that sort of identification in this country is particularly important in this day and age. I would suggest that there are forces that are disintegrating this particular nation and that it behoves us on one hand not to say: 'My country right or wrong'. But it does behove us to pause once in a while and concentrate on that national identification. In the context of what are appropriate flags and emblems, we should bear that in mind.

I probably will be accused of disloyalty in this regard because I must admit that my fundamental identification is as an Australian. I feel very strongly my loyalty to my country in that regard and my pride in my country in that regard. It is not all that popular to say those sorts of things now but I am quite happy to put them on the record. In the context of this particular bill, in the context of a Territory legislature and in the context of Territory flags and Territory emblems, one is forced to consider the relative identification with the Territory and with the Territory's part in the country as a whole. I have already said that my primary identification is with the country as a whole.

However, I share exactly the same frustrations with the lack of understanding of northern Australia that the majority of the people who live in this country demonstrate. I have a quiet pride about the wide open spaces in the north and my association with them. Like the vast majority of us here, I was born elsewhere but I have developed and learnt a great deal about the north and about the things that distinguish the north from the south. It is certainly my home now. I have every sympathy and wish to exert whatever effort I can to make that part of northern Australia, the Northern Territory, a place in which all people can lead happy lives.

In this particular bill, I notice that there are a couple of clauses that, in the context of this debate, are worthy of comment. I draw specific attention of honourable members to clause 9, the clause headed: 'Improper Use of Declared Emblem an Offence'. Subclause 9(2) says:

A person who, directly or indirectly, assumes, uses or otherwise deals with, or causes to be assumed, used or otherwise dealt with, or prints, publishes or manufactures or sells or offers or exhibits for sale or causes to be printed, published, manufactured, sold or offered or exhibited for sale or sends, distributes or delivers to or serves on or causes to be sent, distributed or delivered to or served on a person any writing, material or object in which or on which appears a declared emblem for any trade, business, calling profession or commercial purpose or in connection with a club or any body or association of persons or in such a manner as to suggest that the writing, material or object has official significance is guilty of an offence.

That is a remarkable clause because one is forced to consider whether its use for political purposes may in fact be an offence under that particular section. I am wondering if, for example, the President of the Australian Labor Party in the Northern Territory, in seeking to use the Northern Territory flag for political purposes, may find a burly constable on his doorstep one particular day. I can only assume that that will not occur. I am not quite sure whether in fact that particular clause would permit that and whether the President of the Australian Labor Party or the secretary thereof may in fact have to write to the Chief Minister seeking the use of the flag for political purposes. If such were the case, I wonder what his decision would be.

I wish to make a comment on schedule 1. This is just a mere printing error. If the Leader of the Opposition is in the precincts, I have no doubt that he will start moaning and groaning as soon as he realises the substance of my comment on schedule 1. Schedule 1 is the description of the arms of the Territory. I am well aware of the comments of the member for Koolpinyah drawing attention to the shape of the actual kangaroo and the genitalia thereon. Male or female, I can never quite work out which is which. In the description of the arms, I feel

sure that there has been an unfortunate misspelling. The red kangaroo is referred to in the bill as a 'Macropus refus'. I think that should be 'Macropodus rufus'. I draw that to the attention of the Chief Minister.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, there has been a bit of comment this afternoon about lapel badges. I do not have one because I cannot keep one. Every time I put one on, I find that somebody comes along and says: 'What is that? Can I have it?' Not wanting to displease anyone, I give them away. I do not have one at this particular time. In fact, right throughout Australia, I find that it is recognised and people ask about it.

A notable member of the press gallery commented in his column in the NT News today about the lack of the lapel badge flags being worn in the Assembly. I wonder if that warranted so much space in the column. The lapel badge is worn proudly and the flag is flown proudly right throughout the Territory.

I would venture to say that our flag is the most recognised state flag in Australia. In fact, I would not have a clue what the other state flags look like. I do not know whether anybody else knows but I certainly do not know. I have seen them somewhere along the way but they have never really stuck in my memory. Certainly, the Territory flag does stick in your memory.

The member for MacDonnell commented on the restriction on the use of the flag and whether people could or could not use the flag under this proposed legislation. The Chief Minister stated in his second-reading speech:

This Assembly will be aware that there is widespread reproduction of the Territory flag for advertising, tourist sales and wearing apparel. Mr Speaker, I expect that these uses will continue. Indeed, the flag and various Territory emblems are of great promotional value to the Territory, particularly in the tourist industry. My government actively encourages the extension of their use. For this reason, the bill contains no restriction on the use of the Territory flag.

I am very grateful for that because I use it on my newsletter and I would not like to think that I would have to omit it. It has become a part of the front cover.

The provisions in the bill to protect the Territory's name and the very recognisable emblems of the Territory are very sensible. I am very pleased that the very real part that Aborigines play in the Territory are enshrined in our arms. I will not go into the description that the previous speaker went into with regard to the arms, but they have very real reference to the part that Aboriginal people play in the Territory. I think that we should be proud to have that recognition in our arms.

I support this bill all the way. We must protect the Territory's good name and that could be put down by the misuse of our flag and arms.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a couple of brief comments. I was pleased to note that the honourable member for Victoria River picked up the point that there had seemed to be some confusion in respect to the interpretation of the bill in so far as the flag is concerned. The flag is not defined as an emblem in this bill and, therefore, it is not subject to the restrictions that are imposed on the use of Territory emblems.

As we all know, the flag is used very widely and it is pleasing to note that the Leader of the Opposition well recognises its identification with the

Country Liberal Party. As a matter of interest, even his own party supporters recognise it as such. During the last federal election campaign, I noted with some glee at the Nightcliff polling booth that the member for Ludmilla, who was helping with scrutineering, happened to have a Territory flag pinned to his collar. The scrutineer from the Australian Labor Party objected to the scrutineer wearing that symbol on the grounds that it was a CLP badge. I thought that was marvellous. We made a great noise about it and made sure everybody recognised that, in fact, it was a CLP badge, and then proceeded to remove them ostentatiously.

Mr Smith: You were still asked to remove it, were you?

Mr HATTON: Yes, we were. Under the circumstances we did not take any firm objection to that. There are times when one can do a little electioneering inside a polling booth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the emblem provisions are particularly important. They provide a vehicle for the protection of some of the particular emblems that one would envisage. The one that comes to mind most readily is the striking emblem that has been prepared and distributed to Northern Territory sporting teams for people who are representing the Northern Territory interstate. It is a particularly striking symbol and very valued by our junior and senior sports people in the Northern Territory. I think the bill is intended to protect those types of emblems and badges against misuse or abuse. They are particularly striking and should be given a measure of protection.

As I said, the flag is widely used and generally one would not object to its use. I must say, however, that there was one occasion when I have found it quite repugnant that the flag was used. That was in respect of a particular brand of milk that was produced in New South Wales. The packaging was produced in New South Wales and the completed product was flown up and distributed throughout the Northern Territory. The packet displayed the Territory flag prominently which gave customers a clear impression that they were buying fresh milk, produced in the Northern Territory, when it was frozen milk imported from southern New South Wales. I understand from consumers that it gained a bad reputation because of its lack of staying power at home. Certainly, that was of no help to the dairy producers we have in the Northern Territory and their aspirations towards trying to put fresh milk on the Northern Territory market. I think that is the only use to which the Territory flag has been put that has upset me. In my view, it misrepresented a product that was not produced in the Northern Territory, underwent no manufacturing at all in the Northern Territory and yet, by way of the Territory flag symbol incorporated on the pack, led customers to believe it was fresh milk produced in the Northern Territory.

Apart from that, I think the more we can use the flag the better. I take great pride in seeing it when I get the rare opportunity to go to major sporting events. It is rare not to see it somewhere in the crowd at major sporting events in Australia. Yet it would be very unusual at any of those events to see any other state flag flying. There will always be a Territory flag somewhere in the crowd, be it on someone's hat, hanging over a balcony or somewhere around the crowd. The implications of that are that the flag clearly provides a symbol of the identification that people have with the Territory and a method by which they can express their pride in the Territory. That is something that we should promote and not limit in its general terms. However, I wish that we could find a way to stop it being abused by interstate manufacturers.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no wish to prolong this debate so I will keep my comments brief. I believe that it is important that, over the few years since self-government, the Territory flag has become synonymous with the nationalistic feeling - if I may use those words in a Territory sense - of Territorians. It does not matter where you go throughout the Northern Territory, or even interstate, you will find Territorians displaying their flag as a badge. I for one do it regularly and I am very proud to do so. I am concerned that the custom does not seem to be as popular as it used to be in this Assembly.

I would like to support the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition who expressed his agreement with the fact that no Union Jack is shown on our flag. I believe that, in the case of the states and the Territory, it should not be. I think I am correct in saying that we would be the only state or territory that does not display the Union Jack on its flag. However, I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition's comments about the Australian flag and his wish to have the Union Jack removed from it. It is important that it remains there because, regardless of what happens in the future, nobody can ever take away from Australia the fact that our existence, our heritage, originated from the UK. The Union Jack was the first flag to be displayed on our shores. That is how I feel.

When people talk about the Territory flag being the symbol of the CLP, I disagree with them. I do not consider it to be the symbol of the CLP at all. However, I believe that the CLP and its members are very proud indeed to display the Territory flag because they are proud of the fact that we are a self-governing Territory. The flag symbolises that. I have noticed a change in ALP policy recently. For years the ALP has displayed the Australian flag in most of its advertising.

Nevertheless, the Territory flag and the badge are very popular. I was at a function recently and a young lady who had had just a little too much to drink bumped into me. She wheeled around. She had a great smile on her face and I thought, 'oh gee, that is nice'. I thought she was going to comment: 'Well he is a fine looking fellow'. It was not to be because she fastened her gaze on my flag. She said: 'That is a fine flag. I wish I could have one like that'. I thought: 'Well, yes you can my dear, but you will have to go to the shop and buy one because I am not giving mine away; I like it too much'.

The honourable member for Victoria River commented that most of the state flags have the Union Jack on them and their own emblems; for example, South Australia has the magpie and Queensland, even though its emblem is the Cooktown orchid, has the Maltese cross and so on.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of the government's proposal. I feel very proud of our flag.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUPREME COURT (JUDGES PENSIONS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 89)

Continued from 5 March 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this amendment makes provision for the payment of pensions to Supreme Court judges who have served more than 6 years but less than 10 years. The current provision entitles judges to a pension of 60% of their salary if they have served for more than 10 years or if they retire because of permanent disability or infirmity. The amendments provide for a pro rata pension at the rate of 0.5% of salary for each completed month of service up to the maximum of 60% of salary. This is available only if the judge has served at least 6 years. In the case of retirement through illness, a judge who could have served 10 years or more will receive the full 60% of salary as pension, while a judge who could not have served 10 years will receive a pension calculated at 0.5% of salary for each month of the period of his service plus his potential term to retirement age.

The transitional provisions, however, ensure that judges appointed before the commencement of the amending legislation retain their current entitlement to a full pension - that is, 60% of current salary - if retired on ill health, even if they have not and could not have served 10 years. When introducing this bill, the Attorney-General explained that the Territory's current provisions were those inherited at self-government. However, the Commonwealth provisions were amended in 1981 to permit a pro rata reduced pension after 6 years' service. The Territory amendments have simply adopted a similar formula and, by logical extension, have applied it to a pension for retirement because of ill health. As I said, the legislation is consequent upon changes that were made to similar schemes elsewhere and this simply brings the Territory into line with those amendments. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy speaker, this is a perfectly reasonable proposition and I support the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

WILLS AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 100)

Continued from 6 March 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill introduces amendments which, in effect, go to all possible lengths to ensure that a will is valid. What it does is apply the laws of as many jurisdictions as can be found to have any connection with the matter - for example, where the will was made, where the testator died, where the testator habitually resided, where the testator was a citizen, where removable property disposed of in the will is situated etc - in an effort to validate the will. In other words, if the will is valid under the laws of any place with which there can be established some connection, then it will be upheld.

In introducing the bill, the Attorney-General indicated that the amendments implement the Hague Conference Convention on the conflict of law relating to the form of testamentary dispositions. Apparently, the Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction which has yet to adopt the terms of the convention and, with the endorsement of this bill, Australia will be in a position to cede formally to the convention. You may recall that the Wills Act was amended last

year to give the Supreme Court the power to validate a will which would otherwise fail because of a technical defect, so long as the court was satisfied that the will represented the true testamentary intention of the deceased.

These are all attempts to ensure that a will is implemented wherever possible rather than allowing it to fail for some technical reason. The problem is that the laws relating to the making of a will can be overly complex and, of course, the general population, in which I would include myself, is often ignorant of the rules. There are added problems where a conflict of laws situation arises, where the applicable jurisdiction may not be obvious and, hence, the applicable rules may not be obvious.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this piece of legislation is welcome. It will provide that injustices that have occurred because of technical deficiencies in the past will not do so in the future and ensure that wills, the intentions of deceased persons as to the disposal of their estates, are carried out.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Sixth Report

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I present the Sixth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. Copies of the report are being distributed to honourable members.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, some 3 days ago there were a number of unhappy people in Darwin. I refer to the people who went to the government's motor car auction. This time a significant change had been made to the procedures that had been followed previously. At previous government vehicle auctions, all cars and public vehicles were sold in single lots but, on this occasion, only 50 of the 128 vehicles were sold in single lots and the other 78 vehicles were sold in lots of 3.

This came as a very unpleasant shock to a number of people who had seen the government auction as a means of purchasing a satisfactory vehicle. No notice of this change was contained in any of the government's advertising of the auction. It was not mentioned at all that well over half of the vehicles that were available for auction would be sold in lots of 3. It was not until people looked at the catalogue that was provided that this became obvious. A glance at the catalogue indicated to most people who were interested in buying a car that most of the best cars were reserved in lots of 3. For example, all but one of the Bluebirds sold in single lots had automatic transmission. That meant that the price of the Bluebird that people could purchase in a single lot was more expensive because we all know that automatic cars are more expensive than manual cars.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it became evident on the night of the auction that this new practice had resulted in an increase in the price of the single-lot vehicles over preceding auctions whereas, in contrast, the lots of 3 vehicles were going at a substantially cheaper rate per vehicle than had been the case previously.

I think the public of Darwin deserves an explanation as to why this significant change has been made to motor car auction procedures. The widely-accepted explanation was that pressure was exerted on the government by used car dealers and, as a result of that pressure, the system was altered. That is the only explanation that I can think of that makes sense and I invite someone from the government to comment on it.

At this time, the government is under some pressure from within the Northern Territory and, certainly, from a federal government point of view, to maximise the amount of money that it raises for itself. It causes me concern that it has engaged in activity which, I am pretty sure, resulted in less money being raised than if the government had followed the established procedure of single-lot auctions. It would be interesting if the government were to produce those figures so that judgments could be made. I serve notice on the government that that will be the subject of a question on notice from myself. I invite the responsible government minister to comment on this procedure which many people found quite strange.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second thing I want to talk about is a cyclone aftermath issue concerning NTEC. I have nothing but praise for the way NTEC handled its quite difficult task after the cyclone but I think it fell down rather badly in the public relations area. I am not sure how many other members of the Assembly in the Darwin area were plagued by constituents on Saturday night and Sunday morning, but I was. There are 2 points I want to raise.

First of all, one of my constituents has need of a life-support system for his daughter. It operates on electricity. He moved into my electorate recently and when he did so he filed an application with NTEC which indicated that he needed a continuous electricity supply. NTEC maintains a list of names and, when the electricity goes off for a period of time, NTEC personnel come out with a generator. That is how I understand the system works. The first thing that went wrong was that NTEC lost his initial application and it was only after I made representations that he supposedly went on the list. But the system fell down last weekend. This person did not receive a generator to operate this life-support system. He was one of those unfortunate constituents whose power was not restored until well into Sunday and that created quite a problem for him and other arrangements had to be made. I just wanted to make the point to the minister, who is listening intently, that that life-support system, from my limited experience of it, is not working terribly well and he might like to have a look at it.

Secondly, it was a very frustrating time for all those people who, no doubt for good reason, did not get their power restored on Saturday. There is nothing worse than seeing people across the road, around the corner or up the street, who have power on when you have no power. In that circumstance, I believe people have a quite legitimate right, as customers of NTEC, to be able to ring up NTEC and ask: 'What is happening? Why haven't we got power on? The power is on across the road'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the situation was that, after a number of telephone calls, I tried to contact NTEC on Saturday night. What you got when you

contacted NTEC was a message to this effect: 'We are working as hard as we can. We expect to have the power on within 5 or 6 hours. If it is not on again by then, ring us back. If you have an urgent message' - which I had in terms of this life-support matter - 'please wait until after the message'. If you waited until after the message, all you heard was this dreadful NTEC music. There was no one on the end of that phone for most of Saturday night. Later, NTEC took the recording system off. Early on Sunday morning people would ring this emergency number and they got absolutely nothing, not even a recorded message. That was not good enough. NTEC really did fall down rather badly on a PR level. NTEC is a servicing agent and it is dealing with customers who have no choice. Perhaps that has made it a bit complacent. Certainly, I would ask the minister to look at that aspect of NTEC's operation when, hopefully, a review of the total NTEC approach to the cyclone is undertaken.

Could I make one other suggestion? For those people who are registered for assistance with their life-support systems when the power goes out, is it possible to give them a number to ring that will be manned? It is pretty frustrating when you think your kid is suffering, the power is off and you cannot get through to a responsible person to find out what is happening, and if you are likely to get a generator or if you have to make some other arrangement. I can understand NTEC's reluctance in a power blackout to have a number that everybody has access to because staff will spend all their time answering the phone. However, people with a particular problem and a need for a continuous electricity supply deserve to have a special number that they can ring and know that they will receive attention for their problems.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to clarify a couple of matters that have arisen today. They relate to answers I gave to some questions yesterday dealing with prospects for abattoir operations in the Northern Territory this year.

I am delighted to retract my criticism, in this particular instance, of Professor Ovington, the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. I received a telex this afternoon from Professor Ovington in respect of the problem I outlined in the Assembly dealing with Mudginberri abattoir. According to this telex, Professor Ovington has made the offer of a lease to the operator. In the first instance, the lease would be for the life of the proposed management plan of the park which, it is anticipated, will be 5 years from the beginning of next year. It would be followed by a 2-year option after that. Subject to determination that the use of the abattoir for the killing of buffalo would be in accord with the B-TEC program and the destocking of feral buffalo from Kakadu National Park and surrounding areas, there would be a further 2-year extension. That would mean that those operators would have an opportunity to operate for a further 10 years.

Professor Ovington concluded:

As well as the conditions I have outlined, the draft lease documents will address such other issues as suitable environmental controls and the circumstances in which compensation may be paid for improvements carried out in the life of the lease.

He also said:

I am also prepared, subject to both the acts and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, to investigate ways in which your bankers may secure and register their interest in the abattoir operations when the proposed lease is entered into. I trust

that this letter will be satisfactory for your purposes. I assure you of my goodwill in these ongoing discussions and I would ask that you or your representative contact Mr Gillespie of the service's Darwin office immediately if further problems arise.

As I said, I am delighted to be able to retract my criticisms of the events that have occurred.

The other brief matter that I would like to clarify arises from an article on the front page of the Northern Territory News today headed: 'Meatworks Opening in Doubt'. Whilst I do not want to query the general content of that article, there are a couple of statements attributed to me that are not accurate. I am quoted as saying that Katherine has been closed by picket lines for the past 2 weeks and this is likely to continue. The fact is that Katherine is not open and is not being picketed. If it does not open its doors, obviously it will not be picketed. My concern was industrial action in the event that it did open. I was in fact referring to the picket lines at the Achilles meatworks in Tennant Creek.

The other point that I would like to clarify, for the record, is an implication that I have indicated that, even if cattle gets to the abattoir and is slaughtered, in the current boggy situation, the market for that meat is uncertain. I do not believe that to be the case nor did I make that statement. I think that matter should be clarified for people so that there is no misunderstanding as to what I said. I can appreciate the problems the journalist had. It was a very hurried telephone interview this morning, undertaken as I was packing up to come to the Assembly. I can assure the Assembly that I did not make those statements and I do not make them now. I hope that clarifies those issues.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a group of young Territorians who travelled to Melbourne a couple of weeks ago to compete in a national sporting competition. I believe there were 25 of them. They were members of the Northern Territory Little Athletics who competed in Melbourne on Easter Sunday, 7 April, at the Australian Little Athletics Championships. The success of the Northern Territory competitors was exceptional. Mr Deputy Speaker, when you consider that our Little Athletics have been competing at this national event over the last 10 years and had won only 1 gold medal during that time, the recent results were even more outstanding.

Of the 24 gold medals which were competed for by all of the states, the Northern Territory and the ACT, the Northern Territory Little Athletics won 6. The exact results of the events in which the Northern Territory did so well are as follows. The gold medal in the javelin was won by a young lad from Darwin called Brenton Tennant, with a throw of 47.96 m. As well as winning the gold medal, young Brenton set a new Australian record. Another gold medal was won in the shot-put event by a young lad from Alice Springs, Mathew Gadsby. He tossed it 13.92m. This lad was very unlucky; he was only 8 cm away from setting another Australian record. Mathew Gadsby won a second gold medal with a discus throw of 44.6m. Mathew is following in his father's footsteps. I am indicating the centres from which these young people came to identify which Little Athletics centre they are from. A lass called Sheree Scully, from Darwin, won a gold medal in the 200 m sprint with a time of 26.7 s. Sheree won a second gold medal in the 60 m hurdle in a time of 9.2 s, and another gold medal was won by a girl from Katherine, Marion Ryan, in the 1500 m walk which she completed in 7 min 32.9 s.

Silver medals were won by 2 competitors - Brett Ireland from Alice Springs, in the 1500 m walk in the time of 7 min 6.1 s, and Jodine Nudl, from Darwin, in the 400 m race in the time of 1 min 1 s. The girl from Darwin who won 2 gold medals, Sheree Scully, also won a bronze medal, in the 100 m race, with a time of 12.9 s, and Justin McNamara, from Alice Springs, won 2 bronze medals, 1 in the 400 m race in 58.8 s and the other in the 200 m race with a time of 26.8 s. A lad called Shane Ellis, from Darwin, won a bronze medal in the 1500 m walk in a time of 7 min 28 s.

Mr Deputy Speaker, all in all, the Northern Territory competitors won 12 of the medals. They finished fourth in the national championships. New South Wales came first, followed by Victoria, Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland, ACT and Tasmania. In addition to the medal wins, the Northern Territory side also won the trophy competition between the smaller states - that is, those with lower populations - beating ACT and Tasmania.

Tonight I pay tribute to the Little Athletics. I am very fortunate because Little Athletics in Alice Springs use the oval behind my office so I see them training night after night, usually for Territory competitions or, as of late, in the lead-up to national competitions. I am advised by Little Athletics organisers throughout the Territory that the same type of hard work and training is carried on at all the Territory centres. From the results that were achieved in Melbourne on 7 April, it was obvious that the athletes themselves, and their coaches and trainers, have put a lot of groundwork into getting their teams to a top level of fitness for these national awards. I am certain that I reflect the views of all Territorians when I pay tribute to the competitors, and their coaches and managers, for the remarkable degree of success that they achieved in Melbourne.

Mr Deputy Speaker, given the many years that the Territory Little Athletics have competed at national championship level, and the fact that they have now started to bring home the bacon, for want of a better word, I am certain that they are now placed firmly on the national map and they will go on to bigger and better things. It is interesting to note, of course, that one of Australia's most successful competitors at the last Olympic Games was a former Little Athletic. I refer to Glynis Nunn. I am certain that, given the dedication of both the competitors and their coaches and team officials in the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory will continue to mount and maintain a challenge at Little Athletics events. Hopefully, these children will stay with athletics in later life and, in the not-too-distant future, we will see them competing not only in the Commonwealth Games but, in later years, in the Olympic Games.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, when I first entered this Assembly, one of the biggest problems that was raised again and again with my office in Alice Springs was that of people with contracts with the government who were seeking payment for the services that they had rendered. These people were fairly desperate. They had bills to meet and they wanted to be paid. The government set up an accounting service in Alice Springs. Since that service was set up, I do not think I have had 1 further complaint on that subject.

Unfortunately, the lady who set up that office for the government, Mrs Ailsa Zinns, has had to retire due to ill-health. I would like to pay tribute to the work that she did in getting that office off the ground and taking that workload off my shoulders. I am sure every other member in that area feels the same way. The problem that we had with people complaining about government payments turned off just like a tap. It was an excellent move by the government.

Ailsa Zinns dedicated herself to the job. I think just about every government department is registered with that accounting service. It is doing an excellent job.

She used to come to see me occasionally and often she would complain about the traffic on Larapinta Drive. She was always concerned about the accidents that happened there and how long you had to wait to cross. Clearly, she had a bit of a phobia about it. As luck would have it, she was involved in an accident with a vehicle there and, unfortunately, she suffered spinal injuries which affected her sight and have forced her now to retire early. I pay tribute to Ailsa Zinns and the work she did in setting up the government accounting service in Alice Springs, and the good work that it does.

Another person who has had to retire from Alice Springs is a lady for whom I have an extremely high regard and I am sure almost every member of this Assembly who knows her would hold her in equally high regard. I refer here to Mrs Helen Daff who has been running Giles House for many years. Unfortunately, her husband is a very sick man and has to go to Western Australia to undergo medical treatment. She felt that her duty was to him. I know it was a big wrench for her to leave Giles House because she enjoyed her work thoroughly. She did great work with the young children who go through there, young people who have been in strife. She has done a great deal to rehabilitate those people.

I pay tribute to her. Whilst many great leaders and people with good schemes and good ideas do not always leave behind people who can take over, I believe that the strength of her personality and the methods that she used in helping these young children have been passed on throughout the Territory. I believe that Giles House will continue under good leadership, thanks to the influence that Mrs Helen Daff has left behind.

Yesterday, in question time, mention was made of indegofera, which is a weed which poisons horses. Apparently, meat from infected horses has been fed to pets and has had an affect on their livers, particularly those of dogs. It caused disintegration of the liver and the animals died. I was involved to some extent with this when it was first discovered and I pay tribute to a veterinarian at the Sadadeen Veterinary Clinic, Richard Cameron, who told me that several dogs had died. He carried out an autopsy on them and found that the livers had virtually disintegrated. He had carried out some research in the district and on how the animals had been fed and where the meat had been obtained. I think it was discovered that somebody had killed a horse out bush and fed his animal from it. It was known that the horse had indegofera poisoning and that gave him the clue. He sent material to a Queensland laboratory for analysis. I remember that he rang and said to me: 'Look, this is a pretty serious business. Dogs dying is not very good, but the person who has been supplying this dog meat also has been supplying horse meat for pet meat purposes to Japan. If, perchance, somebody a little unscrupulous decides to feed it to humans, we could have quite a problem on our hands'.

I approached people in the Department of Primary Production, vets and so on, and got a fairly cautious response to his proposition. I suppose scientific people tend to be a bit that way. There was no known information to suggest that the meat from horses suffering from indegofera poisoning could cause death in other animals that ate it. It was very interesting to hear from the minister yesterday that this seems to be the case and that Richard Cameron's theory has been vindicated. I believe it is worth putting on record that an alert, young vet has served the Territory very well. One can imagine the sort of international incident that would eventuate if horse meat had been fed to

humans in Japan and had the same effect as it had on those dogs in Alice Springs.

Last Tuesday, I gave a little run-down on some 'fun' I had with the ABC. A humorous little incident came out of that misrepresentation which had me supposedly arrested at a demonstration. According to Dr Ross Peterkin, who was up early that morning and who heard the 5.30 am news, it was read something like this: 'and the CLP member for Sadadeen, Mr Collins, ... oops ... I think I had better read that again ... the ALP member for Sadadeen, Mr Collins was ...' and so on. The Leader of the Opposition may have some cause to think that he may have been defamed too. I do not concede the seat to the ALP, mind you.

Mr B. Collins: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: While speaking about the Leader of the Opposition, I believe he will be heading for Canberra over the weekend to meet Mr Morris, hopefully, to get some sense out of him on the Darwin Airport. I am sure that we all wish him luck and I hope he does not get the Walsh treatment that we have heard about this afternoon. There is a story going around that, actually, he is going down there to learn the Morris dance so that he can come back and lead the dance on May Day around the maypole which has been erected on the north side of the Darwin Airport. Some people thought it was a flag pole.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make some comments in this evening's adjournment debate, particularly pertaining to Ayers Rock. I have spoken on this subject before and it is dear not only to my heart but I am sure to every member of this Assembly. Of course, Ayers Rock is one of the prize tourist attractions in the Northern Territory. I believe that it is still ahead of Kakadu in visitor numbers. This evening I do not propose to describe at length and in graphic detail the attractions of that particular place and its associations for Australians, black and white. I have done so at considerable length in debates in this Assembly and I do not propose to do it tonight.

The importance of Ayers Rock to Territorians and all Australians has been cast into doubt. Considerable concern has been raised in the minds of Australians about the management of Ayers Rock. This evening I wish to speak about 2 particular matters.

Firstly, I wish to comment on the Willesee filming incident which, unfortunately, has not been aired as an issue in this Assembly so far. I think it is a shame that the Minister for Conservation has left the Chamber. I sincerely hope that he is listening to this over the loudspeakers or, at the very least, will internalise it from Hansard in the morning. I have been down to see the particular motel sites that were the subject of that astoundingly and disgracefully sensational report. As you may or may not be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, those motels had been vacated on New Year's Day, at the end of 1984, and they were in the process of being rehabilitated. The Willesee team decided to produce an extraordinarily sensational report that, unfortunately, was not shown in the Northern Territory. I had the opportunity to see it. A copy of it was sent to me from Melbourne by some friends and I was totally appalled by that particular program.

Attention needs to be drawn to the part played by the Minister for Conservation in that very sad saga because it was at his instigation that not only the Willesee team but also several journalists visited Ayers Rock. They came because considerable doubts had been raised in the minds of many people about the mess left there, not by the Aboriginal people but by the previous owners of the motels that became the centre of controversy nation-wide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I visited Ayers Rock at that time. I saw the conditions around those motels. The Inland Motel was in fine condition. Aboriginal people were staying there because they had been requested to look after it by the previous owners until subsequent arrangements could be made. Appropriate transfer arrangements had been made by the previous owner, Ms Di Byrne, and I pay tribute to her here. It seems to me that good arrangements had not been made in respect of the other motels. I do not suggest that it was necessarily the fault of the managers of the other motels for not making those arrangements but I think that it has been a tragedy for all Territorians, and certainly for everybody involved in the tourist industry in the Northern Territory, that that sort of publicity has occurred.

I think a full explanation is required of the Minister for Conservation for his attitude in this regard. I trust that that will be forthcoming at some stage. As I recall it, in the actual program, the minister went in boots and all and said: 'Yes, goodness me, isn't this outrageous. Aren't the Aborigines who are living down here doing a dreadful job?' When he actually saw the program, he started to recant. He went through a 180-degree turn and then made another 180-degree turn, making the full 360 degrees, because subsequently he was reported in the media as saying that the man, who is well known to me, who had evicted very forcefully the Willesee film crew, should be charged by the police. What an absurd suggestion. I happen to know the man who removed that film crew so forcefully which was invading privacy in that manner. Basically, he is a very quiet man. I have seen other people incur his displeasure and on those occasions the right was on his side too. The last person I saw incur his displeasure like that took a long time to get up so I think that film crew was pretty lucky.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you would find it as outrageous as I did that a film crew, under the most specious of pretexts, could go into anybody's house and film at 7 o'clock in the morning. I will not take up any more of the Assembly's time on that particular issue. Suffice it to say that I want an explanation from the minister of his conduct in this matter. I trust that it will be forthcoming. He did not cover himself with glory in that regard. Normally, I find him to be a man of considerable forbearance, a man interested in consultation and in the resolution of difficulties. I found the behaviour of the minister in that particular incident somewhat beyond the experience that I have had of him in other circumstances. I was deeply disappointed. I trust he will provide us with some sort of explanation.

A second matter I wish to speak on this evening relates also to Ayers Rock and to bad publicity. It is doing the Territory no good, as I have said, nor the tourist industry, nor the people who live there, my constituents, whether they are black or white. This sort of publicity does no good for anybody. This particular recent incident involved photographers who were told that they could not photograph at Ayers Rock. My subsequent inquiries into this matter led me to the conclusion that the process of giving people permission to take commercial photographs, normally a very simple business, had been complicated by the placement of ANPWS staff at Ayers Rock. There was a consequent difficulty of communication between the Conservation Commission, ANPWS people at Ayers Rock and the ANPWS office in Canberra, which had been approached by people involved with the particular film crews. It was quite clear to me, as it would have been quite clear to anybody else, that this was some sort of administrative difficulty that should have been possible to resolve.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not only unfortunate but it is a tragedy for the tourist industry in the Territory that that sort of bad publicity gets out.

Let me just describe how bad the publicity was. Let us start close to home because that is where it began: 'Stupidity in focus. This snap could cost us \$2000'. The Centralian Advocate was not able to take a photograph inside the park, but it said: 'We'll publish and be damned'. The merits or otherwise of that editorial decision, be it as they may, created an unnecessary cloud of confusion. That would have been bad enough in the Northern Territory but that particular photographer was accompanied by a photographer from the Herald. Here is an article that appeared on the front page of the Melbourne Herald on 18 March: 'Ayers Rock now it's been censored'. It tells the very sad story of the inability of those photographers to take pictures within the park because of this administrative difficulty. That was not the end of it either because there was also an editorial in the West Australian on 20 March this year referring to the senseless ban at Ayers Rock and suggesting that the Aborigines at Ayers Rock had been trying to stop press photographers taking their photographs. Of course, that was nonsense.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me get to the nub of this business. I was saddened and disappointed to hear that that particular publicity had occurred. I was even more saddened and disappointed to find that the member for Braitling had accompanied the press photographers concerned. Questions started to arise in my mind as to why these circumstances continue or why this administrative difficulty to which I have referred was not able to be removed. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you will know yourself, the member for Braitling has a very canny head for publicity. Honourable members may not be aware that, in fact, the member for Braitling had been travelling with these particular press photographers for several days, all the way up the South Road. I appreciate, as do all other members, most of the central Australian community and, in fact, anybody who lives in northern Australia, the sincere endeavours that the member makes to provide the best possible roads within the Territory. We all appreciate the effort that he makes to ensure that the South Road will be sealed in the shortest possible time. I would like to have the time to lobby in that regard as well. However, unfortunately, I do not have the time to take trips up and down the South Road. But since those particular functions are so ably carried out by the honourable member, I pass on my sincere thanks to him in that regard.

But when I find that he accompanied these 2 press photographers, listened to them make telephone calls all the way up the South Road to try get the appropriate approvals and did not lift a finger to remove the administrative difficulty to which I have referred, I start to believe that his interests were a little malign in this regard. Dare I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the member for Braitling perceives some sort of political advantage in this sort of publicity. I cannot imagine what advantage that would be. I have already referred to the disadvantage that that confers on the tourist industry and on the Northern Territory as a whole but perhaps some time a little later in these sittings the member for Braitling will provide us with a more satisfactory answer than he has provided us with hitherto.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, as an aide-memoire, I will be using copious notes. When the member for MacDonnell spoke yesterday and called those of us over here on the backbench 'a lot of hoons', my first thought was that I had to put a knot in my bluey. I believe he tried to come the raw prawn, hoping that we would all throw a 7 or pack a plonker or chuck a Micky. But I did not come down in the last shower and I know more than my prayers because I put forward the view that, as usual, the member was a bit off his pannikin in calling us all hoons, as he knows bees from bull's foot about the word, or the sex of the word, or even that, if one was a hoon in the Northern Territory, one would be breaking the law, and it would not be a giggle, as he said yesterday.

The member for MacDonnell tends to go off a bit like a babbling brook. But he is a bit on the pea with kangaroos in the top paddock when he bombards us with his various loquaciousness on the variety of subjects he has chosen to speak on over the time he has been in the Assembly. He probably believes he is casting pearls of wisdom before ...

Mr Bell: Before swine, certainly.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... before the swine of ignorance but, if he thinks this, his intelligence is as scarce as rocking horse manure. If I did not know him better, I would say he could have been understood to have been on the turkey. His calling all of us over here hoons was a try-on and was no good to Gundy. He thought it was one up against our duck house but I didn't have a snout on him. I wonder if I called him a 'quandong', coming as I do from WA, would he believe he was more than a wrinkled up hard little nut? If I called him a Guzinter, I would be telling the truth, but is he a hooer also?

The honourable member tends to have a flute. In saying these things, I do not have a cultural cringe. I am proud to be an ocker. He can tell me to take a running jump and I am not a patient for the green cart, but it is London to a brick the member thought he was doing a Flash Harry yesterday. He thought he would big note himself and consider himself an illy-whacker thinking we over this side were all galahs and galoots. But I say again that he was off his pannikin. If he sold half the tickets on himself, he would go a long way. I would like him to go for a nice ride on the padre's bike. In being the recipient of the honourable member's gratuitous description yesterday, he had more hide than Jessie if he thought he had done a crooked McGinnis.

I have not treated the honourable member's remarks with ignore, but fair suck of the sauce bottle, I am not such a warby, even if he is a pie-eater, to realise he thought we were all blue ducks. After his disclaiming with his words of hoons, repeated many times, I expect if he was called to task he would behave like a piano player in a brothel and get into a guiver. When the member hears these words, I don't want him feeling like a bastard on Father's Day.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last remark.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I withdraw that last remark, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I know he will always think of that socialist light on the hill of Mr Chifley's so I will stop my belly-aching and desist from calling him a tonk.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to what the Minister for Primary Production said about the goat project at the Coastal Plains Research Station this morning, I was very interested to hear that it will include 60 local does and that it will continue over a number of years. I think \$13 500 has been allocated for this project, which will not go very far over a couple of years. The minister did not give any indication that the Northern Territory government will put in a dollar or 2. I hope sincerely that it does. I hope also that the project is successful.

I have written to the minister on this, and whilst and I did not realise it at the time, probably my views on this subject are ahead of those of the Department of Primary Production. In my letter to the minister, I suggested that, instead of buying local does - although it must be admitted that it would be cheaper than buying them down south - the Department of Primary Production should go the whole hog and buy top-class does from down south.

As I said earlier, probably I am ahead of the Department of Primary Production in my husbandry expectations, as are many of the small goatkeepers in the rural area. Probably this has been taken on board by officers of the Department of Primary Production. Most sensible people learn about their breed, no matter what animal it is, either on non-productive animals of that particular breed or on cheap animals. Really the Department of Primary Production is starting from basics as its officers have much to learn before they can be considered to be on an even standard with many locals in their knowledge of local husbandry conditions. I am not knocking this project and I am very pleased to see it starting at last.

I believe the government could at least put in a dollar for dollar with the money that has come from interstate for it. I hope that the Department of Primary Production and the minister follow the belief that there is a future for goats in the Northern Territory. I think they would be well served if they took a lesson from Gunn Point Prison Farm in the way in which it has bought and husbanded top quality stock, in the form of Landrace pigs. Through its culling programs and selling programs, it has increased the quality of stock in the Northern Territory.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the adjournment debates on Tuesday and Wednesday, the member for MacDonnell expressed concern in relation to a number of road projects on this year's capital works program. I intend to allay the fears of the member but before doing so I would like to put the matter of road funding into perspective.

Road funding sources for the Northern Territory have been from federal government special purpose grants and from the Northern Territory's own funds. In the past, the federal funds have been distributed through the State Road Grants Act, Australian Bicentennial Road Development Trust and the Accelerated Stuart Highway Program. In all these programs, the federal government has directed the areas where the funds can be used and has placed emphasis on the national highway system. To achieve full federal funding, the Northern Territory government has had to contribute, from its own funds, a minimum amount which was calculated through a complex formula. The Northern Territory government's contribution to roads generally has been well over the minimum requirement and is the main source of funding for maintenance and upgrading of our local roads network.

In light of the reluctance of the federal government to discuss the replacement legislation for the Road Grants Act, which ceases in July of this year, the Northern Territory government has been concerned about the future levels of federal road funding. Last week, at the Australian Transport Advisory Council meeting, the federal minister, Mr Morris, confirmed these fears by announcing a new program, the Australian Land Transport Program, to replace current legislation. He also announced funding levels for this program for 1985-86. All states suffered a reduction in funds in real terms despite recommendations in industry and Bureau of Transport Economics reports demonstrating a critical need for significant funding increases in real terms. Mr Deputy Speaker, as a consequence, insufficient funds will be available to meet all but the most urgent priorities.

The honourable member referred to a number of roads in the Alice Springs area and I will deal with them in turn. He advised that he had heard a suggestion that the proposed sealing of Larapinta Drive from the 73 km to the 98 km would not take place. The facts are as follows. This road is the main link from Alice Springs to Hermannsburg and is sealed to the 73 km mark. Recently, tenders were called for the 73 km to 98 km section with an option to

extend to 108 km. The tenders received reflected current increasing costs and, as additional funds were not available, the contract was let for the 73 km to 92 km section at a cost of \$1.7m. The completion of the Hermannsburg road is proposed in 2 parts with the first section being considered for 1985-86.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member then referred to the Imanpa-Idracowra-Horseshoe Bend access road. This road is part of a pastoral network linking properties to rail trucking yards on the Stuart Highway. It is intended to replace the existing low-standard roads at an estimated cost of \$500 000. Documents will be available in early May. However, tenders may have to be deferred as all uncommitted roadworks are currently subject to review in keeping with the projected decrease in road funding.

The member for MacDonnell further expressed concerns in respect of the Plenty Highway and the Santa Teresa access road. The present position is as follows. A contract has been let to construct the Plenty Highway from 68 km to 98 km, at a cost of \$1.9m. This includes the section from 68 km to 82 km, which was being constructed by Northern Australian Civil Engineering when it went into liquidation.

The Ewaninga project involves realignment of the old south road away from Commonwealth land needed for extensions to the Alice Springs airport. The estimated cost is \$1.2m and the project will have to compete with other proposals for limited funding in forthcoming budget deliberations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell then referred to a letter he received from my predecessor, the present Minister for Health, dated 5 July 1984 advising that the Santa Teresa-Andado road was programmed for reopening in the 1984-85 financial year. That letter was written in good faith and with firm intention at that time. The situation in respect of this road is that the road to the old Andado homestead is about 200 km and was abandoned in 1972 when the Andado homestead was moved about 30 km south. A new access to the homestead was put in from New Crown, a distance of about 60 km. The road is not currently maintained. However, it was considered a worthwhile development as a desert tourist track and \$80 000 was programmed in 1984-85 for its upgrading. However, in line with current financial constraints, the project was deferred by Cabinet from the 1984-85 program. It will be considered, together with other proposals, in 1985-86.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the old south road from Alice Springs through Maryvale to Finke via Deep Wells is a low-standard road which is given normal rural road maintenance. Alternative access to Maryvale is from the Stuart Highway. The section from Maryvale to Finke, which is not maintained, is 150 km long. As there is a good standard road from Kulgera to Finke, it is unlikely to achieve priority in road funding in the current financial climate. The question of proposing the works as a federal CEP project will be investigated.

The Hermannsburg to Katapata Gap road carries tanker traffic from the Mereenie field to the railhead at Alice Springs. It has been upgraded this financial year at a cost of more than \$300 000. That is because of the proposed use by the oil haulage contractors. Once upgrading was completed, triple road trains were used on the surface which had not really been designed for that use. It only took about 10 weeks for the road to revert to the poor condition of which the member spoke. I think it is probably pertinent to mention at this stage that an agreement with the CLC and the oil people prohibits more than 5 truck trips per day. As a consequence, the road trains involved are as large as they can legally be. Obviously, that puts extra strain on the road.

The Department of Transport and Works has spent \$60 000 on further work to rectify the problem sections. I might add that, under the provisions of the agreement between the government and the oil people, the joint venturers are presently negotiating with the Minister for Mines and Energy for the upkeep of the road.

Construction of the oil pipeline between the field and Alice Springs will commence in the near future. Given the good offices of the member for MacDonnell in that part of Australia, I would certainly urge him to do all he can to facilitate its quick and trouble-free construction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet, I would also like to cover a topic that the member for Millner raised in the adjournment debate this evening. It is in relation to the auction of government motor vehicles in Darwin on Tuesday. The member for Millner was rather concerned that a number of vehicles were auctioned in lots of 3 instead of in single lots. He stated that the only reason could be that the government had received pressure from used-car dealers. I would like to assure all members that that is a lot of rot. The government would not bow to that sort of pressure. However, representations were made by the Motor Traders' Association to myself regarding the number of vehicles that the government was putting on the market through the auction system. After having a look at the situation, I found that, over the last 6 months, the government had accumulated 470-odd vehicles to sell. In view of the fact that over 500 people are employed by the 33 members of the Motor Traders' Association and the circumstances of vehicle sales by motor traders during the 3 or 4 week period leading up to an auction and the 3 or 4 week period afterwards, there was concern that some of these jobs might be affected.

The vehicles are in quite good condition and the mileages are reasonable. The types of vehicles were bringing quite reasonable prices. Local people were buying them. I have no problem with that. That sort of opportunity should be available. However, I also have a great deal of concern for the jobs of people in the industry. I was of the opinion that the number of vehicles that we were selling in this short space of time might affect those jobs. I think that the jobs of Territorians are pretty vital. This government attempts to take all the steps it can to ensure that it does not cause people to lose jobs as a result of its actions.

It might be interesting for the member for Millner to hear that the number of single vehicles that were auctioned had a reserve price of \$57 050. The actual auction price of those vehicles was \$80 150, some \$23 000 above the reserve price. In relation to vehicles that were sold in lots of 3, the reserve price was set at \$204 650 but the sale price was \$240 900, some \$36 000 in excess of the reserve price. One of the things that I was worried about in taking these steps was that there would be a significant drop in government revenue in relation to the sale of these vehicles. However, at this stage it appears that the prices were well in excess of reserve prices, which certainly makes me feel a lot happier.

However, I am concerned that there is a possibility that Darwin people may not have the opportunity to choose from a large range of vehicles at motor auctions. If any member can think of any suitable alternatives that the government could look at in relation to auction sales and the protection of jobs of people in the industry, I would be very happy to hear about them.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a couple of items that I want to talk about very briefly. The first one relates to a proposed park in the electorate of Victoria River. I was interested to hear the member

for MacDonnell say that Uluru was still the most visited park in the Territory. I expect that the future park at Stapleton just might outdo it, not necessarily because it is as well known or that it is identified with Australia but because of its beauty and its close proximity to Darwin and the close proximity of a very beautiful little town called Batchelor.

For those of you who have not visited Batchelor, it is really a very attractive town. It was built in the mid-1950s as a service town for the Rum Jungle uranium mine. There is a fair amount of history about that uranium mine. I remember studying in social studies in school in New South Wales back in the 1950s and hearing about Batchelor and Rum Jungle. At that stage, I did not believe that I would ever live in that part of the country. Batchelor is a very beautiful town and it is very close to this proposed park at Stapleton Station.

I have not been on the ground within the park area but I have flown over the proposed park on a number of occasions at various altitudes over many years. I am aware of the spectacular beauty of the area. In fact, I have a number of photographs taken from the ground which really show up the very real beauty of this particular area. The waterfalls, the rock holes and the general topography of the area will attract many people. It has been an area visited by the 4-wheel-drive clubs over the years. We have seen in the papers over the last few days that they are concerned that their use of the park may in some way be diminished. I certainly hope that that will not be the case; that they will still be able to maintain their ability to get to that place. I am sure that that will not be diminished in any way.

However, I have a few comments to make with regard to the proposals. I believe there is a feasibility study under way looking into the ways of developing this particular park. I think that is great. We need to have development of that particular area and we need to have easy access for tourists, whether they be interstate tourists or people from Darwin or other parts of the Territory. We must be able to get into those places. Not everybody can afford, and I certainly cannot afford, to fly over it. I have only flown over it in the course of my employment over many years. It is a place that does need to be opened to the general public.

I have concerns with any idea of development within the park itself. It is an area of 67 500 ha. It is not a big area in the scope of Territory parks. It will be one of the smaller ones but there is a lot compressed into that very small area. As I said before, the township of Batchelor, a beautiful town, is only 35 km from the park. It is a town with a fairly large number of people, a fair few of whom are out of work. It has many excellent services: Darwin power, sewerage services and good water. It has a very nice swimming pool, ovals, parks and a number of points of interest. The one thing lacking in the town is tourist accommodation.

A few years ago, land was released for tourist accommodation at Batchelor: an area for an hotel, an area for a caravan park and an area for a service station. I have had doubts about the advisability of that land having been sold off as 3 separate lots. I think it may have been more attractive as 1 lot to be developed as an integrated service. For whatever reasons, it was released as 3 separate lots. The people who purchased those lots have not been able to attract funds for development. That is a gripe for another time but it concerns me that the small developer in the Territory often finds it difficult to get finance. No matter how likely the opportunities are for development in a particular area, if it is a small operator, it is very difficult. Most of them have had trouble getting finance from the banks and from the NTDC because it is not one of the better known places.

Batchelor does have tremendous potential, as does the whole area: Adelaide River, the farming areas and of course this new park. I am concerned about the costs of operation of small towns. Batchelor is perhaps unique in this area. We inherited Batchelor from the federal government with all these services which we have had to maintain. The pool, for instance, is not used enough. It is too cheap: 20¢ for adults and 10¢ for kids to go in. I think that is ridiculous. We should be paying more.

Batchelor is without a local government system. It has been difficult to return money to government from the town. That is being considered by the Territory government right now. But we do have these services. A lot of Darwin people use the facilities. They come down. We have a very fine bowling green. It is not in a good state of repair currently but it has been a good bowling green. The Rum Jungle Bowling Club was the first bowling club in the Northern Territory. It does require some support at this particular time. It is very difficult to get support for that club. It is a small club and the Darwin clubs do not support it financially even though the Rum Jungle club contributes funds through membership of the Northern Territory Bowling Association.

I would like to think that the development for Stapleton Park would be placed in Batchelor. As I said before, we have services, the facilities are there and we have housing and an unemployed work force. People are willing to work and keen to find work. For whatever reason, they live in Batchelor. Some of them have had long associations with the area. Many have a lot of trouble getting full-time employment and would be happy for this opportunity.

I just wanted to raise this matter this evening because I think that it is worthy of consideration by the government. We need to devolve industry and employment opportunities from the major centres into the small areas like Batchelor. I would hope that the government gives every consideration to this particular proposal. It is not unique to put development outside a park. We have done it at Uluru and Kakadu. It would be the ideal. We could bring tourists in through Batchelor. They could overnight there then go into the park. Without going back on their tracks, they could use the Wangi Road back to the Darwin River Dam Road and back to Darwin. There is access through that area. I think it has a lot of merit and I hope it will be considered.

Talking about the devolution of employment opportunities for major centres into the smaller centres brings me to another point. It has to do with the recent purchase of a peanut husker from Kingaroy for the growing peanut industry in the Northern Territory. That peanut industry has had a chequered history too. But we now are seeing peanuts growing at the Douglas-Daly. The interest in peanuts in that area is great and will continue to grow. In fact, it was the direct involvement of the farmers of the Douglas-Daly and their lobbying that caused the Department of Primary Production to go to Kingaroy and purchase the machinery that was being auctioned there. It was purchased very cheaply. They rightly think at Douglas-Daly that that machinery ought to be installed at the Douglas-Daly. I agree with that view. I know that there are some problems associated with that. One is power. There is a power plant at the grain storage depot. I think they have a 90 kV.A. and a 45 kV.A. plant.

There is some difference of opinion about what is required for the present operations but I understand that the peanut plant would take in the vicinity of 35 - 45 kV.A. It would provide the impetus for some development in that area. Again, there are a number of people in that area who would be interested in the work. The farmers in that area are very keen to see a development around that area. That is the way towns get going. However, they do need employment

opportunities. The local people, quite rightly, feel that they have a strong interest in that particular piece of machinery since they did most of the lobbying to see that the government actually purchased it.

I would hope again that that is given very serious consideration and goes there and not to one of the larger centres such as Katherine or Darwin, as has been proposed. I think it would be a retrograde step for it to go to Katherine, for instance, because it is moving back down the track. I know there are some people around Katherine who will jump on me for saying that but I still feel that my first interest is to see that things happen in my own electorate. I know that this would give great impetus to that area. It may cost a little more to put it there but at times we have to spend a bit of money to devolve industries and employment opportunities into other areas. We do that in all sorts of ways.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other day I asked a question of the Minister for Primary Production about what was being done about the magpie geese problem at Tortilla. Following that, there was comment by both the member for Koolpinyah and the Leader of the Opposition who both said that we ought not be looking at growing rice in the Tortilla area because geese grow better. That may be so. We could go right back to the beginning of Australia and ask: should we have grown this or should we have grown that? Anywhere in Australia there would have been many reasons for saying we should not have started because pests would cause problems.

