

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fifth Assembly  
First Session

**PARLIAMENTARY RECORD**

Tuesday 4 October 1988  
Wednesday 5 October 1988  
Thursday 6 October 1988

Tuesday 11 October 1988  
Wednesday 12 October 1988  
Thursday 13 October 1988

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

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

1997-1998

REVENUE  
STATEMENT

1997-1998

REVENUE  
STATEMENT  
1997-1998

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

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

PART I

DEBATES





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DEBATES

Tuesday 4 October 1988

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

RETURN TO WRIT  
Division of Flynn

The CLERK: Honourable members, I lay on the Table the return to the writ issued by His Honour the Administrator on 25 August 1988 for the election of a member for the Legislative Assembly for the electoral division of Flynn, certifying the election of Enzo Alido Floreani.

Mr Enzo Alido Floreani made and subscribed the oaths required by law.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until tomorrow Wednesday, 5 October 1988, at 11 am.

For the benefit of honourable members, the reason for this motion is that there will be a memorial service for Mr John Hickman, a Territory businessman for some 30 years. The memorial service will be held at Christchurch Cathedral at 10 am on 5 October 1988 and all members are invited to attend.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Auditor-General's Report 1987-88

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table the Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the year 1987-88.

TABLED PAPER  
Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

The decade since self-government has been a period of unprecedented growth in the Northern Territory. Over this time, thousands of jobs have been created in new and expanded industries and an atmosphere of confidence has been created. While there has been an inevitable slowdown over the past year, following reductions in federal funding, the foundation has been laid for sustained growth in the Northern Territory economy. The Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy recognises that basic infrastructure for a diverse and developed economy is now in place and seeks to build on that foundation by establishing a framework within which future economic and commercial decisions can be made with confidence. The strategy is not a list of business opportunities which can be identified for the Territory at this time, nor does it form a defined term plan for the years ahead. It is intended to establish broad directions for growth and development, and taking up the opportunities identified within that broad outline will be the role of business and individuals.

I am pleased to inform honourable members that this strategy is not what the government in isolation has decided is appropriate for the Northern Territory. It is the result of close cooperation between the government and the private sector, with the support and participation of the Northern Territory Development Council, and I would like to place on record my thanks to council members for their contribution.

I will not speak at length about the document before honourable members have had the opportunity to study it in detail. However, at this stage, I will cover the essential objectives of the strategy. The key to stability, security and confidence in the Territory's future is access to employment. The essential objective of any strategy for the future must be both to encourage and to promote steady growth in new employment opportunities and to ensure that the jobs created cover a wide variety of skills and industries which are a long-term and stable part of the economy. We cannot expect people to commit their future and that of their family to the Territory if they are uncertain about the stability of their employment or the opportunities available to their children. This strategy aims, therefore, to identify areas for new or expanded business activity to provide employment opportunities to meet these objectives. It also recognises the crucial role of education and training in equipping Territorians for the opportunities which will emerge.

The strategy is focused on capturing the greatest possible stream of benefits for the Territory and gives priority to activities which have a strong, local multiplier effect which will generate additional work for other Territory enterprises and which can generate business opportunities for new enterprises which can be located in the Territory. A key element in achieving this aim is the creation of new activities which add value to Territory raw materials and resources, including the further processing of mineral and primary products and greater local input to the servicing and supply of such local industries as fishing, minerals, and oil and gas exploration and development.

It is essential that the Territory economy grows by capitalising on its strengths, not by somehow supporting its weaknesses. Those strengths are many. Our location may have been a disadvantage in the past but, in the global village of the 1990s, it will be one of our strengths. The Territory is the gateway between Asia and Australia, a location of great commercial and strategic opportunity. Greater attention will be paid to improving our knowledge and awareness of the requirements of the Asian market and the Territory's educational links with Asia will be expanded.

The Territory is rich in natural resources and the mining, pastoral, horticultural, fishing and tourist industries are our strengths. Where we have such a competitive edge, we must continue to build on that advantage. However, it is undesirable that the Territory economy should remain narrow-based and be subject to influence by external factors such as commodity prices and currency fluctuations. It is vital that the constraints posed by the small size of the local market are overcome. Diversification is, therefore, a major goal of the development process, and value-added processing and export manufacturing, aimed at markets outside the Territory, are key factors in the development plan.

The strategy identifies regional development as an important part of overall development, not through artificial redeployment of industry and activity, but through capitalising on local advantages. The first stage in this process is the compilation of a comprehensive report on regional resources, and this will be completed within 12 months. The realisation of

the potential of Aboriginal people is also fundamental to the Territory's economic and social growth. The government supports the growing interest shown in commercial enterprise among Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations. Continued research and investigation into such opportunities and improved access to training and education for Aboriginals, including training in management skills, are high priorities of the strategy.