I can understand the concern about the magpie geese. I would not like to see the magpie geese wiped out. I think they are magnificent birds. I know they are great to eat and they are great to look at. They have a place in our environment and I would not like to think that they would be wiped out of that environment. The sonic boom that is in operation - although it is inoperable at the moment - at Tortilla Flats Experimental Farm is well worth consideration. I know there are real problems because of the gliding in but this may be one way of enabling rice and geese to coexist in the one environment. I do not think we should stop growing rice because the geese eat it. Because there is a problem, we should find ways around it. In fact, that is being done. Rice production in the Tortilla Flats area is a growing industry which is providing employment in the area. We are selling everything that we can grow and we are growing more each year. I wish the farmers involved in that industry at Tortilla every success in the future.

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

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin this evening by telling you how much I enjoy these adjournment debates. Since I have been participating over the last month or so, my leg muscles have strengthened quite considerably. All this jumping up and down every few minutes over a period of several hours has done wonders. In fact, I have even now given up the idea of jogging. I really enjoy it.

I would like to compliment the member for Koolpinyah on her remarks when she referred to the member for MacDonnell. I thought that some of her phrases were, to say the least, quite quaint and perhaps I could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps she could well be the honourable member for Snake Gully, Snake Springs, Howard Gully or wherever. Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the frivolity of her comments and I can assure her that one of these days I might just pop into the sulky and potter on down there to Snake Gully. If she would care to throw a damper, and perhaps the billy, on the old fire, we might sit down and have a cuppa and a good old chat.

Nevertheless, turning to what the member for MacDonnell said concerning publicity about some of the activities around Ayers Rock or Uluru, I think it is good that some of the southern media are finally starting to wake up to what has been going on here in the Northern Territory and some of the nonsense that has been resulting from land rights issues. Perhaps they are waking up and starting to change their tune. I compliment the member for Braitling on his efforts in this regard.

It is a well-known fact that I am a great supporter of tourism. In fact, I spoke during the last Assembly sittings on the need to develop facilities for the training of young people in the tourist and hospitality industries in the Northern Territory. I would like to talk to you this evening concerning a further development of my interest in this matter. Quite recently, I drove all the way to Alice Springs, Ayers Rock and back. Unlike the member for MacDonnell, who said that he would not have the time to make such a trip, I know the member for Braitling has recently undertaken that trip. I really wanted to have a look at the tourist infrastructure between the major towns. We have all been through the major towns such as Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs. I really wanted to have a look at what was in between.

I must say that I was really delighted with my stay in Alice Springs; it is a fine town. It is a very pretty place which has tremendous tourist infrastructure. There are places like Simpson Gap, Standley Chasm, the camel farm and many other places to visit. It is a very arty place and I really enjoyed being there. I compliment honourable members from central Australia for living in such a delightful township.

One aspect that I thought was a wonderful tourist attraction was some of the quaint activities that occur there. During the very week that I was there, there happened to be international aircraft flying straight into the airport. In fact, one member said the other day how delighted he would be if international aircraft could drop straight into Alice Springs. Lo and behold, there was an international aircraft. Perhaps that is a forerunner of things to come. I noted that the member for Sadadeen was reported as being mixed up with a group of people who were out there to welcome that particular aircraft, although there was some confusion as to which group he was with. Nevertheless, I thought it was very interesting.

A day or 2 later, I happened to be walking down the main street of Alice Springs and I was confronted by a large banner. It had a sun in the middle of it. I am not sure of the other colours - black and some other colour. There was a march going on and many people were involved in that. I walked over to the park where the people finally stopped and they brought out their microphones and speeches started. I found it terribly interesting - from a tourist point of view, mind you. There I stood and who should I spy just behind the date palm but the honourable member for MacDonnell. After hearing the comments of the member for Sadadeen about how people were confused with regard to his intention at the airport, I thought: 'Boy, wasn't I lucky because I could have been confused by some members of the media as to my intention in being in the park and involved with this particular march'. Thus, they missed a wonderful opportunity.

However, I was delighted to hear some of the comments that were made by some of the Aboriginal people there. They were saying things such as: 'It's that Mr Holding and that Mr Hawke we have to blame for this new land rights package. They are the people who are going to tear down the Northern Territory Land Rights Act. We really do not want that'. That is the sort of thing that they were saying. I went away completely confused. Those were my experiences in Alice Springs and I would be delighted to return as quickly as I possibly can.

One thing that became quite apparent as I drove up and down the track, as it is affectionately called, was the lack of decent tourist facilities to cope with the expected influx of tourists when the sealing of the South Road is completed. Everybody seems to think that this influx will occur. Of course, we have to get our tourists from somewhere because now we will not get our new international airport, despite the fact that we wasted \$20m on it. The international tourists we have been expecting from Japan and other places will not be coming this way. The tourists will be coming up from South Australia and that is why it is so important that we put this infrastructure in place. I was fascinated by some of the places that I encountered and I would just like to run through some of them.

I will start at the Top End and go south because that is the way I first perceived it. The point I am trying to make is that it is not just a matter of passing through places like Adelaide River en route because around these little townships there are a number of points of interest, most of which are just not exploited. The potential is there. Let us have a look at Adelaide River. We have the war cemetery and the old army camps which are covered by spear grass and weeds but which could be resurrected as a tourist attraction.

Then there is MtBundey Station. What else would tourists like to see more than a typical Northern Territory cattle station? They might even decide to sidetrack and go down to Batchelor. I must agree with the member for Victoria River that it is a beautiful place. They could then go down to the old Rum Jungle mine site. There is tremendous potential there. Pine Creek has its hotel with verandah and boardwalk, and the old railway station which I must admit is in a state of disrepair. We must do something about that. They could go out to the Frances Creek mine and so on.

At Mataranka, the old Elsey wayside inn is a fascinating spot to have a beer or 2. Then there is Mataranka Homestead. I am very pleased with the new operators of the old Mataranka Homestead. They are part of a group based in Katherine and they are developing day tours out of Mataranka Homestead to the very interesting sights around that area. We also have Territory Manor and the Antbed where artefacts and memorabilia are housed, and the Elsey graves where some of the characters in the book 'We of the Never Never' lie buried.

Then there is Larrimah. Now there was a great place. We called in to see Sid Smith at Larrimah Hotel. Larrimah is one of the greatest and most popular fishing spots in the Northern Territory. Right outside the pub there is a nice big waterhole about 3 m across and there sits the pink panther in a chair with his fishing line, his glasses, a can in his hand and a hat. The line is in this puddle of water. The tourists pull up in droves and take their photographs. They all come in and have a chat to Sid and have a beer. You need a gimmick in this business and Sid has the gimmick. I compliment him for that.

Just across the road, there is the Green Park Caravan Park which is really an ideal site. It is very well kept. There are crocodiles and so forth. Just down the road, there is the Gorrie airstrip which was the fighter airstrip to protect Daly Waters where there was a major bomber airstrip during the war. Unfortunately, that airstrip lies in disrepair. The Birdum railway terminal is an area of great interest. One thing that has nothing to do with tourism I will mention anyway. Lying right at the terminal are 25 optispec mercury discharge light fittings which have been left since the closure of the railway. They are worth \$300 or \$400 each. I am quite sure that NTEC could make very good use of them but, doubtless, they belong to ANL and will corrode and rust and get blown about and fall down. Thousands of dollars worth of perfectly serviceable light fittings, which could be put into good use, will just go to waste.

At Daly Waters, Judy Mannix runs the hotel. It is filled with memorabilia and artefacts. It is a great place to go; a real old country style hotel in my opinion. I have already mentioned the airstrip there. The Highway Inn is at the junction of the Carpentaria and Stuart Highways. The Carpentaria Highway goes out to Borroloola. It is a great place to stop. Of course, you could whip over to Borroloola. There is good fishing down that way, I am told.

Newcastle Waters is next. We all know that Mr Packer has just built himself a mansion at Newcastle Waters. It is only about 3 km off the main road.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Did you go in there?

Mr SETTER: No, I did not. There was a big sign saying 'No Trespassing' so I thought I had better not. Nevertheless, I have gone in and out of there from time to time and I can assure members it is a mansion. Mr Packer was not in residence at the time. However, what better for a bus load of tourists than to whip in there and say that this is where Kerry Packer has his ranch, here are the stockyards and so on? That is what they come to the Northern Territory for. We should exploit that.

Time is running out so I will not carry on further down the track closer to your home, Mr Deputy Speaker. There are some fascinating places like Wauchope, Barrow Creek and famous Ti Tree which, I am told, abounds in vineyards.

However, what I will say is that, in the main, the facilities down the track are inadequate for the influx of tourists who are about to descend upon us. They are quaint and some of them should be retained that way because that is what tourists come here to have a look at: typical Territory-style accommodation and so on.

I would like to make the recommendation that we adopt this approach, and I certainly will be writing to the Minister for Tourism concerning this. First of all, we must appoint a tourist promotional officer who is responsible for development of tourist promotion associations on all these small centres down the track. Together with the local residents, he should identify local sites of interest and document them. He should develop a system to print brochures and so on so that, when the tourists pull up at the local pub, the publican can say: 'Hey, go and have a look at this'. That way they spend more time in the area. Of course, it is all about dollars.

This person should counsel local operators and advise them on upgrading their facilities, particularly with a view to developing more caravan parks and camping areas adjacent to those townships. He should assist existing operators to develop proposals for funding new developments. Where appropriate, he should attract new operators. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would commend these suggestions to the Minister for Tourism.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Negotiations to Secure the Return of the Strehlow Collection to the NT

Mr COULTER (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise all honourable members of the progress of negotiations to secure the return to the Northern Territory of the important and significant items of Territory Aboriginal heritage known as the Strehlow Collection. Mr Speaker, you would be aware that these items collected by the late Professor T.G.H. Strehlow have been the subject of considerable controversy, particularly since the reported removal of the collection from Australia. It is not my intention to address the vexed question surrounding the collection's removal, if indeed it was removed from Australia. Rather, I want to inform members of the positive steps taken to restore the collection to its rightful place in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory government has always maintained an interest in the Strehlow Collection, regarding it as an integral feature of the Territory's heritage. Thus, it was a matter of great concern to us when it was removed from Australia. My colleague, the Hon Daryl Manzie, then the Minister for Community Development, initiated discussions with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Clyde Holding, and a member of the Strehlow Research Foundation, Mr Bob Liddle, to voice that concern. It was agreed in a series of discussions that the Northern Territory government should adopt a central negotiating role to return the collection under satisfactory arrangements to the Territory.

Events progressed slowly until meetings in Darwin, on 21 and 22 January this year, between the Chairman of the Strehlow Research Foundation, Mr John Bannon, and myself as the Minister for Community Development. From those meetings, a position paper was developed to allow for purposeful negotiations for the collection's return. Intensive correspondence, discussions and meetings followed over a 6-week period involving Mr Bannon, the Chief Minister, Mr Holding and myself, resulting in considerable progress but also identifying a number of stumbling blocks. Finally, at a meeting in the Chief Minister's office on 14 March, involving Mr Holding, senior officials of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Chief Minister and myself, it was resolved that I should travel to Toronto in Canada to talk directly with Mrs Kath Strehlow, Professor Strehlow's widow, and, by a 1982 High Court decision, the legal owner of the collection. It was considered these face-to-face talks would help to overcome the stumbling blocks we were facing. I left Darwin on 16 March, 2 days later, and arrived in Toronto on 18 March. I contacted Mrs Strehlow and attended meetings on 19 and 20 March. As the result of those meetings, I signed with Mrs Strehlow a heads of agreement establishing conditions for the return of the collection to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I will read that heads of agreement for the benefit and information of all members:

Heads of agreement, dated 29 March 1985, between Kathleen Strehlow, representative of the Strehlow Research Foundation, and Barry Coulter, Minister for Community Development, representing the government of the Northern Territory of Australia, regards a position paper on the eventual return and assemblance of the entire Strehlow Collection in Australia, its ultimate housing and the employment requirements of Kathleen Strehlow.

1. It is agreed that the collection as per the inventory currently being compiled by the Strehlow Research Foundation be assembled in

the Northern Territory of Australia at a mutually agreed secure location between the foundation representative and the Minister for Community Development forthwith.

2. A position of associate anthropologist be designated to a male to overcome some concern that the collection contains significant pieces that may attract possible criticism if stored under the current circumstances.

3. A remuneration package for Mrs Strehlow, consisting of an offer of a salaried position, accommodation and an appropriate retirement arrangement, along with an ex gratia payment, be negotiated to provide for her future security and ensure her continued close association with the collection.

4. That the planning for construction of a research facility to provide for the eventual storage of the entire collection commence, to allow budgetary requirements to be met and enable the construction to proceed as soon as practical.

All the above is dependent on the Australian federal government undertaking to ensure the collection remains intact in its entirety, and that its integrity remains complete within the designated location within the Northern Territory, and that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs provides an undertaking not to prosecute or effect any legal action that would prejudice the return of the collection.

Mrs Strehlow has given an undertaking to return to Australia in August or September of this year to finalise the necessary operational details of the research facility and take up the position within the facility.

That was signed by both myself and Kathleen Strehlow.

Mr Speaker, that document underlines the intention of Mrs Strehlow to place the collection in the Northern Territory as soon as possible. In relation to the ex gratia payment mentioned in the heads of agreement, I should say that the Territory government would be reluctant to make a large cash settlement in Mrs Strehlow's favour per se. To treat our own heritage strictly as a commercial transaction would be an unacceptable course for us. I might add that there is much material within the collection, which we have identified through the inventory, which can be attributed directly to Mrs Strehlow. Here I am talking of research documents, books, volumes, diaries, paintings etc which were the personal effects of Professor Strehlow. These documents are unquestionably her private property.

Upon my return to Darwin on 24 March, I communicated the heads of agreement to Mr Holding. In further discussions, particularly at the conference of Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney on 29 March, Mr Holding indicated his substantial agreement with the conditions of that document. Under the conditions of the heads of agreement, it is necessary that indemnities against prosecution of members of the Strehlow Research Foundation be provided by the federal government. For his part, Mr Holding has given such an undertaking in relation to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage (Interim Protection) Act of 1984. However, indemnities under the Customs Act would also be necessary and Mr Holding has written to the Attorney-General to that effect. The matter now rests in the hands of those 2 ministers.

If those indemnities are received, I am assured by the Strehlow Research Foundation that the entire collection will arrive in the Territory within 2 weeks. I made plans that the collection would be assembled securely in a vault at the Northern Territory museum whilst decisions were reached about its ultimate location. As a gesture of good faith, I have arranged with the Strehlow Research Foundation that part of the collection be assembled and sent to Darwin even though full indemnities have not been obtained. It is my understanding that boxes containing collection material will arrive at the museum shortly.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members, I will outline briefly the scope and importance of the Strehlow Collection. Professor David Turner, an anthropologist at the University of Toronto, who is well known to many Territorians, was commissioned by the Strehlow Research Foundation last year to evaluate the collection. In his report he stated:

The Strehlow Collection represents something unique in the annals of Australian history: a comprehensive and informed body of data and materials on Aborigines collected, organised and much of it analysed by a linguistic scholar born and raised amongst the people from whom the data and material were collected.

He also described the collection as 'a national treasure of fundamental importance to all Australians, black and white'. Professor Turner also said:

The quality of material available in this collection is obvious to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of central Australian Aboriginal society. The census files alone contain a wealth of information on local descent group, section and personal totemic affiliation, warranting years of study and analysis.

Mr Speaker, as part of the negotiation process, the Northern Territory government granted the Strehlow Research Foundation \$5000 to compile the draft inventory of the collection. That report was received in January this year. Given the immense significance of items in the collection to Aboriginal people, it would be inappropriate of me to go into detail about that inventory. But the collection includes artefacts, a 1000-volume library containing many first editions of books on anthropology, more than 50 paintings, hundreds of reels of sound-recordings, many reels of film, thousands of pages of genealogical records, more than 6000 still photographs, personal papers, diaries, manuscripts and press clippings. There can be no doubt that the collection is immensely valuable.

Before I conclude, I must refer to some regrettable comments made by media commentators and a Northern Territory senator about my trip to Canada. It would not be worthy of reply had not the comments been linked with alleged extravagant spending by ministers of the Northern Territory government and the need to watch our pennies under the eyes of the federal Treasury. As honourable members will realise, the trip to Canada represented a genuine desire to return the priceless Strehlow Collection to the Territory, with the full blessing of the Commonwealth through the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who in fact was present when the decision was made that I should go. For the record, the cost of travel, accommodation and expenses for my trip was \$9000. Finally, I must make it clear that the Northern Territory government has done all within its power to secure the satisfactory return of the Strehlow Collection. We have played our part to the full and it is up to the federal government to ensure that the collection is located in the Territory on conditions that satisfy us all.

I foreshadow that the collection will be stored in a research facility to be built at an agreed location in central Australia, and our discussions with Mr Holding have been on the understanding that there will be a Commonwealth financial commitment to such a facility. My involvement with the Strehlow negotiations has also brought to light the possible existence of other collections of significant Aboriginal heritage. I intend to investigate the possibility of those collections joining the Strehlow Collection at such a research facility.

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I will deal very briefly with possibly the most unimportant matter first. I am intrigued by the language the minister used in his statement. The minister provided a defence - why I do not know - for the necessity for him to go to Canada which I would have thought would have been self-evident from the statement itself. What the minister did not do was explain why it was necessary for the member for Flynn to accompany him. I cannot understand why. Perhaps the member for Flynn will provide his own explanation. It is a fact that Canada is an English-speaking country. It was not necessary for an interpreter to go with the minister to translate Canadian into Territorian. I am sure he would have been able to make himself understood. I am sure that he is perfectly capable of carrying his own suitcases. Indeed, if things had been too lonely in Canada, he could always have talked to himself. I would question why it was necessary because it was left unsaid. I am not querying why the minister went because I have no question about that. In fact, I did not even raise it publicly. But, it certainly begs the question as to why the member for Flynn needed to go on this trip because he did not even rate a mention.

The reason I referred to the language used is because, in the minister's statement, he says quite specifically: 'For the record, the cost of travel, accommodation and expenses for my trip was \$9000'. I would assume, and I may be wrong, that the simple English translation is that that was for the minister's trip and did not include the expenses of the member for Flynn. Perhaps the minister can indicate by a twitch of his eyebrow or a nod of his head if that is correct. There is no twitch. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the member for Flynn, in the absence of any facial expression of the minister himself, to indicate, as I suspect, that this amount of money in the statement is for the minister's trip alone. With the cost of international travel being what it is, I would assume that it is.

This prompts a further question. It is the minister's own words that prompt this inquiry from me; I had no intention of raising it. Why is it necessary, if that is so, to distinguish and separate the expenses of the minister himself from that of his travelling companion? Wouldn't it have been simple and reasonable to say that the cost of the trip for the government representatives who went to Canada was \$X instead of separating his own expenses? Does it indicate that, in fact, the purpose for which the honourable member for Flynn accompanied the minister had nothing to do with involvement in the negotiations on the Strehlow Collection? Indeed, it may well be that the member for Flynn was not even present when those negotiations took place. I look forward to hearing an explanation from the member for Flynn to justify his \$9000-worth of travel. Certainly, if they both went for \$9000, it must have been at a very cheap rate indeed.

Mr Speaker, I speak of this matter with some misgivings and a great deal of disquiet. The federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I do not always agree. In fact, we often disagree. But there is one thing that he and I agree

on, and it was raised by the Minister for Community Development. I am certainly not here to speak on his behalf, but I know from personal conversations I have had with him on this matter that, in respect of undertakings he has given for indemnities, he has done so with the greatest personal reluctance and disquiet. That is exactly the position that I hold in respect of this matter. I hold that view because of the public statements of the Strehlow Foundation and its representatives. I think I have seen all of the interviews that have been conducted in public by Mr John Bannon on behalf of that foundation. Mr Speaker, I take it to task for what it has said publicly about its motives in removing the collection, including ex gratia payment in respect of getting that collection back to Australia.

The reason I say that I agree with the honourable minister is that it is a priceless collection. I agree reluctantly that it is unhappily necessary to deal with people who, in my view, are putting at risk a collection which they themselves have told us, again and again, is priceless to Australia. It forms a piece of our history that it would be a major tragedy to lose. Mr Speaker, I am extremely unhappy that it is necessary - and I concede that it is - to deal with people on the financial basis upon which this arrangement has been made. The misgiving I have - and I do not seek to place the negotiations at risk - is that there is no way in the world I can speak in this debate without expressing my great reluctance and unhappiness about what has happened with this entire collection. At any time the Strehlow Foundation has made public statements on this issue, the matters of money, jobs, free houses, pensions for life etc have never been mentioned. The one thing it has always said, very piously, is that it has no interest in any financial matters in respect of this collection. It wants simply to see the collection preserved and not lost to Australia. It thought that there was some risk, from the federal government specifically, in terms of the national heritage legislation, that this would happen. That reason and that reason only has been given consistently by the Strehlow Foundation for taking that disgraceful action, not simply of removing the collection to some safe place, as it saw it, within Australia, but taking it out of the country.

Mr Speaker, I refer to the heads of agreement that were quoted in the honourable minister's statement:

All the above is dependent on the Australian federal government undertaking to ensure the collection remains intact in its entirety, and that its integrity remains complete within the designated location within the Northern Territory and that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs provides an undertaking not to prosecute or effect any legal action that would prejudice the return of the collection.

Mr Speaker, taking the Strehlow Foundation at its word, only one thing was required to get that collection back to Australia. The reasons it gave were that it feared that the federal government would in some way endanger the collection - that was mentioned again and again - under its national heritage legislation. If we take the word of the foundation, all that was required to bring the collection back to the Northern Territory tomorrow was a public undertaking, a written indemnity, from the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that that would not happen. In fact, that specific indemnity ...

Members interjecting.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in respect of the interjections from people opposite, I refer them once again to the public statements made by the Strehlow

Foundation. I would suggest that it is not beyond the wit, in terms of what it is worth, for that indemnity to have the same degree of force and certainty as the indemnity that will be provided for certain police officers for tapping telephones in order to prosecute people in courts. I am sure that would have had as much weight as those indemnities. Indeed, it would not be beyond the wit of the federal legal officers concerned to draw up a legal agreement putting that indemnity in writing. Of course, that sort of indemnity would have been agreed to. That is the only thing that was required.

Where did the money come from? I will tell where the money came from because it is another sweet little deal. People have spent years ripping off Aboriginal people. There has been a long and sorry saga in the Northern Territory of people lifting what belonged to Aboriginal people for nothing and, after 20 years, walking away with \$1m in the bank. Deals to that effect have been done so many times in the Northern Territory. You see people coming forward and describing themselves as the friends of the Aboriginal people: 'My friend has given me this for safekeeping'. Indeed, I know of one particular and notable example of this in the Northern Territory where very little money changed hands at all. Priceless collections of Aboriginal art were accumulated so that those collections would not be 'lost to the people'. The friends of the Aboriginal people accumulated this treasure house - because that is what it turned out to be - and cleaned up very nicely indeed. The money went into their bank accounts. The Aboriginal people who contributed the treasure, and their descendants, received nothing out of it.

We hear all of these pious sentiments now. I watched the interview with John Bannon from South Australia on national television where he said that there was no question of any money changing hands: 'We simply want guarantees from the federal government'. Despite the interjections opposite, I know perfectly well that those things can be written into agreements and have the force of the law, Mr Speaker. 'All we want is that and we will bring it all back'. Now we have a house to be built, a lifetime job for the person who removed the collection from Australia and a pension for the rest of life. On top of that, we have the intriguing matter of this ex gratia payment.

Mr Speaker, there needs to be considerably more detail given about how much this ex gratia payment will be and whether the negotiations will break down if it is not satisfactory to the hijackers of this collection. The statement is quite silent on that issue. It is obvious that the heads of agreement have included this as a foundation stone for the agreement being successful. Here it is on page 4; it is part of the heads of agreement. The statement also indicates that it has not yet been negotiated. What happens if the ex gratia payment, which is to be offered in addition to the house, the job and the pension, is not enough? Where is it going to come from? I suppose it will come from a NTDC appropriation like the last ex gratia payment we had to deal with. How much is it to be? What if it is not satisfactory to the people who stole this priceless and irreplaceable collection and took it overseas? Will the whole deal collapse if the ransom price is not high enough?

Mr Speaker, I am intrigued by this ex gratia payment. Perhaps the minister could indicate specifically exactly what it applies to. If it applies in respect of the actual artefacts themselves, then I would reject it utterly and, at whatever cost, refuse to deal any further with the people concerned. As I said before, it certainly makes an interesting observation to compare the public statements of the organisation that removed that collection with what is contained in the minister's statement.

I conclude by saying that I am not condemning the Northern Territory government for the way this deal has been arranged. I do not think anyone could

construe anything I have said this morning as being a criticism of the Territory government. My criticism is directed at the Strehlow Foundation and its public pontification about its complete disinterest in matters financial which has been exposed as nonsense by this statement. I agree that, if we want to retain this priceless collection for the Territory, we appear to be over the same financial barrel that we had in respect of the casino deal. I concede that it would be a tragedy if this collection were lost. I concede that it is necessary to negotiate with these people. I know how unhappy the federal government is at providing indemnities against prosecutions under federal laws. I am confident that the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will be able to prevail on his colleagues who are responsible for the Customs breaches that have occurred to provide the same indemnities. In case the wrong impression is created by the references to the federal minister's enthusiastic support, I want to place it on the record that the federal minister was certainly enthusiastic about the minister going to Canada to negotiate this deal. Certainly, he supported that but he feels no enthusiasm about providing indemnities against prosecutions. I do not suggest that there should be any great enthusiasm. I concede that this collection has to be returned and that it may be necessary to offer ex gratia payments which may be considerable amounts of money but I wish to record that it is with extreme distaste and extreme unhappiness that I am conceding that such things are necessary.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Public Service Superannuation

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, last week, I made a statement on developments affecting the superannuation rights of Northern Territory public servants. I advised honourable members of a letter that had been received from the Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, indicating that he had decided to overturn an agreement entered into only last November by his predecessor in office. That decision has the gravest implications for the Northern Territory financially and industrially. When I informed the Assembly of the decision last Thursday, I was gratified by the response of members of the opposition. They strongly supported my expressions of dismay and disappointment at this outrageous unilateral decision by a senior federal minister supposedly acting on behalf of the Hawke government.

Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to spend a few minutes on tracing the background to the problem now confronting the Territory. It is indeed a very serious situation and raises questions that are quite fundamental to meaningful intergovernmental relations, to financial responsibility and to industrial relations. The plain fact of the matter is that, at the time of self-government, the Territory was not given the financial capacity to pay employer superannuation contributions on behalf of Territory public servants. This applies to all Territory government employees except for those who are employed by the Port Authority, the Darwin Institute of Technology and NTEC. That lack of resources was acknowledged in the Joint Task Group Report on Superannuation Arrangements for the Territory. Paragraph 3.2 of that report states:

3.2 In considering the Northern Territory liability to the Commonwealth for Territory employees who are members of the Commonwealth scheme, it is convenient to separate the employees into two groups:

(a) employees of the Northern Territory and Northern Territory authorities in respect of whom the Territory

has not so far been provided with the financial capacity to meet the employer superannuation liability under the Commonwealth scheme; and

(b) employees of certain Northern Territory authorities that, since 1 July 1978, have been provided with the capacity, in whole or in part, to pay employer superannuation contributions either by the inclusion of appropriate amounts in the Territory's base funding or, in the case of business undertakings, through the recovery of costs.

The Memorandum of Understanding records the rights of Territory officers in regard to membership of the Commonwealth superannuation scheme. I draw the attention of honourable members to paragraphs 80, 81 and 82 of the memorandum. A copy of the paragraphs is attached to this statement. These paragraphs were intended to guarantee the superannuation eligibility of our public servants at least until the Northern Territory had been placed in a position to establish its own superannuation fund.

Until Senator Walsh's letter, the Commonwealth and its officials have always acknowledged that the Territory's base funding has never included any financial capacity for superannuation payments for the mainstream of public service employees. The principal issue that was left unresolved in 1978, when the Memorandum of Understanding was entered into by the 2 governments, was an agreed mechanism which could be used to determine the level of Commonwealth assistance to the Territory. Understandably, the Commonwealth wanted to ensure that it would not become responsible for superannuation liabilities at a rate over which it had no control. What was needed was a neutral and objective measure of the additional financial capacity to be given to the Territory.

During late 1981 and throughout 1982, a joint task group of Territory and Commonwealth officials addressed this question. At the same time, a group of Territory officials examined options for the Territory to establish its own superannuation scheme. These activities culminated, in early 1983, with agreement about funding arrangements and about a Territory superannuation scheme. However, all these arrangements came undone early in 1983 when the new federal Labor government indicated to the Territory government that it would not take the necessary legislative action to enable the Territory scheme to be established unless the ACTU and the Northern Territory unions gave their full support. As the unions continued to have misgivings about transfers to the new scheme and the Territory government guarantees of benefits, the matter was dropped. This left Territory public servants without their own superannuation scheme and the Territory government without the financial capacity to meet superannuation liabilities.

In 1984, the joint task group of Commonwealth and Territory officials further considered the question of equitable funding arrangements. This culminated in a report to ministers. That report recommended that the Territory be paid a specific purpose grant each year to meet the full cost of superannuation benefits for public servants retiring from the NTPS after 1 July 1984. The only adjustment would be for variations from the agreed number of public servants. It is noteworthy that the task group's recommendations were accepted in full and without reservation by the then Minister for Finance. It was this report that led to an exchange of letters between Mr Dawkins and myself late last year cementing an equitable ongoing agreement on a matter of the greatest financial and industrial significance to the Territory.

At this stage, I would like to read an extract from Volume 9, No 43 of the Commonwealth Record, covering the period 22 to 28 October 1984 under the heading: 'Superannuation for Northern Territory Employees'. It reads as follows:

The Minister for Finance, J.S. Dawkins, said today that he has agreed to arrangements proposed by a joint task group of Commonwealth and Northern Territory officials to fund the cost of benefits payable to Northern Territory employees under the Commonwealth superannuation scheme. Under these arrangements, the Commonwealth will provide the Territory with sufficient financial assistance to enable it in turn to reimburse the Commonwealth for the costs of benefits to all Northern Territory employees. Thus the Commonwealth will continue to meet the cost of the Northern Territory contribution in respect of its employees who are members of the Commonwealth scheme. Many of these are public servants who transferred from the Commonwealth in 1978-79.

Mr Dawkins said: 'Since the Northern Territory government abandoned its own proposals for a special scheme to cover all Northern Territory employees, we have been working to develop a fair, long-term basis to allow the Northern Territory government to finance its obligations to its employees who are members of the Commonwealth superannuation scheme. Our objective has been to ensure that the arrangements meet the interests of all concerned, not least the Territory employees who will remain secure in their entitlements under the Commonwealth scheme. It is now up to the Northern Territory government to agree'.

Mr Dawkins indicated that he has today written to the Northern Territory government to seek its agreement.

Mr Speaker, as honourable members know, we agreed to the proposal made by Mr Dawkins. A copy of our letter dated 21 November 1984 was tabled in the Assembly last week.

Let me now explore some of the implications that will flow from Senator Walsh reneging on this agreement. Turning first to the financial consequences, members will recall that, in my statement last week, I indicated that the Commonwealth's actions have exposed the Territory to an unfunded, annual liability in the order of \$50m. More detailed analysis confirms this figure to be \$46m per annum. I understand that Senator Walsh is now saying that this is nonsense. It is claimed that, in the immediate future, the cash consequences will be manageable and that we should not be concerned until it starts to hurt. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that such a response would represent the epitome of financial irresponsibility and shortsightedness. It would be an act of almost culpable negligence that would deserve the strongest censure from all Northern Territory residents.

Advice from the Australian Government Actuary tells us that, in each and every year, the Northern Territory is accruing liabilities at the rate, in current dollar values, of \$46m per annum based on the present number of members of the superannuation scheme. Honourable members should be under no illusions whatsoever. If we do not provide for liabilities as they are incurred, they must be met in the future at an even higher cost. In superannuation, a liability is incurred as people work, not simply when they retire from the public service. It is like living on credit with no real prospect of being able to honour your commitments when payment becomes due.

Mr Speaker, just as it would be irresponsible and negligent for my government to enter into commitments that it cannot keep, so it is doubly irresponsible for the Commonwealth to force us into a situation where we are living above our income. All honourable members should be aware of the rapidly increasing cost of superannuation benefits. Prudent business management practices dictate that these emerging liabilities can be met only by adequate progressive provisions for these future costs. Indeed, private sector enterprises would soon find themselves falling foul of company auditors and accounting standards if they were not to provide adequately for such future costs.

The cost of public sector superannuation is an issue that, in recent years, has been receiving close attention. All around Australia, urgent action is necessary to come to grips with the liabilities that are now starting to emerge and for which inadequate provision has been made. Throughout Australia, there is an increasing awareness of the cost of deferred benefits. Governments are finding that the short-term expediency of not making adequate and progressive provision for the future is now resulting in enormous demands on already limited discretionary funds. These demands have been exacerbated by the recent trend to earlier retirement and improved life expectancy of beneficiaries.

In the 1983 Review of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme, commissioned by the then Minister for Finance, the highly-respected and independent firm of actuaries, E.S. Knight and Co, commented extensively on the risks to government of the government's failure to fund superannuation liabilities adequately. The actuary stated:

In all the circumstances, it is my opinion that the unfunded employer-financial benefits are less secure than would be funded benefits, and hence the Commonwealth superannuation scheme members are at a disadvantage with respect to members in private schemes.

In his review, the actuary spelt out to the Commonwealth the hazards of an unfunded scheme for employers:

The disadvantage emerges at a time of change. The trust deed which governs a private scheme will usually permit fairly readily a change to future service benefits. It will usually prohibit or severely restrict a change to past service benefits. The assets held in a fully-funded scheme will secure the payment of those past service benefits. In the Commonwealth superannuation scheme, there are no such assets in respect of employer-financed benefits, and hence there is a lesser level of security with respect to accrued employer-financed benefits.

This actuarial advice presents a disturbing picture both for governments and their employees. For Territory employees, there is another level of uncertainty. A scheme financed on an emerging cost basis in the Territory inevitably depends on adequate funds being available to the Territory government at the time of payment of benefits. The Territory's likely continued dependence on federal funding means that Territory employees, under an emerging cost scheme, are relying on the federal government of the day to ensure that the Territory can meet its obligations. Senator Walsh's action highlights the fallacy of any such faith in the federal government. Only a funded scheme can provide assurance for Territory employees that funds will be available to pay benefits when required.

The basic issue in question here is whether or not the superannuation rights of public servants can be guaranteed under the conditions being laid down by the Commonwealth. If these rights cannot be guaranteed, I put it to honourable members that we cannot accept Senator Walsh's decision. We will not be forced by Senator Walsh into assuming a liability which the Territory has no financial capacity to bear. This is Territory bashing of the worst possible kind.

Senator Walsh's actions strike at the very foundations of intergovernmental relations. In unilaterally overturning an agreement between our governments, an agreement which has barely had time to be implemented, he demonstrates yet again his bias against the Northern Territory. He also casts grave doubts on the status and security of all agreements which we have transacted with the Commonwealth. Is this the thin edge of the wedge?

In conclusion, I wish again to assure honourable members and all officers of the Northern Territory Public Service that my government is making every effort to obtain a reinstatement of the superannuation scheme. Superannuation is a sensitive, personal issue and I recognise that this is a matter of the gravest importance to all public servants, particularly to those officers who are contributors of long standing to the Commonwealth superannuation scheme. My government will be doing all in its power to protect and preserve the rights of all officers. Any changes must be discussed with the employees' representatives and assessed in the light of expert advice. I hope to be able to discuss this matter with the Prime Minister and reach a satisfactory solution. I am seeking to meet the Prime Minister as soon as possible for this express purpose, and I shall keep members fully aware of developments.

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, to put it in personal terms, I think we have a situation confronting the Northern Territory that is quite justifiably causing an enormous amount of concern to public servants in the Northern Territory. I suspect that every member, over the past 2 or 3 days, has had representations from public servants who are concerned and uncertain about what exactly is going on. That is very disturbing indeed. We also have the situation where, as has been said already, both sides of the Assembly agree that what we had from Senator Walsh in a number of aspects, which I will come to a bit later, is disturbing indeed. It is also fair to say that there is a united determination to attempt to talk sense to the federal government to have this strange decision reversed or, if not reversed, significantly changed.

Unfortunately, we have a situation where the uncertainty that was created by the first statement of the Chief Minister has not been allayed to any significant extent by his supplementary statement. We do not have anything that is new in this statement. It is a pity that the Chief Minister has not taken the opportunity to provide some additional information which might have gone some way towards allaying the fears of public servants or, if in the Chief Minister's view that is not possible at this stage, spelling out more fully what the implications for the Northern Territory are.

What we have in this statement, apart from a well-reasoned and justified argument that the federal government has broken a commitment entered into freely last year, is a statement that the unfunded liability of \$50m that was talked about by the Chief Minister is now an unfunded liability of \$46m. We do not have an explanation of how that figure was arrived at. We do not have any information at all from the actuary as to how he arrived at those figures. I wish to place on record my acknowledgement that a briefing has been offered to

the opposition and that maybe that information will be supplied to us at that briefing. But in this debate on this important public matter, we do not have that information.

What we do have is now becoming increasingly clear. The Northern Territory government is saying that the existing Commonwealth superannuation scheme is not satisfactory and that it wants to change to a new scheme. Let us get it clear that we are talking about a Commonwealth superannuation scheme which presently is funded on an emerging cost basis. The Northern Territory government, through the statement of the Chief Minister, seems to be now saying that that system is not good enough for us in the Northern Territory and, if we are to take on superannuation - forget the cost for a moment - we will take it on on a fully-funded cost basis. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that that quite significantly changes what this debate is about. The letter from Senator Walsh said, and I think the relevant section must be read out in this debate:

Under the revised arrangements that I have agreed with the Prime Minister, the Territory will be required to meet a portion of the emerging cost of employer-financed benefits payable to its employees who retired or retire on or after 1 July 1984. The Territory is to meet that part of the liability that relates to the person's employment with the Territory on or after that date.

In other words, in line with the existing Commonwealth procedures, the Northern Territory has been asked to agree to meet the emerging costs. In one sense, that is consistent with the agreement that was entered into last year in October between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth governments. The Northern Territory government at that stage indicated that it was happy with the emerging-cost scheme which is the basis of the present Commonwealth scheme. It was happy to accept funding from the Commonwealth government on an emerging-cost basis to pick up its contributions from 1 July 1984. It has now changed that attitude and is saying that, if the Northern Territory government is to pick up the financing of its part of the scheme, under Senator Walsh's letter, the emerging-cost scheme is not satisfactory and we would have to go to a fully-funded scheme to ensure that we were properly covered. Mr Speaker, I say again that that is a significant shift in the debate. I do not want to pass judgment on that part of the debate at this stage because I do not have enough information.

I accept that the Chief Minister has put forward an argument in the Assembly for a fully-funded scheme. I hope that the briefing that we are to receive today will shed some light on the desirability or otherwise of our moving to that part of the scheme. Certainly, I am not in a position to comment on it. However, I want to say again that, by introducing that completely new element, we have been led into a situation where the Chief Minister is saying that government-funded schemes that operate throughout the rest of Australia are not sufficient for us because they are all emerging-cost schemes and what we want is a fully-funded scheme.

Mr Speaker, there were some quite strange elements in the way that the government went about announcing this bombshell from Senator Walsh. The letter from Senator Walsh was dated 4 April 1985. On the same letter, there is what appears to be the date of receipt of the letter in the Department of the Chief Minister - 11 April 1985. One week later the first statement on this was made by the Chief Minister in this Assembly. What has become clear is that the Public Service Commissioner, the Teaching Service Commissioner and other people involved in the personnel areas had no prior notice that this statement was to

be made. In fact, I am advised that the first that the Public Service Commissioner knew about it was when he was reading the statement as the Chief Minister was making it in this Assembly.

To me, that appears to be a very strange way of going about government business and consulting the employees of the Northern Territory government who have direct responsibility for a superannuation scheme. A week passed between the receipt of that letter in the Chief Minister's office until its tabling in this Assembly and yet, during that week, no attempt was made at consultation with the head of the Northern Territory Public Service. Mr Speaker, I think this Assembly and the head of the Northern Territory Public Service deserve some explanation as to why high-level discussions did not commence on this matter as soon as the Chief Minister received the letter.

Mr Speaker, I want to pick up another matter that was in the Chief Minister's first statement and not in his second statement: his claim in the first statement that there was a specific breach of the Memorandum of Understanding because Senator Walsh had made it clear that the federal government was not prepared to pay any additional money to finance this scheme. The Chief Minister stated that that was a breach of section 29 of the memorandum which dealt with special grants. Mr Speaker, I would like the Chief Minister, in his reply, to address the question of whether the fact that he did not mention that particular issue in his second statement meant that he had had a change of mind on that, because I think it is at least arguable that Senator Walsh's comments do not go to any limitation on existing section 29 of the Memorandum of Understanding. Also, I think it is at least arguable that section 29 will be open to the Northern Territory to make an extra submission in that area. It is an important issue and I hope that the Chief Minister will give us a legal opinion or at least the opinion of an officer from any of the government departments on what the existing, formal government position is on that particular matter.

Mr Speaker, to come down to the nitty gritty of it all, let me reiterate the opposition's concern at what has happened. As the Chief Minister has said, it is clear that, at the time of self-government, there was no provision written into the Memorandum of Understanding for the funding of superannuation for public servants in the Northern Territory. As the Chief Minister has said, sections 80, 81 and 82 provide quite clearly that that question - which is a vexed question indeed - was to be the subject of ongoing consultations. As has been outlined, those ongoing consultations resulted, in October or November last year, in an agreement between the 2 governments that the Northern Territory government would be responsible in future for the payment of employer contributions but that the money for that would be supplied by the Commonwealth government on an emerging cost basis.

Mr Speaker, let us be clear that we had a unilateral decision of the federal government to change that position, which was freely arrived at, in a way which is to the significant disadvantage of the Northern Territory. The opposition condemns the approach that Senator Walsh has taken on this particular matter as strongly as those on the other side of the Assembly. To put it mildly, it is not helpful at all. Certainly, it is contrary to the way intergovernment relations should take place. It is quite clear, I think, that the implications of this matter as they become revealed to us are enormous indeed and that, over a longer term, we will have considerable problems in the Northern Territory meeting these superannuation contributions within our present budgetary framework. It is clear that a rescue operation has to be mounted over the next few weeks and I am sure that we, on this side of the Assembly, are prepared to offer the government any assistance that is possible on this particular matter.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has plans to meet with relevant federal government ministers as soon as possible to put the opposition's case on this particular matter.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that the one value that I think the Chief Minister's second statement has is that it puts the problem that we are faced with in a more rational perspective than did his first statement. In my view, the first statement was a blatant political document. The second statement is a much more reasoned document. It explains more clearly the problem that confronts us - and it is an enormous problem. As I have said, it behoves everyone in this Assembly to put his mind to persuading the federal government that it has made a wrong decision and a decision that should be reversed.

MOTION
Cognate Debate

Mr ROBERTSON (Health)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the 2 ministerial statements made by the Chief Minister relating to superannuation for public servants be taken together in one cognate debate and one motion be put in regard to the Assembly taking note of the statements.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Public Service Superannuation

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): The member for Millner hit the nail on the head when he said that a bombshell had been dropped. I would say that there were 2 bombshells dropped: the letter of 4 April to the Chief Minister in relation to the superannuation funding and the remarks made by Senator Walsh in the federal parliament yesterday when he referred to the 'previous' Memorandum of Understanding. That is something that we should worry about. The memorandum anticipated the complexity involved in transferring this function to the Northern Territory government and a joint task group was established to make recommendations to Commonwealth and Territory ministers. I will quote from the joint task group report. I am not sure whether the Chief Minister tabled this important document this morning but, if not, I would be only too pleased to make it available to honourable members. The report stated:

Superannuation is one of the most significant and complex functions which was not transferred at self-government. In relation to superannuation, paragraphs 80 to 82 of the Memorandum of Understanding state that serving officers of the Northern Territory Public Service and Northern Territory authorities as at 1 July 1978 who are contributing to the superannuation scheme of the Commonwealth Public Service can continue to do so. Other eligible existing staff and future appointees will be eligible to contribute also. However, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory accept that the question of employer superannuation contribution poses some complex issues and have agreed that the matter should be urgently considered by a joint Commonwealth-Northern Territory task group, including actuaries, for report to ministers. Such consideration is to include the possibility of the Northern Territory being placed in a position to establish its own superannuation fund. The Commonwealth and Northern Territory will, at the same time, negotiate a total staffing level for effective self-government within which the agreed superannuation arrangements may operate.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister referred to the numbers on the joint task group but not its composition. He said that 8 departments were involved in the joint task group study which was established in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding. It consisted of representatives from the Commonwealth Departments of Finance, Treasury, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Territories and Local Government as well as the Public Service Board, the Office of the Superannuation Fund Investment Trust, the Australian Government Retirement Benefits Office, and the Australian Government Actuary Office. The Northern Territory was represented by the Department of the Treasury, including a consulting actuary, and the Office of the Public Service Commissioner. Certainly, it was a very high level task group. We are all aware of the correspondence between the Chief Minister and the former Finance Minister, Mr Dawkins, which agreed to the workings and the recommendations of that joint task group report.

Let us look at the history of the Northern Territory government's intentions in relation to its superannuation scheme. Cabinet agreed in 1981 to proceed with the drafting of a bill to enable a separate Territory superannuation scheme to be established. This bill required considerable consultation with Commonwealth departments and the relevant staff associations. A second bill was introduced in 1982 to replace the first. This bill was not proceeded with because of the unwillingness of the Commonwealth to make the necessary legislative changes to allow Territory employees to have their own scheme. It was partly due to the opposition of Territory public service unions to compulsory transfer to any Territory scheme. In view of the substantial delays and the unlikelihood of the Commonwealth government changing its attitude on these points, the government decided not to proceed with the second bill but instead to develop a separate benefit scheme for NTEC employees and to enhance the benefits payable to police officers taking early retirement. The concept of a separate Territory scheme covering the whole of the public service so as to dispense with membership in the Commonwealth scheme was thus shelved. NTEC employees had the option of remaining in the Commonwealth scheme.

Mr Speaker, I understand that Senator Walsh is concerned at the rate of growth of the Northern Territory Public Service. I understand that his concern is that public servants make up a third of the whole Territory work force. I will be addressing myself to those points during the course of this sittings. I wonder if Senator Walsh has taken the time to read the joint task group report because it is quite clear that the matter was of concern to the group itself. I quote from page 9, clause 4.8 of the report:

The task group concluded that a neutral solution to this problem would be to determine the base numbers at the date each function was transferred from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory, and to apply Northern Territory population growth as a measure of growth in employment in the Northern Territory Public Service and Northern Territory authorities to increase the base numbers to July 1981 terms.

Mr Speaker, in regard to this question, the task force set the staffing numbers at 10 875 as at 1 July 1981. I understand that current Northern Territory public service superannuants number approximately 12 000 and this includes 4500 employees who were compulsorily transferred.

Mr Speaker, in almost 5 years, our public service membership of the superannuation scheme has increased by a little over 1100. In noting some of the remarks made by Senator Walsh, I have the feeling that there was more to the underlying vindictiveness than was expressed. Perhaps he was worried that there

could have been an open-ended arrangement whereby we could have been stacking the system with all the public servants in the world and that eventually the Commonwealth would have to pay for them. But that was not true. Membership has increased by a little over 1100 in 5 years. Taking into consideration our policy on school-leaver recruitment and other growth factors that the task group would have considered, the task group concluded that:

The staff growth factor to be used in arrangements from 1 July 1981 for calculating the annual specific purpose payments by the Commonwealth should be such as to enable an automatic adjustment, independent of policy decisions taken by the Northern Territory government, that may affect Northern Territory staffing numbers. The task group noted that there are competing forces by way of increasing economies of scale, the increase in the ratio of public servants to population experienced by governments over time, the requirements to overcome currently performed services as the population increases and unique disabilities in the Territory - for example, isolation and high Aboriginal population - which make it extremely difficult to quantify future trends in Northern Territory staffing numbers. Accordingly, the task group proposes that the average annual Northern Territory population growth during the previous 5 years be used as the staff growth factor in the formula.

It is very important that members realise that those comments were contained in the report and gave the base line for the staffing levels that would be the beneficiaries of superannuation. One could have forgiven the senator if he was considering this matter in relation to one of the Labor states. We are living in one of the fastest growing areas of Australia; its growth rate is 3 times higher than the national average. If all else failed, the joint task group had an ace up its sleeve. I would like to quote from another part of the report:

The task group proposes an overall review of the arrangements, after they have operated for 5 years, to establish whether the payments by the Commonwealth represent a fair reflection of the share of the emerging cost to the Commonwealth scheme employer-financed benefits to be met by the Northern Territory, given the numbers and characteristics of the Northern Territory contributors agreed for the purpose of the arrangement. In the event that the Northern Territory decided at some time in the future to introduce its own general superannuation scheme for its employees, the arrangements would be modified to provide for the Commonwealth to provide the Territory with the financial capacity to meet the emerging costs of employer-financed benefits under the scheme as if the Territory employees had continued to be members of the Commonwealth scheme.

Mr Speaker, I am at a loss to understand the dear senator's concern. Perhaps he has not read this most important document. Senator Walsh is on the public record as saying that the Territory is overfunded and that the Memorandum of Understanding has no legislative backing. The Chief Minister indicated this morning that the fact that previous Labor governments have accepted the financial aspects of the Memorandum of Understanding should be sufficient.

Mr Speaker, in answer to a question yesterday by Senator Rae about whether he was prepared to review his decision regarding the NTPS entitlement under the Commonwealth Superannuation Fund, we know from the Chief Minister this morning that the short answer was no. There is supposed to be some cooperation between governments at ministerial level but he is not prepared to entertain any thought.

of any further correspondence on that particular question. At the same time, Senator Walsh was asked whether he agreed that his letter to the Chief Minister of 4 April was a flagrant breach and repudiation of the written agreement between his predecessor and the Chief Minister of the NT, signed on behalf of the governments in October 1984. His answer was no. Mr Speaker, we must start to reconsider other correspondence that may be on file. Where do we stand with the Medibank agreement? Where do we stand with the roads grant to the Australian Bicentennial Roads Program? I must express my concern for the many Northern Territory public servants who must be totally confused by the events of the last few days, especially those who were compulsory transferees. It is quite clear from Senator Walsh's attitude that he will not change his decision.

We must act quickly. One solution could be for the Commonwealth government to refund all moneys paid by the Northern Territory public servants to the Territory government. A Northern Territory superannuation fund could then immediately be set up with the assistance of the insurance industry in consultation with all unions involved. I condemn the action taken by the minister, without warning, without consultation and without consideration for the many people whom this arbitrary decision will affect. Mr Speaker, I support the Chief Minister in his call for the Prime Minister in Canberra to have this irresponsible decision reversed.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in order to place the actions and, very importantly, the attitude of the federal Minister for Finance in perspective, and to fully realise their gravity, we need to look back at what self-government was all about. Perhaps I can start by quoting from a letter tabled in this Assembly. It was from the then Minister for the Northern Territory, Evan Adermann:

Action will be taken to bring the Northern Territory to a stage of responsible self-government by 1 July 1978. It will mean the formal creation by that date of the government of the Northern Territory with responsible ministers having control over and responsibility for their own finances. Under the heading of financial arrangements should be the principle that the acceptance of responsibility means the raising by the Northern Territory of a reasonable proportion of the funds required to pay for services at the standards desired by the Territory people and that overall financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory should broadly follow those lines that exist between the Commonwealth and the states, due regard being had for the particular circumstances of the Northern Territory.

In a statement to the House of Representatives on 14 September 1977, the same federal minister said, when referring to the proposed new government's autonomy:

Our approach to this matter will be guided by the principle that the essence of responsible self-government is that a community should be free to make its own decisions in the full knowledge that it will be required to live with and be responsible for all the consequences of those decisions. We are concerned to ensure that the new political entity which we are proceeding to establish will be truly responsible in all respects.

There were many other statements made and debated in this Assembly during the period leading up to July 1978 on the details of self-government. The whole purpose of the debate was to show Territorians that self-government, as

proposed by the then Fraser government and ourselves, was real government whereby there would be predictable financial security for the first time and a recognition of the special circumstances of the Territory - the decades of neglect, the high cost factors and the lack of infrastructure. Most importantly, there was a recognition of our low taxing capacity relative to the states. We were never intended to be some puppet government having to please the Commonwealth with everything we did. The federal minister's moves in relation to superannuation are symptomatic of a deep resentment towards our level of funding and the way we spend some of it. That is why my references to the principles of self-government are so important in this debate.

Self-government is about standing on your own feet, being allowed to make mistakes and being accountable for them. It is about Territorians determining their own future. Provided the Territory government disburses the funds available to it according to law, the Commonwealth has no role in oversighting our expenditure or passing judgment upon it; that is, if self-government means anything. Those principles I have referred to certainly meant a great deal to us back in July 1978. They were the very understandings that led us to accept self-government. They are the principles embodied in the Memorandum of Understanding.

It would appear that the current federal government views the Northern Territory as some sort of parasite that will not go away. The actions of the federal Minister for Finance in regard to the Commonwealth superannuation scheme and his outrageous public statements about federal payments to the Territory demonstrate a total contempt for the principles of self-government and the arrangements between our 2 governments on the subject. I strongly suspect that his views stem from ignorance of the fact that, prior to self-government, the responsibility for providing government services and administration for all 1 500 000 km² of the Territory rested with the Commonwealth. If Mr Walsh thinks that the Commonwealth could do it as effectively and cheaper, then he is wrong and pre-1978 history shows that.

The Minister for Finance clearly ignores Commonwealth payments to the states totalling \$20 000m every year when he charges that the Territory is overfunded. This financial year, Western Australia will obtain 50% of its budget from the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland will obtain 55% of their budgets from the Commonwealth and Tasmania will get 61% of its budget from the Commonwealth. Does anyone here care to charge that none of those governments have mismanaged some of their funds? Of course they have. The Territory will get 85% of its budget from the Commonwealth. Our portion of Commonwealth revenue receipts is fully justified on the 50-year-old principle that, as citizens of the federation, all Australians are entitled to an equal standard of government services despite their geographic location.

We all know that the Memorandum of Understanding is not a document we can drag the Commonwealth to court over; it is only as strong as the integrity of the parties to it. Despite our concerns about the integrity of the federal Labor government, the member for Millner said in August last year, and I quote from Hansard: 'The Hawke government is an honourable government and fulfills its commitments. When it wants to consider changing those commitments, it gives due notice and takes into consideration the views of other governments'. It seems Senator Walsh has not heard that he is supposed to be working for an honourable government.

The rot started setting in when the former Territory member in the House of Representatives began his campaign in the federal parliament chirping about overfunding and alleged financial mismanagement by the Territory government.

His ministerial colleagues in the federal parliament no doubt were keen listeners because there was a Territorian on the floor of the federal parliament advocating ways by which they could reduce their federal budgets. Members opposite were never short on beating the same drum. The Leader of the Opposition has told us that the Memorandum of Understanding can be discarded in 5 seconds and that he is embarrassed about the level of funding that we receive. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has referred to Commonwealth payments as a luxury and a handout. Who are these people representing? Territorians? I think not. The opportunities for the Commonwealth to hack our budgetary programs to pieces are many. Why do members opposite urge them on so many times?

Today, we are debating a unilateral decision on superannuation which will cost millions of dollars over the next few years. We await every day now the decision on the \$150m powerhouse grant. We await the decision on the \$60m electricity subsidy and its future. The capital repayment grant of somewhere near \$60m is receiving unhealthy attention from the federal government. 49 other specific purpose payments are soon to be decided in the budgetary process, including B-TEC, roads, water resources, education - the list goes on and on. If the treatment handed out to us over superannuation is an example of things to come, we are in for a very rough time.

If the memorandum is unilaterally torn up by the Commonwealth and we return to the days when our funding was determined annually in the budgetary context, then self-government will become a sham. Our options would be to give it all back to them or press for statehood. Either way, Mr Speaker, this Assembly should demand from the federal parliament, on behalf of the citizens of the Northern Territory, a statement endorsing the principles of self-government and eventual statehood. Territorians have a right to know what the status of their government is and, indeed, what their future will hold. Senator Walsh's behaviour is despicable. If he is allowed to get away with it, every Territorian will suffer. We must make no mistake: this is just the beginning of a campaign against the Northern Territory. I commend the motion.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, apart from the fact that it is not a motion, I certainly commend the statement that is before the Assembly. The honourable minister who has just spoken has a very tired record indeed and, as I commented as I walked in, was speaking very much like yesterday's politicians. It is the same tired, worn out argument that the honourable minister has been trotting out for 8 years in this Assembly. No thought has been put into his contribution and no substantiation has to be given for his remarks - he simply trots out the same old message.

It is interesting to hear references to things like the electricity subsidy. It is a fact - and of course the minister would like to forget about it - that his government failed to have that agreement signed by the former Fraser government. I can remember going down to Canberra and listening at first hand to the reasons why it could not be done because the Fraser government did not want to sign it and did not sign it. It sat unsigned on Fraser's desk for 8 months and it was the incoming Labor government that had to conclude the negotiations. When we hear this nonsense about what a dreadful time we are currently getting from the Labor Party, the facts are that we, in the Territory, get a dreadful time from whichever government is in power federally. It is a product of too much land and not enough people. Again and again, the Territory's voice is difficult to make heard at a national level. It was just as difficult with the former conservative government. The electricity subsidy would have to be the most stupid example for this current government to give because it failed to get Fraser even to sign it and the Labor party had to fix up that little problem.

Mr Speaker, have a look at the conservative opposition's preoccupation with the deficit and listen to the statements that are currently being made by the pretender to the throne, John Howard, who is likely to be on the throne before too much longer. Have a listen to his discussions about the necessity to chop the deficit. The only complaint that the current conservative opposition is making in respect of the proposals by the Labor government is that the cuts that they intend to make are not severe enough. The former Chief Minister in this Assembly, Paul Everingham, took up the cudgels with me in a public television debate on the question of deficits. I never had a high regard for the former Chief Minister's capacity as an economist in any case, but I can remember him saying that deficits are irrelevant. I noted that, along with the left wing of the Labor Party, people who say that are very strangely silent these days. No one talks now about deficits being irrelevant.

I have sat in forums of my own party and heard people say: 'It does not matter how big the deficit grows, you can afford to deficit your way out of any problems that you have'. That was the position the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory took. He quoted a figure, and I have still the tape recording of that debate. He said: 'It does not matter if it goes beyond \$10 000m. We can afford to have a deficit for a railway in the Northern Territory. It will not affect things like interest rates'. Mr Speaker, the facts are that, irrespective of whatever government is in power - and this is precisely the reason why we have bipartisan support at federal level for things like the fuel increases at the moment - it is clear that the size of the deficit is absolutely vital to the economic health of this country. If the deficit does blow out and the country as a whole owes more money than it can pay, interest rates will get out of hand - and they are rising at the moment - and confidence in the dollar will be destroyed. We have been hearing nothing but a profound and loud silence from the people who have said formerly that deficits do not matter, and that includes the Territory's current federal member.

I see from the front page of the Australian today that the federal government is aiming at a \$1000m cut in public spending nationally. Now that that is out, I dare say that that will be the target that it will try to achieve. It really is arrant nonsense to listen to this pie-eyed cant from federal conservatives about how they would fund the airport and how they would have built the railway. Of course they have been back-peddalling on that ever since they made the statement. They are now saying they would only build it in light of the economic circumstances of the day when they took over. The facts are that the Territory always has trouble with federal governments of whatever political complexion.

Mr Speaker, I agree with the Attorney-General that the Territory is at the crossroads. I had not intended to contribute to this debate because I did not want simply to repeat the factual information on superannuation that has already been delivered by the Deputy Opposition Leader, but the same tired old line from the Attorney-General cannot be allowed to stand. The facts are that we have a case that must be heard and it is the actions of this government that have compromised that case being made. If he doubts that, he need only talk to the average man in the street who does not live in the Northern Territory. I would suggest that he could start by having a chat to a few of the tourists who come to the Northern Territory. I have just been speaking to one at the gate of the Assembly. I have found that, if you talk to the visitors to the Northern Territory, the first thing they raise with you, apart from the casino, is the pay rises for politicians in the Northern Territory. As I said before, not rejecting those pay rises initially was such a stupid decision that the political damage that that has done to the Territory, irrespective of any subsequent action, is irretrievable.

It intrigued me greatly to hear the reasons given by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory as to why we cut our pay. If the reasons that he gave on ABC TV and Channel 8 television are correct, then we might as well have kept the money because the Chief Minister said that the reason we relinquished it was because we were being criticised by federal politicians over the money we paid to ourselves in the Northern Territory. The fact is that I supported that pay cut, even though it was done far too late, for the simple reason that it was unjust for us to receive the money. The political damage caused by accepting the pay rise had already been done and that cannot be changed by anything we do now. As I said when talking about the casino, I am sick and tired of listening to the minister heaping the silly nonsense that he did on the opposition.

The facts are that, in the current economic climate of this country in the run up to the next budget, nothing said or done by the opposition in the Legislative Assembly would come close to the damage that has been done to our financial case in Canberra, irrespective of whichever government is down there, by the incompetence and the mismanagement of this government. That is a fact and, apparently, we are to be reminded of it again on national television tonight. I have been given full warning that there is likely to be an extremely interesting contribution to the Four Corners program tonight from our current federal member, heaping the blame for all of it on the current Northern Territory government. If that information is correct - and I will be watching with my video recorder running - it will put another nail in the coffin of the Northern Territory. If it is true, then the federal member for the Northern Territory needs to be condemned for it. But I have been told, Mr Speaker, that that was the tenor of the remarks that he made. I will be interested to see how much of that goes to air.

The fact is that it has done us substantial damage at the worst possible time. The government of the Northern Territory trots out these tired old lines about what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said and what we said 7 years ago about self-government or whatever. The facts are that the government knows that it is its own current, monumental incompetence, which it demonstrates day after day in this Assembly, that has done the damage. This morning, once again, it was demonstrated in this Assembly that members of this government could not lie straight in bed. Not only the Chief Minister but very many of them are incapable of telling the truth. They are incapable of doing so. As I said before, the timing of this gross mismanagement on the part of this government has done great damage. Consider the money that was lost on B-TEC, the TIO losses - which, on the record of the Territory Insurance Office annual report, were due to mismanagement and incompetence - the pay rises, the ongoing saga of the casino, the yet-to-be-revealed details about Myilly Point and the money that has been spent there destroying accommodation even though these things have resulted in profoundly greater damage to the Northern Territory's case this year than anything that has been done by anybody on this side of the Assembly. We would not even come close. Mr Speaker, these people are the architects of their own destruction and nobody else.

Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I have acknowledged the absolutely appalling and inexcusable behaviour of the federal government, in particular that of the minister. As a result, I intended originally to say nothing further in this matter but I could not allow the former Treasurer's speech to pass without comment. In his public statements, the federal member has said that the then Treasurer was cheek by jowl with him at every step on the casino trail. In answer to his puzzled look, I am perfectly happy to provide the minister with the transcripts of that interview with the federal member in which he named him as being equally as culpable as he was in respect of the matter. Members opposite ought to look at cleaning up their own act.

If for no other reason, what Senator Walsh has done is inexcusable because that is not the way you deal with people once you make agreements with them. We have had a very profound example from the Northern Territory government of how it deals with people with whom it has agreements but we do not expect the federal government or anyone else to stoop to the same low level of behaviour as the Northern Territory government has done in the past in respect of agreements with people. It is a fact that, at the moment, the federal Minister for Finance seems to be engaged on a course of action which nobody could interpret as being anything other than a personal and a very vindictive attack on the Northern Territory. Thanks to Senator Walsh, it is no good anybody in the federal government now saying that this is simply good fiscal policy or budget restraint that must be exercised because of the federal deficit. Senator Walsh seems to be laughing a fair bit while he is doing it. He cannot help himself; I have read what he said in the Senate. I am disgusted with the sentiments expressed by Senator Walsh. I am not quite sure how much more clearly I can say it than that.

Mr Speaker, irrespective of whether we are talking about the superannuation legislation or anything else, Senator Walsh has made it abundantly clear that the Northern Territory is to become a very special target. That cannot be countenanced by any member of this Legislative Assembly irrespective of what political party he belongs to. I conclude by saying that I support the remarks made this morning by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about the reservations and the complaints we have with the way in which the Territory is being dealt with in respect of superannuation. The agreement was confirmed in writing last year by the then Minister for Finance, Mr Dawkins. That agreement should stand and it should be honoured. It should not be reneged upon in the way that it has been by the federal government. I go further to say that the Prime Minister of Australia has an obligation, in respect of the non-stop vitriolic attacks on the Northern Territory by the Minister for Finance, to make it clear that there is no question of the Northern Territory being singled out for particular political attention by the federal government. He should make it clear that, in seeking to achieve that proposed budget deficit, the Northern Territory will not suffer any greater disadvantage than that being suffered by the states. I suggest, with all due respect to the federal Labor government, that if it is politically foolish enough to single out the Territory and demonstrate afterwards that the Territory was singled out for special attention, it will cost it a great deal of electoral support, not only in the Northern Territory but elsewhere as well.

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Speaker, the final part of the Leader of the Opposition's contribution was the main reason why I wanted to speak and, of course, he encouraged me somewhat by what he said to start with. Of course, it was inevitable that a member of the opposition would spend at least 75% to 80% of his speech giving excuses and reasons for the manner in which the federal government has behaved.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was the first person over the weekend, I understand from a transcript I read - and I assume it is an accurate transcript - to try to be an apologist. His argument was that it would not cost \$46m or \$50m or whatever in accrued liabilities but a figure much less significant than that. That was the first time we heard a member of the opposition lead the argument with: 'What is all the fuss about? Who cares about the breach of undertakings? Who cares about the consequences to the public service? It is not \$50m after all. It is a mere pittance like \$115 000'. Of course, that has now been demonstrated to be a completely false figure. The true figure is approximately that advanced by the Chief Minister in the first instance. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition's role is that of apologist for the Commonwealth government. And it is the Commonwealth government; it is

not sufficient or proper, in my view, for the Leader of the Opposition to single out Senator Walsh as being the sole villain in this piece. I know it is very difficult to accept the word of the honourable senator, for reasons which I will come to in a minute, but he said that he sent the letter that caused this furore after consultation with the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition launched into his debate on this subject, and I think it is more shame to him that he did not heed his own original counsel and remain silent because he has certainly done the Territory public's cause and his credibility no good by bothering to stand on his feet in the first place.

Mr Speaker, he launched initially into a discussion on NTEC and the agreement. He is perfectly correct that, up until that time, that agreement had not been signed. Indeed, this government and the Fraser government had a whole range of agreements which we entered into in good faith between us. There were agreements in writing and there were agreements between gentlemen. I use the noun rather than the description. The Fraser government honoured each and every fundamental agreement, whether in writing or verbally, between itself and us when a minister gave another minister an undertaking or where the government gave the government an undertaking. I know of no fundamental breach which attacked the economic and basic foundation of self-government in this Territory. It was good enough for the Fraser government to honour agreements which it entered into, either in writing or verbally - it certainly honoured the NTEC agreement - and it took the present federal government, via the auspices of the present Minister for Finance, to breach agreements in writing. He did so with the pious mumbo jumbo that we have just heard from the opposition.

Mr Speaker, if we want to look at the depths to which Senator Walsh will go - and I assume, if we are to believe anything that he says, with the cognisance, understanding and at least tacit approval of the Prime Minister - then we need only look to his own words. The questions which were asked in the Senate last night included one which was even more pertinent than the question from Senator Bernie Kilgariff. I refer to the supplementary question asked by Senator Rae. I think it demonstrates something that this country, not just the Northern Territory, ought to be aware of. The Leader of the Opposition was quite correct when he said that the Commonwealth thinks it can treat some citizens of this country in this manner simply because they are Territorians. He was absolutely correct when he said that it will not get away with it in the rest of the country either. We are all citizens of this country and all citizens look to the same standards of behaviour and honour. While we are on the subject of quantum, I am quite sure Christ would not have been made happier if it was 5 pieces of silver and not 30. Betrayal is betrayal, breach of word is breach of word and honour, when breached, is dishonour. The supplementary question was: 'I just wondered if the minister would come back to the point. Doesn't it repudiate the agreement made on 25 October 1984 by the present government and his immediate predecessor on behalf of this government - not the previous Fraser government, this government - and the government of the Northern Territory?' That is a rather convoluted way of putting it. What he was asking was whether the agreement breached was an agreement of his own government. The answer that the minister gave, in typical arrogance and not even addressing the chairman, was the single syllable word, 'No'.

I have the utmost regard for Mr Dawkins. He was probably the first Labor shadow minister I met with. The Leader of the Opposition, who was then shadow minister for education, assisted in setting up that meeting. I think he is one of the more capable and certainly one of the more honest and honourable members of any government I have come across, particularly the present federal government. We are talking about whether or not there was a breach. In a letter of 25 October to the Chief Minister, which was tabled earlier, Mr Dawkins

stated: 'I agree with arrangements proposed by the task force as summarised in the attachments to this letter and that they should operate from 1 July 1984'. What of the attachment? Attachment A comes down to the fundamental point that we are talking about in respect of the Territory's capacity to pay which was recognised not only by the Fraser government but by the present Hawke government. This document is attested to by the signature of a minister of the Crown of this Commonwealth. It related to arrangements under which the Commonwealth would provide the Northern Territory with financial capacity to meet the employer liability under the Commonwealth superannuation scheme: 'The Commonwealth will make annual payments to the Northern Territory to provide the Territory with the financial capacity to reimburse the Commonwealth the emerging cost of the Commonwealth superannuation scheme'. The answer that Senator Walsh gave in respect of whether or not his letter was a breach of an undertaking was quite simply, 'No'. I agree entirely with the Leader of the Opposition's belated statement. He usually defends and excuses for 80% of his debate and then finally comes back to something for domestic consumption. I dare say he cuts the last bit off his Hansard and sends it to Senator Walsh and says, 'Look, Peter, I am a good guy'. There can be no other reason why the Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly would even hint at defending the decisions taken in this matter.

One can analyse in depth all of the documentation in relation to this matter. Indeed, the Chief Minister did so in his statement but I would like to turn briefly to the answer given by Senator Walsh to Senator Kilgariff and try to expose it for what it was. Senator Walsh referred to the behaviour of the Fraser government and the way it recklessly distributed money 'like confetti at a wedding' in the Territory. This was raised this morning and I do not like going over the same ground but let us look at why that quantity of money was provided to this Northern Territory. It had 2 purposes. It was an insistence of this government to that government that that was a not excessive but proper level of funding for this one-sixth of the continent of Australia. Secondly, everyone, even Mr Isaacs when he was here, recognised that level of funding as being an appropriate level to compensate, at least in part, for decades of negligence and neglect by governments of the federal parliament of both persuasions. It was not an excessive amount of funding at all. The man does not understand the history behind the Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr Speaker, he went on to talk about the size of the public service. The agreement which was entered into by Mr Dawkins and the Chief Minister in relation to this particular question is as follows. The Commonwealth acknowledged that, at 1 July 1981, the public service of the Northern Territory numbered 10 875 and, by agreement, that number could be escalated for the purposes of the formula by the average increase in Northern Territory population over the previous 5 years. In 1978, and concluding in 1979 when the Supreme Court came across, all officers of the public service, with the exception of a few key people appointed by this government as departmental heads or deputy secretaries, were compulsory transferees. They were Commonwealth officers compulsorily transferred by way of an amendment to the Commonwealth Public Service Act and a complementary amendment to our act. What did that have to say, Mr Speaker? In lay terms, it said simply by act of parliament attested to in the name of the Crown in Canberra and in the name of the Crown in this place, officers of the public service of the Commonwealth of Australia compulsorily transferred to the Northern Territory Public Service would not have their terms and conditions of employment eroded such as to be less than they were as at the date of compulsory transfer. In my submission, not only has the federal minister breached the undertaking between governments - and that undertaking over the signature of a minister, John Dawkins - but it has also breached its own damned legislation. It is on the statute books presented in the name of the

Queen to the Governor-General for his signature. In this incredible letter that we are expected to cop sweet, they tear up the Memorandum of Understanding, they tear up Mr Dawkins' letter to us and they tear up an act of parliament. I do not know what constitutional and legal difficulties Senator Walsh will have in implementing this piece of lunacy but you had better believe, Mr Speaker, that this government will be seeking the best legal advice and the most competent constitutional lawyers it can find to examine those issues. Mind you, we know the tricks of governments in Canberra, and I do not level this only at the present Commonwealth government: if you lose in the High Court, you change the law. And that is just an ...

Mr B. Collins: You always lose in the High Court.

Mr ROBERTSON: The trouble is we do not have the capacity to change the law where it is a Commonwealth law that overrules us. The honourable member is perfectly correct in respect of those that we lose. Mind you, Mr Speaker, I do not think there has ever been a state in its formative years that has not sought constantly to have the power and validity of the relationship of its legislation to the legislation from whence it was hatched tested in the nation's highest court. I make no apologies about our trips to Canberra to the High Court of Australia.

Getting off that, Mr Speaker, we have this multiple breach. The real reason I rise in this debate, apart from a wish to express my horror at what has happened, is to urge all members, by whatever means possible, to speak to our fellow citizens south, east and west of the borders of this Northern Territory. If this sort of vindictive assault can be levelled against 130 000 Northern Territory citizens from the railway, to the airport and now to this, just because those taxpaying citizens had the audacity to return overwhelmingly a federal member of a different persuasion to that party which holds power in Canberra, then there is a message there that all citizens of all states and territories in this country ought to listen to.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I had no intention of speaking in this debate but the offerings of the last 2 government speakers have forced me to rise and speak with a still, small voice of reason. The performance by the government in this regard has been rather like watching an old motor car. I have a fair bit of experience in my electorate of watching old motor cars. By golly, the difficulty in cranking up the old tin lizzie today has been quite something to behold. I think it is obvious to all honourable members that the engine has not been able to start.

Let me say at the outset what both speakers on this side of the Assembly have said: we strongly condemn the actions of the federal government, and specifically those of the Minister for Finance, in this regard. I am quite convinced that his actions in respect of the superannuation arrangements are ill-considered and vindictive. I do not think that, as an opposition, we need to refer to them in any stronger terms. We can scarcely refer to them in any stronger terms than to refer to our federal colleagues as behaving in a way that is ill-considered and vindictive. I hope we will not have further government speakers saying that we are attempting to beat the federal government with a stick made of sponge rubber. That is certainly not the case. We are particularly concerned to have our strong criticism of that government placed on record in this debate.

There are 2 further comments I wish to pick up, one from the erstwhile Treasurer, the member for Fannie Bay, and the other from the member for Araluen. The member for Fannie Bay said that the level of government services in isolated

places should be the same wherever people are living. If the government is trying to suggest that the opposition does not agree with that, all I can say is that the honourable member and his colleagues on the other side of the Assembly have been sitting with cotton wool in their ears. I do not think that anybody who has listened to the speeches in this Assembly from any member of the opposition would be convinced of anything other than that the opposition has attempted by every means to provide government services in their electorates that are of the same standards as would apply elsewhere in the Territory, let alone elsewhere in Australia.

I think it was that particular comment that raised my ire in the first place. I am sure that my constituents out at Docker River and the constituents of the member for Stuart at Nyirripi would be most interested to hear the pious tones with which the member for Fannie Bay suggested that his government was the only bearer of the standards in that regard. Quite obviously, it is clear to all Territorians, certainly to all members of this Assembly, that members of the opposition have fought harder for simple government services. I am talking about schools, medical services and roads. Nobody has fought harder than we on this side of the Assembly. It scarcely behoves the honourable member for Fannie Bay to suggest any division in that regard. I think that his offerings in that respect were somewhat out of order.

He suggested that there were problems with levels of government services around this country and that, of course, is precisely the job of the federal government. Mr Speaker, isn't it difficult for the federal government to provide this sort of equality of government services when the Northern Territory government spends its money the way it has? I will not labour the issue of the casino. I will not labour the issue of payment for members of this Assembly. I will not labour the failure of the government to provide an answer in the statement preceding this one about the Leader of Government Business' trip to Toronto to hold the hand of his colleague, the Minister for Community Development. Of course, one could go on ad infinitum.

The comment that came from the member for Araluen in this debate was not of much more use. I never cease to be entranced by the offerings of the honourable member for Araluen. I think it is a debating style that I will have to develop as well. It is a sort of amalgam of high dudgeon and a very fruity tone of voice that I am sure adds considerable weight to his arguments whenever he rises to speak in this Assembly. You will no doubt recall, Mr Speaker, that, while waving his hand in the air, he said: 'And each and every agreement has been honoured by the Fraser government'.

Since the Fraser government passed into the trash can of history, circumstances in the Northern Territory have changed. Indeed, since the agreement to which reference was made by Mr Dawkins in October of last year, circumstances have changed considerably. Not only have we lost one Chief Minister and gained another, but the present incumbent and his predecessor still manage to box on fairly satisfactorily in public. That must look terrific in Canberra, Mr Speaker. It must add a great deal of credibility to the process of government in the Northern Territory when such depressing spectacles are seen as the Chief Minister and the member for the Northern Territory having a good solid box on in public.

The member for Fannie Bay referred to my friend the erstwhile member for the Northern Territory who, as far as I am concerned, did a great deal in the time that he held that office to obtain a better deal for the Northern Territory. Of course, Mr Speaker, we are aware, and all Territorians are gradually becoming aware, that the Northern Territory government is more interested in scoring

cheap political points than in looking after the needs of Territorians. Nowhere has that been seen more clearly leaping to the fore than with this particular arrangement. I appreciate that the signs are all around that the Chief Minister is in deep political trouble. Let's hear the backbench laugh because we know exactly how they feel about it, Mr Speaker. I know that we will have months and months of this. Every pécadillo will be thrown up like a drowning man grasping at straws.

I will say no more about the offerings of the members for Fannie Bay and Araluen. Let me close by reiterating that the opposition's position in this matter has been a responsible one. The opposition roundly condemns the Minister for Finance not only for the decision he made but for the manner in which that decision was made and promulgated. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory government's weapons are blunted or, to conclude with the metaphor with which I began, the motor car of government in the Northern Territory has thrown a big end.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I was interested to note the member for MacDonnell's reference to digging into the trash can. From the comments and the garbled sounds that came from that side of the Assembly, it seemed to me that perhaps he had overbalanced and fallen in. I would like to open my remarks this afternoon by confirming this government's commitment to do all that it possibly can to protect the interests of Northern Territory public servants in the matter of superannuation. I will certainly be putting my voice behind the government to protect the interests of the public servants who live in my electorate of Jingili.

Mr Speaker, in July 1978, we negotiated the Memorandum of Understanding with the federal government of the day. Our understanding was that that was our guarantee of security for the future and perhaps was the basis on which we could develop towards statehood. We have progressed a long way along that road until this last several weeks. I would like to quote from the Memorandum of Understanding. I refer particularly to references to superannuation. Item 80 says: 'Serving officers of the Northern Territory Public Service and Northern Territory authorities as at 1 July 1978 who are contributing to the superannuation scheme for the Commonwealth Public Service can continue to do so. Other eligible existing staff and future appointees will be eligible to contribute also'. Item 81 says: 'However, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory accept that the question of employer superannuation contributions poses some complex issues and have agreed that the matter should be urgently considered by a joint Commonwealth Northern Territory task group, including actuaries, for report to ministers. Such consideration is to include the possibility of the Northern Territory being placed in a position to establish its own superannuation fund'. Item 82 says: 'The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory will, at the same time, negotiate a full staffing level for effective self-government within which the agreed superannuation arrangements may operate'. That was the Memorandum of Understanding and we have worked and governed within those guidelines with regard to superannuation ever since.

The Commonwealth amended its Public Service Act to fall in line with and complement the transfer of Commonwealth public servants to the NT at the time. That included protection for superannuation arrangements. Part of that was that the Commonwealth was to pick up the cost of funding that superannuation scheme. The superannuation scheme must be Commonwealth-funded because the Territory government does not have the capacity to fund it. It is absolutely impossible for us to attempt it. I refer you, Sir, to the NT News of 22 April. The headline says: 'Community must suffer to pay public servants' superannuation'. Those were the comments in the NT News of the day.

The task force that was referred to in the Memorandum of Understanding was set up. I would like to quote from its recommendations presented on 25 October 1984:

The Commonwealth should make annual payments to the NT to allow the Territory to fund the employer-financed benefits of the CSS on an emerging cost basis. The payment would be in respect of benefits that became payable on or after 1 July 1984 to Territory employees in respect of whom the Territory had not, to that date, been provided with the financial capacity.

The Commonwealth through Senator Walsh, has virtually torn up the agreement. Senator Walsh has taken it upon himself, with the stroke of a pen, to disregard the recommendations of that task force, to disregard the Memorandum of Understanding and to disregard the understandings with the various unions involved. With a stroke of his pen, he has scrapped all that. I quote from his letter to the Chief Minister of 4 April 1985:

I refer to my predecessor's letter of 25 October 1984 about the arrangements under which the Territory would meet employer liability for benefits payable to its employees under the Commonwealth superannuation scheme and to your reply of 21 November 1984. I have reviewed these arrangements and have concluded that they should be varied significantly.

Later in the letter, he commented: 'Should the Territory decide not to pay the employer superannuation contributions, action will be taken to terminate membership of Territory employees in the Commonwealth scheme'. That is Senator Walsh's attitude to the situation.

We heard in an earlier debate that, for the Northern Territory to fund such a superannuation scheme, it would cost many millions of dollars - dollars that we do not have. We do not have that funding capacity. I suppose one could say there are 2 options. One is that we would have to impose taxes or raise the money in some other way in order to fund such a scheme. Certainly, we would not want to do that. The second option is not to have any scheme at all. Of course, both of those are totally unacceptable. However, I see that the future of Northern Territory public servants is certainly threatened and we must do everything in our power to make sure that they are protected.

I would like to quote Senator Walsh's reply to a question from Senator Kilgariff on 22 April: 'Nevertheless, it is true and what it does draw attention to is that the fiscal irresponsibility of the Fraser government as it applied to the NT has produced the most bloated and feather-bedded public service in the country'. I would suggest that there would be many public servants who would totally disagree with Senator Walsh's comments. I certainly do not agree with those comments.

It is quite obvious from what has been happening in recent times that this Commonwealth Labor government is in deep financial trouble. I suggest that it is the Whitlam era all over again. That government went down the gurgler and the Hawke Labor government is well on the way. It is grasping at any means to cut costs, any means at all. I was listening to the ABC this morning and would like to quote what the Prime Minister said. He made a number of comments. In fact, I am looking forward to watching the Gillies Report later in the week because I am quite sure Mr Gillies will have a field day with him. Mr Hawke said this morning: 'We have come to be living beyond our means'. That is under his Prime

Ministership. He also foreshadowed cuts of \$1000m in government spending. The Leader of the Opposition made this point earlier. We are looking down the gun barrel of \$1000m in cuts. He went on to say that, during the last 2 years, we have had the lowest level of industrial disputation for 17 years. Might I remind you, Mr Speaker, that for a long time before the last 2 years, Mr Hawke was the president of the ACTU and in fact was responsible for the actions of the unions during those days about which he claimed that we had a very high rate of industrial disputation.

Mr Speaker, we have noted that we have just lost the airport in Darwin. Mind you, the government has already spent \$20m which is sitting out there gathering dust and which will eventually blow away because there is talk of shifting it to the other side. During the debate the other afternoon, I drew attention to the fact that, in spite of the cutback on the airport, the Australian flag was still proudly fluttering over that site and I was very pleased the next morning when I drove down McMillan's Road to see that somebody had decided that that flagpole should be removed. In fact, it had been cut off with an oxy torch and was lying on the ground. I think that is fair enough.

The Minister for Education commented last week that he had been in touch with Senator Ryan and he had asked her to confirm that the Tindal air base development would go ahead. He wanted that information so that he could confirm the development of infrastructure in the Katherine area to support the airport. He indicated that he had not received a reply from Senator Ryan and, to the best of my knowledge, he has still not received that reply. I would suggest that it is most likely that the Tindal air base development is the next one on the list for the chop.

Back in the days of the Fraser government, we heard cries from the Labor Party about the razor gang. Even though I was not a member of the Assembly in those days, I am sure the opposition here cried about the activities of the razor gang of the Fraser government. The razor gang substantially cut fundings at the time. I would suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that this government does not have a razor; this government has a guillotine. I believe that we are on the losing end. I think that our Memorandum of Understanding, as we have understood it all these years, will end up in the basket. Mr Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I will try to keep my remarks brief. I must rise to comment on Senator Walsh's actions in the last few days relating to superannuation arrangements for Territory public servants. We are talking about 12 000 public servants and obviously that relates to 20 000-odd Territorians. Possibly a number have been in the Territory for a large number of years and have made the Territory their home. They contribute to the Territory's prosperity and growth and they have faith in its future. However, their whole understanding of being a public servant in a self-governing territory relates back to the days when self-government was conferred upon the Territory and to a Memorandum of Understanding which undertook special provisions in relation to the rights of public servants and their security.

Mr Speaker, we have heard a number of people run through the details of sections 80, 81 and 82 of that Memorandum of Understanding but it remains a fact that it was an agreement on which the Territory community based its decision at an election that brought about self-government. Everything that has occurred in the Territory since then has been in line with the funding arrangements of that Memorandum of Understanding. I think that all Territorians must find it intolerable that Senator Walsh has declared that this Memorandum

of Understanding is not worth the paper it is written on and that it is a commitment that he feels that his government should take no notice of. Mr Speaker, I find that very interesting. Obviously, the senator holds the view that this was not an understanding between a federal government and a Territory government but an understanding between a political party and a Territory government. I cannot see in any other way his action to deprive Territory public servants of superannuation after an agreement had been reached and people had made decisions which affected their lives that related to that agreement.

I think it is worth while mentioning that a joint task group examined the matter of superannuation and ways and means by which changes could be made to fund it and the Territory government could take over some responsibility. It is interesting that that group reported back to the then Minister for Finance, Senator Dawkins. Briefly, that report stated that the federal government should continue to accept responsibility for funding that superannuation scheme. The then Minister for Finance agreed with that concept. He made a statement which was recorded and has been spoken about on numerous occasions today. He stated that he was in agreement with what the task group said and that, under the arrangements, the Commonwealth would provide the Territory with sufficient financial assistance to enable it, in turn, to reimburse the Commonwealth for the costs of the benefits to all Northern Territory employees.

Mr Speaker, Mr Dawkins is recorded in the Commonwealth Record of 22 to 28 October, under the heading 'Superannuation for Northern Territory Employees', as having said:

Our objective has been to ensure that the arrangements meet the interests of all concerned, not least Territory employees who will remain secure in their entitlements under the Commonwealth scheme.

The then minister wrote to the Territory government to seek agreement on the findings of that task group and the Territory government agreed, as was indicated in a copy of a letter that was tabled on 21 November. I find it intolerable that a written intergovernmental agreement in relation to something that has been studied for a number of years has been overturned by Senator Walsh. Obviously, either he seeks no advice from the experts that he employs in his departments or he takes no notice of any advice that is submitted to him in relation to the Northern Territory. As I said earlier, we are talking about an effect on about 20 000 Northern Territorians who have built their lives in the Territory on the basis of a memorandum that this man, in this other place, has decided to throw out the window.

I think that it is probably pertinent to continue with a few remarks in relation to a reply that the senator gave to a question in the Senate last night. When answering the question, he stated that the Northern Territory Public Service had exploded to the point where it now embraces one-third of all persons employed in the Northern Territory. Certainly, that sounds horrendous, Mr Speaker. I had a brief search through some statistics to see just how close to the mark the senator was.

It was interesting that, in August 1978, just after self-government, there were 5257 public servants employed by the Territory government and, at that time, there were still 2600-odd Department of Health staff employed by the Commonwealth. Teachers and a number of other smaller groups made a total of almost 4000 public servants still employed by the Commonwealth. In other words, there were 9000-odd public servants and, out of the total work force of 46 000, approximately one-fifth were either Commonwealth public servants or Territory public servants. In 1985, we have the good senator talking about 12 000 public

servant superannuants. We have 59 700 people employed in the Territory. In other words, one-fifth of the work force is public servants. That is some explosion, Mr Speaker. Obviously, this man likes to select figures for his own twisted gratification and throw them around the Senate to try to impress some of his colleagues, and we are the people who are suffering. It makes me extremely angry to realise that we have to rely on the whim of a man like Senator Walsh. I shudder to think what else is coming down the tube in relation to the Northern Territory.

He seems to have a definite impression that we are all living in clover here. I wonder where this impression came from? I have scratched my head and asked myself why would a person in that place have the attitude that the good senator appears to exhibit in relation to the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, it is shameful for me to have to say it, but I am afraid that the honourable members opposite have contributed, in my opinion, to the honourable senator's view of the Northern Territory and its funding. The Minister for Mines and Energy ran through a few statements that were made in relation to our funding, and I think that it might be worth running through an example of the sort of attitude that is exhibited by honourable members on the other side of the Assembly.

On 30 August last year, the Chief Minister was speaking in the budget debate and he said: 'There is no doubt where the sentiments of the federal member and the federal senator belong because they have been indicating for some time that the Northern Territory is overfunded, that it is treated too kindly by the Commonwealth and that the Territory should prepare for less because it will receive less'. Mr Speaker, at that stage, there were no interjections. There were no calls from the members opposite who were sitting there calmly. When the Chief Minister went on to point out that the Northern Territory receives 85% of its funding from the Commonwealth, we had an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. He called out '86.9%'. He had the figures. Obviously, he had been running around telling everyone, right down to the last percentage point. There were no comments at all when it was claimed that the federal Labor members had been saying that we were overfunded. When the Chief Minister dared to understate the amount of Commonwealth funding we were to receive by 1.9%, we had a response. This is the sort of thing that has been going on for a number of years. It was started by the members opposite in order to create a climate that might win them an election. It went so far that it lost them the election, but it has also affected us in that they have created a belief in the federal government's benches that we are overfunded.

It is the most ridiculous thing I have heard of, Mr Speaker, because you have only to travel around the Territory to see what still needs to be done in relation to roads and schooling and, for some of the outlying communities, we have insufficient funds to maintain existing facilities, let alone keep up with the growth that is occurring in the Territory. These people have been talking about our being overfunded, and the net result is what we are seeing today. The airport has been thrown away. What about some comments from our Labor senator, Mr Robertson? I will not dwell on it for long, but I heard the honourable senator on Territory Extra this morning and he was 'disturbed by the suddenness of what had happened'. He said that the federal government needed to save money and restore a balance, but that it should have done it more gradually. I just cannot understand the man, Mr Speaker. He has been telling them for 2 years not to give us any money because he thinks we have too much. He made a few more comments. He said that it was unfortunate that public servants were led to expect that they would be looked after by the federal government. Certainly, it was unfortunate in the light of what happened.

Public servants made the mistake, as we all did, of trusting correspondence and undertakings from the federal government. It just did not work out, did it, Mr Speaker? One of the most telling things that the good senator came up with was, 'I never make dual statements'. It makes me wonder what will happen to us in the future.

Public servants in the Territory most certainly work harder. Our departments have been organised in such a way that we have areas such as the Department of Community Development which encompasses what would probably be taken in by 6 or 7 departments in the states. My Department of Transport and Works covers areas that, in the states, would relate to 5 or 6 departments. Obviously, savings that evolve in relation to the administration of those departments because of those arrangements are productive for the Northern Territory and we will continue to operate in that way.

I reiterate, Mr Speaker, the Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, has certainly done the Northern Territory a tremendous amount of harm.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, painful though it is for me to continue this debate, which seems to have become extremely repetitive, I am afraid I just cannot let the comments of the Minister for Transport and Works go unchallenged. Mr Speaker, I have no difficulty in standing in this Assembly or in any place in public - this Assembly seems to be becoming extremely private - and condemning the federal Minister for Finance for his attitude towards superannuation arrangements for public servants in the Northern Territory. I have no difficulty in doing that at all. However, I find it a little bit annoying, to say the least, when the Minister for Transport and Works uses this Assembly in the crass pursuit of his political future, wherever that might lie. We had a similar exhibition of this from the former Treasurer, the now Attorney-General, who insists on labelling the criticism of any member who dares to point out incompetence, as being almost tantamount to treason. I reject that attitude and I will continue in this Assembly to criticise it wherever I perceive it.

Mr Speaker, the member for Jingili raised a few matters. Most pertinent amongst them was the present federal deficit. Indeed, this federal government is in financial strife and I do not think that anybody in this country would care to deny that. I suppose that the causes of that are multiple and as many reasons can be proposed as there are political persuasions in this country. I would not care to canvass those reasons but I am sure that it has been done well and truly by persons in other places. However, it is a fact of economic life in this country that we are in some financial difficulty. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I can come to grips with that as long as the Northern Territory is not being singled out for special treatment. However, in trying to come to grips with financial difficulties, I think it behoves all of us, as Territorians and Australians, to recognise those difficulties. The types of behaviour that have been exhibited by members in this Assembly during this year certainly do not contribute to any rational debate on the matter.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the parliamentary salary increases. He mentioned also the casino saga and the teeth pulling. The scratching after information on that certainly does not do the Territory any service at all. Mr Speaker, I would ask all members, government members and my opposition colleagues, to recognise the consequences not only of their words in this Assembly and words in other places but indeed of their deeds in this Assembly and in other places.

Another matter which particularly affects me as a member for a very remote electorate is the manner in which funds are disbursed and indeed the

justification that we use when we go to the Grants Commission. I come from an extremely remote electorate and, quite frankly, that electorate wonders what people in Darwin do. My electorate perceives that Darwin seems to do very little for its income. There is very little produced by way of export income. Indeed, my constituents perceive this entire community as being little more than a wonderland. Compared to Darwin, Nhulunbuy does earn export dollars and it does provide tax dollars. However, we receive very little financial recognition for that.

I have outlying communities in my electorate which have very primitive services. Indeed, if the Territory continues to use the isolation of very few people over an extremely large land mass as a reason - a quite justifiable reason - in pursuing its case with the Grants Commission, then those communities in those areas do need servicing. As the member for MacDonnell said, I become a little incredulous when we argue continuously about the importance of recognising the anomaly not only in Australia but perhaps internationally of our very small population on an extremely large land mass while the very persons who are the worst affected victims of that anomaly, receive by far the least number of services. I would suggest to the Northern Territory government that its credibility and its standing within those very remote communities would be much enhanced if it recognised its own arguments when it puts them to other places, and particularly recognised them in relation to the very communities that most need those services.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak in relation to one aspect only of this matter before the Assembly, and that is on behalf of those who are most directly affected by this action of the federal government: that group of people who are approaching retirement. Those people have already made their contributions not only to the Northern Territory but to this country, through their blood, sweat, tears and initiative, all of which has led to the development of this Territory as we see it now.

In approaching their retirement, those people quite correctly have made appropriate plans towards that period in their life when they are entitled to a reasonable style of living. They have made their necessary arrangements. What has the federal ALP government given them over the last 2 or 3 years? Firstly, Bob Hawke decided that they were gaining too much out of the superannuation schemes that they had been prudently contributing to for years and decided that it would be appropriate to tax them some 30% of those savings. Mr Speaker, that in itself was an outrageous action but it was followed immediately by the outrageous incomes assets test that further stripped people of their proper entitlements in their years of retirement.

What do we do now? I guess I could be excused for being rather cryptic in suggesting that the Minister for Finance, with his somewhat twisted mind, has decided that he will solve the problem of people being concerned about 30% taxation and having too many assets by terminating this superannuation scheme as a shortcut method of silencing public criticism. I hate being cynical but much has been said in relation to this matter. I speak quite genuinely. I am deeply concerned on behalf of those senior citizens of the Northern Territory who are heading towards retirement. I can assure them that I shall not rest on their behalf until we convince this federal government that its commitment to return to their rightful owners a proper return of the taxpayers' dollars through superannuation schemes is fulfilled.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of the statement. I think it is truly significant and even historic that members opposite have found it necessary to condemn the senator

for his actions and the decisions that he has taken because he truly deserves to be condemned.

In concluding my remarks this afternoon on the way the federal senator has proposed to exclude Territorians from the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme despite their legal entitlements, I would like to put into perspective a couple of the unfortunate remarks that have been made by members opposite about the Northern Territory and its funding. I think it is important for us to reflect on what self-government is all about. Self-government came to the Northern Territory not because somebody found it at the bottom of the garden with the fairies under a bush. It was hard fought for and it was well deserved because Territorians had been suffering from 70 years of Commonwealth incompetence and mismanagement that had driven people on both sides of the political spectrum to absolute despair. In the end, both sides of politics in the Northern Territory were only too delighted to cast off the Commonwealth yoke. In terms of looking at the Northern Territory and reflecting upon what a terrible government the Northern Territory government is, how wasteful it is, how it receives too much money and how it should not get this and it should not get that, let us never forget that we are here today because of the actions, incompetence and waste of those muddle-headed wombats who run the country in Canberra. They happen to be on both sides of the House.

Mr Speaker, I reject outright that the Northern Territory is wasteful and that it receives too much. It makes me sick inside to hear people on the other side say it and I guess I do not expect much more from Senator Robertson. It was certainly all I ever expected from the former federal member, Mr Reeves, who walked up and down the political corridors in the federal capital talking about excesses in the Northern Territory and how our funding should be cut back. I would like to put on record my view and the view of many people, particularly long-term Territorians as distinct from the fly-by-nighters, that the Northern Territory does not want to be a mendicant. We do not derive any satisfaction out of having to ask the Commonwealth for anything. We are here because we like to be here, we want to be productive, we want to be creative and we want to make this the greatest state in the Commonwealth. We do not derive any satisfaction in lining up in Canberra to obtain our dollars. The reason that we went to self-government is that, previously, it was pretty hard to get any funding at all. The important thing is that we want to be self-sufficient.

Mr Speaker, I was thinking about all the criticism that was coming across the Chamber a moment ago and I thought to myself: 'Think of one thing that the Labor Party has done for the Northern Territory to make it productive and strong and better and a nicer place to live. Just one thing'. So help me, with all that has occurred in the last 10 years, I cannot think of one thing that the Labor Party has done for the Northern Territory that has made the Territory a better place in which to live. I can tell you a 100 things the ALP has done to make sure the Territory is brought down to its knees as soon as possible. All honourable members opposite gave a litany of all the terrible things we have done.

Let me run through a couple of things that the Commonwealth government has done to us in the very short time it has been there to ensure that we never go anywhere, never get anything and never succeed. We have the world's greatest uranium province which has been tied up and set aside. We are not able to put that to good use to create jobs and wealth and gain tax. It lets people in South Australia have a canter but not the Northern Territory. Our railway has been regarded as some sort of dream that should never have been raised. Certainly, it will not be funded by the ALP. We do not see the railway simply as an entitlement. The railway was part of a development plan, a land bridge

scheme into Asia, to give all Australians the opportunity of prosperity and development. Without it, that is not likely to occur. The development of the states a hundred years ago was very closely related to railway networks in the respective states.

Let us look at the airport: 3 years of inquiry, political decisions, election promises, public works committees, \$20m-worth of expenditure and another \$12.5m that we will lose. For what, Mr Speaker? It talks about financial mismanagement; it is so far in front of us we cannot even see it. We have always bid for national parks because we believe they are a great resource to be developed and promoted. The 2 best parks in the Territory are locked up like a can of sardines. It is almost like a break and entry to get anything done in them. We would like to undertake some development in Kakadu: 'You can have 25 units. We do not want too many people in the park because they mess things up'. This sort of attitude is making it very difficult for the Northern Territory to be self-sufficient, strong and productive.

The Commonwealth Land Rights Act is history and folklore all over this country. The fact is that very little development has resulted from it and the damage that it has done can be easily demonstrated. Look at the damage that has been done to the prawn fishery over the last 5 years under Commonwealth maladministration. It is so hopeless that it is almost beyond belief. You would think it has deliberately set out to destroy the fishery. It has destroyed the fishermen. Most of them are broke and it is only a matter of time before the fishery is finished.

We had the hottest offshore exploration patch in the world 12 months ago when the Jabiru finds occurred. We could have had just about any oil company explore. What have we got? Nothing! They are all sitting down there contemplating their navels, working out whether they will have cash bidding or whether they will have RRT, who will get it and who will administer it. By the time they are organised, the oil companies will be in the next hottest exploration spot in the world.

Mr Speaker, I find it very difficult to cop this business about how terrible we are when I have to put up with the nonsense that is heard every day from the ALP here and in Canberra. It has nothing to crow about. Its incompetence is so well known that it is famous for it. I commented the other day that I thought the devaluation of the dollar would also bring about the downfall of the Prime Minister because of the consequences that would flow from it. There is one other thing that will beat the dollar and that is the Minister for Finance. He is not a political operator; he is off balance. He cannot be well to be doing the things that he is doing. He is on the most vindictive, political charge that anybody has ever seen in this country. We all know that society has to be maintained everywhere and governments in every state and the Commonwealth government have a duty to maintain society and see that it receives the resources it needs. Mr Speaker, we are at the point where a madman with an axe is cantering through the financial countryside determined to see not only that we are not maintained but that we are destroyed. The Leader of the Opposition said it. He will not just bring difficulty and hardship to the Northern Territory; he will wreck his own party and probably the country before he is finished.

Mr Speaker, the senator is not being a reasonable person. He is not demonstrating a reasonable, political behaviour and his single-minded determination to ruin the Northern Territory is not normal either. I think it is time that the Prime Minister and or his colleagues in Cabinet brought him to heel before very serious harm is done to us and to the rest of Australia.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Preferred National Land Rights Model

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, honourable members are aware that, on 20 February 1985, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Clyde Holding, released the Commonwealth's preferred national land rights model. In so doing, the federal minister described the model as containing outlined proposals that are not a final outline of Commonwealth legislation but a preferred basis for consultations. He said that his December 1983 commitment to federal parliament to develop a set of proposals which would represent the government's position on land rights for public scrutiny had been honoured.

My purpose in making this statement is to outline for the benefit of honourable members the Territory government's preferred basis for consultation. In the year since the commencement of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory government has made repeated representations to successive federal Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs and Prime Ministers of both political persuasions. We have sought to have the Land Rights Act amended to overcome problems experienced by the Northern Territory that have been imposed on us by the federal act. Alas, until now, our requests seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

Honourable members will recall the negative response of the Commonwealth government to the 10-point package proposed by my predecessor. That was a genuine attempt to achieve an equitable system of land rights for the Northern Territory and to redress the mistakes made in the federal act which became obvious as the full effects of its implementation were felt. Mr Justice Toohey, a former Aboriginal Land Commissioner, reported to the Commonwealth early in 1984 on his review of the operations of the Land Rights Act. Some of his recommendations were positive suggestions from the Territory's viewpoint. Some fundamental problems remained unresolved in his report. A year further on, the national land rights model is produced and, even in that model, some recommendations by Mr Justice Toohey are not addressed.

Some of the problems we have represented to the Commonwealth, but by no means an exhaustive list are that: the Northern Territory should have the same freedom as the states to legislate for Aboriginal land rights and that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act should be repealed in favour of legislation to be passed by this Assembly; the exposure of public purpose lands to Aboriginal land claims; the absence of a time limit on the land claim process; the ability of Aboriginals to veto mining activities on Aboriginal land and the obviously detrimental effect that veto power has had on Territory development; the inability of the Territory to acquire Aboriginal land or easements for any purpose, even for the provision of services to Aboriginal communities and, therefore, the inability of the Territory to protect government-financed assets on Aboriginal land; and the application of Territory laws to Aboriginal land.

Mr Speaker, I have had the opportunity to discuss a range of Aboriginal affairs issues with Mr Holding both shortly before and after his release of the national land rights model. I must say, in fairness, that those discussions constituted a useful and frank exchange in which the federal minister acknowledged a number of the Territory's concerns as matters for negotiation and resolution. Of course, we had to agree to disagree on some issues. I have advised the federal minister that the Territory government welcomes the release

of the national land rights model for negotiation and that we are ready to enter negotiations in a constructive manner. It was in just such a constructive manner that I agreed not to proceed with a number of legislative proposals on Aboriginal affairs as indicated in His Honour the Administrator's speech at the opening of this session of the Assembly.

However, while the Territory government is prepared to enter the negotiations in an open manner, we are alert to the need to insist on clarity and precision in the negotiated provisions of the model and an absence of ambiguity and inconsistency. In that regard, there are a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities in the model. For example, Aboriginal community living areas on pastoral properties and the needs of town campers are put forward as subjects for Aboriginal land claim rather than under existing and adequate legislation. The mining royalty arrangements proposed are far from clear and lack the necessary precision. The situation regarding national parks and the preservation of prior interests of the public in those parks need clarification. Questions of prior interests generally in land the subject of a claim or grant, for things such as recreation, mining, the use of water courses and access to public roads, have also to be determined. Inconsistencies and ambiguities such as those must be ironed out to avoid unnecessary reference to the courts for interpretation or on constitutional grounds.

That brings me, Mr Speaker, to the first of the matters I raise as a part of the Northern Territory's preferred basis for consultation or negotiation. It is highly likely that Commonwealth legislation of a national character in the area of Aboriginal land rights, and particularly any Commonwealth attempt to impose such legislation on a state, would give rise to issues in the High Court to test its constitutional validity. The model envisages the imposition of the Commonwealth provisions on a state only where state law is non-existent, inconsistent or incompatible. The Northern Territory is not accorded that privileged position. In relation to the Northern Territory, the federal minister said, in releasing the model, and I quote from his press release of 20 February 1985: 'As a consequence of this exercise, I will be reviewing the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act to ensure that it is consistent with the national approach as finally endorsed'. Again, in a speech on 16 March to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, he said: 'Many of you, I know, are concerned about the government's intentions regarding the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. The government does intend amending that act to ensure that it is consistent with the national approach'. The federal minister also indicated that intention in his discussions with me.

Honourable members on both sides of this Assembly should agree that that is not an equitable, rational or progressive approach by the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth accepts that, fundamentally, the legislative prerogative for land rights rests with the states, then the firm position of the Northern Territory government is to insist on the same prerogative. The Northern Territory government will insist on repeal of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and will insist on the right to legislate on Aboriginal land rights with the same freedom as the states. On that basis, I give an undertaking of this government that land rights legislation of this Assembly will be consistent with the Commonwealth preferred model to the extent that various state legislative enactments are similarly consistent. When considering the model, it needs to be remembered that the Northern Territory already has the constitutional capacity to legislate in some areas such as pastoral lease excisions for community living areas, urban land, needs-based claims and sacred sites protection, and has so legislated or been prepared to legislate. A fundamental position of the Northern Territory government will be that there must be no further intrusion by the Commonwealth into Northern Territory responsibilities.

The next matter I raise as part of the Northern Territory's preferred basis for negotiation relates to the apparent extension in the model of the categories of land which may be open to Aboriginal land claim and extension of the basis for claim. Under the present Aboriginal Land Rights Act, claims may be made to unalienated Crown land, which means Crown land in which no person other than the Crown has an estate or interest but it does not include land in a town. Such claims may be made by traditional Aboriginal owners, which means a local descent group of Aboriginals who have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and for the land, and are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as of right over that land.

Mr Speaker, the model includes in a description of land available for claim all other Crown land which is unused and unallocated for other purposes, and Commonwealth national parks where applicants can establish that they have a traditional entitlement or historical association with the land and are willing to accept a grant of land conditional upon its continued use as a national park. According to the model, the basis on which claims can be made are traditional entitlement, as at present, historical association, long-term occupation or use, and specific purposes such as the needs of town campers. These 2 parts of the model alone raise a host of issues for resolution.

Honourable members are aware of the significant difficulties occasioned to parties to an Aboriginal land claim and the time and expense involved. To widen the scope of claims when it is patently unnecessary is only to exacerbate that situation. Further, honourable members are aware of the conflict the land claim process has caused in the wider community. That would also be exacerbated by an extension of the basis for claim. Honourable members will recall the furore that was created by the Commonwealth's unilateral decision to vest title to Ayers Rock, Uluru National Park, in the traditional owners. The model takes things 1 step further. Commonwealth national parks would not only be available at the whim of the Commonwealth government but would be available, albeit conditionally, to claim as of right even though the land would not otherwise be unalienated Crown land. The claim basis of 'historical association' is introduced - whatever that may mean. I am sure it is not just an exercise in semantics on the part of the Commonwealth, and the Territory government means to find out what is intended.

Mr Speaker, regarding the claim basis of 'long-term occupation or use' and 'specific purposes such as the needs of town campers', the Territory government has recognised and responded positively to needs-based requirements for land. The track record of the Northern Territory government has been exemplary in providing urban land for town camps and negotiating pastoral property excisions for Aboriginal community living areas. The strong argument of the Territory will be to reject specifically the proposition that needs-based requirements for land, such as pastoral property excisions and town camping areas, can form the basis of an Aboriginal land claim per se, because we have met needs-based requirements for land under existing Northern Territory legislation. Such needs must be considered in the context of availability of urban land for all purposes and of continuing viability of pastoral properties from which excisions are proposed. Thirdly, the needs-based requirements are not a proper subject for Aboriginal land claims per se.

Returning to the question of national parks for a moment, I advise the Assembly of a firm commitment I made in discussions with Mr Holding on the recent deal arranged for Uluru. I intend to rid the Northern Territory of the presence of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in favour of management of all national parks, both Territory and Commonwealth, by the

Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. One of the ambiguities that emerges from the 2 parts of the model that I have just been addressing is that they appear to allow for repeat land claims when a previous claim has been disallowed. That proposition is simply not on. Mr Speaker, in summary, the Territory will argue for maintenance of the status quo, where only unalienated Crown land is available to Aboriginal land claims and only available to claim by Aboriginal traditional owners as presently defined in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

One positive aspect of the model, from the Territory's viewpoint, is that applications for land claims will cease 10 years after commencement of the proposed legislation. While that provides a foreseeable end to the land claim process, the Territory will argue that we have already had an exposure of 8 years and that some lesser period than 10 years of further exposure must be negotiated. Indeed, Mr Holding has acknowledged that proposition in our discussions. It seems adequate and reasonable to suggest that, for the Territory, a further 2 years for claims to be lodged would be appropriate.

In describing land which will not be available for claim, the model includes: 'Land set aside for public purposes, including stock routes and stock reserves'. There is a very real danger of 'stock routes and stock reserves' becoming a stock phrase, if it has not already done so, and an exclusive one as a definition of 'public purpose lands'. The Territory will argue for a definition of wide scope to include, for example, water reserves, and will argue that the application of 'public' to watercourses be extended to include underground waters so that subterranean reserves can be resourced without the complications of royalty payments. In this context, we will seek also to have the beds and banks of rivers and coastline claims' question rationalised. Our argument will be that these are public land in every sense and should be available as such.

Mr Speaker, the word 'royalty' turns me to one of the most complex aspects of the model, that dealing with mining, compensation and the question of mining royalty equivalents. Let me touch on 2 matters as examples of the position the Territory will take. Firstly, honourable members are aware that the model proposes abolition of the Aboriginal right to veto mining activity in favour of mining on Aboriginal land under a negotiated agreement. It proposes a tribunal mechanism which will hear parties to negotiation and recommend to government the terms and conditions upon which mining activities should proceed. The government then makes the decision as to whether the mining activity will proceed and on what terms and conditions. The model stipulates: 'Mechanisms to resolve disputes over access to Aboriginal land are not to constitute a de facto veto'. The Territory will support that stipulation wholeheartedly and press for watertight timetable provisions for the negotiation and dispute resolution processes so that some real direction and security can be accorded to Territory development in relation to mining activity.

Mr Speaker, there are a number of things to be ironed out in the mineral exploration and development area of the model, but I am confident that the de facto veto question can be negotiated successfully. In that regard, I commend honourable members to a reading of the federal minister's address to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace that I mentioned earlier. At page 8 of the address transcript, he said: 'The Commonwealth government has developed its model in recognition of Crown ownership of minerals and that decisions in respect to access and exploitation of those minerals must rest with the elected government'. On page 9, he said: 'The government has also taken the position that no one group within the community should have the right to veto over the development of national resources'. Again, on page 8, he said: 'Control for Aboriginals does not necessarily require a power of veto'.

Secondly, the model makes repeated reference, in this part, to 'the government'. For example, section 9.5 of the model provides for Aborigines to have access to payments in the nature of mining royalties; that is, a payment made by government which represents a proportion of the ordinary royalties received by government in respect of mining on Aboriginal land: 'The relevant government' - and I emphasise the words 'relevant government' - 'to determine the proportions to be so paid and the distribution of such payments to the Aboriginal people, including those affected by mining operations'. Mr Speaker, given the Commonwealth's stated intention of continuing the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act in a form 'consistent with the national approach as finally endorsed', one wonders which government the Commonwealth intends as the 'relevant government' in respect of the Northern Territory. The Territory's firm position will be that the 'relevant government' and 'the government' here and in all the provisions of the model will be the government of the Northern Territory.

One last matter to be addressed, to which I referred in my opening remarks, is the question of the ability or inability of the Territory government to acquire Aboriginal land or easements over Aboriginal land for any of various necessary and compelling reasons, including for the provision of the essential service facilities. The national land rights model does not address that question in any way. In fairness, I must say that Mr Holding has acknowledged the Territory's problems in this regard. I should also observe that, since this is a national land rights model and the states presumably do not have the problems we have in relation to acquisition, then the Commonwealth may consider it was not an appropriate matter to be addressed in the model. Be that as it may, it is the Territory's firm position that the acquisition question will be negotiated contemporaneously with the national land rights model and as a condition of our willingness to negotiate at all.

Let me say this too, Mr Speaker, and in the strongest terms: the Territory's objective will be to achieve a position where we can respond to needs in Aboriginal communities and get on with our job of providing essential services in communities without having a gun held at our head by such as the Bureau of the Northern Land Council. You are aware, Mr Speaker, that, in your own electorate, the government has taken the firm decision that it will not enter into a licence agreement with the NLC in order to be allowed the privilege of improving the water supply at Beswick community, and that will remain our position until the acquisition question is successfully negotiated or the NLC adopts an attitude different from its present intransigent one.

Mr Speaker, I have not addressed all of the problems we have with the national land rights model or referred to all of the matters which need to be ironed out or clarified. I have sought to indicate to the Assembly some of the important issues for negotiation and positions the Territory will adopt as its preferred basis for consultation and negotiation. The Northern Territory welcomes the release of the model as a genuine attempt to achieve an equitable system of land rights for Aboriginal Australians and to achieve a degree of national uniformity but the Northern Territory has long been a testing ground for Commonwealth experiments in Aboriginal affairs policy and it has provided the model for land rights legislation in Australia. It is time for the Northern Territory to be accorded, as we will demand, equal recognition with the states both as to the content of land rights legislation and as to the right of the Territory to legislate itself on a matter so vitally affecting its Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens.

Mr Speaker, it is our intention to submit a detailed response to the Commonwealth spelling out our position on proposals contained in the national

land rights model and on associated matters not contained therein. At an appropriate time, I intend to table a Territory position paper in the Assembly and have it distributed widely for comment. I hope that honourable members on both sides of the Assembly and the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and his colleagues will accept this statement in good faith as a statement of intention and a preferred basis for consultation that is complementary to that proposed by the Commonwealth.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement. I include the 2 sets of documents relating to the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there was a brief period of some 4 or 5 months when I thought this new government, under a new Chief Minister, would adopt a new style. I thought the new Chief Minister, coming from a semi-rural seat with virtually a lifetime in the Territory, would work on establishing a framework for long-term racial harmony. I thought he would be big enough to resist the temptation to kick the underdog. Mr Speaker, it may seem strange but I remember fondly the first 12 to 18 months of his predecessor's post self-government period. I remember him visiting with the Cabinet to meet with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress while I was its director. He visited a couple of times and we talked about mutual problems. He was surprisingly sympathetic. He convinced the executive of that body, which at that time was considered to be something of a radical movement, that he was genuinely interested. At the time, he had some legislative runs on the board: the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority and complementary land rights legislation etc. Certainly, they assisted his case. That was about 5 years ago.

Avid readers of the press may remember that there was considerable rumour circulating at that time regarding a left-right split in the CLP. That may seem hard to countenance now, given the absolute pre-eminence the now honourable member for the Northern Territory was able to establish over the CLP both inside and outside of parliament in later years. However, there were rumours of a build-up to a palace coup. Apparently, he recanted on his rumoured leftish leanings because he stayed on.

I remember the short-term effect was that he was not to meet Aboriginal groups on his own for a while. At that stage, the now Minister for Mines and Energy was sent with him to ensure that he did not get carried away and make any concessions. He was the Chief Minister's minder in those days. It should not have amazed me, Mr Speaker. I suppose I was not amazed but rather saddened and disappointed. The event marked a tragic change. The former Chief Minister, who had the brains to know right from wrong, changed his approach overnight. There were no more informal meetings to work out problems. The whole emphasis changed to one of forcing confrontation. His idea was to keep going until there was an overreaction but to keep claiming that he wanted balance and that, with goodwill, everything would work out. He made sure that all his calls for packages or whatever included at least one non-negotiable point that was completely unacceptable to Aboriginals. It was a very successful tactic. He made sure that he kept isolating a minority of the population by placing it in a position where xenophobia took over from rational debate. That is what the previous Chief Minister did for the last 4 years that he held that office. I am afraid that, in the long term, history may forget the very real contributions he made to the development of the Territory and remember that he used racial division for political ends.

As I said, I had hopes for the new Chief Minister. I had always thought that, beneath that new-age exterior, a thinking man waited to get out. I know,

for example, that he was keen to obtain a resolution on the living area provisions for the people in the Kings Canyon area. Not all of them have been permanently and lawfully resident there for the last 10 years that would be required if they wanted to apply for a piece of land on the property now. Some people will say that the Chief Minister wanted something that these people had to give and that was why he granted the excisions. I prefer to think that the Chief Minister was moved in some way by the justice of their request and responded to it.

I know that there have been a number of other discussions held with various Aboriginal groups, certainly in central Australia, which have made people start to feel that there was, as the song says somewhat cynically, a brand new day. People were talking about getting positive approaches from ministers. I will not name the ministers concerned because, the way things have turned out over the last couple of sitting days, it may cost them their jobs. There is also the possibility that the odd one will quietly continue to work for a fair go for all. I certainly do not want to put anything in the way of that.

What of the Chief Minister himself? What of the man who withdrew all that controversial legislation before the Assembly last sittings? This legislation had been labelled in the most extreme terms and protested against inside this very Assembly. What of the great man who, in the interests of harmony and the future of the Territory, withdrew that legislation? Where is he now? I will tell you where he is, Mr Speaker. That part of the Chief Minister's character, the shining knight aspect, if you like, has been transformed into a mouse in the face of a possible challenge to his own position. We all saw what happened at the last sittings. We saw the Chief Minister lose every round. We saw how weak his arguments were and how he was exposed at every turn. We saw the quite extraordinary lengths that he went to in this very Assembly to try to get his fellow ministers to join him in defending the indefensible. We saw his political masters shaking their heads in the public gallery as he made one gaffe after another. We all read the very accurate press summation of the whole sorry episode.

However, there is more. I have the good fortune, in the course of my travels through my electorate, of passing frequently through the fair town of Tennant Creek. Every time I do that, it becomes more and more obvious that the good electors of that town, which is his stronghold in Barkly, are fed up with having an absentee landlord so to speak. On the last point, I can honestly say that I sympathise with the Chief Minister. As the member for the largest electorate in this Assembly, I know how difficult large electorates are to service face to face when one has even a shadow ministerial workload. However, while I can sympathise with the Chief Minister, I raise it simply to point out how, new-age thinking or not, the pressure has built up on him to change his moral stance.

Mr Speaker, lastly, I would remind members of the fact that an important group in this Territory, the pastoralists, a group with which I have more than a little contact, was moving to disassociate itself publicly from his leadership. There you have it. The stage is set. We have a Chief Minister who, like the last one, knows that only by building up a climate of trust and understanding will the bridges be built. The Chief Minister has probably dreamed, as many of us have, of a special type of Territory society which we will be proud to hand on to our children. The Chief Minister did not decide to tough it out, to take on his critics and show them that they are wrong. He followed the lead of his predecessor and retreated behind the ultimate truth of his side of politics: if you bash the underdog long enough and hard enough, if you get him to bite back, you will scare the electors into thinking they are

threatened; play up the force of division, get them fighting each other and then back the majority because, after all, might is right; and never solve the problem because, if the problem is solved and they all get together, they will realise that it was all a sham and that Territorians have far more binding them together than pulling them apart.

Mr Speaker, it would only take a few short years of a government of reconciliation to make both sides realise that pulling together is the only way to go. The Chief Minister had the opportunity. He could have grasped it but he took the short-term solution to his political problem: he decided to spend a few days black bashing. His difficulty was that he had to stop being compared unfavourably with his predecessor so he had to be even more outrageous than his predecessor. The previous Chief Minister, for all his faults, never countenanced as complete a turnabout on excisions as we saw in this Assembly last week. I hope that he never makes a statement on land rights like the one we just heard. I cannot vouch for that I am afraid. He seems of late to have found that extremist views appeal to southern audiences and has possibly decided to pursue that road hereafter.

Mr Speaker, it becomes more and more evident that the only solution that will work is the one that both sides agree to. You cannot champion one side to the exclusion of the other. He cannot hope for a reconciliation if he pursues the one-sided approach we saw in the excision statement on Thursday and this statement today. All the new-age thinking in the world will not help him if he continues down that line. I say to him - and I say this honestly: before it is too late, to thine own self be true and turn back. I say that because I believe that, essentially, he is probably a moral man. However, the Chief Minister must know that his proposals are not a practical basis for negotiation with the Commonwealth. His proposals will be seen for what they are - purely political kite-flying.

The Chief Minister has said that he wants the Land Rights Act abolished and his government to be given the right to legislate. In his performance on Thursday, he said that 'excision legislation was too hard' and that he would give up on a legislative solution or any independent position. He said he would go along with the ambit claim proposed by one of the interested parties to the absolute exclusion of the others. Thereby, he destroyed his credibility in this whole debate.

I believe, as do most of my colleagues, that there can be no true statehood for the Northern Territory unless it has the same powers and responsibilities and the same electoral representation as the states. We cannot negotiate a second-class statehood for the Northern Territory. In that context, I believe that, at statehood, the Northern Territory must have the same powers over Aboriginal affairs, national parks etc as are enjoyed by the states. The Land Rights Act would be repatriated at that stage. If the Chief Minister had made this the basis of his argument, I would have found little to fault about it. What does he want however? He does not want the act repatriated at statehood nor does he want the act simply repatriated now so he can repeal it. He wants the federal government to repeal the Land Rights Act so he can have open slather in working up his own model.

Mr Speaker, last Thursday, we heard the types of solutions he proposes. Did they indicate the political savvy of someone who presumably feels ready to lead us into statehood? He caved in completely to the pastoralists on Thursday and came back on the next sitting day to tell us, in all seriousness, that he will establish with a Labor government his bona fides so that it will say: 'All right, you have demonstrated a mature, responsible attitude to all this. We

will repeal our act and you have a go'. What absolute rot! If it were not so damaging to the Territory's cause, it would be laughable. Instead, it is pathetic.

There is no way I can address all the issues raised in this paper in a reply of this nature unless I can be granted an extension of time. There are some 100 pages in this statement: the federal position, the Northern Territory position etc. To attempt to skim over them all would not be doing justice to any of the parties to this very important debate. I will therefore concentrate in the time available to me on what I believe is the central issue in this whole debate. It is one that has caused the greatest degree of emotion. I refer to the concept of the veto provided for in the current Northern Territory land rights legislation.

It is a very hard question. I am afraid that there are some people who reject it on that very basis. It requires careful, rational thought. I do not think that I can honestly stand in this Assembly and talk about land rights without stating my position on the veto. I know that my position is not a very popular one at this point. I am aware that I could keep quiet and hedge about and hope that no one asks me the correct question. However, I would like to explain our policy on this issue. In formulating our policy, we have rejected the view that all development will always be bad for all Aborigines. We do not see Aborigines going back to some pristine, pre-contact state. Nor, on the other hand, do we hold the view that all development will necessarily always be good for all Aborigines or any other group.

For Aboriginal groups, we see a community development process, sponsored by the government, but basically carried out by Aboriginal people whereby they find a new balance within which they can develop. The problem with development projects prior to the veto was that Aboriginal people had no effective means of ensuring that their interests would not be disregarded or swamped in the process. The basic fact is that the so-called veto provisions of the Northern Territory act ensure that Aboriginal people are involved in working out conditions upon which development can go ahead on their land. There is no doubt that there are Aboriginal people living on their own land in parts of the Northern Territory who are adamant that they do not want exploration or mining at any price. Many of these groups also draw the same line with government officers, missionaries, politicians and, indeed, all outside contact. They wish simply to be left alone to be given a period within which they can make the necessary adjustments to their own lifestyle so that they can determine their own new balance, a new symbiosis, if you like.

On the other hand, I believe that there is no doubt that, given safeguards for sacred sites and having appropriate project management agreements worked out which will alleviate deleterious effects on the communities' lifestyles, the vast majority of Aboriginal people on the vast majority of Aboriginal land are prepared to negotiate mining agreements. Mr Deputy Speaker, you may ask why the people who are prepared to negotiate mining should be allowed to have the veto. The veto in the hands of those groups provides them with a degree of comfort and security that ensures that they can negotiate as equal partners with the miners in the whole process. It must be remembered that equal negotiation with white mining companies is a new phenomena for the vast majority of the people to whom I am referring. Having that veto gives them the encouragement to go ahead with the negotiations and ensures that the possibility of exploration and mining going ahead on those lands is greatly enhanced. In that context, the veto is pro-development.

What of those groups who at this stage wholeheartedly resist exploration and mining? I believe that, for any company to go in and force itself upon that

group, would be an act which would set mining in this Territory back 20 years. There is no doubt that Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory today are far better organised than were the groups who rallied to the cause of Noonkanbah. I believe that, if a mining company were to go on to land where people had said they were not wanted, Aboriginal groups throughout the Territory and their supporters would rally to their cause. This would have the effect not only of creating a great deal of confrontation in the Northern Territory but also would have the effect of other Aboriginal groups, who are currently willing to negotiate mining agreements, reassessing their position. I believe that the possibilities of mining being negotiated in the rest of the Territory, where people are willing, given the safeguards I spoke of before, would be reduced. Those groups may, in fact, end up taking an anti-mining stance themselves. Confrontation is not the answer on this one and neither, I believe, is the excessively legalistic formula which has been proposed by the federal minister in his preferred national model.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member for Stuart.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: I thank honourable members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that what is required here is a reassessment, not of the principles involved in the Land Rights Act, not of the veto, but of the machinery of negotiation. It requires that the land councils have a very honest look at themselves and the mechanisms they use to negotiate with miners. It requires a commitment on the part of the miners to stop playing politics with the Land Rights Act and to work with the land councils towards its success. It requires the miners to work wholeheartedly with those groups that, currently, are basically in favour of mining.

If - and it is a very large 'if' because it would require a turnabout which I would hope we may see from the current Chief Minister - this government were to take the line that I have proposed in this debate, I am certain that, when the mining industry has some runs on the board with those groups that are currently in favour of mining, in the not-too-distant future they will be in a position to come back to those who are currently saying no and find that, because of what they have heard about the negotiations and what they have seen, they will have reassessed their position and will be willing to negotiate exploration and mining on their lands. I say this as a person who believes that mining gives the greatest chance for Aboriginal people to obtain the capital that they require to break out of the current round of poverty and welfare. However, I believe that it is not good enough for us to say that we are going to force people into this position. I believe that the overall community development process, of which I spoke before, is the most important ingredient in this whole development.

I have shown that the alternatives to the current veto will bring, in the case of the federal model, a big increase in legal representation or, in the case of the Northern Territory model, a substantial possibility of further Noonkanbahs. I believe that I have pointed to a middle road where success can be achieved. Change for change's sake is not the answer to this problem. It appears to me that there has been a consistent statement: 'We are having problems with this particular formula. Let's chuck it out and start again'. When we have problems with the Town Planning Act, for example, we do not abolish

town planning; we examine the mechanisms involved in town planning to see if we can make it work more effectively. We must not throw out everything that we have learned to date. We must build on what we have learned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not here as an apologist for the NLC or the CLC or anyone else. I would prefer obviously to be able to report that more exploration licence applications had been processed through the system. It is simply not good enough, however, to turn around and blame the Land Rights Act and the land councils solely for the situation that we are in. It is common knowledge that, ever since the Land Rights Act was introduced, it has been under attack from past and present members of this government. They forced the Northern Territory land councils into a fortress mentality where they saw that it was essential that they put all their efforts into organising land claims rather than negotiating existing exploration licences. They were in a situation with a government in Canberra that they did not trust. They thought the best thing they could do was to put all their efforts into organising as many land claims as they could rather than negotiating exploration licences. If they had been working in an environment of comfort and security, we would not have seen that situation arising. In those days, the land councils did not have the resources that they have now. We all recall the battles over the Land Rights Act in the last 8 years and I believe it is fair to say that, if the Northern Territory government had not waged all those battles, if it had not invoked the assistance of the last Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on its side to attempt to tear down the Land Rights Act, the land councils would have been in a far better frame of mind to negotiate with it and with the miners for far more development projects than have gone ahead to date.

This government also cannot continue to shirk its share of responsibility for the failure to get mining going in the Northern Territory, given the position that it has taken on issues such as the high level of profit-based royalties and, as I said, the constant battles it has waged with the land councils over points which were obviously unwinnable, taking them continuously to the High Court. It is about time that this government owned up to the people of the Northern Territory for its share of the failure to get the mining industry off the ground in the Northern Territory.

With regard to the position paper that we have before us, there should be a complete reassessment. It should be taken back and the Chief Minister should work on a complete reassessment of the principles that he has used to develop that model. It is quite possible that he could work out a negotiated agreement for those machinery problems in the act. Many of those were referred to by Justice Toohey and have not been rectified. I have been highly critical of the federal government in that many of those recommendations have not been implemented. I believe that, if the Chief Minister were to go to the federal government and to the land councils and talk to them, there is still a possibility, even at this late stage, for a negotiated agreement. If he were to throw his weight behind the continuation of the Land Rights Act and were to say to the land councils that he would negotiate with them on the parts of the act that they agree are not working properly, that he would negotiate on the basis of Justice Toohey's recommendations to make it workable legislation and that he would go into bat for them on that basis with the federal government, I believe that he would then arrive at a consensus with the land councils which would set the whole scene into a different mould completely. We would have people of the Northern Territory working out their own answers to their own problems instead of the continuous political battle we have whereby, every time that a Chief Minister feels that he is getting into some sort of political strife or his own personal position has been threatened because of moves within the party, he has to turn around and take it out on the lowest socio-economic group in our society.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to the last speaker's speech, I was frantically looking for my notes on excisions because I thought I must have had the wrong debate. Then, I realised that he was having a second go on excisions because he had nothing worth while to say about the preferred model.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the long, vexed question of Aboriginal land rights in Australia, and particularly in the Northern Territory, is one that has many hidden secrets and loopholes and, potentially, has very dangerous consequences for the future of equal opportunity for all. No one, I am sure, who has given the question any honestly-considered thought would deny the right of Aboriginal people to land. Unfortunately for the Aboriginal people of Australia, their land was easy pickings for the British and subsequent settlers of Australia. But their fight is not unique. Equivalent struggles can be found in the history of every nation on earth and they are going on today. The potential for it happening again in Australia is indeed still quite high and it is possible that, some time in the not-too-distant future, not only the Aboriginal people of Australia but all Australians could be fighting to retain rights to land in this our homeland.

I say 'our homeland', Mr Deputy Speaker, because that is what it is - yours and mine equally with everyone else who is a citizen of this country. I recall very well my first ideas on inequalities that existed only a little more than 2 decades ago when I first arrived in the Northern Territory to work with the Tiwi people on Bathurst Island. At the time, I was a young man in my early twenties and I was set the task of working with and teaching young men who were only a few years younger than myself. Every one of them came to be very good friends of mine. We shared much of our spare time together outside of school and work hours. I spent 6 years on Bathurst Island and, during the course of that time, I began to realise the inequalities that existed between these friends of mine and myself. For the first few years, I could not share a drink with them and these fit and intelligent young men could not join the Australian forces as anything more than a temporary servant. I well recall one young Tiwi who applied to join the regular army around 1968 or 1969. It caused quite a flap at the time. At the time, this man was doing a building apprenticeship in Sydney and became the centre of a behind-the-scenes inquiry by the army and never did join.

There were many other inequalities for Aboriginal people in those days and I was a strong advocate for rights for Aboriginal people at the time. I saw no reason why they should not be equal citizens with me, sharing all the benefits that this great country has to offer. Aboriginal people gained full citizenship. They gained the right to award wages, the right to drink and the right to unemployment benefits. They gained the right to move freely without the consent of government officials or the paternal advice of community or reserve administrators. In 1976, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory gained the right to land. Of course, before 1976, they had the right to purchase land and own it but, in 1976, they were given the right to claim land that was not alienated land. They were also to receive land that had previously been Aboriginal reserves and mission land.

The history of what has happened in the Northern Territory since 1976 does not need elaboration here. We all know well the court decisions that have broadened the scope of land rights way beyond what was envisaged by the original drafters of the act and the legislators who brought it into being - at least, I hope it was beyond what they envisaged because I have heard it said that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976 was written by lawyers for lawyers. If that statement is untrue in fact, it is certainly not untrue in

effect. The decisions have allowed claim on public purpose lands which include, in my book, river beds and banks, even though that does not seem to be the case in a recent decision taken by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the alienation of pastoral properties through purchase and conversion to Aboriginal freehold are only 2 cases in point.

There can be no doubt that it is past time for changes to the federal land rights legislation if we are to be forced to live with it. It seems that it has taken the weight of opposition from the states over proposed national land rights legislation to obtain any change at all. While the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has indicated that he is prepared to sanction state legislation that is capable of functioning side by side with federal legislation, he is not prepared, it seems, to do that in the Territory's case. This Assembly obviously is not considered competent to produce legislation on land rights even though our legislation in many other areas consistently leads the states. Even in legislation for Aboriginal people, and I cite the sacred sites legislation as a case in point, the Northern Territory government acts as a state government in all respects except for the right to make laws for Aboriginal land. The federal government should allow this government to provide its own legislation and repeal the federal act. We are not hard-hearted monsters, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are capable of showing concern for the needs of Aboriginal people in the Territory. It is all right for federal parliamentarians to shed crocodile tears for Aboriginal people but how far are they prepared to dip into their own states and their own land for Aboriginal people? It is fine to make laws that only affect other people but what gives them the right? The person who wrote and approved the Holding preferred model either assumed that the Territory would have the same rights as the states or he thought it was not worth mentioning. I suspect that the latter assumption is the correct one. It should go without saying that Aboriginal land in the Territory should be subject to Northern Territory laws.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have long lamented the unwarranted control that the land councils have over traditional Aboriginal land and its owners. In many instances, the wishes of traditional owners are overridden and the land councils quite blatantly assert their own will. Traditional owners should have more control of their own land. This will probably come about only if more direct ownership of land by traditional owners is brought into being. It should not be difficult for land councils to maintain a register of traditional owners. I would suspect they would prefer not to so that it is more difficult for people to make contact with traditional owners directly.

It will be interesting to see how the states handle the question of inalienable freehold. I suspect that, if they condone this at all, it will be with several provisos relating to easements for roads and pipelines and for leaseback for other uses, and without the power of the Aboriginal people to veto uses if they are considered to be in the public interest. I am particularly concerned about the beds and banks of rivers which would seem to be public purpose land and therefore not available for claim. As I said before, a recent action of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in granting an inalienable title to the Malak Malak claimants to sections of the bed and banks of the Daly River following release of the national preferred model seems to put this in some doubt. I quote a couple of paragraphs from a letter from Mr Holding which I received yesterday in response to a letter which I wrote to him:

Dear Mr McCarthy,

Thank you for your letter of 21 March concerning the Commonwealth preferred national Aboriginal land rights model and, in particular,

the possibility that the bed and banks of rivers may be available for claim to become Aboriginal land. There is a distinction between land which is specifically set aside by way of a formal declaration for a particular public purpose and land which the law preserves as being generally open to the public. The bed and banks of rivers may fall within the latter category where they are vacant Crown land which is unused or unallocated for other purposes.

When that hits the states, there will be some real problems. Commonwealth national parks should also be defined as public purpose land and should not be available for claim. I certainly agree that control of national parks should be returned to the Territory. The basis for claims is broadened under the model to include 'historical association' - whatever that means in real terms; I certainly do not know and people I have asked have not been able to tell me. This needs some explanation as it seems to be very loose and could include just about anyone. I think that is what is intended.

Traditional entitlement should be the only basis for claim for land under any form of inalienable title. The Territory is already catering for other groups, including town campers and residents on pastoral leases, and there is no need to bring them into any national land rights legislation. Should national land rights legislation allow 10 years for claimants to place an application for land grants in the states, a considerably lesser period should apply to the Territory if the act is to be equitable. We have had 8 years of claims in the Northern Territory. In any case, this should have been long enough for potential claimants to make application under this legislation and investigation and approval will flow on after the cut-off date for applications.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory government has faced the intransigence of land councils in the past in attempts to gain easements across Aboriginal land for a number of purposes. Surely any government must have the right to the use of land within its state or territory to provide services to its citizens? In the Territory, we have a major town isolated in the extreme through the difficulty of claiming easements across Aboriginal land for road access. I am not aware of anywhere else in the world where this could happen within a state or a territory.

As mentioned previously, the Northern Territory government is catering already for Aboriginal people in relation to excision applications. In my own electorate, a group of people who have an association with Victoria River Downs Station were provided with Territory freehold on an excision of land from that pastoral property only last year. This group is well satisfied with its title. I was talking to the people there as late as yesterday in this regard. An attempt was made recently by the Northern Land Council to sow the seeds of discontent by indicating to the people of Yarralin that their title was not secure. Fortunately, there are people at Yarralin who understand that freehold is the securest form of title available to Territorians outside of the Land Rights Act.

With regard to payment of compensation to an affected pastoralist for the land and improvements excised from his property, I believe that the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account should be responsible unless, of course, the successful applicants can afford to pay on their own behalf. All Northern Territory laws should apply to excised land as, indeed, they should on all land in the Territory.

The power of veto that Aboriginal people hold currently over mining proposals on their land is hard to defend. I heard what the member for Stuart

had to say about it but, in my own mind, I have always found it very difficult to defend this power of veto that is available to one group of people. Provided no damage is done to sites of significance to Aboriginal people, the rights to mining of all minerals should rest with the government of the state or territory in which they are found. I believe that that is the only position to adopt on something like minerals. It is very much like the use of rivers. As a matter of fact, in the letter that I was quoting before, Mr Holding went on to say that people who use the Daly River will not be affected; they will still be able to get to the river and travel on it. That is fine but they cannot get off the river other than at 2 or 3 points along it. They cannot use the banks. They cannot get off and fish without permission and, if that is not detriment, I really do not know what is.

The right of veto, which is not available to any other citizen of Australia, has done more to damage relations between Aboriginal people and other Australians than any other principle in the present Land Rights Act. Not only the right to veto mining but the action of advisers to traditional owners in vetoing filming and other access to places of special note to all Australians has caused quite considerable concern. No one would deny the right of compensation to Aboriginal landholders in so far as it is available under the Northern Territory Mining Act. If special provisions in this regard are continued for 1 group and are not available for others, then the potential for discontent is apparent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think that the present climate on land rights should be underestimated. There are many people who have had close ties with Aboriginal people for years and have maintained good relationships with them who are now feeling resentment at the way the land rights issue is proceeding. I am quite sure that few genuine Aboriginal people want confrontation with the rest of the population. Unfortunately, a climate is growing in which confrontation is inevitable unless there is a withdrawal to a more reasonable line, not to prevent ownership of more land by Aboriginal people but to allow for ownership under the same laws and conditions available to the average citizen. This is not to say that certain places of special significance should not be protected. Obviously, they should and must be. However, there is no sound reasoning in tying up vast tracts of land forever and effectively denying the right of Aboriginal people to develop their land through a lack of adequate provision to allow them to raise money in or through their land. The present provisions for lease of Aboriginal land are so short in terms of lease as to prohibit any developer putting money into assets on the land.

There has been a general growth in Aboriginal expectation in relation to land rights over the past 8 years. Any drawing back from those expectations may be hard to achieve for the Territory. However, as I said previously, I do not believe that Aboriginal people want confrontation. They want land in sufficient quantities to live peacefully in the way to which they are accustomed. There is little likelihood of Aboriginal people going back to subsistence hunting. There is not the same need for the vast areas which were required traditionally, but there is a need to provide land on which to live, work and play. I think most Territorians would want this government to see that this came about. The Northern Territory government has already done much more than any state to see that this objective is achieved. If the federal government allowed us to, we would get on with the job of providing a secure future for all Territorians, not driving wedges between people but working together with all Territorians to achieve a better, more secure way of life for us all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's statement and the broad outline of the Territory's response to the preferred land rights model. I hope

that we can achieve equality with the states in this matter and, if the opposition has any confidence in the Territory as a self-governing body of people, I imagine it will support that principle too.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments relating to the Chief Minister's statement and the comments made by the previous speaker, which I found somewhat extraordinary coming from somebody who represents traditionally-oriented Aborigines in this Assembly. I will return to his contribution shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me be quite clear about my position. Unlike that of the Chief Minister and that of the Northern Territory government, it has not changed since the enactment of the Land Rights Act in 1976. I believe that it was a very just piece of legislation. I do not propose to rehearse the history of its enactment and the inquiries that led up to it nor to detail an account of what has happened within my own electorate. I am deeply disturbed and, to use a favourite phrase of my political opponents, I think it is important that we send a message to Canberra on this one.

The preferred model and its possible implications for the Northern Territory and for Aboriginal Territorians are extremely unjust. It is worth while to pause for a moment to reflect on the political forces that have given rise to the promulgation of the preferred model. I believe that the federal government has allowed itself to be seduced by the Western Australian government which, in turn, has allowed itself to be seduced by some extraordinarily powerful lobbying from the Western Australian Chamber of Mines and some extraordinarily divisive advertising, let me say, to choose my words carefully, by that particular body that has sent a shiver of fear up the spine of Premier Burke and his colleagues in the Western Australian government.

Because Aboriginal land in Western Australia abuts my electorate, and the interests of the Pintubi people and other people in the western desert are exactly the same in Western Australia as they are in the Northern Territory, I made representation to the Seaman Inquiry. All honourable members should be aware that the Seaman Inquiry endorsed the major aspects of the operation of the Land Rights Act that the Chief Minister, the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Western Australia, all to their eternal discredit, are seeking to push back today. I hear the honourable member for Sadadeen mumbling in his beard over there. I sincerely trust we will have a slightly less sotto voce contribution to this debate and we will hear him roll it out in exactly the same way as we have heard the Chief Minister and the member for Victoria River roll it out this evening. By golly, hasn't it been fun?

I will place on record exactly where I stand in this regard. I have made a submission. Unfortunately, I do not have it with me in Darwin and I am unable to table it in the Assembly this evening. But I have certainly taken to task the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the basis of attempts to compromise on sections 45 and 46 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act which, as some honourable members may be aware, are the so-called veto provisions. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act does not mention the word 'veto'. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act, in those particular sections, seeks to give solid control over mining on Aboriginal land. These people who are standing up now, not only criticising the preferred model, which is a dreadful backoff in itself, but further seeking to carp and criticise in this respect, I find totally appalling. I find it a total denial of a brave attempt to recognise rights on behalf of a singularly disadvantaged people. I find their behaviour and the attitudes expressed in this Assembly by those people I have mentioned worthy only of contempt.

Let me turn then to the offering of the member for Victoria River. Like all the other characters on the government backbench who have been given their orders to beat the federal government at every turn, he has said: 'Yes, let us repatriate the Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory. It really must be a Northern Territory act'. Let me say that I would very much like to see the time when government - and I use the collective sense rather more properly than it is usually used by its abusers on the other side - in the Northern Territory can be trusted to behave in a responsible manner with respect to legislation that is entrusted to it. For the benefit of the member for Victoria River, let me just refer to the scandalous, vandalic behaviour of the member for Fannie Bay who barely escaped prosecution with respect to the complementary legislation for which he and the government of which he was a part were responsible. Yet we have newcomers like the member for Victoria River and deceivers like the Chief Minister attempting to suggest that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act ought to be repatriated. How absurd.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Under standing order 55, imputations of improper motives should not be allowed. I would ask the member to withdraw that remark about the Chief Minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Very wise indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member will refrain from reflecting on decisions from the Chair.

Mr BELL: I withdraw that latter comment, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I do take some satisfaction.

Let me turn to a further comment from the member for Victoria River in respect of the statement of the Chief Minister. At one stage, he seemed to be saying that Aborigines were acceptable provided they were aspiring to behave like European Australians. I will put that into simple blunt terms: blackfellers are okay provided they are trying to be whitefellers. It is an argument that you get so often from political conservatives. On the one hand, they are quite happy to say, 'Let Poland be Poland', but when, in their own backyard they are asked to let Aborigines be Aborigines, they will fight tooth and nail. Let us work out why that is. There are 2 reasons behind it. One reason is money and the other is divisiveness as a political strategy - divide and rule. Money and divide and rule are the chief reasons why the Chief Minister is behaving in this way. As I said earlier today, he is under serious attack from his party. He is doing a dreadful job. His succession has been a disaster. The wheels of government have just about fallen off the motor car of the Northern Territory and he is desperately attempting to claw his way back to a position where he can obtain some respect from his backbench and from the rank and file of his party. Let me say that this is a fairly depressing attempt to do so. It is not only depressing but it is illogical and totally ignores the realities of the Aboriginal Australian.

A further comment made by the member for Victoria River referred to the veto being hard to defend. I am quite sure that the member for Victoria River's constituents will be most interested to hear both that he believes the veto to be hard to defend and that he does not really believe that Aboriginal land rights in the traditional sense ought to be recognised by Australian law, because that is exactly what he said. I feel sorry for the member for Victoria River because he is in a very difficult position. He is part of a government whose chief political strategy relies on attacking a recognition of

Aboriginal land rights and yet he represents Aborigines in this Assembly. I appreciate his difficulties. On the basis of his offerings today, it might have been better if he had remained silent and hoped that nobody noticed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I find it very difficult to accept that the member and the Chief Minister are not prepared to respect the umpire's decision. They are not prepared to accept the judgments of Justice Toohey who reported on the operation of the Land Rights Act. It was an impartial judicial inquiry and the Chief Minister is not prepared to abide by the umpire's decision. As a sporting man yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you will find that a rather distressing refusal.

I do have some further comments to make in relation to development on Aboriginal land. The member for Victoria River was suggesting that development on Aboriginal land was impossible. That is absolute nonsense. I am not too sure what is happening in the electorate of Victoria River. Like my own electorate, it is a vast area. It is a considerable distance from my own electorate. In case nothing is happening on Aboriginal land in the electorate of Victoria River, let me hasten to say that considerable development is occurring on Aboriginal land in the electorate of MacDonnell. I have referred in previous debates in this Assembly to the pipeline, for example, that has been negotiated recently between the Mereenie oilfield and Alice Springs. You yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, have referred to that very same pipeline. In fact, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Industry and Small Business and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all on the government benches have said what a wonderful thing the pipeline is and what a wonderful boon it is for the Northern Territory that we will pipe natural gas to Darwin and petrol to Alice Springs. But there has not been one word about the fact that the oil and gas are coming off Aboriginal land and that there have been substantial and successful negotiations to ensure the possibilities.

I must have one of the real fun electorates in here because everything seems to be happening in it. Both the Brewer estate and the Mereenie oilfield are in my electorate, and of great interest they are to me because that particular oil pipeline will provide numerous jobs and considerable growth and development for the Northern Territory. I just wish that somebody would tell the Chief Minister, the member for Victoria River, the member for Sadadeen and anybody else who chooses to interject that, in fact, there is considerable positive development going on to the benefit of Aboriginal people, who are uniquely disadvantaged as I have said, and to the Territory as a whole.

I am concerned to sound one note in this debate. I trust that the Chief Minister will take it to heart. What bothers me most of all is the continuing cloud of uncertainty that has been created by the Chief Minister, by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, by the Prime Minister of this country and by the Premier of Western Australia. If anyone opposite reckons that I am not prepared to have a go at the federal government, he ought to listen to what I am saying or read it tomorrow in Hansard. I think that the behaviour of the federal government in this regard has been supine in the extreme. The federal government has refused to abide by the decisions and the proposals put forward by its own judicial inquiry in exactly the same way as the Western Australian government has done. I think that is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for the Territory. It is a tragedy for taking the heat out of the land rights issue here. Finally, it is a tragedy for disadvantaged Aboriginal Australians who need all sorts of assistance to ensure that the benefits that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act confers on them can be translated into solid benefits for them, their children and their children's children. What really bothers me - and it is not addressed here, it is not addressed in the federal minister's preferred

model and it is not addressed by the Western Australian government - is that governments around Australia are not taking into consideration the hard question of how they can confer real lasting benefits from a just recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to the Chief Minister's statement on the preferred national land rights model. Before I start on the points that I prepared, I will take up a couple of issues that the member for MacDonnell raised. He said that everything was happening in his electorate. He has pipelines and pipelines, one of which crossed a main road last year and he was not even aware of it although it occurred in his electorate.

Mr Bell: When your electorate is the size of Victoria instead of the size of a suburban block, Roger, you might have the same problems.

Mr VALE: I would have thought that the member would have driven across the Stuart Highway south of town on a weekly basis, if not more frequently. What he forgot to tell the Assembly is that, as well as all the other development, we are going to put the sewage farm out in his electorate. He is really getting development.

The package circulated by the Chief Minister was referred to as the preferred national land rights model. I ask: preferred by whom? It certainly is not preferred by the ALP in the Northern Territory for reasons different from ours. It is certainly not preferred by the land councils nor by members of the Northern Territory government nor by a large majority of Aboriginal people who live in the rural areas. Indeed, it is certainly not preferred by the majority of Northern Territory residents who are opposed to the existing legislation and the package contained in the proposals by the federal government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the original proponents of the Aboriginal land rights legislation, in arguing for that legislation, advocated a number of points. They argued that, if Aboriginals were given back their land, it would give them back their pride and their ability to solve a number of the social problems affecting their communities, including drinking, unemployment and housing. After almost 8½ years of this land rights legislation having been in place, questions must now be asked. Are the Aboriginal communities any better off? Is the drinking problem any less? Has their employment situation improved? Have their housing problems been overcome? The answer to all of those questions is certainly no. Why is that? It is because the original Aboriginal Land Rights Act failed dismally to recognise true Aboriginal law and to reconcile it with European law. For example, the land councils are in no way related to Aboriginal law and Aboriginal land custodians. Aboriginals speak for their own land in their own areas under tribal law. The land councils exert far too much control and Aboriginals in bush areas are now starting to realise exactly what a detrimental influence the land councils have over the Aboriginals in rural areas.

What would make interesting reading - and I think they should be compulsory reading for many Northern Territory and federal parliamentarians - are the Hermannsburg transcripts which were prepared by people from the Hermannsburg settlement with Aboriginals when the land rights legislation was originally proposed in 1975. Hermannsburg Europeans translated the legislation blow by blow and verse by verse and recorded comments of the traditional Aboriginal owners in that area. Those people then and still today oppose the legislation as it existed. Despite all of the work that was put into preparing this submission, the federal government and the minister responsible for that act

refused to recognise the comments of those Aborigines. Instead, they were more willing to pay heed to the noisy, vocal minorities in the town areas in the Northern Territory and, in particular, in the southern states, in the universities and other areas. What the traditional owners said in the Hermannsburg transcripts is now of course starting to come true.

The states have the right to legislate on many issues including land rights. The same right should be transferred to the Northern Territory. What would happen, for example, if the federal government attempted to move in on any of the states and close the seas as it has done in the Northern Territory? What would happen in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales? The federal government would have a civil riot on its hands. It would not work. The federal government would not get away with it for 24 hours, let alone 8½ years. It would bring down a state or federal government if it proposed something as absurd as that. What would happen if the states had the same absurd permit system that the Northern Territory must live with? For example, if anyone wants to leave Alice Springs and go to Halls Creek, he must seek permission from the land council to travel through such areas as Yuendumu and points further west.

I am of the opinion now that large Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory are very much part and parcel of the Northern Territory and, as such, should be subject to exactly the same laws as other areas in the Northern Territory. I believe we should seriously consider revoking the permit system at an early date. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs referred in his model to new roads. He said: 'New roads constructed over Aboriginal land, not being land previously set aside for that purpose, to be the subject of negotiations with the affected Aboriginal communities, including as to terms and conditions of use'. If I use a road in the Northern Territory, then I observe the laws of the land: speed limits, registration, driving under the influence etc. There should be no need whatsoever for Northern Territory residents and our numerous visitors to obtain these permits. There will be many more visitors when the South Road is completed. Why should these people be subjected to the permit system and not be allowed to travel freely across parts of the Northern Territory? I can accept the fact that, on large Aboriginal communities, living areas are somewhat exposed compared to urban situations and those areas should be protected and off limits to prying eyes. But it is absurd to continue with this permit system for travelling in the Northern Territory.

The mining veto must be considered seriously. Despite the fact that the minister referred to the mining veto, in the next breath, he referred to the setting up of a cumbersome tribunal. Despite all the oohing and aahing of members opposite about the mining and development of the Northern Territory, it is a known fact that no development whatsoever has taken place in the Northern Territory on Aboriginal land since the land rights legislation was packaged, presented and passed by the federal parliament. The members for MacDonnell and Stuart cannot argue that Mereenie and Palm Valley are shining examples because, for both of those, the exploration and the development were commenced long before the passage of the Land Rights Act and negotiations over the pipelines have been going on for years. The Granites goldfield is another one that the member for Stuart has used from time to time as a shining example of land rights legislation working in harmony with mining development. Negotiations on development of that proposal on Aboriginal land have not been going on for weeks and months but for years and years.

The opposition quite often implies that members on this side are building up an aura of racial tension in the Northern Territory. I would suggest that certain Aboriginal organisations in central Australia, before accusing us of

that sort of action should first examine their own comments and public statements. The recent fire in Alice Springs which destroyed the Aboriginal Legal Aid Office ...

Mr Bell: Our statement, Roger, in that respect - come on!

Mr VALE: I did not interrupt the honourable member for MacDonnell once.

Mr Bell: Because I did not talk nonsense.

Mr VALE: The recent fire which destroyed the Aboriginal Legal Aid Office in central Australia prompted a comment from a lady, who is associated with one of those organisations, that 'Alice Springs is a hotbed of racism'. I believe that the Northern Territory News was less than fair with its comment in 'Dean's View'. The comment was 'Alice Springs Aboriginal Legal Aid Office Guttled' and there was a cartoon showing fire and smoke and Ku Klux Klan figures cooking sausages. That type of thing builds up racial tension in the Northern Territory. It is not legislation which is well thought out, well planned and designed ...

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I think that standing orders require that the honourable member for Braitling confine his comments to the particular statement at hand. The statement is not in relation to racial tension but in relation to the preferred national land rights model.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr VALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the point I would make is that any legislation, be it in this Assembly or the federal parliament, should take cognisance of the fact that, if it is sensitive and emotive, then racial tensions can erupt.

The most amazing point in this afternoon's debate so far is that, even though the Australian Labor Party tells us continually that it is the great reformist party, as far as Aboriginal land rights legislation is concerned, it is set in stone and must not be changed. In conclusion, I believe that the trouble with emotive legislation such as this is that, in most cases, the federal parliament has legislated for short-term advantages rather than long-term solutions to large problems. Legislation for issues such as this should not be for ourselves but for our children and future Northern Territory generations.

Mr COULTER (Berrimah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to add a few remarks to those put forward by the Chief Minister, the member for Braitling and the member for Victoria River. Unfortunately, I cannot add too much to the member for MacDonnell's contribution to this debate, nor would I like to.

As the minister with portfolio responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs, I attended the meeting of the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council in Sydney on 29 March this year. The Commonwealth put forward for discussion at that meeting the preferred national land rights model. While I am not at liberty to go into any great detail on those discussions and the levels of agreement reached, I am able to advise honourable members that the states are firm in their intentions that the Commonwealth preferred national land rights model will be negotiated on a bilateral basis. That is to say that, initially at least, the Commonwealth will be negotiating separately and privately with each of the states concerned and, of course, the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory endorsed the concepts of bilateral negotiations as did all the states. As I

said previously, I am not at liberty to discuss details of the AAAC conference. However, when transcripts are available, it will be evident that all states are undertaking bilateral discussions with the Commonwealth. However, a wide range of positions was apparent. Western Australia, which was mentioned by the honourable member for MacDonnell, was proceeding to implement its own land rights, as we all know. Initially, it was reluctant or at least cautious about negotiating its Aboriginal land rights proposals with the Commonwealth. We have seen many examples in this Assembly of why anybody would be cautious in negotiating with the Commonwealth.

As a result of this caution and the outcome of actions in the Upper House on the night of 16 April in Western Australia, it is now more than likely to open up bilateral negotiations on the Commonwealth preferred model. Its aim would be to achieve, as far as possible, necessary compromise situations between the national model and the actions that Western Australia took following its considerations of the report on the Seaman inquiry into Aboriginal land rights in that state. There is significant advantage for the Northern Territory in being able to negotiate its concerns about the model. Remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, that we are the government with the longest experience in Australia when it comes to land rights. We have been down the road and we know the pitfalls and the problems. I remind the honourable member for MacDonnell of a document that was tabled in this Assembly last year by the then Minister for Mines and Energy, now the Chief Minister, which outlined clearly the projects which had been slowed down by land rights claims etc. Some of those projects were retarded for years. If the member for MacDonnell would like to look at that particular document and refresh his mind, I think it would be beneficial, not only for the member but also for this Assembly at large.

With the experience that has been hard-earned by the Northern Territory, as it were, in private negotiations with the Commonwealth, I believe that this basis of negotiation and consultation will allow the Northern Territory to put forward its particular and special concerns that, in many instances, are peculiar to the Northern Territory and have evolved from Commonwealth-Territory relations on Aboriginal affairs over a large number of years. We can be more confident that our special concerns will not be swamped or overridden by concerns of the states, which might occur in all-party negotiations involving the Commonwealth, the 6 states and the Northern Territory. Whilst all states and the Territory have given support to bilateral negotiations in an endeavour to find a solution with the Commonwealth on this matter, it is worth keeping in mind that, if resolution is achieved, the federal minister will then be required to express the land rights model in legislative form which will have to meet the approval of the ALP caucus and Cabinet. Honourable members on both sides of the Assembly will be aware that the progress of the legislation might face some difficulty, to say the least. However, that issue to one side, the legislation will then be required to pass through the House of Representatives and the Senate. The point I wish to make is that, if at any stage after the conclusion of negotiations, the proposed legislation fails, it would be an untenable proposition not to alter the Northern Territory legislation.

One of the important areas raised by the Chief Minister in outlining Territory positions to be taken on major issues in relation to the Commonwealth's preferred national land rights model is the question of the Territory's inability to acquire Aboriginal land or easements over Aboriginal land for any purpose. The member for MacDonnell said things are going well in his area and the member for Victoria River tried to point out some of the problems that are being experienced elsewhere. The importance of negotiating that issue contemporaneously with the national land rights model of the Commonwealth cannot be stressed too strongly. Despite the obvious adverse criticism the Northern

Territory attracts over land rights issues on occasion, our position on bilateral negotiations is constructive and based on goodwill. In addition, the Territory, through my Department of Community Development, is involved heavily in coordinating the identification of essential service needs on Aboriginal communities and the provision of essential services to meet those needs. The Chief Minister instanced the present example of difficulties the government is experiencing with upgrading the Beswick water supply because of the insistence of the Northern Land Council that the Territory government enter a licence agreement in order to gain the privilege of getting on with its job of improving an essential service to that community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Beswick water supply case is but 1 example of the problems the government has experienced in relation to Aboriginal land in carrying out its responsibility and commitment to provide essential services to Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land. I need not detail all the other examples. Suffice it to say that, through the organisation established under the chairmanship of my department, NTCAP, the Northern Territory Coordination of Aboriginal Programs Committee, Northern Territory government departments are involved at present in an exercise to identify and catalogue specific problems that are being experienced. That cataloguing will be of use in our negotiations with the Commonwealth on the whole acquisition question.

Of course, problems with the acquisition issue are not confined to my department. They are faced day by day by all departments involved in the provision of services to Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land. A common example is demands by Aboriginal traditional owners, either themselves or through community councils or other representative groups, for the 'payment of compensation' - and I place the words in inverted commas because it is compensation for the right to go on to Aboriginal land to provide what are patently necessary and essential facilities. I will not instance localities but a recent example was a demand for payment of \$2000 per house compensation for teacher accommodation. I endorse the Chief Minister's hope that members on both sides and all parties concerned will accept the Chief Minister's statement in good faith as a statement of intention to negotiate and consult. But in those particular instances, one can hardly talk of goodwill where we are required to pay compensation to supply essential services. This is the type of cooperation that the member for MacDonnell is talking about. This is the way that we are going to progress and get on with the job and raise the standard of living in the Northern Territory. It will only be done if there are enough bickies in the barrel and we can pay for the privilege of providing essential services such as water and teacher housing to some of these localities.

Honourable members would agree that the Chief Minister's statement has been delivered without rancour in a non-provocative way and indicates a real intention to negotiate common problems. I look forward to all parties entering into necessary consultation with goodwill and a firm intention to achieve a system of land rights for Australia, and particularly for the Northern Territory, that is equitable and rational and will enable us to progress further than under the present inherently unsatisfactory system that the Northern Territory has laboured under for the past 8 years. Some of that labour has been enunciated very clearly today by the members for Braitling and Victoria River.

The Western Australian model, as originally proposed, would give open slather to mining activities on Aboriginal land; that is, Aboriginals would have no power to stop mining or negotiate mining activity although they would receive mining royalty equivalent payments. The present situation in the Northern Territory provides for Aboriginals to veto mining activity on Aboriginal land. We have heard the opposition's response to that. In fact, it does not want

change to the model: everything is going well; there are no problems at all and it is steady as she goes. It is thought that, in the context of the 1983 federal election, the Prime Minister did a deal with the Western Australian Labor Premier which then left the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in a position of searching for a compromise situation on the mining veto question. The compromise situation he settled on allows for mining on Aboriginal land at the decision of government on negotiated terms and conditions and, in the absence of negotiated agreement, for government decision based on the recommendations of a tribunal. That is yet another body to go through. The tribunal also recommends on compensation payment. Maybe we should employ it in the Northern Territory to tell us how much we should pay to supply essential services such as water and housing for teachers. Perhaps we could use it as a consultant to the Northern Territory government so that we can operate under our Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory. The member for MacDonnell would prefer that there be no change at all. He would prefer to leave the veto provisions for mining on Aboriginal land intact.

I refer again to Mr Holding's statement to the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice and I reinforce just what the present feeling is in regard to minerals in Australia. He said:

The Commonwealth government has developed its model in recognition of Crown ownership of minerals and that decisions in respect of access and the exploitation of those minerals must rest with the elected government. The government has also taken the position that no one group within the community should have the right of veto over the development of national resources. Control does not necessarily require the power of veto.

In addition, he said:

In recognition of special circumstances and needs of many Aboriginal communities, the proposals do, however, confer substantial rights to Aboriginals in relation to mining and exploration.

He was referring to the ability of Aboriginals to negotiate the terms and conditions of mining activity and to put a case to government against mining activity for decision by government. He went on to say:

What is important now is that Aboriginal representatives and others give close attention to the sorts of guidelines and criteria which, within the framework of the current proposals, will ensure maximum protection to Aboriginal people.

That is supported wholeheartedly by this government. The whole issue of development, supply of essential services and many other problems that are being experienced daily - not only by my department but by many other departments trying to improve the life of people in the Northern Territory - are being hindered by the land rights model as we know it today. Our mineral wealth is locked up in Kakadu stages I and II and now they are talking about Kakadu stage III. It is locked up in national parks and by land rights and is no longer obtainable by the Northern Territory government. We must be able to get on with the job and develop Australia for all Australians. As the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said, the wealth of Australia belongs to all Australians and we should all be able to exploit that wealth to the benefit of all Australians.

If the national model, negotiated on bilateral arrangements, is not supported, then the only course of action left to the federal government is to

look at the Northern Territory lands rights model because it cannot exist if the rest of Australia will not accept conditions similar to those in the Northern Territory act. We have had to labour under that act for the last 8 years and it is time for a change.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to support the statement by the Chief Minister. In addressing the issues raised by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in his release of the Commonwealth national land rights model, I would refer members to the history of what has happened since the introduction of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976. Many members today have already spoken and those who have not are probably well acquainted with this history. I believe it is important to restate it time and time again so that we are all well aware of the implications of what has occurred and what is still continuing today. In 1976, the Northern Territory, without the ability to resist, amend or control it, had thrust upon it legislation which has proved to be one of the most counterproductive legislative packages ever to be devised for any state or territory. The land rights notion, which commenced with the federal government under Whitlam and was completed by the Fraser administration, never envisaged the disruptions, the implications and the magnitude of the claims and the rights of Aboriginals to refuse access to land granted to them under inalienable freehold title, a form of title granted to no other Australians.

Let me restate some facts on land claims since 1976. Already, nearly 34% of the land area of the Territory has been converted to inalienable Aboriginal freehold title and claims are outstanding on approximately another 13%. When they are granted, over 450 000 km², just under half of the Northern Territory, will have been alienated. In addition to these claims, there are 28 outstanding claims to stock routes and bore reserves. Approximately 11% of the Northern Territory mainland and offshore island coastlines and nearby waters are controlled by Aboriginals. Claims will continue as the Northern Territory Land Rights Act is open-ended and does not have a sunset clause provision.

What are the effects of these claims on all Australians and, more particularly, on Territorians and their visitors? Firstly, there is the permit system. Access to Aboriginal land is controlled by the land councils - the Northern Territory Land Council and the Central Land Council - and authority to enter for whatever reason can be and often is withheld. The incidents involving access to Uluru are well known and have been the subject of debate in this Chamber on many occasions. What is not known so well are the difficulties facing Norforce, our North-West Mobile Reserve, in obtaining permits to carry out routine patrols and exercises in Arnhem Land. The very reason it was set up was to patrol and defend the northern coastal areas. Road access between Nhulunbuy and Katherine, referred to by the member for Victoria River, has been the subject of negotiation for over 2 years. In the meantime, the number of people who have received permits to travel the track into Nhulunbuy can be counted on the fingers of no more than 2 hands. To my knowledge, no permits at all were issued in 1984 to drive to Nhulunbuy.

On the subject of mining, no exploration titles were granted on Aboriginal land since 1972 when the Ranger inquiry started. Since June 1981, there have been 165 exploration licences offered to 42 companies, and all subject to an agreement being reached with the Aboriginal land councils. Negotiations were commenced with only 1 company and they have been concluded only within the last 4 weeks. That is after more than 2½ years. No other agreements to undertake exploration have been completed to date.

In a mining survey that the Northern Territory government undertook in 1984, 33 responded in the following way: 22 companies approached land councils more

than 140 times; 21 of these 22 indicated a willingness to enter into negotiations; 9 of the 21 only received indications from land councils that they were willing to negotiate; and 14 companies have or are considering reducing expenditure as a result of problems with the act. The dollar value of these proposals for exploration commitments in 1981 terms was estimated at \$19.3m. As a result of the lack of progress, none of these funds have yet been committed. Most of the money has been diverted elsewhere in Australia where exploration is possible. This breakdown of some 11 years' duration of the exploration and development of mines in the Northern Territory has been complete.

Mr Deputy Speaker, most laymen are not familiar with the long lead-time in developing mines. The exploration, proving of the ore body and its reserves, feasibility evaluation and development are time-consuming and costly and the development of a new mine can take up to 15 years. Even if exploration on an intensive scale were to commence tomorrow, the 11 years' lack of activity and production has imposed an incredible cost on the Territory's development potential and the potential income of all Territorians, not to mention the lessening of our economic dependence on the Commonwealth, a dependence which, on the one hand, the Commonwealth finds considerable difficulty with and, on the other hand, keeps us in a position, so far as mining is concerned, of boxing on with our hands tied while receiving body blows on financing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what has the Aboriginal Land Rights Act done for Aboriginals? Most supporters of the act would say that at long last the Aboriginals are receiving justice for past misdeeds of generations of Australians. They are having land returned to them that is rightfully theirs. They are at long last having their self-respect returned to them by the ownership of that land. They may consider that justice has been done and they may well be right. They certainly have had land returned to them that they occupied at some time. They may have gained a measure of self-respect by owning the land but I think their victory in this issue has been a hollow one.

Aboriginals own the land for ever and a day in legislation only. They have a title which affords them no commercial leverage other than the right to extort mining royalties. They can neither borrow against it nor sell portions of it for any reason whatsoever. Certainly, they cannot have it taken off them if they fall on hard times. They have no worries about the introduction of wealth taxes, asset taxes or death duties but they have no opportunity to advance their living styles or conditions along the lines of all other Australians unless they receive continuous, large, annual injections of government funding. Whilst government funding is not under threat at the moment, I wonder just how long, after a national land rights act was running and all other states began receiving claims for large tracts of land and subsequent funding for the remaining 130 000 Aboriginals in Australia, before a breakdown in the ability of Australians to meet the commitment of this order would occur. It would make the problems with the public service superannuation scheme look like kindergarten ones.

The tying up of Australian land by this legislation has to be addressed more effectively than by the proposed Holding model. Western Australia has granted reserves of 219 000 km², approximately 9% of the state so far, and claims to another 40% of the state could be successful over the vacant Crown land in that state. They also have a further 173 000 km² of parks and reserves, nearly another 7% of the state. If our experience is any guide, over 50% of their state could be rapidly closed to them. South Australia has so far granted nearly 19% of the state to tribal interest groups, an amount of land exceeding 184 000 km², and has considerable amounts of vacant Crown land which could be

subject to claim, and the story just goes on and on. The alienation of Australia to one group of people is not serving the interests of Aboriginal people in the best way and it is time to work out better solutions to the problem of land rights and for the use of the resources of this land, which is valuable to all parties, to be returned to the Territory where it rightly belongs.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to this debate. The member for Victoria River gave some clear indications of what the 1967 referendum was about. Many people tend to think that the only thing that 1967 was about was drinking rights for Aborigines. I am sure that, if we could have seen into the future and seen the increased degradation and appalling misery that has been the lot of many Aborigines since that time, it might have had an effect on the way people voted. Of course, there were many other aspects and the key one was citizenship for Aborigines and the many privileges which that gave them compared to the terrible conditions under which they lived. No doubt, people felt that they were doing it in the best interests of the Aboriginal people but we can look back with some horror at the limitations placed upon their freedom. Maybe European Australians voting in that particular election were being a bit impertinent in the sense that, to my knowledge, they did not ask the Aboriginal people whether they wanted citizenship of this country. Did they understand what it all meant? I dare say only individual Aboriginal people can answer that. I believe that the large majority of Aboriginal people accept Australian citizenship. There are a few minor, noisy exceptions and we had an example of that in this Assembly a few months ago.

Citizenship gives rights and, with those rights, comes some responsibility. My greatest concern with the principle of land rights is that it could be used as a vehicle to divide this nation into 2 nations. I do not believe that such a proposition is in the best interests of either Aboriginal people or other Australians. However, such a proposition would be in the interests of people who are our enemies. There are people overseas who would see us as a country that is very rich in many resources. Certainly, we would be seen as a plum worthy of picking. If that can be done by any means, I am sure that there are those who are very interested in pushing that particular line.

I would refer honourable members to a particular idea that is being promoted in Australia, namely that Australia was conquered rather than settled. The ordinary man in the street's attitude is: 'Conquered or settled, who cares?' However, there are moves afoot to try to have the federal parliament declare that Australia was conquered. Apparently, in terms of international law, if people are considered to be a conquered people, then the implication is that they must be considered to be a sovereign people. The implication of sovereign people means that they are entitled to a sovereign state. There is international pressure through the United Nations in relation to Namibia. Maybe there is some reasonable point there but is it in anybody's interest to divide this country into two? It is not in interest of anyone within the country unless he has very warped views.

Another area of concern in this regard relates to the Makarata, the treaty. If Aboriginal people are Australian citizens, who has ever heard of people who belong to a nation making a treaty with a part of that nation? The biggest promoter of such ideas is none other than Mr Nugget Coombs, a gentleman who did his studies at the London School of Economics which is one of the great Marxist training grounds. He is a gentleman whom I believe very strongly is not to be trusted. He has attempted through this matter to add weight to the conquered status of Aboriginal people. It is an attempt to divide the nation. He is

trying to be subtle and cunning about it but I do not believe that any such attempts to divide this country will do us any good whatsoever.

The danger is that, if land rights land eventually became land sovereign to the Aboriginal people, it would mean that the owners of that land would be within their rights to invite any 'assistance' from abroad that they might like and the other nation could do nothing about it in terms of international law. Some of the friends who could be invited certainly would not be in the interests of any of us.

The defence implications would be very clear from what I have just said. In the Territory, we already have a closure of seas. It is difficult to obtain permits to travel over Aboriginal land. It really horrified me to read an article on land rights in the Bulletin a few weeks ago where it stated that Norforce, this small group of people who are supposed to be our army in the Territory - and they are few in number - are having great difficulty in obtaining permits to travel across Aboriginal land. It is an unbelievable situation. I note that, in the model that Mr Holding has proposed, officers of the Commonwealth and the states will have rights to travel over the land in the course of their duties. I certainly support that. How could we do otherwise?

Honourable members should be aware of the methods that the Marxists will use to try to pull the wool over our eyes. Members should be aware of the implications and, while we can still oppose what they are trying to do with words and win, we had better speak those words and make the Australian people well aware of the possibilities. Let us not kid ourselves with the old saying: 'It couldn't happen here'. My next door neighbour comes from Czechoslovakia. Occasionally, he talks to me about these matters and says: 'Do not be fooled into saying that it cannot happen here. That is what we were all saying in Czechoslovakia'. The Poles no doubt said the same. We know where they are today, to their great regret. Does that mean I am against land rights? Definitely not. I believe that land rights can be implemented in a manner that avoids the dangers that I have mentioned. I believe that it can be done in a way that can strengthen the citizenship of Aboriginal Australians and give them a desire to play a real role and contribute to the well-being of this whole nation.

The concept of inalienable freehold concerns me because, in the Territory experience, generally it relates to very large tracts of land held by land trusts or, worse still, by land councils on behalf of Aboriginal people. Pastor Albrecht had associations with Hermannsburg mission. He grew up with Aboriginal people and he knew their ways. He was one person who had great authority to talk with common sense on this matter. He likened the way we have given big tracts of land to councils or land trusts to the situation, say, if the people in Alice Springs were suddenly required by the town council to hand over all the titles to properties and the town council told them what they could and could not do. That was his description of the way we were doing it. He felt that that was indeed very wrong. I think you and I, Mr Deputy Speaker, have been well aware of the power struggles within Aboriginal land trusts, councils and other organisations. Some very bitter infighting occurs among these people. The question I would raise, Sir, and you mentioned it in your own speech, is this: are ordinary Aboriginal families any better off? They cannot help but be drawn into the squabbles of the power mongers, the power brokers. I am sure that they are not very happy with that side of things. I am sure that they are no better off than they were before. The solution is fairly simple and straightforward and I am sure it is what Pastor Albrecht would have suggested: we should give the land in small parcels to small groups. The smaller the group, the better, right down the nuclear family.

Hermannsburg was mentioned. Hermannsburg was owned by the Lutheran Church. Some time ago, it decided that Hermannsburg station should be cut up and given back to the Aboriginal people. I believe that it did this with a great deal of knowledge and wisdom. It divided it into small parcels for the various family groups and I believe that has worked very well. It was very interesting to note comments from people who had associations with land councils and some of their advisers. The councils were furious that the land had been divided into small groups rather than kept as one large property. One can only guess at the reason why they preferred it to be one large property. Did they want large tracts of land which would eventually become part of a second nation within this country? I am well aware that it took many years to complete negotiations on the pipeline. However, things started to move after the Lutheran mission had handed over the land in small parcels to the various groups. Although there were many small groups, negotiations became easier and the pipeline is a reality.

'Inalienable land' means that it cannot be sold. It means that you cannot raise equity on it. As one member said, about the only thing you can do is hope that somebody will discover some minerals on it and you might obtain some royalties. Why should the land be inalienable? I suppose the reasoning would be that, if we gave the land to Aboriginal people and they were able to sell it, whites would buy it and the Aboriginals would be without land. The truth of the matter is that much of this land would not be seen as being very valuable. It might be very difficult to sell anyway.

Another view is that, by making the land inalienable, we are being very paternalistic. In a sense, we are saying to Aboriginal people that they cannot manage their own affairs. I believe that a certain level of insult is attached to that. It certainly does not make them free agents, as are other Australians, in the matter of land. At this stage in our history, perhaps a balance between the 2 views is needed. In the model of land rights that I would like to see, there would be the capability to phase out the inalienable title when Aboriginal people, with full understanding, consider that it would be desirable to have the same rights in respect of land as the rest of us have. The smaller the parcel of land and the smaller the group having title to land, the easier it would be to phase out the inalienable titles for this land. The freedom to buy and sell land is something that all citizens should have. I would not like to be misquoted here. If they have the money, Aboriginal people are able to buy any land in Australia which comes on the market. We are talking about special land which would be available under claim.

I fully support the Chief Minister's proposition that the elected government of this Territory should decide upon the land rights for this area. Other states are to be given this right, provided they toe the line. That is the big stick - as long as the states follow the pattern that the federal government wants. If there is a dispute, there could be some almighty High Court battles. We do not have the privileges of a state and, unfortunately, we are told far too often by the federal government just how things should run. If we had a fair and reasonable government in Canberra, it would say: 'The Territory is heading towards statehood. It has to make its own decisions. It has to take responsibility and this is an area in which it should have responsibility'. We should not have to wait for Mr Holding's good graces to amend our act in a manner which he thinks is suitable.

I would remind honourable members that the previous Chief Minister introduced a 10-point plan on land rights which he believed would make things far more workable for the Territory. The ALP followed this with a 13-point plan. It is very interesting to note that, in relation to Mr Holding's model, all the

opposition is saying is that it does not want any changes whatsoever. It seems to have really done a turnaround. It wanted 13 points changed back in those days but what the Territory has been lumbered with now has become the great thing. I would love to hear an explanation for that and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will be able to display some very fancy footwork.

The model proposes land rights for town camps for Aboriginal people and also land rights on pastoral leases. Originally, it was only to be for inalienable Crown land. Other people have covered these points but this is of considerable interest to me. We have legislation in place or in train to allow these things to happen. I do not believe that the federal government should interfere in this particular area. The principle that Aboriginal land should be subject to Northern Territory law is absolutely vital otherwise it is part of a model which would deny a unified Australia. A one-law one-people concept is the only way to go even if it takes us many years to get there.

The question of land rights and mining has been fudged over and I believe that the wrong question has been asked many times. The proper question should be the one that I put to this Assembly a year ago: how much money has been put into mineral exploration on Aboriginal land and on Crown land? The answer is that, since self-government, \$115 000 has been spent on Aboriginal land and \$131.3m on Crown land. Those are the cold hard facts. You put your money where your mouth is.

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

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly will not take up too much of honourable members' time tonight. I simply wish to record a concern I have, particularly in my electorate. My concern is the almost sleight of hand way in which the preferred model deals with land claim procedures. Paragraph 4.1 says that Aboriginal land claims are to be on the basis of traditional entitlement, historical association, long-term occupational use and or specified purposes such as the needs of town campers.

Earlier on today we heard the member for Stuart talking about racial harmony, black bashing and the underdog. We had an incident in my electorate that came to a head approximately 4 months ago over the Christmas-New Year period. It related to people who were living in what I call a transient camp in Rocklands Drive. Honourable members will recall ...

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I think that, in this particular case, what the member has to say about the electorate of Wanguri and whatever Aboriginal people may do there scarcely could be regarded as relevant to the statement at hand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. That just underlines the tunnel vision of the member for MacDonnell. It seems that, if you get the sandstorms out of his eyes, he just does not see any part of the Territory other than that little area down there.

Mr Bell: It's tougher in MacDonnell than Wanguri.

Mr DALE: That is because you are down there.

Mr Bell: No, it is because there is more of it.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, over the Christmas-New Year period we had a number of problems that arose from people who were living at what I call a transient camp on Rocklands Drive. However, I wonder how this preferred model would affect the people who were living at that particular transient camp. My understanding of paragraph 4.1 is that they do not need to have traditional entitlement, nor historical association nor long-term occupation or use. They simply need to be able to specify purposes such as the need for town camps and they can lodge a land claim.

I will outline my concern about the preferred model and how it relates to racial disharmony, black bashing and the underdog. In my view, the underdogs in the particular incidents that developed because of that transient camp were the people who lived in the Daisy Yarmirr Hostel, as well as the other people who lived in the houses around that area. I can assure members that a number of people in those categories are Aboriginal people. It was those people who started to talk about disharmony within society, and black bashing was certainly part of what they were talking about. I wish to record my concern about this particular paragraph 4.1. I believe that the statement of the Chief Minister this morning that the Northern Territory opposes any grounds other than traditional entitlement is the correct way to go. I simply hope that somebody puts the case strongly enough to Mr Holding to take appropriate action to ensure that the people who live in suburbia do not have to worry about land claims being made on what are known to us as town camps.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like this afternoon to support the Chief Minister's statement concerning the preferred national land rights model proposed by the Commonwealth. I would like to make one thing quite clear from the start and that is that I believe in equal land rights for all Australians, be they Aboriginals, migrants or the locally-produced products like you and I, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not believe in any special rights for anybody. We all should be equal in this country. It is a free country and we should ensure that it remains that way. However, having said that, I accept that we have land rights with us. In fact, we have had land rights legislation for 9 years. The Northern Territory has had tremendous experience in this regard. We have learned to live with and accept land rights. I support the Chief Minister's comments regarding Mr Holding's preferred model of the amendments to the Land Rights Act.

We have had 9 years of land rights and one of the things that we have experienced during these 9 years, apart from an awful lot of litigation and debate, is considerable dissension in the community. That is something that really concerns me. We have had dissension on both sides. The Aboriginals are not satisfied with the situation. They are continually arguing and commencing litigation. We have pastoralists who have problems. The Everingham government put forward a 10-point package to amend the Land Rights Act and, regrettably, that package was never enacted because there was a change of government. I believe that the opposition put forward a 13-point package. We also had Justice Toohey's report. Regrettably, very few of these points have been picked up in Mr Holding's proposal.

My first concern is that the majority of white Territorians are greatly concerned about land rights. It is one thing to stand here and say that, but I can assure members that, when I move around my electorate and the Territory at large, one thing that is continually raised with me is the concern that white Territorians have about the land rights issue. I find that that concern is projected not only throughout the Northern Territory but right throughout the states in Australia. I have travelled interstate on a number of occasions. One of the things that was raised with me regularly was land rights and how it would

affect people. When the Land Rights Act was first brought into being in 1976, it was only going to affect the Northern Territory. Now we find, 9 years down the line, that it is starting to affect the states. This is where the reaction is starting to occur. Perhaps one could call it the backlash.

Recently, the Western Australian government attempted to put through its own land rights act. It was rejected by the upper house. Doubtless, it will try again but there has been considerable debate over there. New South Wales has accepted some form of land rights, although I believe it is very limited. It is the same in Victoria and in South Australia. Queensland has its own unique style. I believe that we must support a uniform land rights package that will cover the whole of Australia. It is ridiculous to have one form of land rights in the Northern Territory, another in Western Australia, another in Queensland, another in South Australia and yet another in New South Wales. I am not quite sure where Tasmania fits in but the whole scene is crazy. We should have a uniform package.

I have lived in the Northern Territory for 12 years and it has really concerned me that, during that time, the dignity of Aboriginal people has been eroded. I have seen them used as political tools by others who really do not have the interests of the Aboriginal people at heart, only their own vested interest, whatever that might be. I believe that Aboriginal people must stand up for themselves and re-establish their dignity. Instead of having to rely on yellow faces, as I heard the Leader of the Opposition refer to them the other day, and instead of having to rely on any other people, they should stand up and be counted and develop their own destiny. If they are prepared to do that, I for one will certainly support them.

Back in 1976, the federal Land Rights Act came into being. Since then, there have been 85 land claims lodged in the Northern Territory. In physical terms, that represents almost 50% of the Northern Territory. The claims are open-ended. There is no limitation on the number of claims under the existing act. Of course, where a claim to land has been rejected, that land is open to further claim. Of those 85-odd claims, only 15 have been resolved in those 9 years. 30 to 40 claims, most of which are fairly recent, are for reasonably small areas, like stock routes and so on. 20 to 25 claims really have an impact because they have been lodged for very large areas or for areas which include tourist facilities and so forth. Let us project that into the future. As I said, there have been 85 land claims in 9 years, 15 claims have been disposed of and the remainder are still outstanding. Even if there are no further claims, it will take 50 years to dispose of the claims that we already have. That is an absolutely ridiculous situation.

Let us have a look at the cost of the claims. We know that, after claims are lodged, they are processed by the courts. All interested parties engage the services of legal counsel who have to do a great deal of work and research. They employ anthropologists and so on. Recently, I was passing through Tennant Creek and I called in at the El Dorado Motel. In the garden around the pool was a group of gentlemen having a barbecue dinner. I took them to be members of a service club or some other group like that and thought no more about it. The next morning I happened to notice 2 very prominent QCs. I asked one of them what had been happening on the evening before and he told me that they were there for a land claim hearing. There would have been 20-odd fellows involved in that. I am not suggesting that they were all QCs, but they were all legal counsel of some description, with their staff. That was for just one claim. If we imagine the cost of that one claim and project that over the 85-plus claims, the total cost of allowing land claims to go through our courts is

astronomical. I question whether we can afford this sort of extravagance when we see the \$1000m cuts that Mr Hawke spoke of this morning on the radio. I wonder if anybody has ever really thought about the cost of all of these land claims to Australia.

Recently, I was in Alice Springs, and, as I mentioned in the Assembly last week, I witnessed a demonstration by Aborigines down there. It was a protest against the Holding package. The honourable member for MacDonnell happened to be in attendance. The thing that came out of that, Mr Deputy Speaker, was that the Aborigines were criticising Messrs Hawke and Holding at great length and they claimed that these people were responsible for tearing down the Land Rights Act. However, they commented that the ALP was okay. I question the position of Northern Territory members of the ALP because, as I understand it, they are in conflict with their federal masters at the moment because they are taking the position of the Aborigines in the Northern Territory and arguing against the package put forward by the federal minister.

I would like to quote from some comments made recently by that honourable federal minister. He described his model as containing 'proposals that are not a final outline of Commonwealth legislation but a preferred basis for consultation'. He said that his December 1983 commitment to federal parliament, to develop a set of proposals which would represent the government's position on land rights for public scrutiny, had been honoured. Indeed, it has but I would suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, now that the Western Australian legislation has been defeated, we will very quickly see Mr Holding backing away from his preferred land rights model. That is not the final legislation that we will see because Mr Holding's position is well known and I believe he has been forced into this particular package through pressure applied by others within the federal Labor Party. I believe that we must fight to enact legislation that is in the best interests of all citizens of the Northern Territory and we must fight for that tooth and nail. I support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief because honourable members have gone over most of the ground but I feel it is important that I note a couple of points in relation to the statement before the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, honourable members will recall a statement which has been quoted many times in the Assembly over the years in debates about the Land Rights Act and about the expectations and apprehensions of people in the Territory as to just how far land rights can go in the Northern Territory. The statement I am referring to was made by Mr Viner several years ago when he was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He issued a publication condemning people spreading rumours that claimable land in the Northern Territory could reach as high as 50% of the total area of the Northern Territory. He described these rumours as outrageous and racist. I think he said that the maximum claimable land in the Territory was about 27%; I know it was very close to 30%. We all know what has happened since then. In reading the second-reading speeches from the federal parliament when it debated the self-government legislation back in 1978, I noticed that Dr Everingham of the ALP had an even more conservative view which was quite interesting. He touched on the black-white relationships in the Northern Territory. He said that there were many misconceptions and apprehensions held by white people in the Northern Territory about the Land Rights Act which, at that time, had been operating for nearly 2 years. I will quote a short paragraph from Dr Everingham. He referred to an interview on a program called 'This Day Tonight'.

The misconceptions relate to the rights of Aborigines overriding those of whites. For example, it was stated at the interview that

land claims now in existence and in the pipeline cover at least 50% of the Territory and Aborigines are currently negotiating not only for mining royalties but, in one instance, for 36% of the gross profits as well. There has never been and I cannot see that there will ever be from the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council, the bodies responsible for negotiating land rights for the Northern Territory, a claim for anything like 50% of the Territory. I think the claim is for less than one-eighth of the Northern Territory.

That is a second clear and indisputable demonstration that the very members of parliament who passed the Aboriginal Land Rights Act had no conception of just how far land rights could be taken in the Northern Territory. Obviously, they never envisaged anything like the situation we have today.

I move on to the preferred model. I am indeed worried. My view is that it could only be very detrimental to the Northern Territory to amend the Land Rights Act in many of the ways that are listed in the preferred model. I used to think once that any amendment to the Land Rights Act would be an improvement but I am certainly far from that view now. I would like to comment on the extension of eligibility to claim beyond what we currently know as traditional attachment. I think that that would extend land claims in the Northern Territory significantly because there have been quite a number of claims where land has not been granted because the commissioner did not find that there were traditional owners for at least part of the land claimed. As members have mentioned, it appears from the model that the extension will mean that virtually any non-freehold land in which the government has an interest could be potentially claimable. I am not saying that it all will be claimable but it has that potential. Obviously, we must take a cautious approach here, having regard to how far people thought the first Land Rights Act would go.

I would like to make another point. The model includes a system whereby, in the event of a landholder not agreeing to exploration or mining activity or to conditions relating to either of those activities or the compensation to be paid relating to either of those activities, the matter will go to a tribunal which will make recommendations to a minister. The question is: who is the minister in the case of the Northern Territory? Will it be a Territory minister? The federal government has the power to legislate in that direction. I guess we must assume it will be a federal minister. If we expand significantly the number of matters, which should be the responsibility of the Northern Territory but which can be referred to a Commonwealth minister for determination, it will mean mining companies and others will have further dealings with the bureaucracy every time they want to do something. That is a terrible shame.

We have made an informal approach to the federal minister's staff in Canberra to clarify which minister is being referred to as far as the Northern Territory is concerned. We did not receive an answer. I do not think they had thought about it because, clearly, the preferred national land rights model has been drawn up by the Commonwealth with the view to giving the states the message that, if they set up a system as outlined in the model, then the Commonwealth will stay out of their hair. The message to the states is to set up a system whereby a state minister determines these matters and, provided there is some justice in the process, that will be okay by the federal government. How do we fit in? We do not know. For that very reason, I am very sceptical about it all. I support the statement of the Chief Minister. I believe that it is really the only sensible position that we can take.

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been listening to the debate and would not have spoken on it if it were not for one point which was consistent with the point I made in another debate this morning: this is again a little warning to the states. When I was working on this last night and over the weekend, I found 18 points that I could have spoken on. I draw the Assembly's attention and the attention of the states to paragraph 7.8: 'Living areas to be subject to normal Commonwealth laws and state laws to the extent they are consistent with Commonwealth law'. It is the neatest vehicle I have ever seen put up to overturn totally the provisions of section 51 of the Constitution in respect to areas which this model envisages will be handed from within the states to the Commonwealth.

For the purpose of this exercise, the Commonwealth relies on the amendment to placitum (26) of section 51 of the Constitution. I think I have mentioned this before. Lumb and Ryan argue that that placitum was originally intended by the designing fathers of our Constitution to prevent discriminatory law being made by the Commonwealth or a state in respect of Aboriginal people. It was a discriminatory provision in the Constitution nonetheless. It was designed specifically to provide for discriminatory laws made against Kanakas. That is why it was worded the way it was. The wording was such as to provide that they could make special laws in respect of people other than Aborigines. Over the years, that became distorted and turned around. By the time the referendum was conducted, it was read as meaning that it empowered the Commonwealth to make discriminatory laws against Aborigines, which was an absolute distortion of the original design. Under that guise, we have the Commonwealth saying that it can impose Aboriginal land rights on the states throughout the Commonwealth. No one in his right mind would attempt to anticipate which way the High Court would go. Perhaps I am not in my right mind but I believe that, considering the Franklin Dam case, Queensland and the rest of the states can challenge the Commonwealth until they are blue in the face because I believe that any such enactment by the Commonwealth minister would be upheld by the High Court as being valid, having regard to the way placitum (26) of section 51 has been treated.

However, it extends that in respect of areas where, under state law, excisions are made in urban areas or near urban areas for the purposes of living areas. Remember the states can pass complementary legislation to this and the Commonwealth law will not apply to that state law granting land rights. Take the example of, say, Western Australia enacting legislation to provide for living areas. In respect of state laws on health, education, electricity etc, the Commonwealth, by this vehicle, proposes to give itself power to legislate in respect of those excised areas and take them under its umbrella. May the states wake up before it is too late.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support. I noted with interest some of the vehement expressions from the other side of the Assembly that did not have much to do with the issue at all. I will give them their due.

I would like to put into context where I think the Northern Territory is in relation to land rights and where we are heading in the future. We have now had land rights for just on 10 years. 49% of Territory land has been claimed or is under claim. We have 167 land claims and I have been advised by the department that we have about 20 years of hearings ahead of us at the current rate of disposing of the land claims. We have been to the High Court 4 times. We have had constant disputes amongst our own community and in the courts about a whole range of issues in relation to the act. In my view, there is no way that any reasonable person can say that the act has been a success. From time to time, we have had debates that have demonstrated without any doubt how the

Land Rights Act has prejudiced the interests and development of all Territorians, including Aborigines. We must look to our future. We believe that we can spend the next 10 years going through the motions that we have had in the last 10 years. There does not seem to be a lot that we can look forward to.

Given that Mr Holding's preferred model is simply a discussion paper, it is not really possible for us to forecast what will result from it and what his bill will mean for Australia when it becomes an act. But as the Northern Territory has more experience on land rights issues than any state in Australia, I believe it is essential for us to give our views on the discussion paper. There are so many aspects to the minister's discussion paper that it is not possible to debate them all in this Assembly in a whole sittings, let alone in one afternoon. But I think it is absolutely essential that we define and make known our views and concerns because this will not go away. It will become a problem for the whole country. My great concern is that, if the problems that the Northern Territory has had with land rights were inflicted upon the rest of Australia, we would have an economic crisis in this country such as we have never seen before. I do not believe that any Australian state ought to be subjected to that possibility.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this matter will not go away. It will come before this Assembly again when the minister's bill is drafted and made available for consideration. I do not know when that is likely to be but, if we have as much trauma with the next bill from the federal parliament as we have had with the existing one, life could be pretty unpleasant. Where do we go from here? I do not believe it is possible for us any longer to accept the premise that land in the Northern Territory should or can be administered and ruled over by another parliament. That is just not acceptable any longer. We have reached the point where we need to take charge of those things ourselves for the benefit of our community. We do not want our problems addressed by people whose interests have nothing to do with us whatsoever. Whether that will take 2 years or 5 years or 10 years is another matter but that must be the objective of Territorians in the long term.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. Some of them were very positive and worth listening to. We can be assured that the question has not gone away at all and it will be back as soon as the minister's bill is drafted.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Koolpinyah

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I seek leave of absence for the honourable member for Koolpinyah who is interstate on important business.

Leave granted.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr DALE (Wanguri)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, last Wednesday 17 April, during a debate on the motion by the Leader of the Opposition regarding equal opportunities and the status of women, I made a statement that is recorded in the third line of the last paragraph on page 59 of the Hansard for that day. It reads: 'I was a member of the Northern Territory Police Force for 11 years'. That should read: 'I was a member of police forces for approximately 11 years'.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 separate groups of cognate bills, serials 110 and 111 and serials 90, 91, 92 and 93 being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to respectively, the second readings, the committee report stages and the third readings of the bills together, and the bills being considered separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

OFFSHORE WATERS (APPLICATION OF TERRITORY LAWS) BILL

(Serial 110)

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 111)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of these bills is to apply Territory laws to the waters off the Northern Territory coast in a more comprehensive manner than the law currently provides. The general principle is that laws only apply to areas outside the Territory, which ends at low-water mark, if they have a sufficient connection with the Territory and are not subject to a contrary intention appearing in particular acts. The coastal sea is that area 3 nautical miles offshore from the Territory coast. In 1980, 2 Commonwealth acts gave the Territory certain rights, powers and title in the coastal sea, including express power to legislate for this area.

Section 60 of the Interpretation Act, enacted before 1980, provides that every Territory act has effect in the coastal sea as if it were a part of the Territory. There are 4 problems with this section in its present form: firstly, it applies only to legislation; secondly, it is unclear whether it has any retrospective operation; thirdly, it is subject to any contrary intention; and, fourthly, it does not dispense with the need to show a sufficient connection with the Territory. Being enacted before 1980, there may be argument as to its validity although the view of the Department of Law is that it is valid. The government considers that the provision applying Territory laws to the coastal seas should be changed to provide that all laws, not just legislation, in force in the Territory, other than Commonwealth laws, apply to the coastal sea as if it were part of the Territory as well as overcoming the problems outlined above. This is the effect of clause 3(1) of the offshore bill.

A zone of economic exploitation, referred to as the 'adjacent area', is defined in the Commonwealth Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967. Generally, this is an area 200 nautical miles from the coast. In the case of the Territory, however, it is limited by the location of Indonesia. The outer boundaries vary generally between 100 to 150 nautical miles. The Commonwealth has empowered the Territory to legislate for subterranean mining and shipping facilities occurring in the adjacent area beyond the coastal sea with no need to show a sufficient connection. There is no Territory legislation exercising this power. This means, for example, that the Territory would have to show that a particular act was intended to apply in the adjacent area and that the matter had a sufficient connection with the Territory. Western Australia and Tasmania

have legislated to apply their laws to subterranean mining and shipping facilities in the adjacent area. Again, it is considered that the Territory should do likewise and thereby avoid the need to show that particular laws are intended to apply to this area and have a sufficient connection with the Territory. This is the effect of clause 3(2).

Many state acts dealing with offshore matters also contain a provision enabling regulations to be made which exclude the application of their laws to the above areas in specified situations. Examples of where such a provision might be used in the Territory would be if the Territory entered into a joint venture agreement with a foreign government concerning scientific research within the coastal seas or subterranean mining in the adjacent area and wished to exclude Territory laws concerning, say, workers' compensation or fauna protection from applying to foreign nationals. This is provided for in clause 4.

The Interpretation Act Amendment Bill repeals section 60 of the Interpretation Act. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 90)

MINING AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 91)

COAL AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 92)

PETROLEUM AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 93)

Bills presented together and read a first time.

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

These amendments are designed to facilitate the creation of further Territory parks and reserves and to ensure the conservation and proper management of both existing and future parks whilst pursuing the responsible development of the Territory's resources. The proposals are designed to rationalise existing mechanisms which already accommodate exploration and mining in Territory parks and reserves. Experience to date indicates that the legislative mechanisms currently embodied within the Mining Act, the Coal Act, the Petroleum Act and the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act are unsatisfactory to developers and the public alike. The requirement for a plan of management to be in place prior to any exploration is hindering the creation of further parks and reserves and unduly delaying the processing of exploration and mining proposals.

Sections 17 and 18 of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act cater for exploration and mining, but require that, before any exploration or mining activity can be permitted in a park or reserve, such activity must be in accordance with a plan of management, must include a detailed description of the mining activity and must set out the conditions that will apply to the operations. These requirements are complemented by provisions in the Mining Act which prevent the Minister for Mines and Energy from granting an exploration or mining title in a park or reserve unless the proposed activity is in accordance with the plan of management.

The drafting of a plan of management is a complex and time-consuming process, allowing for public review and subsequent evaluation by the Conservation Commission. It can be expected that a plan of management may not be completed for at least 12 to 18 months after the declaration of a park. In the case of Arltunga Historical Reserve, the Conservation Commission has been preparing a plan of management for over 4 years. Applications for exploration or mining titles made under the Mining Act in respect of that land have been held in abeyance for the same time. The Commonwealth government's Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has taken similar periods of time to produce plans of management for Kakadu and Uluru National Parks. Apart from the delays inherent in such a system, the procedure itself involves an impossible situation which requires the disclosure of the development of a possible mineral resource before it has been discovered or even sought.

The overall objective is to create and manage more parks more effectively without unnecessary inhibition of mining interests. The Northern Territory endorsed world and national conservation strategies both of which recognise that conservation and development can and must be mutually supportive. Economic development, without wise environmental conservation controls, is no longer acceptable nor is it necessary or desirable for narrow conservation objectives to hinder sound development proposals. These bills seek to revise certain legislative procedures in order to establish acceptable arrangements to accommodate exploration and mining activities within parks and reserves declared under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act. Duplication of requirements under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and the Mining, Coal and Petroleum Acts adds to the difficulty of creating new parks and to the complexities of detailing exploration and mining approvals. It is to overcome that problem that these proposals are before us today. It is also proposed to adopt administrative procedures between the Department of Mines and Energy and the Conservation Commission which will complement these amendments to the legislation. I will table those procedures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said previously, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and the Mining, Coal and Petroleum Acts have stringent statutory requirements that must be met prior to the granting of any exploration or mining title within a park or reserve. Exploration is a temporary occupation of land for the purpose of searching for or evaluation of mineral deposits or hydrocarbons, possibly involving sub-surface sampling. While large areas of land may be required for exploration, that activity involves only minor disturbances to the land. In the rare event that an ore body is discovered, the mine and related facilities require a miniscule amount of land. Less than 0.05% of the Territory's land surface is utilised for mineral recovery. Exploration is conducted over a little more than 15% of the land surface. Mining is a conditional land use, limited in size and time, for the purpose of extracting minerals and hydrocarbons in order to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life. Indeed, mining can also be the reason for the creation of a park. For example, I cite the old Arltunga Goldfield. If there had been no mining at Arltunga, I doubt that any consideration would have been given to the creation of a park in the area.

The Territory government has effective arrangements for the regulation of exploration and the development of resources under these acts and for the assessment of the environmental impact proposals under the Environmental Assessment Act. To retain the additional arrangements under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act is like using a sledgehammer to kill an ant. The proposals will enable assessment and possible utilisation of mineral resources within a park while, at the same time, providing maximum protection for the values of that park. As I have indicated, such procedures reflect the concepts involved

in the national conservation strategy. Exploration and mining in parks is permitted in other states. For example, in South Australia, exploration is permitted in the Simpson Desert National Park and the development of a magnesite deposit is permitted at Balcanooona. Western Australia's policy is very similar to the proposals before us today and there are quarries and sand-pits operating in Victoria's national parks.

In order to simplify the legislative controls yet ensure that the Conservation Commission has adequate input into determining the terms and conditions to be applied to future exploration and mining within parks and reserves, the following principles will apply. The regulation and control of exploration and resource development is to be administered under the provisions of the Mining, Coal and Petroleum Acts and not duplicated under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Acts. Secondly, the present controls under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act are to be revised to exclude the requirement that current approval processes be in accordance with a plan of management. In their place, procedures are to be adopted which acknowledge a consultative role between the commission and the department in relation to exploration and mining.

The revised procedures provide the Conservation Commission with significant checks and safeguards for controlling both exploration and mining activities within parks and reserves and in protecting park values and resources. The new proposals will cater for a smoother legislative path and administrative regime while allowing for a critical role by the Conservation Commission in determining conditions. The public will be kept informed in several ways. For instance under the Mining Act, all applications for exploration licences are to be advertised in the media and a minimum period of 30 days is allowed for public comment. Development titles undergo a similar process and, in addition, may be subject to public scrutiny. The Secretary of the Department of Mines and Energy will be empowered to impose conditions in an exploration licence to maintain natural or cultural values of a park and, where actual mining is involved, the project will be subject to the provisions of the Environmental Assessment Act administered by the Minister for Conservation. This provides for full public consultation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was concerned to hear some very erroneous statements regarding these proposals on this morning's Territory Extra. The comments were symptomatic of the hysteria surrounding this issue through the promulgation of misinformation. For instance, the Department of Mines and Energy has always had responsibility for the rehabilitation of mine sites, not the Conservation Commission, as was suggested by the commentator this morning. It was also claimed that no mining projects had been subject to an environmental impact statement. This is simply not true. Recent mining and gas developments that have been subject to a full EIS procedure include Pine Creek goldmine, the Mereenie oil development project and the Palm Valley gas and pipeline projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to complement these legislative amendments, the Department of Mines and Energy and the Conservation Commission have reached agreement on a set of administrative arrangements to ensure that the proper consultative process is implemented. The arrangements start with the acknowledgement of the commitment to protect areas of particular sensitivity. Currently, the department and the Conservation Commission are determining a list of areas that will be reserved from occupation under exploration and development title. Without wishing to pre-empt those discussions, I would imagine that such areas as the Cobourg Peninsula, Henbury Meteorite Craters and the Katherine and Finke Gorges are the types of things that will be included on that list. It is a responsible attitude which will ensure that those areas

deserving protection are indeed protected in the full knowledge of the assets forgone by locking them away from resource development. All these proposals are aimed at speeding up and refining administrative processes without diminishing the opportunity for public comment. A document outlining the proposals has been prepared and is available to the public. I have also circulated copies of that book to all members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

STATUS OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 84)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The aim of this bill is to provide that a child conceived following the use of artificial insemination by donor or in vitro fertilisation using donated semen or ova will be the child of the couple who have consented to this procedure and not the child of the person who donated the genetic material. As honourable members are probably aware, artificial insemination by donor means a woman's ovum is fertilised by the semen of a man who is not her husband. In vitro fertilisation occurs when the ovum is fertilised outside the woman's body and then the fertilised ovum is implanted in her uterus - 'test tube' babies, as they are called. In this case, either the semen or the ovum or both may be donated. The use of artificial insemination by donor has been used in Australia for about 15 years as a means of overcoming infertility. The use of in vitro fertilisation is more recent, dating back to 1978.

The law has failed to respond to these developments and continues to treat the genetic father or mother as the legal parent of any child born as a result. I think it is clear that, for the sake of the child, the parents, the donors and the community, it is desirable that the social parents of the child, not the genetic parents, should be treated in law as the parents of the child. The question of the status of children conceived by artificial insemination by donor has been under consideration by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General since 1977. The deliberations of the standing committee had almost been finalised when the practice of in vitro fertilisation developed to the extent that successful pregnancies were achieved. The standing committee considered it appropriate to incorporate in any legislation provisions dealing with the status of children conceived by in vitro fertilisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the amendment before the Assembly deals with the status of children born as a result of either artificial insemination by donor or in vitro fertilisation. The bill applies to married or de facto couples. Proposed section 5(a) defines 'married woman' to include a woman who is living with a man, as his wife, on a genuine domestic basis, although not legally married to him. The bill applies to all pregnancies and the children, whenever and wherever they are born, but alters their status only for the purposes of Territory law. Where a wife, with the consent of her husband, undergoes a fertilisation procedure and, as a result, becomes pregnant, then, for the purposes of Territory law, proposed section 5(d) deems the husband to be the father of any child born as a result even though he did not supply the semen. Similarly, the woman who gives birth to the child is deemed, for the purposes of

the law of the Territory, to be the mother of the child even though the child was conceived by fertilisation of an ovum taken from another woman.

As a consequence of these changes, the bill provides that, where the husband consents, the legal relationship that existed between the child conceived as a result of these fertilisation procedures and its genetic parents is completely severed. Neither will have any rights or obligations with respect to the other. Where the husband does not consent to a fertilisation procedure, then 2 approaches are adopted. Proposed section 5(c) will provide that, in respect of an ovum, the woman who gives birth will always be deemed the mother. The husband's consent is irrelevant. This is for the obvious reason that the husband has no relationship to an ovum per se and, on a practical level, under present Australian guidelines, an ovum implantation cannot be carried out without the husband's consent. Where the husband does not consent, then he is not deemed the semen donor and, consequently, he is not deemed the father. The link between the genetic father and child is severed only if the husband has consented. If the husband does not consent to AID or IVF, then the link between the semen donor and the child is preserved in the terms of proposed section 5(f). The semen donor will incur no obligations or rights with respect to the child unless he becomes the husband of the mother. This is going to be great fun in committee.

Were it not for the changes made by this bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, a child born following these procedures would be illegitimate. As a consequence, he or she would be disadvantaged by the laws of registration of birth, inheritance of property and the laws of nationality. The bill is in line with legislative reforms passed last year in both Victoria and South Australia. Legislation has also been passed in New South Wales, but it applies only to donor-semen children. Donor-ova children are not covered. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS REGISTRATION BILL (Serial 114)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill establishes boards and provides for the registration of 10 categories of practitioners working in the health field. Members of these professions have been seeking registration in the Northern Territory for some time and they welcome the provisions of this bill. Honourable members will note that the groups provided for are Aboriginal health workers, chiropractors, dieticians, naturopaths, occupational therapists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists and social workers. If a person wishes to become registered in one of these categories, then that person must have the prescribed qualifications and must apply to the relevant board.

The qualifications necessary for registration are included in the bill. Generally, the qualifications required are eligibility for membership of the particular professional association. One category that does not have a national professional association is that of the Aboriginal health worker. In this category, the qualification for registration will be the Basic Skills Certificate issued by the Department of Health to Aboriginal health workers who

successfully complete the course of training provided by the Northern Territory. The bill makes no attempt to define exactly what these people do or do not do - or cannot do, for that matter. What it does provide is that, if a person wishes to practise or hold himself out as a practitioner in any of the fields covered, he must be registered in that particular field.

The bill provides for a separate board for each category of practitioner with a majority of the particular practitioners on each board. One member of each board shall be a representative of the community. The chairman of each board shall be the Secretary for Health or his nominee. In this way, control of the board's activity will be in the hands of the professions but important links with the government and the community will be maintained. One major advantage of this bill is the fact that we have 1 piece of legislation rather than 10 separate acts. This will ensure that, where it is desirable, uniformity will be maintained without limiting the individual authority of each board. The government is pleased to be able to provide to these people, who have a part to play in the field of community health, the opportunity to control and manage their own professional affairs. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to commend the government for making the announcement today that it is to build a bridge across Rapid Creek linking the Nightcliff and Rapid Creek areas with Casuarina and the Darwin Institute of Technology. I had discussions with the honourable member for Nightcliff and I am happy to refine my term to a 'bicycle-cum-pedestrian bridge'. Hopefully, it will be wide enough to include horses at the same time. Certainly, it is a very positive step on the part of the government and I am sure that it will be one of the best-used bridges in the Darwin area. I put on record my appreciation that the government has at last taken notice of the requests that I have made repeatedly since I became a member of this Assembly and I am pleased by that statement.

Mr Dondas: You can thank your local member for Casuarina.

Mr SMITH: If the member for Casuarina has had some responsibility too, I am pleased to place my thanks to him on record as well.

Of course, politicians are never satisfied. I would ask the government to give consideration to the provision of a bridge across Rapid Creek further downstream linking the water gardens with the suburb of Millner. That would be a much less expensive bridge and it would certainly have a similar effect by opening up the water gardens to a large number of people in Millner. It would cut down the motorised traffic in that area and would encourage people to partake of healthy exercise such as walking, cycling or 'horsing' across the bridge in that vicinity. I recommend that suggestion to the government and hope that some commitment of money can be made for that project in the next financial year.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a number of points I would like to raise in tonight's adjournment. The first relates to the Alice Springs water supply. After chasing 2 ministers around for several months, I find out that the salt content of our water is good for our hearts. I am

delighted to have had the assurance. I am still a bit worried about the taps, the hot water services, the air-conditioners and the car radiators. Maybe we could knock the salt out on its way into town and then package it and put it by the tap to take it after drinking water.

Last week in the Assembly, the member for MacDonnell criticised government members for their attitude to his electoral legislation. He said that not one minister had spoken in support of it because we did not regard it as important. I and a number of members spoke on the proposals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I received a certain letter earlier this month. When I first opened it, I did not pay much attention to the date until I read the letter. I thought it was a practical joke because it was dated 1 April. I thought the honourable member for MacDonnell was practical joking. He was not content with just sending a letter, Mr Deputy Speaker. He jumped off his perch in the Assembly last week and, despite the urgings of members opposite, he would not get back on his perch. He attacked me up hill and down dale for abusing my position and not seeking to pour oil on troubled waters with a permit system for Ayers Rock. I would like to explain my role in relation to the wild and unfounded accusations made by the honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as some members would know, last month I travelled to Adelaide to represent the Minister for Tourism on a trip up the South Road. Prior to leaving Alice Springs, I contacted the office of the Minister for Conservation and gave the names of the journalists who would travel with me. I asked if his office could arrange permits for them to go to Ayers Rock and take some photographs. I understood that that was duly set in train. I left Adelaide and arrived in Coober Pedy a couple of days later to receive a message from the Director of the Conservation Commission, Mr Thomas, asking that I phone him in Darwin. I did so and was advised that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service had rejected the application for the journalists to go to Ayers Rock and take photographs. My first reaction was one of annoyance but I went back into the dinner and advised the journalists and said that, if they had any queries, they should contact Dr Ovington and gave them his telephone number.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the following morning, Mr Kim Lockwood, a journalist from the Melbourne Herald, phoned Dr Ovington's office and was advised that he was unavailable and would be unavailable for another week. We continued on towards Ayers Rock. The member for MacDonnell said last week that I should have tried to establish telephone contact all the way up the South Road. He must never have travelled that road. There are very few telephones between Coober Pedy and Ayers Rock. But that point aside, we travelled on to Ayers Rock. When we arrived there, we attempted to contact officers from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, who were there to authorise or deny the issue of permits, only to find out that the one and only officer there had gone into town.

At no stage did I go public or attempt to exploit that politically. I just stood back and played a completely neutral role although I must admit I was sorely tempted to issue a press statement attacking the stance of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for denying a responsible photographer from the Melbourne Herald and a responsible young reporter from the Centralian Advocate permits to enter the Ayers Rock area and take photographs of a major national tourist attraction.

Subsequent to that, the Melbourne Herald, as was quite within its rights, published a story on the prohibition and wrote an editorial on it. I support exactly what was said in that editorial. It is absurd that journalists and photographers should be denied access to a national tourist attraction like

Ayers Rock. The absurdity of the situation can be demonstrated because that photographer had some very sophisticated camera equipment and could stand outside the park, lean on the fence with a telescopic camera and take a photograph but, if he had stepped 2 feet inside the fence, it would have been illegal. I think the permit system surrounding Ayers Rock has gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. It is little wonder that community advisers and others who deny access to people like this are being held up to public ridicule.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think for the record's sake I should read into the Hansard the honourable member's letter or, if he has no objection, I will table it for other honourable members who would like to see its absurd contents.

We have seen the opening of 3 more major sporting facilities in central Australia and we have well and truly established ourselves in Alice Springs now as the sporting capital of Australia. The Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs opened 2 major facilities in recent weeks. The first was the Alice Springs Basketball Stadium. An exhibition match was played by 2 visiting sides, 1 from Adelaide and 1 from Brisbane. It was a most enjoyable night for basketball and sports fans generally in central Australia.

The second major facility which opened was the Alice Springs Cycle Club's velodrome on the northern edge of town in the Braitling electorate. The exhibitions and the races that were put on by that cycle club over the Easter break were very enjoyable. Shortly after the official opening, it was noted that the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs disappeared fairly quickly. I think he knew he would be lined up to substitute for the former Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs in a race between himself and myself. When the officials turned round, Jim Robertson had gone for broke so that race still has not been held. I remind the minister and the former minister that, at some time in the not-too-distant future, the Alice Springs Cycle Club would very much like to put that race on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the third sporting facility to be opened in Alice Springs was the Alice Springs Indoor Cricket Stadium. I do not want to bore members with details concerning that opening. I have told most of them about the episode which I regard as the high spot in my political life. I was vice-captain to Rod Marsh, the world record wicketkeeper. Rod Marsh's side played the 'rest of the world'. The second ball of my over whistled across the top of the stumps, beating the batsman hands down. Like lightning, Marsh jumped forward and stumped him. At his suggestion, we are bringing out a book called 'Stumped Marsh Bowled Vale', and it will really be a collector's item. Despite what the Centralian Advocate said, our side was not thrashed but came second by a mere 20 runs.

That point aside, I would like to pay tribute to Rod Marsh. From the moment he got off the plane until he left some 48 hours later, he did not stop. He visited a number of institutions - the Bindi Centre, Giles House, the YMCA, the School of the Air - and, wherever he went, young people in particular, bailed him up for autographs and, indeed, many older people did too. He was in my office for an hour or so, drinking a beverage from Western Australia, Swan Gold, which he supports very strongly. He is now working for that company. When he came outside after about an hour or so in my office, there were about 30 or 40 young boys seeking his autograph. Instead of just brushing past them, because he was running late for the opening of the stadium, he introduced himself to each of those young fellows and signed autographs for them. Wherever people walked up to him, he signed autographs for them. I have 2 cricket bats and a number of books autographed by Rod Marsh.

Mr Deputy Speaker, last but certainly not least, I would like to pay tribute tonight to a former resident of central Australia and a government employee. I venture to say that this person is probably one of the most dedicated and hardworking public servants that I have had the good fortune to meet. I refer to Mrs Helen Daff, formerly of Giles House. I sought some information on Mrs Daff from former employees in central Australia and I will read out basically what was said in the response:

Mrs Daff was born on 12 May 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. After Mrs Daff's father and sister were killed by the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, she decided to flee from that country. She came in 1949 to Western Germany, where she was active with the International Repatriation Organisation from 1949 to 1952. She cared for displaced children in Germany and Italy and this also involved institutional care. In 1952, Mrs Daff migrated to Australia. She worked up to 1958 in Callen Park, NSW, a mental home for children and also in some other institutions for juveniles in NSW. In 1958, Mrs Daff came to the Northern Territory and was a matron at Dundas House, Darwin, until 1964. From 1964 to 1974, she spent 10 years in Essington House, Darwin, looking after and caring for children until Cyclone Tracy. During the cyclone, she cared for and protected 45 children even though she had been badly injured herself.

In 1976, Mrs Daff won a Churchill Fellowship and, in the frame of this Churchill Fellowship, she spent time in juvenile institutions in England and the USA. During her time in Darwin, she fostered 5 Aboriginal children, brought them up to adult age and also had a natural daughter. During this time, she was working as a volunteer worker in Bagot with Aboriginal people. In March 1977, she came to Alice Springs where she was superintendent at Giles House until February 1985 when she retired because of a back injury and her husband's sickness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I had the pleasure of visiting Giles House many times and, on a number of occasions, I picked up the kids there and took them to boxing tournaments which were held in the West's football club. Most of those coloured kids knew, of course, that Wests and Pioneers were bitter enemies on the field and, on the way over, some of the kids said to me: 'What is the major bout tonight?' I said: 'It is myself and the president of West's football club'. Unbeknown to me, when I let the kids off the back of the truck, they went in there and spread the word round. When I went to round them up at 10 o'clock that night to take them back, they were all very disappointed that the major boxing event of the evening had not come to pass. Mrs Daff introduced the very successful reality therapy founded by the American psychologist, Dr Glasser, about 20 years ago. She brought to Giles House the highest level of management and care that an institution could reach. Professionals from all over Australia visited constantly and were surprised at the success, the high standard and the smooth running of the place. Through reality therapy, Mrs Daff changed many youngsters from a life of crime to being responsible persons in the community. For example, last Christmas, Mrs Daff received 37 thank-you cards and letters with flowers from former detainees. They all said that, if Mrs Daff and Giles House had not been there, they would have spent their lives in jail but now they have learned responsibility and have become exemplary citizens.

Many projects in central Australia benefited from Mrs Daff and the boys and girls at Giles House. Those institutions that received assistance from her included Buffalo Hall, the Housing Commission, the Indoor Cricket Stadium, Traeger Park, the speedway, the rodeo grounds, the hospital - in emergencies and

for decorationsetc - the litter survey, the Todd and Charles Rivers banks and beds. Mrs Daff tried hard to get land for the Giles House farm and, after many difficulties, finally succeeded. It is now flourishing. Mrs Daff was always available to the youngsters and the staff 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am certain that I speak for other members of the Assembly who know Mrs Daff and, indeed, all of the residents in central Australia who have come in contact with her, when I say that her loss to central Australia will be Western Australia's gain. She will be sadly missed.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in the adjournment this evening. The first concerns the explanation given by the member for Brainting in relation to - it can scarcely be referred to as assistance - his accompaniment of photographic journalists to Ulurunya, Ayers Rock, some months ago. I accept the statement that he made this evening that he had a message from an officer of the Conservation Commission that the journalists should approach Professor Ovington of the ANPWS in Canberra in order to obtain the necessary permits. I accept that the honourable member made that phone call only to find that the professor was unavailable for a week. What I find surprising is that the honourable member left it from Coober Pedy all the way to Ayers Rock to find that the ANPWS officer was not there.

As far as I am concerned, either the honourable member or the journalists should have taken a little bit more care. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on what basis did they proceed from Coober Pedy to Ayers Rock in order to find out that they were unable to obtain the necessary permission to take press photographs? I do not propose to address this matter at any greater length here. Suffice it to say that, if the honourable member thinks that I will be satisfied with an explanation like that, he has another think coming. As far as I am concerned, the honourable member surely could have been trusted with making things a little easier unless, as I said, he had a vested interest in obtaining the very bad publicity which resulted for the tourist industry and for Territorians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on a far more serious note, I wish to draw members' attention to a paragraph that appeared in no less a journal than the Northern Territory News. In Wilson Place last week, the writer of that column seriously upbraided me because he felt that I was in a position to take offence at and perhaps lay a correcting hand, dare I say, on the usage of the transitive verb 'undergrounded'. You would be aware, as I am Mr Deputy Speaker, that the honourable member for Jingili has been seeking to have wires in his electorate placed underground in the face of damage from cyclones. I am curious, as that particular correspondent was, to find how the placing of wires underground, all of a sudden, can become a verb: 'to have those wires undergrounded'. Purist as you are, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you yourself must have shaken a metaphorical head when you heard such an abuse of the English language.

I must confess that, until it was drawn to my attention, I was unaware of it. I not only shook my metaphorical head, but slapped my metaphorical wrist. As a result of this little bit of wrist slapping from the particular journalist, Mr Peter Wilson, I decided to take a somewhat harder line on this serious matter. Only today, I heard, for example, the Minister for Community Development referring to arrangements that he deemed 'equitable'. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite sure that, as an earnest student of the Oxford Dictionary, you would be well aware that the accent does not fall on the second syllable in that word. The word itself is in fact 'equitable' rather than 'equitable'. I am sure the minister will thank me for drawing that to his attention.

I am sure that the member for Fannie Bay took a lesson from the Chief Minister today in relation to his French quotation. I recall the Chief Minister referring so beautifully, in Parisian French, to a 'coup de grace'. That was wonderful to hear today. I am sure that the member for Fannie Bay took this to heart because I think it was only last week that we heard him refer, in heaven knows what accent, to 'coop de grace'. How depressing that was. He certainly is coming on in this regard because I noticed that he saw me barely open my mouth before he raised a metaphorical eyebrow and changed his 'per see' to a 'per say'. It is encouraging to see the member for Fannie Bay enjoying the tutelage of his leader.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Braitling, in this very evening's adjournment debate, would be very interested to hear that the place of birth of Mrs Helen Daff, to whom he so fulsomely referred, does not in fact rhyme with 'vague'. I am sure that he will appreciate his attention being drawn to that problem.

I refer now to another debate today. Lest I be seen to be anything but bipartisan in this matter - and I am sorry he has left this Assembly - the Deputy Leader of the Opposition used a very sad expression today. He used the expression 'reiterate again'. In an otherwise extraordinarily well-controlled, pungent contribution to the deliberations of this Assembly, in peroration the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that he would 'reiterate again' the point that he wished to make in respect of the superannuation statement. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure your colleague, the Speaker himself, would have shaken his metaphorical head and said: 'No, of course one cannot reiterate again'. That is a dreadful tautology. One reiterates or one repeats but one certainly does not reiterate again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, another one I hear all the time in this Assembly, although I confess that never have I heard it springing from the mouth of the member for Braitling, is the term 'criteria'. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I, and I am sure the honourable Speaker, are well aware that there is a singular of 'criteria' - 'criterion'. I noted the Minister for Transport and Works is guilty in this regard. Somebody else used it today. So frequently we hear: 'The criteria for this judgment is that we should all have long hair'. That in fact should be 'criterion'.

In the context of the deliberations of this Assembly, I give an undertaking that, in the coming sittings of this Assembly, to be held, I believe, in the first week in June, there will be a suitable prize for the finest abuse of our language.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to speak about 'The Lies They Teach Our Children' but I do want to quote a couple of things from that article to lead into a few other articles that I have picked up over the last few weeks. I am sure everybody in the Assembly is familiar with this article by Greg Sheridan: 'The Lies They Teach Our Children'. I will quote from that article which was in the Australian a couple of months ago: 'All around the country, teachers are giving our children a diet of intellectual poison. Syllabuses in the social sciences and values-related areas are being taught which are deeply hostile to Australia, to the US, to capitalism, to European civilisation, to industry, to Christianity. They in fact embody a widespread hatred for our society'. Right at the very end, that particular article said that homosexuality was being presented as a positive alternative lifestyle. The Victorian Education Department for a time allowed the use of the book 'Young, Proud and Gay' which contained objectionable material. After protests from parents, the Victorian government banned it from school libraries.

Two Victorian teachers unions responded by distributing the book to schools. It was pointed out in a recent article that books by Enid Blyton, among others, had been disallowed because allegedly they reinforced traditional sex stereotypes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that leads me to an article that was published in the NT News and later in the Australian and other papers, an article by Joseph Grigg in London. It refers to the way that a particular organisation was dealing with books that it did not agree with in London schools. The article said:

'Tom Sawyer', Mark Twain's classic upon which tens of thousands of American boys were raised, is in hot water here. A century or more after it was written, left-wing education officials in London have just ruled it racist and sexist and ordered it removed from the school libraries under their control ...

The Inner London Education Authority, ILEA, also has banned a whole raft of other classics for similar reasons. They include: Daniel Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe', dubbed racist, sexist and imperialist, Charlotte Bronte's 'Jane Eyre', condemned as sexist and Beatrix Potter's 'Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny' because they are about middle-class rabbits ...

The Inner London Education Authority is an elected local government body responsible for all state schools in London. It is dominated by extreme left-wing Labourites called by more conservative-minded Britons, 'the loony left'. Its boss, Mrs Frances Morrell, is a prominent left-wing activist ... She has ruled that all sexist, racist and classist stereotypes are to be eliminated from education of children in London ...

Other books that aroused the ire of leftist ILEA officials included Charles Dickens' 'Oliver Twist', denounced as anti-semitic, Shakespeare's 'King Lear', rejected as sexist, and a commentary on the Bible by the Reverend Ronald Knox simply because it was written more than 10 years ago.

A set of illustrated books much used to teach reading to 5-year-olds was disapproved because it showed well-dressed little girls helping their mothers in the kitchen and little boys helping their fathers in the garage. 'That', ILEA Inspector Pullen was quoted as saying, 'is sexist and classist'. They were ordered replaced by readers showing little girls in overalls working in the garage and little boys in the kitchen ...

Some London schools also have been ordered to stop teaching Latin because it is considered 'elitist', a heinous crime in the hard-left vocabulary.

Just in case anybody feels that that sort of thing is happening only in London, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a few more articles here. I believe there are many more that I was not able to obtain in a hurry. This is a little magazine called 'The Messenger'. It is dated May 1984 and goes way back before the article 'The Lies They Teach Our Children'. The article is by Clare Howard of Tasmania:

The kind of censorship carried out by teachers in pursuit of their own particular philosophy should put parents on their guard. They should be aware of the enormous influence for good or evil teachers

have. One Tasmanian family realised what was happening in the local state school ...

It all began several years ago when my elder daughter Ruth began saying she was disturbed by suggestions made by school staff implying that children should rebel against parental authority. The class was told: 'Do not allow your parents to impose their ideas upon you. You are an individual. You make up your own mind. Do not just repeat what your parents say'.

Then in July 1983 I read some articles alerting Australians to the dangers to the proposed ratification of the UN Discrimination Convention ... Then in early August 1983, the girls came home from school talking about a radical English textbook being used in their classes. On several consecutive nights, our daughters complained that the stories and poems were subversive and, in many instances, crude and filthy. The girls were not allowed to bring the books home so we purchased a copy of book II. We were so shocked that my husband immediately phoned the school principal about our concern ... He took immediate action and, with support from the Education Minister, had them removed from the school.

My husband and I were appalled by the extreme radical and non-sexist nature of these textbooks. I immediately saw the connection between them and Article 10(c) of the UN Discrimination Convention. I realised that some educationists had been preparing over a period of several years for its adoption by stealth ... Many traditional family and Christian books had been removed from the school. The titles included: 'Born Free' by Joy Adamson; 'The Postman', 'Rufus the Red Kangaroo', 'Rusty the Nimble Wombat', 'Koonawarra the Black Swan', and 'Karrawangi the Emu' (all by Leslie Rees); 'Snow White'; 'The Story of the Bible'; 'The Rise of Christianity'; 'Families Around the World'; 'Journey Through Adolescence'; the 'Gideon Bible'; 2 titles on Buddhism and 1 on Islam ...

Before the end of the August school holidays, my husband and I had several interviews with teachers in connection with our concern over the undermining of parental authority. Ruth had been asked to state in class, 'What bugs you about your mother?'

The teacher told us that this approach was now the norm in modern education. I said: 'Why not ask something positive, such as, 'What do you like about your mother?' But the teacher said he wanted to stimulate discussion - implying that he didn't think children have much to say in support of their parents.

We also asked him why dozens of books had been removed from the library during the first term 1983. At first he replied that they were all old and worn out. However, when we pointed out that some of the missing books were almost brand new, he replied: 'You may as well know: we considered the books sexist and we destroyed them. I offer no apology at all?'

When my husband asked where the books were taken, the teacher replied: 'To the city tip, so there would be no argument about them'.

That sounds like the cultural revolution in China. I can see a very close parallel between those 2.

Our concern then became so great that we decided to take the matter to the press. We have also had anonymous phone calls and a letter condemning us. The Tasmanian Teachers Federation has come out against us as has the school staff.

However, the recent High Court dam decision has given the federal government the power to override the states to enforce an international treaty such as the United Nations Discrimination Convention. It may be impossible for our state government to prevent the 'elimination' of sexist books that article 10 of the convention calls for.

Tasmania is not the only state where strange textbooks find their way into classes, as the following shows: 'A study guide by senior Victorian high school students which includes an essay praising Adolf Hitler and the Nazis has been withdrawn from sale and pulped'. The essay said, 'Adolf Hitler has never been given the praise he deserves, especially from western historians'! I will quote also from an article called 'Ita's Mailbox' published in the Sunday Telegraph of 14 April. Ita Buttrose has taken this up in her television program and also in her regular column. This is a letter which she decided she would print. I am not going to quote it in full:

Dear Ita,

When my eldest son was 12-years-old, 4 years ago, he was assigned a poem, 'The Lesson' which you published recently in your column (10 March). I, like the mother who sent the poem to you, was horrified and immediately complained to the English master who told me I was 'old fashioned - children like that sort of thing'.

The next year my son was given a book to review called 'Go Ask Alice', the diary of a teenage drug addict. This book had quite a number of 4-letter words in it.

Two of the questions the class were asked were: (1) Where did pressure (on teenagers) come from? How can you escape or relieve the pressure in a way that is not illegal or dangerous? (2) Describe in two pages an experience you have had that was similar to something the main character experienced ...

Unfortunately, my son had the same teacher the next year. A majority of their English lessons were devoted to drugs - there was much discussion on the subject, a debate and finally two poems: one on cocaine, the other on marijuana. Their book review, which took up the remainder of the year, dealt with a book about sex and violence and seemed to revolve around a girl who had to find some money as she needed an abortion.

Once again I complained to the English master but was told, 'These are subjects teenagers relate to' ...

When I asked why grammar was not being taught, he said: 'That is not what English is all about'.

Yet this year, his fifth year at high school, my son and the rest of Year 11 had a special one-week writing course designed to help them write essays, assignments etc.

It was supposed to be a 'new idea'. They were considered privileged as theirs was the first school to try it. It was implemented because the school said so many students start university with little or no idea of how to write an essay.

I go on to another article in the Australian of 17 April 1985. It is headed: 'HSC play's merit stretches politician's imagination'. It is by Nigel Wall:

For the second year running, NSW Higher School Certificate students were being subjected to an Australian play which was foul, filthy and disgustingly vulgar, the NSW parliament was told yesterday. The Opposition Leader, Mr Greiner, said the play, 'A Stretch of the Imagination', by Jack Hibberd, paraded lurid language and was of dubious literary content.

He asked the Minister for Education, Mr Cavalier, if the NSW Board of Senior School Studies had received complaints that the work contained 'a relentless parade of foul, filthy, immoral experiences and disgustingly vulgar language'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, they are just a few bits and pieces out of a number of articles over the last 12 months that would indicate to me that we have much to fear about what is being taught to our kids or what is not being taught to our kids in the schools today. I do not know where we go. I would like to think that the Minister for Education would be able to give us an assurance that these sorts of things are not happening in the Territory. I suspect that he will not be able to do that because we do not really know much about the content of things that are being taught in our schools today because it is left so much to the individual teacher. It is something that I am really afraid of. I think that we are going down the wrong line. It might be okay if, when we put in these lopsided books, we provided the other side. But we do not. In one case, the books showing the boy in the garage and the girl in the kitchen were thrown out to be replaced with the other side. It is not 2 sides but just 1 side. I am very concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have heard quite a bit lately from our local opposition and its colleagues in Canberra relating to financial mismanagement. In fact, the subject was addressed earlier today. I would like to talk also about financial mismanagement: the outrageous and irresponsible mismanagement by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I refer to a report that was tabled in federal parliament a week ago by the Auditor-General regarding the National Aboriginal Conference. Recently, we have heard some reports relating to the National Aboriginal Conference. I would like to quote some specific examples for no other purpose than to illustrate just how far off the tracks this particular government body had gone and just how far the minister responsible had let it go.

During the audit that was performed at the request of the minister, many instances were reported where the conference had not complied with the provisions of its own charter, the rules of the Aboriginal Corporation and the accounting arrangements as approved and directed by the minister, as well as those requirements that came under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976. Breakdowns were noted in many internal accounting controls. Some of the examples of problems that were shown related to procurement in cash payments for goods or services which frequently were acquired without proper authorisation. If I could mention some of the many instances that were highlighted, there was

the hire of commercial rental cars without orders and the charter of an aircraft by a member where subsequent requisition orders were not drawn for some time after the actual use. Goods and services were procured without proper tendering procedures or proper quotation methods. There were numerous instances where no evidence of quotes were available and, in particular, reference was made to purchase of furniture, motor vehicles and office supplies. Many payments were made without proper evidence of receipt of the goods. In fact, the concern of the Auditor-General was that some payments could have been made for goods and services never actually received.

Specifically, 22 payments were made relating to members' and officers' parking and speeding infringements - a matter quite clearly outside the guidelines. These were things that I would not believe could be done out of ignorance. There was the hire of a commercial rental car by a member at a total cost of \$4200 of taxpayers' money. There was the hire of a bus for members to take a day trip to the snowfields. I am sure that was a delightful outing which had a lot to do with the functions of that conference.

Some concern was shown in relation to the security of documents, in particular of accounting documents. In fact, 4 cheques to a value of some \$3000 or \$4000 were cashed fraudulently. Approximately 13% of the claims in the 9-month period under specific review were paid without adequate supporting invoice and order requisitions. In some cases, documentation was missing.

There were many other instances in relation to the procurement of goods and services that I will not dwell on to any great extent. Another category that caused concern was the establishment of a coordination office in Mexico. Although significant expenditure had been involved in establishing that office, there was no evidence as to the authority for establishing it. Subsequently, the conference noted the concerns and discontinued that office.

Questions were raised in relation to salaries and officers' and members' remuneration. The systems and procedures followed for the processing of salaries and payments from the time of initial recruitment right through to resignation caused great concern to the Auditor-General. In fact, they were found to be quite deficient. Not only did they not ensure that all moneys drawn were properly controlled and paid only to persons whose employment was duly authorised or that all allowances paid were in respect of an approved service, there were many examples of lack of evidence of the authority on which amounts were paid. In fact, I believe that, at the completion of this report late last year, there was still some \$26 500 outstanding in moneys that had not been able to be recovered as a result of incorrect payments to members and employees.

Travel was another area that created significant concern. Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer quickly to travel advances which were not managed in a proper manner. The reasons for travel were not shown. In many cases, they lacked the signature of an approving officer. Some ministerial directives were addressed specifically to correcting this problem but these were blatantly overlooked or ignored by the people concerned. In a number of cases, no evidence was sighted as to members' overseas travel. We heard allegations earlier relating to ministers of the Northern Territory who had travelled overseas on government business. The opposition questioned the amounts that were spent. Here we have cases of a government body that had at least 2 overseas trips taken by persons other than members. There was absolutely no quota allocated for that purpose. In a number of cases, travelling allowances were paid apparently when no entitlement existed.

The question of motor vehicles is one that we have all heard about. Approval was sought to increase the 1983-84 budget of \$360 000 to allow for the purchase of a vehicle for each and every one of the 36 members despite the fact that already there was a carry-over of vehicles previously purchased under the Aboriginal Development Commission scheme. Specific directions were given by the minister relating to procedures for the purchase of those vehicles and these were blatantly ignored. Notwithstanding the minister's direction, the conference accepted a quotation and approved the purchase of 21 vehicles in January 1984. It then purchased 3 secondhand vehicles. Later in February, another 10 vehicles were acquired by the conference, adding up to some 30-odd vehicles purchased at a total cost of \$592 554 - even though the budget was \$360 000 - indirect defiance of the directions given by the minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a number of other areas were highlighted and shown to be of concern in relation to fixed assets and lack of records of assets held by the conference. Approximately only 50% of total assets were recorded in the assets register. A personal charge register contained no entries from 1982 onwards and less than 50% of personal charge assets were recorded. Concern was shown over the receipt and methods of collecting and banking moneys and in relation to the debtors system, budget control, accounting arrangements and advances. In fact, the general conclusion of the Auditor-General's report indicated that there appeared to be a great number of areas that were seriously deficient.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have seen the minister's response to this mismanagement by the National Aboriginal Conference. Quite simply, he disbanded it. I suppose it was the correct decision to make in the end but my criticism of the minister relates to the way he went about that. Certainly, he was aware of this report for 6 months before he bothered to table it in the parliament and he had been aware of the problems well before his initial action in seeking such an audit some 13 months ago.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not looking to denigrate either the original basic principle and purpose with which the NAC was set up nor those members whose task it was to represent the Aboriginal view and advise the federal government in relation to policy decisions. I am aware that, to some extent, these objectives have been met and that many of the members of the conference have taken the responsibilities quite seriously and contributed a great deal towards that effort. However, there is no doubt in my mind that much of the hanky panky that occurred, as well as the obvious and blatant incompetence and dereliction of duty, both by officers and executive members, has been highlighted quite clearly in this report. Despite my small involvement in the affairs of the NAC, I have been advised that, in many cases, members have been guilty of non-performance in jobs that were paid highly for from taxpayers' money. Those members, I am sad to say, led to the total disbandment of that conference.

Whilst the Auditor-General's scathing report highlights a blatant and significant misuse of taxpayers' money, the person who holds unquestionably the major part of the responsibility must be the minister concerned. The buck stops at the top. My criticism of the minister also relates not only to his unwillingness to accept part of the responsibility but also to his lack of performance time-wise. He has sat on this report for quite some time. Certainly, he has not addressed himself to solving the problems that were quite clearly brought to his notice by members of his department.

I mention these matters purely to highlight the hypocrisy of the federal government in accusing the Northern Territory government of financial mismanagement. We have an example of an absolutely disgusting and abominable waste

of taxpayers' money. Obviously, the minister was made aware of it. He made absolutely no attempt to correct it other than by disbanding the NAC completely.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to address an issue which is causing great concern to those electors of mine who live in the suburb of Karama. By way of background, Karama and Leanyer were the first suburbs in Darwin developed under what has become known as the private development scheme. The residents of Karama are typically young families establishing their first home. It is the eastern-most suburb in Darwin. It is the suburb farthest from the natural recreation areas of Darwin and also from most of the commercial and social facilities afforded to the population of Darwin.

The development of Darwin to the east of Rapid Creek has been based on the Canberra model of suburbs revolving around a population to cater for 1 primary school with adjacent small shopping facilities and other ancillary facilities. For some reason, of which I am unaware, for Karama, that principle was disbanded or just not considered at all. Karama has no shops and no facilities at all. The low rate of vehicle ownership in suburbs such as Karama would indicate the necessity for shopping facilities. Residents of other suburbs, by way of comparison, all have convenient shopping facilities, public swimming pools, public tennis courts, doctors, dentists, health centres, community centres, child welfare and child-care centres, hotels, taverns, restaurants, coastal recreation areas, vast tracts of parkland, none of which you will find in the suburb of Karama.

To provide a comparable lifestyle to that in other areas of Darwin, the most urgent need in Karama is for shopping facilities and personal facilities such as doctors' surgeries, hairdressers, restaurants etc. The Darwin retail strategy study, prepared in 1980, recommended 1 to 2 neighbourhood shopping centres in Karama, with the total level of retail floorspace not to exceed 1000 m². This constitutes a viable quantity of retail floorspace for a neighbourhood centre, given the size of the local catchment area.

Under the private development scheme, Karama was let in 4 areas. Two of these, which became known as K2 and K3, were let to a company called Interconstructions Pty Ltd. In the company's devolvement to an associated company, Joondanna Investments, it bequeathed that company an area of land of some 2.7 ha which is currently zoned B2. It is the only B2 land in Karama; it is the only land in Karama available for the development of any facilities whatsoever. Other suburbs have land zoned S1 that can be used for child-care centres and other facilities. Karama has none of these community facilities. All it has is a vacant block of B2 land, and a rather large one at that.

Following concern expressed to me by many residents of Karama about the lack of facilities, I wrote to Joondanna Investments. I was quite nice to them; I wrote expressing my concern and the concern of a considerable number of residents in Karama about the lack of facilities. I will just quote a small part:

It also concerns me that a suburb with a population greater than the town of Katherine does not even have a local store. I would be pleased if you could advise me of what your intentions are towards the development of Lot 6682 and, if you intend to develop, when commencement is expected. If you are unable to develop the land, I would be pleased to introduce you to investors who may be willing to negotiate the purchase of the land or enter into other business arrangements.

I thought that was a reasonable approach to the company in view of its lack of performance in the past. I am hoping to elicit some information as to when we may expect facilities which are available in every suburb in town. I received a letter back. It read in part: 'Our company is offended by your letter'. It continued:

We understand that residents may have been concerned about the timing for a shopping centre and we would point out that the population of Karama, in the 1981 census, was nil and that an estimated population taken on 30 June 1983 was 2610 while Katherine's population, taken on the same days, was 3715 and 4079 respectively.

It used that as its justification for not proceeding with the construction of a shopping centre which, I believe, it has a moral obligation to ensure is developed because it was given land on favourable terms under the private development scheme. At the same time that it was quoting those figures for the population of Karama, this very same company proceeded with the development of a major retail shopping facility, now occupied by G.J. Coles, in the township of Palmerston. Karama has over 2000 enrolled electors which indicates a population in excess of 4000. I understand from advice received from the Minister for Community Development that Palmerston has a population of some 3200. In 1983-84, the population of Palmerston reached 1900 which was in no way comparable to the population of the suburb of Karama yet Karama did not demand a facility like that which has been provided at Palmerston.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not talk at length about the performance of this particular group of companies in Karama. Suffice to say that is not the only complaint I have had of its performance there. I believe that company has a moral obligation either to develop the necessary social facilities in Karama for which it was given the land or to divest itself of the land and allow someone else who is willing to invest money in that suburb to provide those very necessary and expected facilities.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening in the adjournment, I would like to talk about what I see as a decay in the quality of question time over this sittings. I am not going to talk about the use to which ministers have put question time to make ministerial statements or their obvious desire to restrict questions by making long and involved replies to dorothy dixers. What I refer to is a habit that has grown up recently of ministers making a reply along the lines of, 'I will take the matter on board and I will give you a reply some time later during the sittings'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a method that is honoured in parliamentary practice whereby, if a minister cannot answer a question, he may acknowledge that fact by asking that the question be placed on notice. Unfortunately, the ministers do not appear to realise what is behind a shadow minister or a member of the opposition putting a question without notice to them. It is quite possible that they have become so used to the dorothy dixers that they have become inured to this point. We do not bring these things in just to take the place of letters which probably, in some instances, are not answered in the terms in which the questions were put. Firstly, we are seeking information but, secondly, we are trying to ensure that an answer which is given is placed on the Parliamentary Record of this Assembly. I believe that this is an important parliamentary privilege of members on both sides of the Assembly, but it is very important to us.

I would like to give a couple of examples of this and it probably relates to what I was saying earlier about the use to which question time has been put to make ministerial statements. I myself have found that generally, whereas in previous sittings it was possible normally to ask at least 2 questions during question time, lately I have been all that has been possible on that point. I am not casting any aspersions on the office of the Speaker. I have been quite impressed by the way in which generally the Speaker has worked on 2 to 1 from ourselves to the backbench of the government members. I recognise that that is probably a fairly even breakup in the Speaker's eyes. I do not believe that it takes quite into consideration the fact that we have shadow ministerial responsibilities as well as a responsibility to ask questions about our own electorates, which does not apply to the backbenchers on the government side.

However, I would like to refer to a few questions that were put. For example, on Tuesday 16 April, I raised a point which I felt very strongly about. It related to the necessity for the division between the legislature and the judiciary - not only for it to be apparent but for it to be seen to be apparent. On that point, I asked the Attorney-General to assure me that he would request those current members of the legislature who hold the office of justice of the peace, in view of the judicial functions associated with that office, to relinquish that office and take on the appointment of commissioner for oaths. A commissioner for oaths has the same powers in relation to those matters which are important for members of this place such as witnessing etc. However, it is not required that a commissioner for oaths take on a judicial function. I am afraid that the answer was that the minister would deliberate and seek advice on the question before passing an opinion. That is fair enough. As I said earlier, I do not expect every minister to be completely on top of his portfolio. However, I would have expected an answer to be made at some stage during the course of this sittings.

The next one was a question to the Minister for Mines and Energy. In response to a request for assurances regarding the release of waters from the restricted release zone in the uranium province, he stated that he was prepared to take the matter on board and provide a more detailed answer later. It may be that the honourable minister thought that the provision of some information through departmental officers through a committee of this Assembly was a sufficient response to my question. However, as I said earlier, these questions are worked out very deliberately for important reasons. We wish to have the answers on the official record of this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on Friday, I put a fairly detailed request to the Minister for Education regarding various things relating to the Rural Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, ABSEC etc. Once again, the minister was unable to answer the question and he said that he would get in touch later. As I have said, this seems to be developing into a device used by ministers whereby they can fob off a question. With regard to the question on education, it was quite amazing the lengths to which the minister went to state that I had every opportunity to give him policy advice. I have heard that from a couple of ministers in this Assembly and it would appear to me as though they are requesting that I take over the policy development function of their departments.

I raise questions as an opposition member and as a member responsible for my electorate. I raise them in the terms that they are given to me by the electorate. I am quite happy to provide policy advice. In fact, within my shadow portfolio, I am quite happy to take over the function of policy development on Aboriginal education. However, I feel that, given that Aboriginal education involves 30% of the department's activities, that 30% of his ministerial allowance should be passed across to me and he can negotiate with

the shadow minister for education on the other 70%, because it is obvious that there is very little policy development occurring on the government benches on this issue and that most of it is coming from ourselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not go through the entire pile of letters provided to me by my electorate secretary detailing the large quantity of letters sent off to ministers which resulted in either unsatisfactory replies or fob-off replies which referred, for example, to the football and basketball courts at Laramba. We had an ongoing discussion on this and, finally, the department said that it might be able to give some assistance while it was out there doing other works and that it would be able to give me an answer before the end of March. We are nearly to the end of April now and again there is no answer.

Various contradictory remarks were made when I made a request relating to the electricity supply for the Nyirripi community school. If the department put in an electricity supply at Nyirripi, I suggested that it would be a good community gesture if some extension was made to provide street lighting for the small community that surrounds it. I received an answer from the Minister for Education who said that water was a higher priority at places such as Nyirripi. Coincidentally, on the same day, I received a letter from the Minister for Community Development who said that it was considered that 'the present water services were adequate for people's needs'. Obviously, neither answer is true and both ministers are trying to fob me off by pushing the question to another department.

I wrote quite detailed letters to the Minister for Health regarding a very important program for the development of functional literacy amongst Aboriginal health workers throughout the Northern Territory. I was amazed because I have very clearly laid down how, over the last 9 years, the number of health workers had increased some 8½ times whereas the number of literacy workers in the central region had not increased at all. The answer that I received was fairly indicative of what I see as a weak attitude by this government to this very important problem. He stated, for example, that he has a full-time literacy teacher at the Katherine Institute of Aboriginal Health and an assistant teacher to follow up with teaching on site. The Katherine Institute of Aboriginal Health covers a very wide area yet the government has decided that one full-time and one assistant teacher are sufficient for that region.

However, it gets worse. For the whole Gove area, it was decided that 1 part-time literacy teacher was sufficient. For Alice Springs, it was decided that the 2 people employed by the Institute for Aboriginal Development were quite sufficient. Therefore, 3 full-time, qualified literacy teachers, 1 assistant teacher and part-time literacy teacher are adjudged to be sufficient to cater for literacy training for the 300 to 400-odd health workers employed by the Department of Health. The answer stated that, in the circumstances, the minister was quite satisfied that the department was providing adequate resources towards literacy training for Aboriginal health workers. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is quite indicative of the attitude.

I had a series of other questions about water supplies. I have been assured by the minister responsible that there is a program to accelerate the completion of many of these water supplies by the end of the financial year so I will not go through those at the moment. I will leave that until the June sittings when, no doubt, I will be in a better position to see whether it is correct that they will be able to expend those funds.

However, I am worried about the current state of the trachoma program. Members would be aware that the incidence of trachoma amongst Aboriginal people

in the Northern Territory is a national disgrace. We have incidences of 70% to 80%. We have a very high incidence of blindness which is unparalleled for this particular type of disease around the world. The only comparable group is a very small group of Bedouin tribesmen in one region in the Sahara. In answer to questions about what is being done, the only reply that I have had is that requests have been made. I have received no detailed answers as to where we are going with this very important program. I am aware that there are problems between the Northern Territory Department of Health and the federal Department of Health with regard to the trachoma program. I am willing to go into bat on behalf of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory with my federal counterparts. However, I cannot do it if there is to be blanket silence placed over the whole matter.

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

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to say a few more words about self-government and what it all means. I will not reflect on earlier debates as I appreciate that that is outside the rules. We have heard talk in the Assembly about our concern over what the Territory could be in for during the next budget session of the Commonwealth parliament. It is very important that we reflect on the attitudes towards the Northern Territory that are being reflected by people in power.

Back in 1977, I am pleased to say that the ALP did show very considerable compassion and understanding of the situation in the Northern Territory. I have a couple of quotes from the federal Hansard of a debate by the current Attorney-General, Mr Bowen, who was the ALP lead speaker on a motion in the federal parliament by the then Minister for the Northern Territory, Evan Adermann. Mr Bowen was its lead speaker in that debate and he warned that Territorians were concerned about self-government. He referred to it a great deal as 'statehood', as the ALP did in that era. He felt that Territorians were concerned at what it might mean in relation to taxes and he issued several warnings to the federal government of the day. He felt that the federal Fraser government would not provide the level of financial support required for the Territory but that the Labor government would. I would like to quote from Mr Bowen's speech:

The people of the Territory are fearful of what statehood means. Does it mean that the people of the Northern Territory will have to bear fiscal responsibility because that seems to be the underlying factor in and tenor of the minister's statement?

Later in his speech, Mr Bowen said:

The population is a relatively small group and it is widely dispersed geographically. Those people do need consultation and understanding as to their needs. They do need substantial financial support from the government. Nobody wants to interfere with their local administration. The point we seek to make is that there should be uniformity of administration in Australia. A decision by a person in Darwin to go to live in Perth should not be influenced by different standards in those cities. Laws and opportunities for children, for example, should be the same everywhere. Likewise, if a person in Perth wants to go to Darwin, that person should be able to find there that there is no change of administration and no lack of opportunity there. That is what federalism is all about. Federalism is not just a fiscal arrangement - the idea that, if people are going to make their own decisions, they have to live with them and pay for them.

People in the Northern Territory have to make decisions on the basis that they are in a sparsely-populated area and far removed from a number of essential services. Their decisions have to be balanced in the light of those sorts of burdens. They need financial support and they should be getting more of it, particularly in view of the very few taxpayers and the slender financial resources available there. People in the Northern Territory are concerned about this question of autonomy. They think that they have been hived-off or dumped because that will make the Treasury figures look a bit better. The Treasury can say that the responsibility rests with the people of the Northern Territory and that they will have to do their best to raise the taxes that are needed.

And another one:

What about the financial burdens the people in the Northern Territory will suffer if they are to be given what they need, what they want and what we in the opposition would readily give them? They want autonomy, in the sense of decision-making, but they should not suffer the burden of having to pay all the costs of administration because of their limited resources.

And later:

We want to build up the Northern Territory. We want to give the people there the ultimate in facilities. The whole concept of Labor administration has been to look at where the needs are, whether it be in the area of health, transport or education. The national government has even had to supplement state governments. Is it any wonder that the federal government will have to give substantial aid, magnificent aid, to people in these far-flung areas who face this problem of distance?

And another one:

There is a worry that the facilities in respect of education and health, which are included in the transfer of the functions outlined in the statement, are not as good as they should be. They are run-down. There is a shortage of staff and facilities. For the Territory to take them over in that run-down condition is not fair and reasonable. The Territorians are asking that the government should build them up before it hands them over. It is for those reasons that we want to see the government actively involved in helping the Territory in its administration.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker:

It is for those reasons that the opposition, whilst welcoming the statement, is very concerned about the type of taxation that will be levied on people in the Territory and about their inability to bear it because it could lead to a run-down in existing facilities.

I will not quote any further from the federal Hansard in that regard but, as I said, I thought that was a compassionate and understanding view of the situation of the Northern Territory back in 1977 by a person who is now a very senior Labor minister.

We should contrast that, of course, with the views expressed only yesterday by the federal Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, when he said in answer to

questions, in effect, that the funding for Territorians under the Memorandum of Understanding was symptomatic of the irresponsible actions of the Fraser government. He later said, in justification for his decision on superannuation, that this was a perfect example of the need to protect the interests of the states against the irresponsible fiscal behaviour of the Fraser government in the way it recklessly distributed money like 'confetti at a wedding' in the Northern Territory. He made other remarks which described the Memorandum of Understanding as a 'scandalously generous arrangement of the Fraser government' with us.

Pondering those 2 very different views of federal ministers, I wonder whether the government is just being vindictive in its current attitudes or whether it just does not understand the situation. I think that it does understand. The question I ask myself is whether we should feel guilty. Should we feel that we have been selfish in the Northern Territory in receiving the funds that we have received? Are the massive strides that we have made since self-government something of which somehow we should be ashamed? Is the growth in jobs, development and our productive industries something that we have kept all to ourselves, at the expense of the rest of Australia? Have we been totally selfish in expanding services to the community and encouraging Australians to come to the Territory in significant numbers to work here and seek rewards, to settle, buy homes and raise their families here? Were our excursions into Asia for trade and to secure investment wrong? Was the creation of Yulara, the building up of port facilities, schools, law courts, the museum and vastly improved roads all part of some irresponsible spending spree or can our efforts somehow be seen to have contributed to Australia as a whole? Of course they can, Mr Deputy Speaker. I refuse to feel guilty. I feel only anger at what I see as a betrayal, and statehood is beginning to look more attractive every day.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I would like to draw to your attention some of the issues within the electorate of Jingili which I have addressed over the last few months. Before I do that, I would like to describe the electorate to you. It consists of the suburbs of Jingili and Moil, bounded by McMillans Road, Lee Point Road, Parer Drive, Trower Road and Rapid Creek. It contains 2 primary schools, those of Moil and Jingili, 2 preschools of the same name and Casuarina High School. We have 2 substantial sports ovals, quite a number of small parks and a very famous hotel in the electorate, one that is regularly frequented by several of the members present here this evening. We have a very popular rest and recreation area within the electorate and I refer to the Darwin Cemetery. Regrettably, very few of the residents there vote, only the caretaker. Another thing that the electorate of Jingili is famous for is its cricket team or, at least, it will be shortly. We have been challenged by the Wagaman electorate to a cricket match and I am about to raise a team which I am quite sure will make the sports columns in the local newspapers. I am also sure that the member for Wagaman is already out there. He is rushing back into Chamber. He has heard my comments. I will move on quickly before I tell you my plan of attack for that cricket match and he overhears me.

Some of the issues that I have addressed concern the Darwin City Council. I will run through a few of them and the action I have taken to date concerning them. Firstly, one dear to my heart is the mowing of nature strips. When I was first elected, we were in the wet season. Of course, the grass along the nature strips was growing profusely and there were a number of reasons for that, apart from the fact that it was raining. The reason that many nature strips had not been mowed at the time was not only that many people were away on their holidays. In many cases, it was because nobody accepted responsibility for

them. My inquiries showed me that the responsibility for nature strips lies with the Darwin City Council. After several exchanges of correspondence with the Lord Mayor and the Town Clerk, I found that the Darwin City Council policy adopted in 1979 is such that it encourages householders to mow their own nature strips. Where residents refuse to mow nature strips for whatever reason, the city council totally ignores the problem and the grass grows. There are a number of areas in my electorate and the electorate of the member for Nightcliff, along Progress Drive, where the long grass is well above knee level and yet nobody mows it. It harbours vermin and it is a fire hazard when it dries out.

I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Darwin City Council should address this particular issue. In 1979, it requested a report on this problem. One of the recommendations of that report by Mr George Brown, the council's Parks and Recreation Officer, was that the council purchase a single mowing unit which could be used to move continually throughout Darwin and mow nature strips. The decision of the council was not to purchase that unit so we have the situation that we are in at the moment. Instead, it appointed a beautification officer, who happens to be a lady. Her responsibility is to move throughout Darwin and, where she detects an unmown nature strip or some similar problem, she encourages that householder to mow the nature strip. However, if the householder refuses, then that is the end of the story. I suggest that the Darwin City Council is negligent in its attitude towards the mowing of nature strips. I do not suggest for one moment that it should mow all the nature strips in Darwin. That would be ridiculous, but what I am saying is that, where householders neglect their nature strips, then the Darwin City Council has a responsibility to remove that long grass.

While I am on the subject of long grass, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is another problem that arises throughout Darwin. It is particularly evident in a number of rural blocks that back on to Rapid Creek along Freshwater Road. A number of these abound in long grass as do several other vacant blocks within the electorate. After a number of inquiries to various ministers, I have been told that responsibility for the removal of long grass on these blocks lies with the Fire Service. I have yet to pursue that matter to identify exactly who is responsible but, once again, we have an area where vermin can breed and it is a fire risk in the centre of suburban areas yet the matter is not being addressed. Somebody will have to address it and I intend to take it up with the responsible authorities.

Something else that should be attended to by the Darwin City Council, Mr Deputy Speaker, is the matter of bike racks. Very few shopping areas in my electorate have bike racks adjacent to them. When I walk out of the door of my electorate office, I often find that I have to negotiate 8 or 10 bikes which are lying all over the pavement. One has to step through them. It is extremely dangerous and I fear for pensioners or people with poor eyesight who may trip over them and break a leg or be seriously injured in some other way. Racks should be provided so that those bikes can be placed in them. Where that is not done, the council should invoke its bylaws and take action against those people who leave them lying on the pavements.

In conjunction with the KAB program that is currently under way, I intend to introduce a tree-planting project along nature strips within the electorate. I see this as one way in which I can contribute towards that program and also improve the beautification of the electorate of Jingili.

A matter that has been addressed, and I must thank the Darwin City Council for its cooperation, is that of road signs along Freshwater Road where the road curves past the cemetery and back towards Trower Road. It is a very dangerous

corner which I drew to the attention of the council some months ago. I thank it for erecting suitable signs. These should reduce the possibility of further accidents occurring on that corner. A number have already occurred there over a number of years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I contacted Telecom recently as a result of a survey of the electorate and it has agreed to install a couple more telephone boxes. I will pursue that matter from time to time. I am sure that Telecom will not provide more than a couple of telephone boxes a year.

Bus shelters have also taken my attention. I have corresponded with the Minister for Transport and Works on this, particularly with a view to locating shelters along Lee Point Road where none exist currently.

The intersection of Rothdale and McMillans Roads has caused quite a problem over the last 3 or 4 months as has the access to the Marrara Sporting Complex. I am told that the Department of Transport and Works has a study under way and it will propose recommendations to provide extra access points from the Marrara Sporting Complex on to McMillans Road. I compliment the department for that because, when the sporting complex is developed completely, the NTFL and a number of other sports will operate from it and it will be impossible to gain access to and egress from that area when a number of those activities occur at one time.

The widening of McMillans Road was raised this morning with the Minister for Transport and Works and he replied that the matter will be pursued depending on the availability of funds. I am very pleased to hear that and I trust that the cancellation of the airport project will not interfere with that too directly. Perhaps, in time, when that dual carriageway is completed, we may be able to incorporate a cycle bridge which, no doubt, would please the honourable member for Millner.

I would like to turn now to an area in the electorate that is of great interest to me. This also concerns the Darwin City Council. I refer to the number of parks in the electorate and I am talking about the smaller parks, not the major parks. I will quote from some notes I have made. I have recently done a survey of all the parks in my electorate, together with the Darwin City Council Beautification Officer, Miss Wendy Petrich, and I thank her for her cooperation. Let me quickly run through several of them for you. I will not bore you with the whole 13 or 14 of them. The Moil Park is adjacent to the shopping centre and the oval. Mr Deputy Speaker, when one has a look at this area, it reminds one of a moonscape. There is no top dressing. It is rent with furrows caused by stormwater escaping. There is no grass and it is in a shocking condition. I have requested the Darwin City Council to top-dress and grass that area. Wilson Park, for example, has some trees and nothing else and yet Thornton Park has 6 items of playground equipment, a seat, a bin, trees and a rail fence. Greenwood Park has 4 items of playground equipment, a seat, a bin and some trees. Varney Park has no facilities at all and yet other parks, like Byrne Park, Lim Park, and Borella Park have a variety of playground equipment and other facilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks with a reference to the water gardens. Recently, I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Works to request the installation of playground equipment in the water gardens. I must compliment the minister on the upkeep of those gardens. It is a very beautiful area. It is landscaped in a delightful manner and has shelters, barbecues, table seating, lighting and all sorts of other facilities. It is a

really nice area and very popular. Many families frequent that area regularly, but there is no playground equipment. I have addressed that matter as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have taken on board a number of issues since I was elected on 15 December. We have had success with quite a few of them and I will continue to pursue the matters that I mentioned this evening to the best of my ability and, hopefully, in the short term, we will achieve a great deal of success.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight the member for Victoria River mentioned the name of Greg Sheridan, a name which has been raised in this Assembly on a number of occasions for his article 'The Lies They Teach Our Children' which was printed in the Australian back in January. I believe that Sheridan did a great service to education in this country through the debate that was generated in the Teachers Federation and among teachers generally. Recently, I had the good fortune to visit the Australian Adam Smith Club in Sydney and hear an address by Greg Sheridan. A video was made and I have a copy which I will make available to members if they are interested in seeing it. It was a very stimulating evening and I had the pleasure of meeting Sheridan and exchanging a few ideas.

During the last sittings I mentioned that I felt that parents could be better informed about what was happening in relation to the education of their children, what they were being taught and how they could check on the level of teaching. I used the term 'syllabi'. The honourable member for MacDonnell had a rave session tonight about correct English and so forth and I remember at the time that one of the government members was saying that 'syllabi' was not the correct term. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives 2 options: 'syllabi' as the first and 'syllabuses' as the second. Both are acceptable. However, 'syllabi' is the term that I am used to and it was the term used by the South Australian Public Examination Board in its book on courses.

The member for Victoria River raised many interesting points about views that certain teachers have and books that have been banned as a result of some rather strange ideas that make it all the more imperative that parents have some idea of what is going on. I claim that the provision of syllabi to parents gives them a tool by which they can check whether their children are being taught what is in the syllabi. They can check on the depth of teaching and whether, in fact, the whole course is taught or whether other things are slipped in. It would take only one active parent for each class to check on the teaching that is occurring in our schools. I think much of the point I was trying to make in the previous sittings of the Assembly on this matter was lost because people fell into the trap of arguing about whether it was 'syllabi' or 'syllabuses'. That was most unfortunate.

After meeting Sheridan in Sydney, I was inspired to put my ideas on paper and I wrote a letter to the Australian which was duly printed, and I am grateful for that. However, when the letter was published, 2 words had been changed. 'Syllabi' had been changed to 'syllabuses', which did not really worry me very much. But for 'curricula', the plural of 'curriculum', curriculums had been substituted. That mortified me somewhat so I wrote and said: 'Look, the first one I accept either way, but 'curriculums' where it should be 'curricula' is over the fence. I did not put it that way. Would you mind straightening it out'. That was duly done but a little rider appeared underneath to the effect that: 'We reserve the right to use our own particular brand of English'.

That was rather sad really because what I considered to be the important thing, the provision of syllabi to parents and older students, would give a tool

to the public which would allow a real check to be made upon what is happening in our schools and would also make parents far more interested because they would feel that they had some control over what was happening. I was very heartened on this matter. I had cause to ring the principal at the Alice Springs High School, Mr Roy Harvey, concerning the borrowing of some sporting equipment for the May Day sports which will take place in Alice Springs on 6 May. I mentioned this particular article to him. He had not read any of the comments that I had been expressing. However, he said that, for Years 11 and 12, one of the first things he did this year was to provide syllabi to every student on every course that they would be studying. He said that the change in attitude of those senior students, because the course was mapped out before them and they knew exactly what would be expected of them, was rather amazing. It does not amaze me. I have had experience in this regard. He felt that the whole tone of the upper school had lifted because not only the students but also the parents knew what was required. The students knew that they would have to perform. He told me that they are working on doing something similar for the junior side of the school. However, the core curriculum - this minimum standard, this key to mediocrity that I have opposed all along - is making it difficult for them. However, by the end of the first semester, he hopes to be able to provide syllabi to all the students both in the junior school as well as the senior school. I wish him well in his endeavours. It was not sparked off by anything which I had said, but it was delightful to discover that some of the ideas, wherever they came from, are being implemented.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Classification of Certain Video Material

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I present 2 identical petitions, bearing the signature of 5 citizens and 168 citizens respectively of the Northern Territory, and relating to pornographic material. Both petitions bear the Clerk's certificate that they conform with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, quite a number of petitions identical to these 2 have been moved and read in this Assembly. I do not see the necessity to move that these 2 be read.

PETITION
Classification of Certain Video Material

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 15 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

PETITION
Mineral Exploration and Mining in National Parks

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 27 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to mineral exploration and mining in national parks. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that a national park is a relatively large area set aside for its features of predominantly unspoiled natural landscape, flora and fauna, permanently dedicated to public enjoyment, education and inspiration and protected from all interference other than essential management practices so that its natural attributes are preserved. The petition shows that mineral exploration and mining operations are not essential management practices; that proposals to amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to facilitate mining and exploration in Territory parks and reserves should not proceed; that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly move to exclude any mineral exploration mining operations from Northern Territory parks and reserves. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PETITION
Classification of Videos

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1055 citizens of the Northern Territory regarding the classification of videos. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, this petition is in the same terms as the petition of some 6000 petitioners that I presented to you in the Assembly last week. On that basis, I do not believe it appropriate that it should be read.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for MacDonnell

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this day be granted to Mr Bell, who is absent on urgent business within his electorate.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Minister for Education, Member for Koolpinyah and Member for Flynn

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this day be granted to Mr Harris, Mrs Padgham-Purich and Mr Hanrahan, who are, respectively, attending a conference, interstate on government business and incapacitated due to ill-health.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in the previous Assembly, the member for MacDonnell made innuendo to the effect that I had tried to prevent the Pine Hill farmers coming into the Pine Hill district. The innuendo was repeated this morning by the member for Stuart. The member for MacDonnell said at the time that he was not too sure but that he would get some statutory declarations because the number of people involved were very few.

I would like to put the record straight. I spoke about the Pine Hill farmers to Mr Sid Saville who is Secretary of the Department of Primary Production. I asked him on behalf of the Dahlenburgs what was going on because they wanted to know whether development was to go ahead or not. He did not know where things stood because he had been on holidays. I approached Mr S. Philpott who is the head of DPP in central Australia. I asked him what was going on. He said that he believed that they were going to go ahead in that particular area. I would like to put it on record that I would not stop them if I had the power to. As far as I am concerned, the Pine Hill farmers are welcome in the area. The Dahlenburgs and I are prepared to compete with these people and their \$2.14m. The concern I expressed to Mr Philpott regarded a proposition that he had put to heads of various government departments, who passed the information to me more or less casually. The proposal was for government to put in many millions of dollars of infrastructure. Those department heads expressed to me a concern that this could be in the order of \$10m for a project which was out in the scrub and which really had not proved itself.

I simply expressed our view that we were prepared to compete against the private enterprise money but asked how many millions of government money we would have to compete against. It was a personal view. I do not mind saying it. I say it here. I intended to say it on the other occasions but both times these questions came up on the last day when the opposition expected that I could not get up and make an explanation. That is the explanation and that is the record.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Tourism Training in the Northern Territory

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, one of the economic facts of life in the Northern Territory is that tourism holds the major key to future development. Tourism is the Territory's growth industry and, among other things, this poses important challenges for our education system. I wish

to inform members of what the government is already doing through the education system to meet this challenge and to outline our development plan for the future. I table the plan, Mr Speaker.

Fortunately, tourism is a very broadly-based industry. It includes hotels, motels, restaurants, caterers, travel agencies, transport services, tour organisers, retail outlets and servicing agencies. Directly or indirectly, the industry is destined to have an increasing impact on the lives of all Territorians. One of the prerequisites for taking full advantage of the employment and business opportunities which tourism offers is that Territorians become aware of the industry's importance and the opportunities available. Like other regions, states and countries which depend heavily on tourism for their economic well-being, we all need to become more tourist conscious and tourist oriented.

Mr Speaker, the education system is already contributing to this general awareness through the social and cultural education medium. Commencing with Year 1 in primary schools, students gradually acquire a general knowledge of and attitudes relevant to living and working in a tourist-oriented state and about the tourist industries specifically as a part of their history and geography lessons. Then, through the work experience program commencing in Year 10, students have the opportunity if they wish to gain first-hand experience in the industry by working briefly with an employer. Work experience is a compulsory part of the life and work skills subject area in secondary schools.

At the tertiary education level, as members will be aware, the government has established the School of Tourism and Hospitality in Alice Springs. This school, which is part of the Community College of Central Australia, is helping to meet an urgent if not desperate need in training people for a wide variety of jobs in the industry throughout the Territory. Since it opened to students in 1981, it has been offering an increasing range of full-time and part-time courses. At the same time, the government has continued to expand and upgrade its facilities which now include student residential accommodation.

Mr Speaker, the courses offered include an apprenticeship program in cookery. A butchery apprenticeship program is due to begin next semester and planning is under way for an apprenticeship program in pastry cooking and bakery. There are also full-time certificate courses and an expanding range of part-time courses.

Because it is important that training takes place in a realistic setting, upgrading and construction work at the school has been designed to simulate a commercial environment. Members will appreciate that it is essential to create a proper environment and I am pleased to say that the latest purpose-built accommodation for achieving this aim is now nearing completion.

Mr Speaker, that is a very brief outline of what the government is doing through the education system to meet the challenge of the tourist industry at the present time. We recognise, however, that much more needs to be done and I now wish to bring to honourable members' attention what we plan to do in the immediate future.

At the school level, students who plan to stay on to further their education after completing Year 10 will be able to choose from an increasing range of options. Commencing in 1986, in Year 11 they will be able to choose 5 tourist industry related subjects from a broad range of pre-vocational courses accredited by the Northern Territory Board of Studies. These will include book-keeping, office management, business English, report writing, business

mathematics, catering, food and nutrition, interpreting and translating and so forth.

Commencing in 1986, some schools will be offering packages of Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia courses in subjects which will be adapted to relate specifically to the tourist industry. Subjects available will include accounting, Australian studies, business mathematics, business studies, geography, home economics, media studies, natural resources, management and professional typing. Again, students will be able to choose a package of 5 subjects.

Both Year 11 and 12 courses will lead to direct employment or on-the-job training with part-time study or further specialised education or training at the tertiary level. During the latter part of each year, school leavers will be issued with brochures and other materials outlining employment opportunities in the industry and the further education and training programs which are available. School councils will also be supplied with all relevant information to help ensure that students are adequately informed of what the industry has to offer.

Mr Speaker, so far at the tertiary level the government has concentrated mainly on developing the facilities and courses at the School of Tourism and Hospitality in Alice Springs. From now on, the industry will be given a much greater say in how these programs are conducted. Under the framework of the college council, the management of the school will be conducted in future by a board which will be representative of the industry, technical and further education, the Department of Industry and Small Business and the relevant unions. Through the board, the industry will now be able to play a role in the operation of the school.

While the courses and training programs provided by the School of Tourism and Hospitality in Alice Springs will continue to be expanded, there is no doubt that provision has to be made for similar training programs in Darwin. The government has always recognised the need for training programs in the Top End and, to this end, we approached the Commonwealth for funds in 1984 for the construction of a purpose-built training establishment in Darwin. This would have completed the training infrastructure which the industry has been seeking. Regrettably, however, our submission to the Technical and Further Education Council of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission was rejected. This was a major setback but the government has not been deterred. The situation is such that we cannot afford to wait any longer and it is now my pleasure to announce that the government intends to take the necessary steps to provide for the establishment of a major tourist industry training program in Darwin as a matter of urgency.

The first step will be to expand some existing facilities at the Darwin Institute of Technology so that the first courses can commence in July in order to meet the industry's most immediate needs. These courses will be designed specifically for employees already working in the industry as well as school leavers and adults who are seeking employment in the industry.

Mr Speaker, that will be just the beginning. Commencing in 1986, we plan to put a much more substantial training program into operation. An outline of the development plan is attached to my statement which I propose to table. However, because further discussions and negotiations are taking place, I do not wish to go into detail at this stage. Further details will be provided later. What I can say now is that the government fully recognises the need for training to take place in a commercial or semi-commercial environment. This is essential

if students are to be trained to the high standards which the industry demands. Our tourist facilities must be staffed by professional and skilled employees if the tourist industry is to continue to flourish as it must.

I wish to emphasise that, as with the School of Tourism and Hospitality in Alice Springs, the industry will have access to the facilities to be provided in Darwin. In the past, there has been some industry criticism of the training conducted. Clearly, those who are trained for the industry must be acceptable to the industry. Through programmed access, industry employers will now have the opportunity to use the training facilities available to conduct courses exactly as they see fit. I also expect the Northern Territory Tourist Industry Training Committee to make a significant contribution in ensuring maximum participation by the industry in the facilities. As will be the case in Alice Springs, a board with industry representation will also be established in Darwin to oversee the training programs. The industry, therefore, will have every opportunity to play a direct and constructive role.

The courses planned for Darwin from 1986 onwards will expand on the short training courses to be commenced in July. The government will also provide for the commencement of apprenticeship training in Darwin as well as certificate courses in the food and beverage area, hospitality practices, hospitality management and tourism. In 1986, course development will commence for the establishment later of further certificate and diploma courses. All of these courses will be aimed primarily at Territorians who are set on making a career in our rapidly expanding tourism industry. This includes industry employees who need to upgrade or acquire new skills as well as school leavers and others who are seeking employment in the industry for the first time. The courses will also cater for unemployed youth, adults seeking job training for part-time employment and unemployed people on specially-funded programs.

There will be close coordination between the courses offered in Darwin and those provided by the School of Tourism and Hospitality in Alice Springs. I emphasise that access to the facilities will be programmed so that the industry can conduct its own training if required and so that TAFE can conduct training for the other client groups. It is expected that the industry itself will play a large role in courses run for it. The role of TAFE will be to assist in this as required. The major role for TAFE, however, will be off-the-job training.

Both the industry and the government see it as essential for the courses for industry employees to be conducted separately from those for potential entrants. It is vital for potential entrants to have their training both in a simulated commercial environment such as the Darwin Institute of Technology and, where practicable, to be exposed to work experience in a real life situation. The government sees this as an important way for potential entrants to come to the notice of potential employers and ease the transition to the work place.

Mr Speaker, it is estimated that, from 1986 onwards, approximately 1100 persons per annum will need to be trained from within the industry alone and a further 1000 per annum will need to be trained for entry into the industry. Clearly, the tourist industry has the potential to provide tremendous employment opportunities and to give an enormous boost to the economy. As I have outlined, the government is doing its best to ensure that young Territorians are trained in the Territory to take up jobs that become available in the Territory. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in responding to this statement on tourism, a rather important piece of information affecting the

tourist industry in the Northern Territory, and certainly affecting something which has come to be known as the flagship of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory, has just been placed in front of me. It causes me some considerable disquiet. I take the opportunity, in speaking to this statement on tourism and the development and training required for it, and in the full knowledge that this Assembly will be adjourning at lunchtime, to raise the matter in the Assembly now and to advise the Chief Minister that we will certainly be prepared to give the Chief Minister whatever leave he requires to speak again to this statement or, by way of ministerial statement, to give some response in the Legislative Assembly to this matter.

Mr Speaker, I have just been advised that the Territory Insurance Office has announced that it is to buy 10% of the casino assets. This casino, this flagship of the Territory's tourism industry, as it is continually referred to, continues to be the most appalling flagship for the Territory's tourist industry ever. I dare say, in the last hours of the Assembly this morning, that it would be absolutely appalling of the government and inexcusable of the government to announce something like this today outside this Assembly and not take the opportunity, whilst this Assembly is sitting, on one of the infrequent occasions that it does, to make sure that this matter was brought on in the Legislative Assembly now. I do not like the timing at all. In fact, I think I could be forgiven for thinking that it is an extremely deliberate form of timing. I will not allow it to pass if I can be given the opportunity not to let it pass.

No doubt, it will be put forward by the TIO that it is a justifiable investment. In fact, it is nothing more nor less than an extremely transparent attempt by this government to bail Henry and Walker out of the financial strife we know that it is in.

In order that honourable members opposite do not jump up and say, 'what an outrageous charge', can I simply refer honourable members to question time during this sittings when this very matter was raised. Questions were directed to the Chief Minister himself in respect of selling off units of the casino. Not a word was said nor any information given that the Northern Territory government, no doubt through the auspices of the Territory Insurance Office, was about to do the very thing that I raised in the Legislative Assembly and failed to get a response to.

Everybody around the Northern Territory knows what is going on. Nobody seems to be prepared to say it publicly which is why I tried to flush it out during this sittings of the Legislative Assembly. It is just too coincidental for words that, hot on the heels of raising the prospect in the Legislative Assembly, as I did, and getting no satisfactory answer from the Chief Minister about potential purchasing of casino units, we now find that the Territory Insurance Office is about to take up 10% of the action.

Mr Speaker, I would like to hear it here in the Legislative Assembly and not at a press conference held outside the Legislative Assembly. I stress to the Chief Minister that that is the point of this matter that is attracting my attention at the moment: news that the government is going to hold, no doubt after lunch, a press conference to announce the purchase.

I ask the Chief Minister to take the opportunity to announce the purchase by way of ministerial statement or any other avenue he wishes to take, even if it means coming back after lunch, but to announce it here in the Legislative Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Northern Territory Government View on Taxation Reform

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform members of the Assembly of the submission my government has made to the Commonwealth government in relation to taxation reform. The Northern Territory government has made a constructive contribution to the current tax debate by making a submission to the federal government for consideration in the drafting of the government's White Paper on tax reform due to be released this month. This paper was not brought forward earlier for discussion by the Assembly because the federal government put a closing time of 30 March on the submission of the paper and we have not had an opportunity to bring it forward since.

The Northern Territory will consider making an additional case to the federal government to ensure our voice is clearly heard at the tax summit if the White Paper fails to pay proper attention to the Northern Territory's views.

Australia's tax system is in urgent need of reform and no one disputes that. It is a significant disincentive for people to achieve their fullest work potential or to strive for excellence in their work. It is unfair to many sectors of the community and encourages people to remain social security recipients when in fact they could become fully or partially independent. The Northern Territory government will support a package of proposals for change which addresses the major shortcomings felt so keenly by all members of our society. This support will be conditional on the revenue raised from the new and expanded taxes not exceeding the revenue forgone from reduced taxes.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory economy is not like the economy of the rest of Australia. It needs initiative and risk taking; people must be attracted to live in the north. The particular requirements of the many needy people in the north, both Aborigines and others, need to be addressed so that all people in the north can contribute as fully as possible to economic and social development. The statement does not aim to provide detailed proposals but rather to set out the principles that are important and to stress some particular issues which affect the Northern Territory. These views have been conveyed to the Prime Minister so that the Territory's needs can be taken into account during the tax debate leading up to the July tax summit.

The Northern Territory government seeks: to lessen the reliance on income tax as a component of Commonwealth revenues; a cut in the marginal rates to apply to middle and upper income earners; broadly-based sales tax covering the whole range of goods and services; an increase in the income tax threshold; appropriate social security adjustments to offset the adverse impact of such broadly-based indirect tax on the needy; relief from the high implicit margin on tax rates faced by social security recipients who are contemplating a return to the work force by improved social security tapering arrangements; taxation of fringe benefits that apply Australia wide, but no taxation of fringe benefits that exist solely to offset the disadvantages of living in remote areas of Australia; appropriate adjustments to both the income tax zone allowance and the social security remote area allowance to offset the additional adverse impact to extra indirect tax on northern Australian residents relative to other Australians and which are reflected in higher prices and higher levels of household expenditure in the Northern Territory than elsewhere in Australia; abolition of the airport departure tax on short stay non-Australian residents in order to promote tourism; greater differential between the excise rate for beer with an alcoholic content of not more than 3.8% and beer with a greater alcoholic content to promote lower alcohol consumption; the maintenance of

horizontal fiscal equity between the state and Northern Territory through appropriate changes in the tax-sharing arrangements if there is to be any change in the Commonwealth-state distributions of taxing powers; and a review of crude oil levy arrangements to make these more flexible and to take account of the circumstances of individual fields. The Territory supports the 9 principles proposed by the Commonwealth guide to tax reform. The key principles that are too easily forgotten are the need for simplicity and the need to reduce avoidance and evasion.

The Territory supports an income tax system that encourages people to work and strive for excellence, applies equally to people with the same capacity to pay and discriminates fairly between people with different capacities to pay. There should be a consistent tax policy for people with similar incomes regardless of the source of income. The existing system has encouraged tax minimisation and evasion efforts. Mr Speaker, I am proud to be able to say that the Territory government holds strong views on tax avoidance and will cooperate with federal authorities to ensure that tax is paid. The government does not, however, support retrospective legislation or action.

The taxation system should reflect the capacity to pay. This has been long recognised in all parts of the world and has led to general acceptance of progressive tax scales. However, there is now much evidence that the application of the relatively high tax scales at modest income thresholds has lessened many people's willingness to work longer hours, to take on more responsibility or to seek higher qualifications. A return to a lower marginal rate over a much broader economic range of incomes will greatly encourage economic growth. It is well known that the top marginal rate raises little revenue but leads to much wasteful activity in tax minimisation or evasion as well as the loss of incentive. Lowering marginal rates, particularly for those close to average incomes, will affect revenue. In recognition of this, the Territory supports new tax initiatives, provided that the revenue raised does not exceed that forgone by the lowering of income and other taxes.

Mr Speaker, the Territory is also concerned at the disincentives facing a person on social security who wishes to re-enter the work force. The unemployed or sickness benefit recipient often receives only limited net additional income from taking a low-paying job. If he or she has dependants, the loss of benefits is greater and the net additional income diminishes still further. Improvements in this area can come from either more generous tapering arrangements or further reductions in the rates of tax on incomes close to the income tax threshold.

The process of saving for the future through participation in superannuation funds is to be commended and encouraged. The collective effort not only provides for a more stable community but provides for more economic stimulus and lessens the burden on future governments to service the elderly. As such, those who save for the future should not be penalised through the taxation system any more heavily than those who do not. However, taxation arrangements should discourage double dipping and tax it accordingly if it occurs.

The Territory supports the taxing of fringe benefits where those benefits are not designed to offset the disadvantage of living in a remote area. However, benefits such as subsidised housing in remote areas or freer concessional travel from remote areas - for example, those covered by zone allowance - to major cities should not be taxed. These benefits to remote area residents offset the unique disadvantages of living and earning in these areas, which certainly have limited community facilities, are isolated from traditional family support and have a harsh climate. Without such benefits, it would be

difficult for people to be attracted to and retained in remote communities. If there is any decision to tax benefits applicable to remote area residents, there should be an offsetting increase in income tax zone allowances and social security remote area allowances.

Mr Speaker, the Territory supports the imposition of a broad-based sales tax, subject to the additional revenue raised being applied to reductions in other tax areas, notably in income tax. Further, as there will be an increase in prices resulting from the introduction of this consumption-related tax, every effort must be made to minimise consequent wage claims.

The higher cost structure in the Territory will result in an inequitably high tax payment by Territorians relative to other Australians. If a sales tax is introduced, this will result from freight charges. Freight charges ensure that the cost of many items increase with the distance of the purchaser from the point of production. The Territory and other remote areas are significantly disadvantaged in this respect. The cost of items is frequently compounded in these areas through spoilage. The extension of the sales tax system to a greater range of items will compound the disadvantage suffered by purchasers in remote areas. Similar problems arise if the base for sales tax is changed from wholesale price to retail price. For many years, the Territory has been seeking an exemption from sales tax on the freight component of the price of items subject to sales tax. The Commonwealth has not agreed, claiming many technical difficulties. The Territory is not convinced by these arguments and holds to its position.

Mr Speaker, alternatively, there is an administratively simple way to provide tax relief, mainly through an increase in the income tax zone allowance and the social security remote area allowance to offset the increased sales tax collections due to the higher cost of living in remote areas. Preliminary data from the recent household expenditure survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics can assist in determining the amount of adjustment required. Average weekly household expenditure by all households on commodities or services total \$466.88 in the Northern Territory versus the average Australian figure of \$351.40, a difference of \$95 a week or approximately \$5000 a year. Some \$39 of this difference is due to higher housing costs. Clearly, the differential impact of a sales tax on Northern Territory residents depends on how broadly based such a tax is. An example of 10% retail sales tax on all commodities or services would cost Territory residents \$500 a year or \$10 a week more than the average Australian. This adverse impact would be offset by a reduction of income tax rates. The same data shows that the average weekly income tax in the Territory is \$95.62 compared to the Australian average of \$74.56. For equity with other Australians, the average income tax payable by Northern Territory residents would have to fall by \$10 more than the drop for the average Australian. Such an outcome is most unlikely. To the extent that the additional sales tax is not offset by a decrease in income tax, an increase in income tax zone allowance is appropriate.

For social security recipients, the position is potentially far worse. They generally pay no income tax and spend all their pension or benefit. A 10% increase in the remote area allowance would therefore be needed to offset the additional impact in the Northern Territory of a 10% across-the-board retail sales tax.

Reliance on the retail sales tax could possibly disadvantage the tourist industry, especially if there are exemptions for the necessities of life. Rather than seek any arbitrary exemptions, the Territory would prefer to see further incentives for tourism. This could come through additional

infrastructure assistance; for example, through subsidy of airports in remote tourist-oriented locations. There is also scope for deregulation of both domestic and international air transport in Australia, allowing the benefits of increased competition and consequent expected easier access and lower prices to offset any tax disadvantage. This course of action has the significant advantage of no adverse budgetary impact and is a financially responsible course of action proposed by my government.

One offset would be to encourage international tourists by exempting them from the existing departure tax. The Australian tax is high by world standards and is an irritant to the short stay visitor. It is therefore suggested that non-Australian residents, who have been in Australia less than 2 weeks, be exempt from payment of departure tax. The bias against the tourist industry will of course increase if the broad base of an indirect tax is narrowed, assuming expenditure on tourist-related activities remains subject to the tax.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory is an oil producer now. The production at Mereenie field has commenced. This field also contains significant natural gas reserves. These reserves are to be exploited to supply Darwin and possibly Gove to allow economic electricity generation. The levy regime confronting Mereenie is quite inappropriate to an optimum joint production rate of oil and gas. The regime does not appear to be designed to deal with this optimisation issue. Rather, the levy arrangements seem to be the product of the particular issues that have confronted and continue to confront the Bass Strait producers.

Taxation of natural resource development projects should reflect the varying degrees of reward from different fields. It is inequitable that levy arrangements for Mereenie and other Territory resource developments should be related to the success of Bass Strait oil production. The particular issues confronting the Northern Territory in its endeavours to develop its resources must be recognised in taxation outcomes. The Territory urges the Commonwealth government to adopt a more flexible policy in relation to crude oil levies so that the particular advantages, such as large usable natural gas reserves, and problems such as remoteness from markets of individual fields, can be taken into account in optimising the use of Australia's energy resources.

Mr Speaker, I am sure you will agree the proposals for tax reform which I have outlined to Assembly members make a sound and responsible contribution to the taxation debate. You may be assured, Mr Speaker, that I will be putting the Northern Territory's position forcefully at the summit. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT

Acquisition of Casino Units by Territory Insurance Office

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, under normal circumstances, the opposition would welcome the acquisition of casino assets by the Territory Insurance Office. However, it would have to be the understatement of the political period since self-government to say that the involvement of the government any further in the casino would be regarded by the Northern Territory electorate - not by the opposition in the Legislative Assembly but by the Northern Territory electorate - with the greatest suspicion, and justifiably so.

The announcement has not been made officially. The timing of a press conference for 2.30 this afternoon, to announce it after this Assembly has adjourned, would be singularly inappropriate.

There have been a number of stories lately which have raised grave concerns in respect of the fragility of the casino's financial arrangements and which have deliberately not been raised in this Assembly by the opposition during this particular sittings. Mr Speaker, a major story was run at the weekend which obviously might have had a very direct bearing on the fragility of the casino's financial arrangements, which we deliberately did not raise during the sittings, although there were certainly a number of people pressing us to do so. It concerned certain severe problems that might arise at a not too distant date in respect of taxation, and it involved the majority equity participants in the casino, the biggest shareholders.

Mr Speaker, the problem is this. If the Northern Territory government would, at some stage of the game, like to become even a little bit professional with how it explains to the people of the Northern Territory, and indeed the people of Australia, what in the hell is going on with the casino arrangements it would surely be of great relief to the private equity participants in the Northern Territory's casino operations. It must cause considerable despair in the people who have private money invested in the casino to see the hamfisted and incompetent manner in which they are being represented politically in the Legislative Assembly by the Chief Minister and others. Every time the government opens its mouth, it is only in order to change feet. It is becoming intolerable. What sort of game does it think it is playing with people? Is it the death of a thousand cuts?

Mr Speaker, I said to Senator Walsh's office the other day words to the effect that I repeated this morning: 'Look, I do not know, Senator Walsh, what you are doing to our enemies, but you are certainly scaring the daylights out of us'. I also said in that conversation: 'The one thing that is intolerable in a political context is the death of a thousand cuts'. Story after story is coming out. Bit by bit it is revealing more and more information that we did not know before even after having been told that we were being told everything.

I do not want anybody on the government side of the Assembly to attempt to tell me that this decision to buy 5 million units at \$1 each by the TIO was hatched up at the weekend. Do not tell me that the decision was made only last night. Perhaps it was dreamt up before breakfast this morning. Of course, it was not. The fact is that I heard on the casino grapevine over a month ago that there was a very strong prospect of the Territory Insurance Office buying units in the casino. Because it was unsubstantiated rumour, and because I felt that the government's hamfisted handling of this whole affair had done so much damage, not just to the Northern Territory but to the private equity participants in the casino, I did not even raise it in question time. I left it alone. I thought that, if there were any truth in it, we would hear about it during the sittings - somebody would make a statement and we would wait until then. I decided that perhaps there was no truth in it and, therefore, I would not raise it at question time but I would leave it alone. I was being pressed by a number of people to raise the issue of the potential problems that might be caused if the major equity participants in the casino ran into very serious taxation problems involving large amounts of money. I left that alone too.

However, if this Assembly is to have any semblance of working properly, the opposition has been placed in the position where it simply has no choice but to raise these matters again and again. The behaviour of this government has forced it to do so.

We had confidential briefings from the government which we accepted and kept confidential. At no point at any of those confidential briefings, which discussed the very question from our point of view of the economic fragility of

the casino deal, was it even hinted at that the Territory Insurance Office, or any other quasi-government agency involving anything that could be construed as public money, would be buying in to bail out anything for anybody's reasons. Do not tell me the government did not know about it.

Mr Perron: Where's the public money? Come on big mouth, where's the public money?

Mr B. COLLINS: Is the minister going to say that Territory Insurance Office money will not be considered quite rightly as public money?

Mr Perron: By whom? By you. Nobody else considers premium holders' money public money.

Mr B. COLLINS: I have all day to debate this.

Mr Perron: So have I.

Mr B. COLLINS: I invite the minister to stand up in this Assembly, when he gets the opportunity, and tell the members of this Assembly - and I am sure that all of the holders of TIO policies will be very interested to hear it - that the financial affairs of the Territory Insurance Office are not completely underwritten by the Northern Territory government. I would like to hear the minister or the Chief Minister or any member of the government - and I can see he is not quite so enthusiastic now - stand up in the Legislative Assembly and tell any of us that, if the TIO goes down the gurgler and loses more substantial amounts of money, on top of the \$14m that it has already lost, this government and its resources of public money will stand aside and watch the Territory Insurance Office go into receivership. What arrant nonsense. The former Treasurer and indeed the current Treasurer would not be so foolish as to suggest any such thing. One of the great selling points of the Territory Insurance Office, or indeed of any state government insurance office, is that it is backed by the government. I would like to hear anybody from that side suggest that it is not.

Let us not have any more of this hairsplitting and these stupid semantics in respect of the casino and the TIO's involvement. People are sick of it. Let me warn members opposite that people are sick of it. Let us not have any more hairsplitting and saying: 'Oh well, the TIO is a separate agency from the government and what it does is none of our business. If it goes broke because of investments in the casino or anywhere else, there will be no public involvement. We will just stand back and let it go to the cleaners'. Of course, the government will not do that. No government would. A Labor government would not and a CLP government would not. There is no government in Australia that would allow a state government insurance office to fold. Of course, the government would bail it out and that means that there is a direct involvement of the government in every single investment that the TIO makes.

The minister is certainly misjudging the feeling of the electorate on the casino issue. If he thinks the government will be able to con Territorians into believing that the TIO decision has no connection with the Northern Territory government whatsoever, the government will fail utterly because people are sick of hairsplitting.

If people think I am getting a little sensitive about hairsplitting, let us have a look at the record. On 2 occasions, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has issued public statements specifically stating things as fact which he has later amended by the insertion of 1 or 2 extra words in the Legislative

Assembly. As I said before, under normal circumstances, I would not be concerned about the involvement of the TIO in the casinos. However, look at the abysmal track record of this government for coming clean and telling people the truth about what it is doing. It is obvious from this morning's question time and last week that it is still doing it. Whatever complexion it likes to put on it, there will be yet another public relations disaster for the Northern Territory in respect of this whole casino matter. It might think it has a logical argument that will stand up. Electorally and politically, it will not stand up, either here or anywhere else in this country.

I heard on Four Corners last night some pretty discouraging and upsetting remarks from Senator Walsh. I heard Senator Walsh last night say some appalling things. I agree with the Chief Minister that the subject matter of his last question this morning was indeed the most pertinent of those remarks about the population of the north. But I have to say that, in the face of the worst sustained antagonism that we have had from a federal government for a long time, I thought that the case that was put last night on behalf of the Territory by the CLP representatives in that program was abysmal beyond belief. It was an appalling performance. If the Chief Minister wants to doubt that, then can I tell him about the half a dozen CLP voters and supporters, prominent ones, who pulled me up in the Mall this morning shaking their heads. I know quite a few prominent members of the CLP. They are demoralised. They are demoralised because of the pathetic defence of the Northern Territory that was mounted last night by our leaders. I did not know whether they would put it to air or not but the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, our only federal member in the House of Representatives, was prepared to drop yet another bucket on the CLP government of the Northern Territory by confirming by inference that, in fact, money had been misused. He said: 'You will have to ask the government why they did it. I am not going to give an explanation. Ask Ian Tuxworth'. That did our case a lot of good.

Mr Speaker, I must say that the transparent attempts by the federal CLP member to vindicate his own position on the casino at the cost of the Northern Territory is becoming very difficult to bear, whether one is CLP or Labor. The facts are that the CLP at the moment is doing the Territory a very grave disservice if it has not done what I suggested last week that it should do. It should have taken somebody aside and said: 'You did not stand as an individual. You accepted CLP endorsement and stood as a CLP candidate and you are not doing the Territory much good'. If that has not happened, it is about time that it did.

The Chief Minister made some criticism of the program last night in respect of balance and made a ridiculous statement about Senator Walsh paying money to the ABC specifically to do a job on the Northern Territory. The facts are that the journalists on that program were handed so much usable material and so many quotable quotes from our political representatives of the Northern Territory that they would have had to hand in their AJA membership if they had not used it. Of course, they used it and the damage was done, not by the program but by the representation we have in here.

Mr Speaker, nowhere in any of the debates inside or outside this Assembly, or in any of the briefings the opposition has ever received on the casinos, was there even the slightest mention that there was to be any more government or quasi-government involvement in the casinos. I would like to hear the Minister for Mines and Energy, the former Treasurer, stand up in the Assembly and try a little bit more hairsplitting. He interjected that he would do it. Let us see if he does it in debate, Mr Speaker. Let us see if the people out there will cop it any more.

We had a statement from the Chief Minister in January this year that all documents concerning the casino would be tabled. When he was challenged on the truth of that and when admitting that it was false, he said that what he was talking about was all the relevant documents. That is the kind of non-stop hairsplitting and semantics that I am talking about that people are heartily sick of.

I will put it to the government opposite in purely political terms. The government can put whatever kind of logical and reasonable complexion on the involvement of the TIO in this deal it likes but it will not be believed by anybody in the Northern Territory. Nobody in the Northern Territory is in any doubt whatsoever that there is a hell of a lot of this casino deal that nobody has seen yet and it will only be seen if it is forced, bludgeoned and knocked out of the government. That is hardly the way to run a government because the crying need at the moment is for a little bit of confidence in this government.

Last night, when we needed it most, on a program which not only has massive national coverage but is a program of credibility, we were let down badly by our political representatives in the face of those attacks by Walsh. Mr Speaker, all the smirks of the self-satisfied, smug members opposite, and particularly the former Treasurer, will not change that one iota.

I put myself last night in the place of a southern viewer watching that program and prepared to be convinced by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory that our pay rises were justified. Can any member opposite stand up and tell me that the answer to that question has done anything more than compound the already poor image of the Northern Territory elsewhere, particularly since we have a case to make and we should be making it? I do not like making these comparisons but I would have been interested to see how certain former members of this Assembly would have handled the same matter.

As I keep on saying, this casino affair has gone far enough. I am sick and tired of raising it in the Legislative Assembly. I do not want to. I came into this Assembly this sittings with the intention of not mentioning the casino. But then public statements which were made by the Chief Minister in January were refuted by subsequent statements, which forced us into a position where we could do nothing else. Henry and Walker must now be at the stage of tearing its hair out about the kind of case that is being put on its behalf by these absolute clots opposite. I certainly would not want to be in a position where I had to rely on the members opposite to bail me out because their performance on this whole question has been beyond belief.

Once again, in the face of statement after statement, confirming during this sittings that there was nothing more to be told and that there were no arrangements between the Northern Territory government, Henry and Walker and Kumagai Gumi, last night on national television the Chief Minister used those precise words: 'arrangements', 'Kumagai Gumi' and 'Henry and Walker'.

Mr Speaker, I gave the Chief Minister the courtesy of broadcasting to the Northern Territory this morning on Territory Extra the precise question I was going to ask him in the Legislative Assembly. That was 2 hours before we sat. His response to the question was to get up and say: 'I did not say that. I do not recall saying that. I did not name the companies'. I have to go to the trouble of providing him with a transcript of the Four Corners interview. Does he place so little importance on the words that he says on the Territory's behalf on national television that not only does he not recall what he says but he does not even bother to keep a record of it? What kind of totally incompetent government have we been landed with at the moment? It is becoming worse and

worse with every passing day. Can I assure the Chief Minister and the former Treasurer that it is not just the opposition in the Legislative Assembly that is getting sick of it? Despite what I acknowledge to be a majority of support for the CLP in the Northern Territory, can I tell the government, if it is not aware of it, that it is among its own supporters that the criticism is running at its hardest and its highest. If it is not aware of that, it should go and talk to some of its own members.

What is the point of giving the Chief Minister the opportunity to once again place on the public record what is going on with the casino? We cannot believe anything he tells us. I invite the member grinning opposite to get up and deliver what will be his useful contribution to this debate and to compound the government's position even further. I am quite sure that, if he even attempts to, his political masters will tell him to sit down and shut his mouth. The boss is getting into enough strife without the clowns on the backbench adding to it. The Territory is owed an explanation. It seems to be impossible to get it. The Chief Minister has been given an opportunity by me.

Mr D.W. Collins: Aren't you kind?

Mr B. COLLINS: No, I am not kind. I am just trying to use this Assembly for the purpose for which it is designed and that is to inform the people of the Northern Territory, who pay the taxes, and the people of Australia, who pay the taxes, how the Northern Territory government is spending their money. We are constantly told by the smug former Treasurer opposite that we have endless opportunities in the Legislative Assembly to put the government to the test on financial matters. We never use them, of course, because, every time we bring it up in the Legislative Assembly, the government gives us a proper response and answers the questions fully and openly. What a load of hogwash that has been demonstrated to be.

I invite the Chief Minister and Treasurer and minister responsible for the TIO to get up now in the Legislative Assembly and say there is no connection, as the former Treasurer would like to have us believe, between the TIO and the government. I invite him to say that the government does not underwrite the TIO and that, if the TIO should fold because of improper investments, the Northern Territory government would not inject public money into the TIO to support it and keep it credible as a Territory government insurance office. After saying that, perhaps the government will have some grounds for saying that there is no government involvement in this particular purchase of \$5m worth of casino units because that is what I believe it to be.

The casino arrangements are very fragile indeed. The completely incompetent and inexcusable manner in which the government has put forward the case and is continuing to put forward the case is making those arrangements more fragile than ever. The principal company is in a very fragile financial position. The principal owner of the casino is indeed in a far more fragile position than the original owners of the casino were ever in. Currently, the principals of the current ownership are facing a serious tax problem. It may well be that, if the decision happens to go the wrong way, as they have publicly acknowledged, they will have to pick up a bill in the vicinity of \$1m.

That is why, on behalf of Northern Territory taxpayers, I am interested in finding out whether units of the Coonawarra Trust, as distinct from the TIO interest, are currently being attempted to be sold on the market. I have a very legitimate reason. To quote the former Chief Minister: 'We kicked out Federal Hotels because we were terrified with the prospect of waking up one morning and finding that someone else owned the casinos. They were bankrupt'. I have as

healthy a concern in precisely the same terms and so do most of the citizens of the Northern Territory. I am concerned that maybe we will wake up one morning soon and find out that somebody else owns the casinos under the current arrangements. The fact is, and the government knows it, that that is a very hot prospect indeed. If it wants to dispute that, I would suggest it talks to people who deal with corporate affairs, about companies which are targets, find out what kind of profile the people who make a profession out of that business look for.

Mr Speaker, the move by the TIO to inject \$5m of what will be seen to be and probably is public money...

Mr Perron: You are qualifying.

Mr B. COLLINS: I am not qualifying anything.

Mr Perron: You said it was public money.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I did not want to distract the attention of this Assembly unnecessarily but, unfortunately, the thickheaded clots opposite who like to tell us they are in charge do not seem to be able to get the message. I will say it again. The government would like us to believe, according to the interjections of the former Treasurer, that the Northern Territory government has no connection with the Territory Insurance Office. They will stand up and engage in yet one more exercise in semantics and financial hairsplitting. They will say that, technically of course, theoretically of course, the dollars that the TIO will inject into the casinos are not public money. That argument I thought I had addressed at length. That is what they will be saying in a minute.

I will repeat again for the former Treasurer that, if he and the government are prepared to stand up during this debate and say that the Northern Territory government is not standing behind the Territory Insurance Office and, in the event of bad investments by the TIO, will not bail it out with an injection of public money, then let them do so. How many times do I have to say that? If they are not prepared to say that, they will not be able to make a case to anybody for saying that this investment has nothing to do with them. If the TIO invests anywhere, does its dough and places the policies of its clients in doubt, then the government, whether it is tomorrow, next year or in 10 years time, as a result of those poor investments, will stand behind the TIO and bail it out. It is fairly clear that the government will not be able to make that distinction. I am sorry that I have to labour the point but it still does not seem to have penetrated to our masterly money managers opposite and the drongos on the backbench who would not know what day it is. Take Denis Collins, for example - hold him up to the light and not a brain in sight.

Mr Speaker, the facts are that the government's behaviour on this whole affair is inexcusable. It has been let out in dribs and drabs. The timing is superb. It waits until the Assembly adjourns at 12 o'clock and it cannot be put on the mat in here. It then sails into a nice press conference where we know, from past experience, that it can lie its head off. It even puts public servants in the completely invidious position of having to tell the story on its behalf which, I might add, is a disgraceful way in which to use the Territory's public service. It can do all that at press conferences. The government has a great track record for doing that. If it can be avoided by a bit of fancy footwork and slippery timing, it will not have it aired in here until it absolutely has to.

What I would like to ask in the Assembly this morning - and I do not ask for the truth from the government because that is an impossible demand - is that

the government at least do us the courtesy of telling us as much in here now as it will tell people at the press conference this afternoon.

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, we were quite happy to have the business of the Assembly disrupted so that the Leader of the Opposition could have his say. As soon as I have spoken, we will be moving on with the business of the day.

Mr B. Collins: What if somebody else would like to say something?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it is reasonable to say that the member was granted leave to make his statement. I will respond to it and then we will move on.

I would like to start my remarks by reading the media statement that will be presented this afternoon. That will be the basis of my remarks rather than the supposition, conjecture and innuendo that the Leader of the Opposition has just embarked on for the last 30 minutes reflecting on as many people as he could and as adversely as he could, in his words, for the benefit of the Northern Territory. The statement reads as follows:

The Territory Insurance Office has announced the purchase of a 10% interest in the Territory Property Trust which owns the casinos in Darwin and Alice Springs. The TIO board said it had taken up the 5 million \$1 units which were about to be warehoused through a bank to southern states. The board was confident from financial analysis of the earning potential of the casinos that the investment would produce above average commercial returns for the TIO. The equity had been taken out not only on financial grounds but also to retain further ownership for the Territory within the Territory. The investment was a further extension into the tourist industry and was in keeping with the TIO policy of investing in the Northern Territory. Of the 5 million units, an option to purchase was held over 2.6 million units by Greate Bay Casino and Aspinall Holdings Pty Ltd. The option expires in October 1989. The TIO board said the investment represents 7.69% of TIO's investment portfolio of \$65m.

Mr Speaker, TIO is presently committed to take over \$20m of property investment in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs. In diversifying its portfolio and playing a key role in the Northern Territory's development, the TIO is following the pattern set by government insurance offices in other states.

I would now like to make a few comments about the outburst of the Leader of the Opposition this morning who, with more indignation than fact, set about berating as many people in the community as he could to satisfy himself. There are some facts that the member would have had available to him if he had been a little patient. Let me say unequivocally that this government has created and stands by the TIO. Do not let anybody in the community cause fear and concern that that is not the case. The people of the community respect and are involved with the TIO because it is supported by the government. In so far as purchases and investments by the TIO are concerned, as Treasurer, I authorise from time to time investments over a certain level. In this case, I have authorised the investment, and I did that last week. I also make the point that, as a matter of course, I never make any public reference to any investment of the TIO that

takes place as a result of a decision of the board, either for political gain or whatever. On this occasion, I would not have done that either.

There are some facts that the Leader of the Opposition set aside because they were not convenient or because he did not know them. I suspect that he did know them because of the way he has gone about handling this issue. The purchase of the shares had nothing to do with Henry and Walker or Coonawarra.

Mr B. Collins: I did not suggest that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable member says that he did not say that. I would say that the last 30 minutes was an exercise in putting forward the proposition that the government was buying Henry and Walker shares in the trust to bail it out. The inference and the suggestion is deliberate. I would make the point that the shares in the trust that the TIO has been authorised to purchase are shares that are warehoused. Those warehouse shares have been announced, commented on and referred to so many times in here that it does not matter.

Mr Speaker, the TIO's proposal was that the trust was going public. The float looked as though it would be very successful and, indeed, that the shares in the trust would attract a premium. It proposed that it would be prudent business for the TIO to take the warehouse shares if they were available because they had a guaranteed rate of return that was more than acceptable and because there was the opportunity to make a premium. That would seem to be reasonable.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition asked whether Henry and Walker was disposing of its shares. I did not know that because it was Henry and Walker's business. However, I undertook to find out for the member. The answer I have is that Henry and Walker is taking no action on its initiative to sell its shares in the trust. All arrangements for shareholdings are under consideration pursuant to the intention of the government to float the trust publicly. I am advised that, in terms of corporate affairs considerations, the nature of those approvals should remain confidential until corporate affairs approval is given and the prospectus for the public trust is issued. I will make further announcements at the appropriate time. I would like to set aside any suggestion that the Territory Insurance Office is buying Henry and Walker's shares for any purpose at all. Henry and Walker has indicated that it is taking no action to sell its shares. The TIO involvement is purely a commercial one to invest its money in the best possible way.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that the Leader of the Opposition frequently says that he hates the casino issue and he wishes it would go away. He says it is bad for the people and is destroying morale. The Leader of the Opposition pushes harder and further than anybody else in the Northern Territory to keep the casino issue up front so that people can become bored with it or he can kick political goals with it. In any event, he spends a great deal of time not talking about the facts but using the casino issue to muck rake and to drag the Territory down. He is trying to drag the government down and he will not do that. However, he will succeed in affecting investment confidence in the Territory with his current practice. I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that, instead of jumping up in the middle of proceedings, making assumptions and putting forward innuendos and unreasonable propositions, he should deal with facts. As for his comment that one cannot believe anything that is said in the Assembly, could I remind him that it is only a little while ago that we were pulling him up 2 and 3 times a sittings to set straight false statements that he made in relation to a whole range of things. He had reached a point where nobody in the community believed him.

Mr Speaker, so far as I am concerned the government's dealings over the casino have been proper, just, upright and honest, but the Leader of the Opposition does not accept that. That is fine. However, he should not continue to walk through the Northern Territory community reflecting on the credit position of companies and on the integrity of people and to use the casino issue to drag people down. If he wants to drag me down, he should pick on me and stop dragging everybody else in the community down. As I said, we will be disposing of this matter now and moving on with government business.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in closing the debate, could I just say that there is a huge hole in the government argument on this whole casino affair.

Mr D.W. Collins: One of your giant pinholes.

Mr B. COLLINS: It is about as big as the hole in the top of the member for Sadadeen's head.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. Will members kindly refrain from interjecting during this debate. It is becoming rather tiresome and I am not prepared to put up with any more of it.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, there is a huge hole in the government's argument. There should be no need to raise the business affairs of private companies in the Legislative Assembly at all. This government claims to hold a strong philosophy in respect of private enterprise and non-government involvement yet it demonstrates day after day that it is in fact the most enthusiastic socialistic government in this country. I am not complaining about that. If the casinos were the same private operation as they previously were, which they would have continued to be had it not been for the hamfisted and totally unnecessary intervention of this government in their private affairs, it would be unnecessary ever to raise the casino business in the Legislative Assembly. I respect the right of private companies, which arrange private finance, to run their own affairs without it ever being canvassed in the Legislative Assembly.

The problem is that the government involved the casinos by introducing into this Assembly legislation, unprecedented in this country, to acquire compulsorily privately-owned assets from those casino operators. It has been involved to the extent that it has lost something in the region of \$14m. I am not suggesting that money may not be recovered at some time in the future but, at this time, something in the region of \$14m of public money has been thrown away. If it seriously expects that, in the face of that, the opposition will refrain from constantly attacking this matter, then I will have to disabuse it of that.

Mr Speaker, I have no interest in attacking the affairs of any private company in the Northern Territory. It is the actions and mismanagement of this government that is the nub of the issue. The Chief Minister has told me to attack him and nobody else. He must be an extremely insensitive chap indeed. As he said on Four Corners last night, his shoulders must indeed be broad if he has been able to construe anything I have said as anything other than an attack on him. I use the word 'him' in its Cabinet sense of him having collective responsibility for the actions of his government. Can I disabuse the Chief Minister of that and say that all of the criticisms I am making are directed at his government.

If private companies take up the option to become involved in any way whatsoever as recipients of public money, of which this government happens to be

merely the temporary custodian - it is not its private bank account even though it constantly behaves as though it is - this Assembly has a duty to canvass the use to which the government has put public funds. A number of years ago, the Northern Territory Development Corporation loaned money to private companies at concessional rates of interest and those loans were not made public. The opposition in the Northern Territory pointed out again and again the extreme danger of that procedure and the government, of course, did not listen. It took a major financial scandal relating to loans made by the NTDC to carpetbaggers from interstate who successfully cleaned it out and it took ridiculous public statements to the press by the then manager of the Northern Territory Development Corporation - for example, he asked, if someone came into his office well dressed and well-spoken, what could he do in terms of checking out whether he was financially solvent - to force the government finally into acknowledging that those figures should be published in the NTDC annual report.

I canvass that matter in debate for the second time today because I know there are members opposite, who did not join us until after that had happened, who will not be aware that that is the history of it. The facts are that, like it or lump it, any private company which puts itself in a position of receiving the benefit of public funds bestowed upon it by the government of the day can expect that matter to be made public in so far as the involvement of that public money is concerned.

Mr Speaker, I invite members of the government to put the contrary view that they should have the discretion to dispose of public money without giving any account of it. For a number of years, the government took that attitude. It took the proverbial Buntine Roadways affair to hit the fan with dreadful national publicity to force it out of that complacency. It appears to be sliding right back into it.

I want to correct the record in respect of some of the things the Chief Minister has said. At no point did I suggest that the Northern Territory government would not stand behind the Territory Insurance Office. I would not have thought that anyone listening would have picked up the slightest impression that I was saying that. The Chief Minister is once again up to his favourite tactic of putting words into people's mouths then answering his own words. As I said 10 times during my debate, wherever a government insurance office exists, that government will stand by it. For that reason, it is impossible for the government to divorce itself from the financial affairs of the Territory Insurance Office. Indeed, to nail that argument down a little tighter, the Chief Minister advised this Assembly that it is a statutory requirement for the Treasurer of the Northern Territory to authorise investments of the Territory Insurance Office over a certain amount, and for that very reason. If the Territory Insurance Office makes unwise investments and suffers financially as a result, the government will have to support it. Quite properly, once an investment goes over a certain amount, it then becomes the political responsibility of the government to wear the consequences of the investment.

Mr Speaker, so far as Henry and Walker is concerned, I did in fact take some trouble, and Hansard will demonstrate it. For political reasons, I was talking specifically about the involvement of the Territory Insurance Office in this affair as distinct from any ownership of the casino by Henry and Walker.

Perhaps I could point out something else to the government opposite. Would the government like now to tell me that, because the TIO is now involved as an equity partner in the casinos, it is completely divorced from the affairs of Henry and Walker? The whole matter is now inextricably linked together, which of course is the basis of the very objection I am making to this whole deal. If

members would like to go right back to the original debates where the opposition opposed that nonsensical compulsory acquisition legislation, they would see that the basis of our argument is still the same. If the Northern Territory government had stuck by its avowed principles and had allowed a private company to continue to run its own operations and pay the Northern Territory government considerable amounts of money every year in gaming taxes, there would never have been any reason at all for this matter to have been canvassed in the Legislative Assembly.

The government, the Territory Insurance Office, Henry and Walker, Kumagai Gumi, Pratts and Aspinalls are now all inextricably linked together. If we were talking about an equity partner which had 5% of the shares, 10% of the shares or even 15% of the shares, perhaps it could be said that any problems that Henry and Walker might have would not be all that catastrophic. However, when we are talking about a private equity partner which holds 57% of the equity in the operation, in so far as it affects the arrangements that have been made linking the Northern Territory's Treasury into that operation, the affairs of that company demand the attention of this Legislative Assembly. Mr Speaker, all I can say is that I deeply regret that the actions of this government brought that situation about in the first place.

Motion negatived.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Video Material in the Northern Territory

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, at the last sittings, this Assembly passed the Classification of Publications Bill which, amongst other things, would regulate the sale and hire of video material throughout the Territory. Honourable members will no doubt have been subjected to strong lobbying from the video traders and, last week, we saw the tabling in the Assembly of a petition signed by over 6000 persons. As yet, I have not accepted any arguments to modify the recent legislation which restricts access by persons under 18 years to X and R-rated material in video outlets.

Since that legislation was passed, the Senate Select Committee on Video Material has delivered its findings. These include that a moratorium be placed on the sale and hire of X-rated videos in the ACT and that the customs prohibited imports regulations be amended to stop the importation of what could have been classified as X-rated videos amongst other things. The committee recommended that the moratorium in the ACT apply pending the findings of the newly-created Joint Parliamentary Committee on Video Materials. It is not known when that committee will report but one of its terms of reference is to inquire and report on whether R-rated videos should be permitted to be displayed for sale or hire in the same area and side by side with G, PG and M-rated videos and, if not, what restrictions should be imposed on the display of R-rated material. Honourable members will be aware that that committee is therefore addressing the problems that this Assembly recognised in its legislation.

In considering the recommendations in the report of the Senate select committee, I would suggest that the federal Labor government will be confronted with a divergence of views similar to those encountered in this Assembly. It may take about 3 months for the relevant ACT ordinance banning the sale or hire of X-rated material to be prepared, passed and proclaimed. It is anticipated that the joint parliamentary committee could favour a banning of the sale and hire of X-rated material. If the general feeling is against a moratorium, it could well be an indication that the joint parliamentary committee could be reporting in a fairly short time. Any amendment to the ACT ordinance should not

stop the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board from classifying material as X either during the moratorium or if the finding of the joint parliamentary committee include a recommendation to ban the sale and hire of X-rated material and the Commonwealth accepts it. It appears that, even if only one jurisdiction retains the X classification, the Film Censorship Board will be prepared to make that classification - although it is open to question what priority it will give to the work. However, a banning of the import of X-rated material under the customs regulations would create some problems as no X-rated movies could then be imported.

If the Commonwealth refused to allow the Film Censorship Board to classify material as X, we would have little alternative but to drop the classification and ban its sale or hire. Setting up a film censorship authority ourselves would not be feasible. If the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board continued to classify material as X, but the ACT had a moratorium or permanent ban on its sale or hire in place, we would be in a situation of being the only jurisdiction where the sale or hire of X-rated material was allowed. The Territory could become the distribution and perhaps legal production centre of pornography in Australia.

Should we ban the sale and hire of X-rated videos, apart from attracting hostile comments from dealers and some sectors of the public, we would be sending the market underground. We would also see the fire sale situation that occurred in South Australia. In that state, as soon as a ban became imminent, video shops conducted a successful sale of X-rated videos in stock, which meant they are now stored in peoples' homes on a permanent basis instead of in the restricted areas of video shops away from children.

In the meantime, in December last year, new censorship guidelines were issued by the Chief Censor. They have in effect picked up the recommendation of the October ministers' meeting and tightened up the M and R categories in relation to violence. In particular, X classification now is similar to what was previously contemplated for ER in that it includes explicit depictions of sexual acts involving adults but does not include any depiction suggesting coercion or non-consent of any kind. Thus, in effect it becomes a classification for movies involving explicit consensual sex. Violence can be no worse than that covered by R. In practice, however, most of the videos now being classified as X would involve little or no violence, being the non-violent pornographic movie. As a result, more material is either in a more restricted category or is refused classification altogether. For instance, most bondage material would now be refused classification.

Mr Speaker, the regulations under our act will contain provisions for labelling of video material to show quite clearly what the particular classification is. In this regard, I have received representations from video dealers. They are concerned that the Northern Territory may impose labelling requirements that are different from those prescribed by the Commonwealth or the states. From information I have received, there is no uniformity of labelling amongst the states and I advise members that I intend to require video cases to be labelled clearly and distinctly with black lettering against a white background. This will allow video outlets to use gummed labels already available from distributors. The use of black against the white background provides a suitable contrast irrespective of the colours of the pictures on the front of the video covers.

In requiring videos to be labelled, a further short-term complication has arisen. Many videos were imported before the federal government imposed compulsory censorship of imports on 1 June 1984. It has been acknowledged

publicly that the Film Censorship Board has a backlog of over 2000 titles to classify. Until that backlog is cleared, unclassified videos will remain on the shelves, although they will generally form only a small proportion of videos available in shops. I would point out to members that there is a distinction between unclassified material and material that is refused classification by the censor.

As I foreshadowed last sittings, an education campaign is being prepared to assist the public by describing what is involved in each category of classification of cinema films and videos. Planning is currently under way. It will involve a television presentation of about 5 minutes and short, 1-minute advertisements. Newspaper publicity will be included. Posters will also be given to video shops and cinemas for display explaining each classification. At the same time, copies of the legislation have gone to Territory video shops, newsagents and sex shops to apprise them of the requirements under the legislation.

In addition, an officer from the Department of Law has had discussions with several of the Darwin proprietors to get their thoughts on what should be in the regulations and to better appreciate any difficulties caused by the requirements for X and R-rated videos to be in a separate room in the video shop. The instructions for regulations being prepared will take note of their comments.

A major campaign has been launched by the video shop proprietors to have reversed the decision to require R-rated material to be displayed only in a restricted area. This has involved representations to government and a newspaper campaign and petitions.

With the need to prepare regulations, make other administrative arrangements, including with the Commonwealth, and start the publicity campaign, it will probably be up to 4 months before the act can commence. The main problem in the meantime is the fate of X-classified material. If a moratorium is imposed on X-rated material in the ACT, the Northern Territory will be the only legislature in Australia allowing the sale and hire of X-classified materials. We would have to consider seriously whether to introduce legislation banning the sale or hire of X-rated videos. If, in the end, the Territory either decides or is compelled to ban material with an X classification, then this Assembly will have to reconsider the decision to require R-rated material to be displayed in a restricted area.

Mr Speaker, I am of the opinion that our legislation is the most sensible that currently exists in the country in respect of classification of publications. However, factors beyond our control may necessitate a rethink on some aspects. I propose to keep honourable members informed of developments in the federal sphere as they affect the Northern Territory legislation.

As I said, it is likely to be 4 months before we can commence our act and regulations. Quite clearly, this Assembly will be meeting during that time. We will be able to keep members updated and, if necessary, propose changes during those sittings.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills relating to local government - (a) being presented and read a first time together, and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages and the third readings of the bill together; and (b) consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL
(Serial 116)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 115)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to present a bill which is a major initiative in one of the most important areas of government activity. The bill for a new Local Government Act is the product of over 4 years work, involving extensive consultation with the community and local government authorities, culminating in an innovative piece of legislation which provides the framework for a significant advance for the local government sphere of government. For too long, the local government sphere has laboured under legislation which is an amalgam of 19th century provisions drawn from various state acts.

Rather than continue to amend the current act to remove the most pressing difficulties, the government decided to carry out a complete review of the philosophy and approach to local government and to rewrite the act accordingly. A working party of senior officers was established which produced during the last 2 years 4 discussion papers, which have been tabled in this Assembly, aimed at obtaining comment from the community and local government authorities on proposals for change.

The final report of the working party was issued in October last year recommending sweeping changes to the system of providing for local government in the Northern Territory. The bill now before the Assembly is based largely on that report and takes into account the comments received and the results of the consultation which was carried out on the report.

The bill is based on the philosophy of providing greater independence to local government. This philosophy recognises the role of local government as an integral part of the structure of the Northern Territory in conjunction with the Territory government. The development of more effective and responsive local government will allow the devolution of additional functions and responsibilities to local government to ensure that the basic decisions which affect the lives of people will be made by representatives from their particular community.

The philosophy of the bill recognises the need to continue links between the Territory and local governments and the role of local government as an advocate and spokesman for its community. The carriage of this role is invaluable in ensuring that local knowledge and priorities are available for injection into the decision-making process at all levels of government. Inherent in the philosophy on which the bill is based is the need to make local government clearly accountable to its community for its decisions, responsibilities and the performance of its functions. The adoption of this philosophy of independence will provide for a system of local government which has the opportunity to be innovative, responsive and resourceful. Local government authorities will have the power to initiate and promote a wide range of community-based personal, as well as property, services and to take an increasingly important role in the government of the Northern Territory.

Throughout this exercise, consultation with the community and local government authorities has been given a high priority. Consultation commenced with the issue of the 4 discussion papers which I referred to earlier. Seminars were arranged to allow free discussion on major issues between the community, councils and the members of the working party. Detailed discussions were held at each stage of the process of development of the proposals with the municipal councils involved and the Northern Territory Local Government Association. The result of this extensive consultation is a bill which has general acceptance in the community and with local government.

Many significant changes are made in this bill. I will bring to the attention of the Assembly the most significant. The current act provides for a process of petitioning for change to boundaries of municipalities and wards. The process has been found to be unnecessarily legalistic and technical and not at all in line with the approach of allowing councils to be responsive to change in the communities they serve. Clause 19 of the bill will provide for the periodic review of ward and municipal boundaries to ensure that, as far as is possible, all members of the communities are accorded equal representation.

It is vital that local government be, and be seen to be, above reproach. The bill addresses this need in 2 major areas. Clause 24 provides detailed provisions for the declaration by a member of any pecuniary interests that he may have in any matter before the council. The clause will require the maintenance of a register of interests and will prevent a member from taking part in the debate or voting on a matter in which the member has declared an interest. The bill does recognise that, in relatively small communities, a member may have an interest in matters before a council and that the expertise of that member in that area may be of value to the council in consideration of the matter. The minister will have the power to suspend the operation of the clause sufficiently to allow such a member to speak in a debate.

The other major area important in achieving this vital requirement is contained in clause 69 which provides that council meetings will be open to the public except where prescribed matters are before the council.

There are a number of elections which members of the community are required to deal with. Differences in electoral provisions between elections for federal, Territory and local government are unnecessarily confusing for voters. Division 8 of part II of the bill will provide a system for election of local government representatives which will be aligned with the Territory Electoral Act. I expect that the Chief Electoral Officer will be appointed as returning officer for all council elections. This will enable the considerable expertise of the NT Electoral Office to be brought to bear in council elections. The government, in making the NT Electoral Office available in this way, expects that all councils will take the opportunity to avail themselves of this expertise. These provisions will allow for the introduction of a joint electoral roll. This is a matter which every state has agreed should be addressed but, yet again, the Northern Territory will lead Australia in the achievement of this desirable objective.

To enable councils to gauge the feelings of their residents, provision is now made for the conduct of polls of electors and for meetings of electors. Councils are required to carry a heavy responsibility. To assist them, the bill will provide at clauses 62 and 63 for the appointment by the councils of management and advisory committees. Councils will be able to appoint to these committees people with expertise or an interest in a particular matter. This new mechanism will allow the councils to at once spread the workload and to involve those people in the community with particular knowledge and interest in a subject in the decision-making process.

Members will note that, in line with the procedures of this Assembly, councils will be required to have a specified quorum. Abstentions will be recorded and the chairman will no longer have a casting vote. The local government sphere has long seen the need for more formal input to decision making at the Territory government level. Part III of the bill will incorporate the Northern Territory Local Government Association, of which all councils are members, to help provide that more formal link.

It is almost a cliché to say that the needs of the communities in an area as diverse as the Territory vary significantly. The imposition on each community of the same range of functions and a requirement that these functions be performed to the same standard would not be conducive to the development of an effective and responsive system of local government. Schedule 2 of the bill lists the areas of responsibilities which may be granted to a council. Functions will only be granted to a council when it has sufficient resources. This approach should ensure that local government has flexibility in the delivery of services and that initiatives by councils are not stifled by the narrowness of enabling powers. Once a council has responsibility in a particular area, the operation of clauses 87 and 90 will ensure that the council has power to carry out that responsibility unfettered by constant referral to another level of government.

Traditionally, the power of local councils to expend revenue has been quite significantly tied to heads of power in the act. Again, in line with the philosophy that local government should be able to arrange its affairs independently, the bill provides for councils to be given wide power to expend revenue in accordance with their annual estimates. If a council is responsible for a particular function, it will have power to expend revenue on that function.

The charging of rates is a principal source of revenue for councils. The introduction of this bill will assist councils in applying rates which will allow for a more equitable revenue collection in relation to the services provided to all residents. The general rate will continue to be the principal source of rating income. The definition of this rate will, however, be extended to allow a local government council to declare a general rate based on either a uniform or a differential rating system. The power to rate differentially will be capable of operation by a council by reference to a ward, part of a municipality, a town or a zone declared pursuant to the Planning Act. Councils will also have the power to declare a local rate which is designed to allow councils to recover the cost of a service which benefits only a specified locality in the municipality.

The methods of assessment and valuation of property for the purpose of determining rates is understandably a matter of considerable interest in the community. I do not propose to enter into the debate on which particular method is, in my opinion, best. This is a matter which should and must be dealt with by local government councils and their communities. The bill only contributes to the debate in providing that rates will continue to be levied generally on property. This stance has been taken after examination of the findings of extensive inquiries in Australia and overseas which have consistently found that property valuation is the most equitable and administratively efficient basis on which to collect the majority of local government income.

The bill does provide, however, for the broadening of the types of valuation which may be used by a council in determining the rate to be levied. This is achieved by providing a council with the flexibility to adopt a method based on the unimproved capital value of the site, the improved capital value,

the annual value or a combination of any 2. This combination, if properly considered against the background of high-land-value areas that have medium to low-cost improvements, and the reverse situation, provides a mechanism to distribute more fairly the rate burden without unfairly penalising a particular group. Yet again this system will give to local government the power and the responsibility to organise its own affairs in response to the needs and rate-paying capacity of its own community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the provisions of the bill relating to financial administration have been rationalised and streamlined. The provisions provide proper support for the current local government accounting regulations which were introduced last year after extensive research and consultation. The provisions, as they now appear, are consistent with the need for public accountability and for a system of financial administration which is realistic when the needs of councils are considered.

Inevitably, disputes arise between the councils and the members of their communities. In the past, persons who felt they were disadvantaged by a decision were required to institute costly legal proceedings or wait for the next election. The bill provides for a local government tribunal which will have the power to hear and determine disputes of this nature. The tribunal will have the power to operate free from the technical legal restraints of court practices and procedures. Where questions of law arise which cannot be determined to the satisfaction of the parties, then a reference or appeal will be possible to a local government appeal tribunal. There the matter will end. There will be no facility for continuing the appeal process to the High Court.

The power of local government councils to regulate matters in their communities by making bylaws was the subject of legislative action in 1982. The Local Government Amendment Act (No 2) of 1982 empowered councils to make bylaws on any matter relating to a function or activity vested in it. This power is consistent with the philosophy of the bill and will be retained.

The bill also retains the current method of making bylaws by which councils have a wide degree of autonomy. This autonomy, however, is subject to the same series of checks and balances which apply to other government rules and similar instruments by virtue of the Interpretation Act.

Part VIII of the bill retains, in terms similar to part XX of the current act, the provisions which relate to the formation of community government councils. The majority of the changes which have been made in this area have been made to achieve more consistency with similar provisions in parts of the bill relating to municipal local government and from experience derived from the operation of those already created community government councils. The concept of community government schemes is now being recognised by many small communities in the Territory as an appropriate means for them to obtain a greater degree of control over matters of local concern. It is recognised that, as the procedure available under this part is used more often and by more diverse communities, it may be necessary to review its operation to ensure it remains capable of providing a proper framework for local government for all small communities.

The bill is a major initiative in the field of local government and introduces a philosophy often put forward but seldom acted upon. The government has given the matter a very high priority, a fact indicated by the introduction of this bill just 6 months after the final report of the working party. This timetable places great pressure on the various Territory government departments whose responsibilities impinge on various areas of the bill. The priority was

necessary in order that a bill, which embodies the concepts and philosophies to be followed in local government, can obtain the approval of this Assembly. This will allow the next stage of the process of change to take place.

The next stage is the preparation of supporting regulations. While the bill is quite extensive, and in terms of sheer size it is one of the largest pieces of legislation ever to be brought before this Assembly, it has been prepared essentially as a framework. Honourable members will note the considerable reduction in bulk over the current act. The bill has been designed to leave matters of working detail to be prescribed by regulation. It is the intention, in this regard, to provide an act and regulations in a form which is easy to use and readily understood by those working in the field. Matters of working detail must be prescribed by regulation. Many of these matters of detail are, of course, of great interest and importance to local authorities, the community and the Territory government. The process which will settle the necessary regulations will be similar to that which generated the bill itself. Experts will be drawn to working parties from local authorities, the Territory government and the community. These working parties will have the task of preparation of draft regulations. These drafts, in turn, will be the subject of extensive consultation with local authorities, departments and the community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this process will be completed within one year and the new act and regulations, as a complete package, will be commenced on 1 July 1986. Because it will take 12 months to have a complete package brought together, and honourable members with a knowledge of the area will recognise that this time frame does not represent any slackening in priority or effort, it is necessary to introduce an interim measure, a bill to amend the Local Government Act. This bill basically takes from the new principal legislation some provisions which are required by councils by 1 July 1985. The provisions will provide councils immediately with some flexibility to broaden their rating base. As I noted earlier, these provisions, which allow councils to strike a general rate based on a differential rating system and minimum amounts which must be paid, are provided to give councils power to determine the most equitable system by which to collect rate income. As councils both strike the rate and spend the resultant money, the decision on which alternative to adopt is at the discretion of councils. I intend that this amending bill be commenced before 1 July 1985 to allow those councils, which so desire, to take the changes into account when preparing estimates and budgets for the new financial year.

In conclusion, I must add that, by the introduction of this bill, the Northern Territory government to the extent it is able in accordance with the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, has adopted the principles set out in the declaration produced by the Committee on the Structure of Government of the Australian Constitutional Convention. Those principles recognise the fundamental role of local government in Australia and the value of ensuring that local communities may participate to the maximum extent in the management and regulation of their districts. The government is convinced that the philosophy embodied in this bill recognises the proper position of local government and provides the Territory with a system which will serve us well and be a model for the rest of the country. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT ZONE BILL
(Serial 101)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will recall that, at the August 1984 sittings of this Assembly, the then Chief Minister tabled a report of the Northern Territory government Task Force on the Establishment of a Trade Development Zone in Darwin and announced the government's decision to establish such a zone. He explained then that it was feasible, within the existing Australian Constitution and under existing Commonwealth law, for the Northern Territory government to create a special industry for the sorts of activities that were eligible for relief from high tariffs under several existing provisions of customs legislation.

At that time, the then Chief Minister also foreshadowed the introduction of legislation to give effect to the government's decision to establish a trade development zone. This bill provides for the establishment of an authority, to be named the trade development zone authority, to administer, control and encourage the development of a trade development zone in the Territory and to attract industry to that zone. The authority to be created under this bill will operate broadly along the lines of other statutory authorities of the Northern Territory government.

The establishment of the trade development zone will mark the beginning of an important era for the development of the Territory's economy and expansion of its manufacturing base. The zone has the potential to offer new Territory industry a means around the impasse created by high tariffs and the disadvantage of manufacturing for a small local market. The ability of manufacturers in the zone to service a world-wide market on a competitive basis in the longer term will provide significant economic benefits to the Territory. In particular, these benefits will include increased employment, increased trade and the resultant greater utilisation of infrastructure, industrial diversity and new sources of revenue. Existing Territory industry will also obtain direct benefit from the zone in terms of the increased demand for goods and services created by the new zone industries.

In framing the operational basis of the trade development zone, paramount in the government's considerations were the virtually identical objectives of the proposed authority and the Northern Territory Development Corporation. The common goals of promotion of industrial development and industry attraction for the Territory will mean that the corporation and the proposed authority will act in close cooperation. In addition, the integral interaction between the corporation and the proposed authority will be strengthened by the availability of the corporation's range of industry attraction incentives to users and intending users of the zone. The specific nature of prospective zone industries may require the development of a new range of incentives which the Northern Territory Development Corporation will have to accommodate. If there are constraints within the Territory Development Act which preclude the provision of new incentives, it may be necessary to amend the act.

The bill provides that the minister may, by notice in the Gazette, declare land to be the trade zone for the purpose of the act. In his statement to this Assembly last August, the former Chief Minister indicated that an area of land on the East Arm peninsula had been earmarked as the initial development area of the zone. Notice will be made in the Gazette declaring that parcel of land to be the trade zone once this legislation has been passed.

The bill provides a framework for implementing the various incentives, facilities and services which are envisaged by the decisions to establish the trade development zone. Additionally, many of the points of detail in the trade development zone concept will be effected by means of regulations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I referred previously to the fact that it is feasible to establish and operate a trade development zone in Darwin within the existing Australian Constitution and under existing Commonwealth law. I am pleased to advise this Assembly that there has recently been correspondence between this government and the Commonwealth government concerning its position in relation to the proposal. The Prime Minister has written stating, amongst other things, that the trade development zone concept formulated by the Territory government poses no difficulties for the Commonwealth government in its current legislation. To be operationally effective, the authority to be created under it will need to develop a close working relationship with local members of the Australian Customs Service in order to ensure that the requirements and guidelines of customs laws are complied with in relation to activities taking place in the zone.

With the passage of this bill, many of the administrative and legislative changes necessary to give effect to the government's decision to establish the trade development zone will have been implemented. A key remaining task, however, will be the effective marketing of the zone to potential zone occupants. The government is commencing a marketing program to promote opportunities within the zone to Australian and overseas companies. In addition, pre-qualified tenderers for the Channel Island Power-station are being encouraged to include proposals. The passage of this bill will itself contribute to the marketing effort since the new legislation will be tangible proof of the Territory government's commitment to establish such a zone in Darwin. In effect, the passage of this legislation will give the government a product to sell to prospective occupants of the zone. I commend this bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PALMERSTON DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT REPEAL BILL (Serial 117)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Honourable members will be aware that the Palmerston Development Authority Act was designed to expire on 30 June 1986, 5 years after the date of commencement of that legislation. It was not envisaged that construction would be so rapid or that Territorians would accept Palmerston so enthusiastically as a desirable alternative to Darwin in which to settle. The result has been that legislation introduced in 1981, to enable 5 years of government control, was demonstrated, at the close of 1984, to be no longer completely necessary. Palmerston has grown from the commencement of that now familiar landmark of the elevated water tank, in June 1981 - and, incidentally, that was the first contract awarded - to the opening of an ambulance station in the new health complex in April 1985. The first was commenced as a community need before the construction of the first house; the other was completed to serve the population of 3000 people who, in less than 4 years, have declared Palmerston their home. I am sure honourable members will concur with my sentiments when I say that this new town is a Territory achievement the initiation of which those town planners who recommended the acquisition of the site in the early 1970s may be justly proud.

However, the development would not have reached its present excellence if the team of people who made the town had not believed in the project once the

government made the decision to develop Palmerston in 1980. The success of this venture is not due only to government funding but to the combined efforts of the Palmerston Development Authority, the staff of the authority, the developers and countless others who turned this tract of bushland into a neighbourhood development that is clearly visible now from Darwin, 15 km to the west.

In 1980, serviced industrial land was in short supply in the Darwin area and rental accommodation was scarce and expensive. Palmerston, or Darwin east as it was known in the early days, was recognised as the only viable location for neighbourhood living as Darwin approached saturation development. Already over 1800 residential allotments have been completed and it has been estimated that, ultimately, 50 000 people could be accommodated when construction has been completed. This is roughly the same population as Darwin had at the time of self-government.

In response to residents' wishes, in March 1985, Palmerston was declared to be a municipality. Elections will be held on 22 June to elect a mayor and 6 aldermen and, on 1 July, a town council will be installed. The need for total government administration for Palmerston has ended. Much has been learned from the construction of Palmerston. New methods of town planning, land development and administration procedures have been devised and utilised and these will be progressively studied as Palmerston's growth continues in order to plan successfully for the next regional centre. The growth of the Territory in the past 7 years suggests this may be required sooner than many people would expect.

I turn now, Mr Deputy Speaker, to a brief explanation of the provisions of the repealing legislation, and I will commence with clause 5. It is intended that all property and rights of the authority, specified in the schedule of the bill, be vested in the council of the municipality of Palmerston on 1 July 1985, and that, on the same date, the council be recognised instead of the authority in all agreements as also specified in the schedule. I would like to point out to members that this schedule could be subject to amendment before the third reading of the bill at the next sittings of the Assembly. It is possible, for example, that certain municipal banking accounts may be altered within the next 2 months and, if that is so, an appropriate amendment to part A of the schedule will be needed. It is proper that the new council should not be responsible for any actions that may arise as a result of any act committed by the authority before the commencement of this legislation. Therefore, the Territory has indemnified the council against any such action.

Clause 6 is necessary because not all property and rights vested in the authority will be transferred to the council. Some will be retained by the Territory and this will include certain vehicles and office furniture. Similarly, not all agreements or contracts entered into by the authority will be offered to the council. Instead, responsibility will pass either to the Territory or the minister. Examples of these are consultancy contracts related to capital works development and lease development agreements.

Honourable members will be aware that, for some time now, the residents of Palmerston have been paying rates and other charges to the authority under the Local Government Act. Of course, this will continue under a council. Clause 7 ensures that the council will be able to recover all moneys outstanding that would have been payable to the authority before 30 June 1985.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 2 bylaws have been made by the authority under the Local Government Act. These concern the problems of litter and stray animals. Clause 8 will allow them to continue to apply under a council on 1 July 1985.

Clause 9 relates to the Palmerston Town Plan which is perhaps the most sensitive issue in this bill, involving developers and residents of Palmerston. At present, it is administered by the Palmerston Development Authority. However, although the plan will continue to apply at the commencement of the legislation, all the powers and administrative functions will be taken over by the Northern Territory Planning Authority. Crown leases are being developed in Palmerston, subject to the town plan, where the developer and the authority have agreed on the use and zoning of the land following development. Because planning legislation in Palmerston takes a somewhat different approach to that in the rest of the Territory, it is proposed that various aspects of the town plan be retained so that the reasonable expectations of developers and residents can be met. Therefore, the government wishes that existing agreements be preserved and honoured for at least 12 months after the planning authority assumes control of the town plan so that developers, who are committed to a particular land development, will be able to complete construction substantially as planned. In this way, the different planning approaches which Palmerston has used can be maintained for the immediate future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate ajourned.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 112)

Continued from 18 April 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the legislation before the Assembly is self-explanatory and there is no need to debate it at length. I rise to indicate the opposition's support for the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION Aboriginal Residential Areas on Pastoral Properties

Continued from 18 April 1985.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the Chief Minister's statement on residential areas for Aboriginal people on pastoral properties, I realise that I cannot satisfy all the interests within the Victoria River electorate in this regard. However, I believe that the interests of all will be served if as many Aboriginal people as possible gain access to land for residential and community purposes as quickly as possible, and with as little litigation as possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, no reasonable person will disagree with the justice of providing land for residential purposes to those Aboriginal people living at present on pastoral properties or who have been forced against their will to leave pastoral properties during a specified period. There may be room for argument as to the length of that specified period. The Northern Territory government has opted for a period of 10 years. This may seem to be unnecessarily arbitrary and harsh to those Aboriginal people who genuinely were

forced off pastoral properties before that time. However, it is obvious that, if the scope is widened too far, a potential for a second wave of land rights in the Northern Territory will be brought into existence. The Territory has a responsibility to this and future generations of citizens to see that everyone has a reasonable future within the Territory's borders. Land applications under excision procedures should not be available to as wide a range of claimants as is possible under the Land Rights Act.

From talking to pastoralists and attending meetings where excisions from pastoral properties have been discussed, I have found a broad acceptance of excisions of land for people who genuinely have stayed on the properties. There is a lot of respect for Aboriginal people and their needs, and I am very hopeful that the great majority of cattlemen will accept the need for excisions from their properties and do all in their power to see that the procedures to be established within the Department of Lands are expedited to allow for prompt transfer of title.

I understand that the Department of Lands has appointed officers to ensure speedy action on applications. It is hoped that organisations with an axe to grind will not attempt any action to cause delays because the new procedures do not go as far as some sections of the Aboriginal community in the Territory would like them to. I have no doubt that attempts could be made to mount strong opposition. This was done during last year when opposition was mounted in respect of the Community Living Areas Bill and fears were created in the minds of many Aboriginal people who were in no way affected by the bill. According to the member for Stuart, in his reply to the Chief Minister's statement last week, that bill, which has now been withdrawn, has suddenly become desirable.

The honourable member for Stuart also implied that a deal had been done with the Cattlemen's Association. Mr Deputy Speaker, in any negotiation, there is give and take. The Northern Territory government has been negotiating with land councils for some years, as it has done with the pastoralists and other affected people. A decision has to be made somewhere on middle ground and I believe the government has reflected the middle ground in this statement. Certainly, not everyone of Aboriginal descent will be provided with a bit of land under these proposals, but people who have cared to stick it out on pastoral properties will, and the Territory will be considerably further down the line towards catering for the needs of Aboriginal people for land of their own. Certainly, the Northern Territory will be further down the road than any other state or territory in Australia.

I cannot quite decide whether the member for Stuart was speaking tongue in cheek or if he was just way off beam in suggesting that pastoralists would do a deal with a mate to excise land with a back-to-back agreement for the return of that land a few years later. I have a bit more faith in the Department of Lands and the minister should any attempt be made in that regard. Obviously, should a person or group make application for an excision from property, the Department of Lands, during its investigations, will look at whether there are other possible applicants with a greater need or a more genuine residential link before making any decision under the criteria set down in the proposals...

Mr B. Collins: You would have faith in the government whatever it did, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: I am saying what I believe. It would do that before making any decision to excise land for a person or group in the dubious circumstances outlined by the member for Stuart. They were dubious circumstances, Mr Deputy Speaker.

If these proposals were opened up to any group claiming historical or traditional links with land on pastoral properties, the results would be disastrous. It would leave it open to all the doubtful claimants who have emerged under the Land Rights Act and litigation and court hearings would continue well into the next century. It would have the effect of denying to many people who would get land quickly under this scheme the chance to do so.

I have no doubt that all eligible groups will have their applications in within a very short time. If they do not do so, it is probable that they will sack whatever advisers they currently employ and oust their local member at the next election. Certainly, I shall be talking to groups who live at present on pastoral properties in my electorate without secure tenure and I will advise them on the course of action they should take. The position, size and potential of each excision is a matter for agreement between the Aboriginal applicants and the property leaseholder, and the eventual decision rests with the minister. However, from my reading of the proposals, the initial application need not necessarily make a statement on this.

The factors to be taken into account include the number of people eligible to use the area who fit the criteria and the future population-growth needs for community services, health, education, recreational areas and road access. As pointed out by the member for Stuart, no explicit provision is made for subsistence food growing needs, be it in the running of a couple of killers or the growing of vegetables and other foods. I am quite sure that no excision of land will be so small as to exclude the growing of market garden produce or fruit trees. Many groups will ask for more than sufficient land and there may be some dispute over this, but it is highly unlikely that an area will be so small as to prohibit food growing areas. With regard to the carrying of a killer or 2, provided the area is adequately fenced and maintained, I would be very surprised - and this comes from my discussions with cattle people - to find any cattleman objecting to this activity. But the opportunity for a real problem exists where an Aboriginal group does not provide and maintain adequate fencing but still wants to carry a few cattle.

Mr B. Collins: There is the Fences Act.

Mr McCARTHY: I am well aware of the Fences Act. The member for Stuart would like to see all excisions made up of 2% of the pastoral property. While that may seem reasonable on the face of it, it would mean that excisions would vary in size from well over 300 km² to somewhere less than 40 km², regardless of the needs of the people involved. No, Mr Deputy Speaker, excisions must be made on a needs basis and on fixed criteria if disputes are to be avoided.

A point of agreement has to be reached as to the number of excisions from any 1 property. If it is to be opened up to limitless excisions, it is possible that, on some holdings, a need for more than 1 or 2 excisions could be shown, to the point where some properties could be damaged quite severely. A decision would be required then from the minister as to which group had the greater need. There is room for give and take. Provided that Aboriginal groups concerned were prepared to get together, sufficient land on 1 excision could be provided to allow for separation of the groups.

It must be remembered also that, in time, demands will be made for services on these lots and then it will become an unbearable cost burden on the Territory if residential areas become too numerous. The pastoralist should not be penalised because of excision, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is only fair that he or she should be fully compensated for land and assets lost and should not be responsible for fencing and other access costs. There are adequate

opportunities for Aboriginal people to gain funds for improvements to excised land. For instance, I cite the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account and the Aboriginal Development Commission. These bodies are available to all Aboriginal people for low-interest loans and even for grants. When the minister takes into account an applicant's financial capacity to meet his requirements for improvements on excised land, I understand that he will take into account the applicant's eligibility to obtain funds from these bodies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the sunset clause for applications is realistic. If applicants are genuine, they will place their applications within the next few months. If all eligible people have not applied for excisions before the end of this year, I will be very surprised. It should be made clear that the 3-year period is a restriction on applications only. Processing of applications may continue to any date beyond that cut-off date. I believe that these proposals will go a long way towards alleviating the distressing problems faced by the Aboriginal people on pastoral properties. It will provide them with a place where they can live in dignity in the full knowledge that it is theirs under Territory law and that they will not be asked to move.

I believe that most people will see these proposals as a reasonable step in the direction of equality for Aboriginal land ownership and tenure. As I mentioned yesterday, the people of Yarralin assure me that they are delighted to own their own land under Territory title. They feel that it is more 'theirs' and not something that they can only make a decision on with the approval of a land council. I can assure all applicants for land under these proposals who live in my electorate that I will spare no effort to see that their applications are brought forward quickly and with the support of the affected pastoralist. I support the statement, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak briefly in support of the Chief Minister's statement concerning living areas provided on pastoral properties. Given the lateness of the day, there are only 2 points that I want to raise and they were mentioned by the member for Stuart last week. He said that Aboriginals on pastoral properties back in the 1950s had been 'forced off' and the inference was that that was by pastoralists. I know of no incidents, at least in central Australia, where the pastoralists forced anyone off their properties. Certainly, as a result of the equal pay decision handed down in the 1950s, pastoralists were forced to lay off a number of Aboriginal stockmen for economic reasons. They had to take them off their payroll but, to my knowledge, they were never forced off the pastoral properties in central Australia and many of them continued to live there, although, of course, a number drifted into towns where alternative employment was available.

The member for Stuart was critical of the Chief Minister's statement that goodwill on both sides would provide Aboriginals with living areas on pastoral properties. The member for Stuart indicated that it would need legislative backing. In this Assembly, the member represents an electorate that covers basically the same area that I represented for nearly 10 years. I would point out in fairness to the pastoralists that, to my knowledge in that area, almost all of the Aboriginal groups on cattle stations have their own living areas and either have been provided with lease documents or are in the process of being provided with lease documents, and that is the result of goodwill on both sides. There are a few others in the Stuart electorate but those pastoral properties are: Napperby, Stirling, Neutral Junction, Ti Tree - the Aboriginals at the new camp 6 miles south of that town were given that block of land before it was sold to the Aboriginal community west of the township - Alcoota, Derry Downs, Ammaroo, Mount Riddock, and, last but certainly not least, one that has caused some concern on both sides of the political fence, Lake Nash. Mr Deputy

Speaker, I think that shows adequately that, as the Chief Minister stressed in his statement, given goodwill on both sides, both the needs of the Aboriginals and the wishes of the pastoralists can be met.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, in resuming the debate on Aboriginal residential areas on pastoral leases, I wish to reply to the points made by the member for Stuart last Thursday. It is a shame that he and all other members of the opposition are so interested in this particular policy decision of the government that they cannot be bothered to stay in the Assembly for the debate after grandstanding over a range of spurious arguments this morning. It is important that we consider these issues and respond to the statements that were made.

When the Chief Minister made his statement on this subject, he was referring to the provision of residential living areas for the 3000 or so Aboriginals currently residing on Territory pastoral leases without any land that they could call their own. This should not be confused with Aboriginal land rights, which are adequately catered for - some would say too adequately catered for - in current legislation and which are the topic of uniform legislation proposed by the federal government. That matter, of course, has been debated also at some length this week.

The Territory government is very conscious of the need to provide living areas for those 3000 disadvantaged people but, in formulating these guidelines, we have completed a process which has been going on for far too long. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw the attention of honourable members to a statement made by Mr Gerry Blitner when he was Chairman of the Northern Land Council. As long ago as 1981, Mr Blitner said that these people were looking for a place to live. That view was also put forward by Mr Justice Woodward and by the Gibb Report. It is not the intention to provide areas on which to conduct commercial enterprises, laudable though they may be. The member for Stuart seems to be confused on both these points. Traditional rights to land are fully covered by the land rights legislation and there is ample evidence of Aboriginals having undertaken commercial enterprises on land granted under land claims.

The member also seems to think that, in some unspecified manner, the government has imposed a size limit on the proposed living areas. I can only refer him to Hansard of 18 April last where the Chief Minister stated that the following factors would be taken into account in negotiating an excision from a pastoral lease: the number of people who live or intend to live on the land; future population growth; the needs of the group for education, health and other community services; and reasonable needs for the group for recreational areas. It is these parameters which will determine the size of each living area, and not some academic formula unrelated to practicalities. There is the constraint that the viability of the pastoral lease not be affected and I find it hard to conceive how any reasonable person can take issue with that.

Traditional affiliation of Aboriginals with the land has long been recognised in section 24 of the Crown Lands Act. That section permits Aboriginal inhabitants of the Territory who, in accordance with Aboriginal tradition, are entitled to inhabit that land: (a) to enter and be on the leased land; (b) to take and use the natural waters and springs on the leased land; (c) subject to any other law in force in the Northern Territory, to take or kill for food or for ceremonial purposes animals, *ferae naturae* on the lease land - that is, animals that naturally inhabit an area, and it does not mean the killing of cattle or other animals that are part of commercial operations; and (d) subject to any other law in force in the Northern Territory, to take for food or ceremonial purposes any vegetable matter growing naturally on the leased land.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that section of the Crown Lands Act was amended to its current form in 1978 after the second report of the Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner. In that context, I refer honourable members to the report of Mr Justice Toohey entitled 'Seven Years On'. Mr Justice Toohey stated in chapter 4 of that report that, while section 24 and the provision of living areas were not entirely commensurate, each had a very real bearing on the other. He went on to recommend minor amendments to section 24 mainly to clarify wording. Nonetheless, rights of access are protected by section 24.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Justice Toohey also gave the opinion that section 24 did not confer an entitlement to reside or construct dwellings on a pastoral lease. This will be provided through living areas. However, the government will be watching the situation carefully to ensure that groups not eligible for a living area do not take up permanent residence under the guise of being entitled to do so under section 24. If necessary, we shall introduce amending legislation to put the issue beyond doubt.

The guidelines for living areas were introduced only after extensive consultations, over a number of years, with the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Cattlemen's Association and the land councils. I understand that Mr Holding also had discussions with the Cattlemen's Association and the land councils, in which the Territory government was not involved - another process of consensus and consultation with the government. The result of this is that Mr Holding is prepared to let the Territory government proceed with the guidelines to achieve as many living areas as possible as quickly as possible.

The whole basis of these guidelines is that successful negotiations will be concluded by the respective parties and that I, as the responsible minister, will need to intervene only where agreement cannot be reached. Given the formality of the guidelines and, at the same time, the ability to hold informal discussions between the parties, I am confident that the scene has been set to allow us to conclude a large number of agreements quickly. We have some 70 negotiations in progress, many of which came to a halt due to the lack of guidelines and because the Community Living Areas Bill had not been finalised. Not only can they recommence but those community groups and pastoralists who have not yet entered into negotiations will be able to do so knowing that the rules will not be changed in the middle of the game.

I am a realist and appreciate that there will be cases where agreement will not be reached. I remind honourable members that I have powers in respect of compulsory acquisition of property, should that become necessary, though I hope that reason will prevail amongst the parties and that we can resolve the matters without the necessity for that.

The member for Stuart made much of the fact that the destitute Aboriginals who will be seeking these living areas do not have the financial capacity fence an area and so on. The Commonwealth government has said many times that funds for such purposes would be provided through the Aboriginal Development Commission or the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I only require that assurance to be given for each living area as a simple indication that the Commonwealth is satisfied that its funds will be applied correctly. I should point out that the Commonwealth has indicated that it would pay for the land purchase, if necessary, and it should not be necessary for me to restate the large amount of Territory funding already applied to the provision of essential services. Once eligibility and the appropriate area have been agreed upon, I see title issue as not much more than a formality. Because that title will be a Crown lease initially, there will be no opportunity for deals to be made

involving subleases. Any transactions will require my consent, and I can assure the member for Stuart that I am not about to condone anything that will prejudice the interests of the Aborigines who are to receive the living areas.

Finally, I want to allay the opposition's fears on the number of living areas. The agreement between the Commonwealth and the Western Australian governments was that, as a general rule, there should be only 1 living area on each lease. We will allow more where the pastoralist agrees, and it is my belief that this will happen in some cases. The pastoralists are not 2-headed monsters. The majority have a concern for the Aborigines who live in such distressing conditions on those properties. At the same time, however, they have their own businesses to run and, obviously, are reluctant to enter into open-ended deals with no defined terms or conditions. The government's guidelines provide conditions which will now allow the resolution of a major problem, and that was confirmed by the Executive Officer of the Cattlemen's Association last weekend.

I might say that, at the Annual General Meeting of the Cattlemen's Association last Saturday, it was said by both the President and the Executive Officer that the Cattlemen's Association would not put its name to any agreement that would engender racial hatred in the Northern Territory, sentiments which I strongly endorse.

In closing, I would make one further point, Mr Deputy Speaker. A great deal of concern has been expressed about the application of the 10-year rule, if we can call it that, in respect of people who have been off properties in excess of 10 years. Over the weekend, I have had the opportunity to discuss it with both the Chief Minister and representatives of the Cattlemen's Association, and it would be our intention that, where Aboriginal people could demonstrate that they were forcibly removed from land, even though it might exceed the 10-year rule, they would not be ruled ineligible as a consequence of that, provided that they could demonstrate that situation.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, throughout this debate, one basic and very pertinent point seems to have been overlooked by all speakers and that is the tenure of the land with which we are dealing. We are dealing with pastoral leases granted under the Crown Lands Act, either in term or in perpetuity, and that is clear title to the land similar to that enjoyed by most of us over our homes. The government must continue to recognise that as such even if only to protect the pastoralists' ability to raise purchase and development finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the right to own land and have freedom to enjoy the use of it is one of the cornerstones of our democratic system, and to allow claims on the basis of the opposition's proposals would remove that basic right. The proposal put by the Chief Minister is a genuine attempt to resolve the vexed problem of Aboriginal living areas on pastoral leases. The scaremongering tactics of the opposition and its meagre grandstanding in recent days have added nothing to this debate. All they are likely to achieve is a hardening of resolve in both parties, leading to the achievement of nothing.

The proposal has 2 simple and easily understood criteria for eligibility: groups now lawfully resident on pastoral properties or which have been resident in the past 10 years, and any other group with the consent of the lessee.

Let us look at those arguments not recognised as criteria for eligibility. One was requests based on traditional or historical links with the land. Throughout the years of debate on Aboriginal land rights in this Assembly and

elsewhere, one of the common themes put by both the proponents of land rights and this government and this Assembly is that it was never intended to dispossess pastoralists or other private landholders of their land. In fact, many of those people have taken comfort in assurances given to that end by governments and proponents of land rights alike. Many of the original opponents of land rights have come to accept that as the case and have learnt to live with and accept land rights. To allow traditional claims over pastoral leases in, any way, shape or form will destroy the trust that has been put in these assurances not to dispossess landholders and open up all the old wounds of the original debate. Make no mistake, to allow traditional claims over pastoral leases will generate such a backlash within the community and will create such animosity towards Aboriginal claimants and their representatives that all we have worked for towards racial harmony will be destroyed once and for all and will force a radical review of all legislation relating to Aboriginal land rights.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the proposal does not deny traditional owners the opportunity to negotiate for living areas. All it requires them to do is to meet the eligibility criteria. Likewise, it does not deny those who fall within the other non-eligible groups, for want of better definition. All it does is require them to meet their eligibility criteria. Those criteria are pretty broad, especially the one that refers to any group with consent of the lessee. The confrontationist attitude shown by the member for Stuart in this debate will do nothing other than evoke adverse or cautionary actions from pastoralists. In instances where negotiations may have been possible, pastoralists may now be unwilling to enter into those negotiations.

Land councils have a major role to play in the negotiations on behalf of Aboriginal groups. So that Aboriginal groups have a central point of contact and administrative support, I believe that requests in the first instance should be directed to the land councils.

One of the other conditions which the proposal requires Aboriginal groups to meet is the demonstration of financial ability to undertake necessary and covenant improvements. That is not a new idea. Any applicant for land under the Northern Territory government's direct sale of land scheme has to have a demonstrable financial ability to erect and maintain those required improvements. The demonstrated financial ability of the Aboriginal groups to maintain improvements and to erect improvements would help immeasurably in negotiations with pastoralists who may fear that work may never get done and thus resist applications. It would also serve as a useful review of the suitability of groups by completely independent bodies, those of the Commonwealth or those other bodies who are required to give that financing. Again, there is a role for the land councils to play in formulating the proposals put to various bodies for funding.

The member for Stuart expressed fears that pastoralists may grant excisions to inappropriate groups in order to subvert the intent of the proposal. Again, being constructive, that could easily be looked after by the Aboriginal groups putting their proposals through the land councils. That could be well and truly looked after.

Basically, the proposal will go a long way to resolving the issue without resorting to the complicated, lengthy and invariably expensive legal proceedings that the opposition seems so fond of. Amicably-negotiated settlements are not in the interests of the opposition. The opposition is in the business of divisiveness. The opposition is in the business of promoting false hopes and expectations and then seeing this government not being able to meet those false

hopes and expectations. The opposition is then in the position to deride this government's attitude to Aboriginal land rights.

The member for Stuart suggested that 2% of a lease would provide a suitable area for Aboriginal living excisions. 2% of the average pastoral lease of 5000 km² would constitute 100 km². The member for Stuart shows a marked lack of knowledge or understanding of the operations of the Northern Territory pastoral industry. It is not the norm that a pastoral property of 5000 km² has 5000 km² of usable land. It is the norm to have about 2500 km² or less of usable land.

Also in debate in this Assembly we had aspersions cast upon the trustworthiness of this government in dealing with Aboriginal land rights issues. The trustworthiness of this government is exemplary. Throughout all of the debates on Aboriginal land rights, this is the only government in Australia which has stood its ground. The Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory can look at this government and say that, throughout the 10 years of Aboriginal land rights, we have not altered our situation. This is a government that supports land rights and supports excisions from pastoral leases, but we support them with a degree of moderation. I support the statement of the Chief Minister and commend it to honourable members.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I would just like to say for the benefit of the member for Stuart that, if he were a conservative politician, he would fit very well into the McCarthy mould because he is the sort of guy who sees a red under every bed. When it comes to land rights, he is the sort of fellow who can find 30 000 reasons why something cannot or will not work and why you should do it another way. Mentalities like that are not likely to change late in life. I do not think there is much I can do to accommodate the member and his approach to life. But I can give him an undertaking that the government, the department and the cattle industry, for starters, are keen to see an administrative system set up that achieves the purpose of giving people secure tenure for living, and 'living' being the operative word.

We have made it quite clear. It is not another form of land claim. It is not for traditional purposes. It is not for all these peripheral things. It is for living. If people want to do the other things, there are other avenues open to them to do them but not in the middle of a piece of alienated land.

I would also make the point that my consultation with the cattle industry was so comprehensive because the cattle industry just happens to own the land. It is not unreasonable that we get it organised and agreed on what are reasonable positions to take. One of the great difficulties that we have had in the Northern Territory over the years in dealing with the land rights issue is the double speak that is quoted so often: something that is said to make everybody happy but is written in a different way in law or administered in a different way in terms of practice and land administration. What we have done with this form of words is to outline exactly what we believe is the situation as it applies to all parties so that there are no misunderstandings about the respective positions and rights of the parties. We are not popular with everybody for it but it is more important that we incur a degree of unpopularity for the different positions that we hold and believe in than to have another series of legislation brought into this Assembly that will lead us into another 10 years of disputation in the courts. Surely, we have had enough of that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I give a commitment to you and honourable members that we will be working very hard to show that this does work, and demonstrate to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who supports this approach, that there is

another way of providing land for people who need it for reasonable purposes than by land rights acts.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until 10 am on Tuesday 4 June 1985 or such other time or date as set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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