The government's task is to provide the right environment for development by doing the work that the private sector cannot rightly be expected to do. The government recognises that its direct role in stimulating the economy must necessarily reduce in coming years. The future economic development of the Territory should and will be led by private enterprise. This economic development strategy is a guide for the private sector and a guide for investors within the Territory interstate and overseas which will provide them with the information and confidence necessary to make investment decisions.

I hope the government's critics will read this important document objectively. While it was not possible to involve all parties in drawing up the strategy, the government welcomes constructive suggestions from any quarter, from the trade union movement, from the opposition and from private businesses and individuals, and seeks their support in endorsing this document as the Territory's blueprint for growth throughout the coming decade. Mr Speaker, I commend the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy to the House.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable Chief Minister for his courtesy in supplying us with a copy of this document last night so that we are able to make some comment today.

In starting, I must take up the very last comment that the Chief Minister made. I am constantly amazed. In his foreword, the Chief Minister said: 'The strategy is not a list of business opportunities which can be identified for the Territory at this point of time, nor is it intended to be a blueprint for the years ahead'. If the Chief Minister looks at the very last sentence of his speech, he said that it is a blueprint for the years ahead. Thus, between the foreword to the strategy and the minister's own speech, we have a basic contradiction about whether the so-called strategy document we have in front of us is a blueprint for the future or whether it is not a blueprint for the future. That confusion that the Chief Minister has in his own mind about what sort of document this is unfortunately will be shared by the public of the Northern Territory.

His statement in the foreword is a more accurate one. As he said in the foreword, it is not a list of opportunities and it is not a blueprint. What is it? According to the words of the Chief Minister in the document itself, it is a framework. A dictionary definition of strategy - and let us not forget that this is supposedly an economic development strategy - is 'generalship'. It is defined as 'the management of forces'. Obviously, in this case, the management of forces is a marshal who says, and I quote: 'The vital decisions will be the role of business and individuals'. That represents laissez-faire economics that went out in the 19th century.

There is a vital role for government in the essential decisions that need to be made by this government on the direction of the Northern Territory in the 1990s. Unfortunately, that vital role has not been spelt out. In other words, this is not a strategy, it is a stratagem, which is defined as a 'trick or a device with the purpose and intent to deceive'. The overwhelming emotion that this document produces is disappointment. It has taken 10 years since

self-government for the government to get to this stage. It has taken an initiative started by the previous Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff. It has taken 9 months of effort this year and 2 Chief Ministers, and what we have is a document that does not produce any guidance, any development or any broad framework for people wanting to live in the Northern Territory and wanting to invest in the Northern Territory.

Quite clearly, it is a document that has been put together by a committee. Evidence of that will be given later by myself and by the member for Stuart when we point out the internal contradictions in the document as it stands, and those internal contradictions are there because no one has had the job of going through the committee recommendations - that is, the departmental recommendations - and putting them within an overall framework. The key failure of this document is that it does not provide the reader with any vision of the Territory's future. It does not provide the reader with any sense of leadership nor any indication as to how we are to get to where we should be in 15 to 20 years. We cannot recognise where we should be in 15 to 20 years from this document because the document does not tell us where we want to be in 15 to 20 years time. All it says is that that is up to private enterprise. That is not good enough. No one denies ...

Mr Finch: It wouldn't be good enough in Russia, but it would be good enough here.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Have you finished?

No one denies that the economy of the Northern Territory will be a private enterprise-led economy, but what is denied in this document is the very important and vital role that the public sector has in that particular development, and the very important and vital role that the government of the Northern Territory has in determining the broad principles. In this document, there are statements of strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, they are not always consistent. The document contains 'wish lists' of what the Northern Territory government would like to happen. There are some useful graphs showing trends in various indicators, but it does not hang together and is not what the Territory has waited for or what the Territory needs.

There is no indication in this document that the Chief Minister either knows or cares where the Territory is going and that, as I have said, is the main problem. Business people in the Northern Territory are quite willing to take risks, as they have demonstrated, but they would like to have some hint as to where the government - as the largest single influence on the economy in the Northern Territory for the foreseeable future - thinks we should be going. When you talk to business people, the main criticism you hear time after time after time is that there is no broad direction coming from this government in relation to the Territory's future. That makes the business community feel insecure. People do not want to be directed as to where they should invest their money, and no one is suggesting that they should, but they do want a government that knows broadly where it wants to go and where it wants the Northern Territory to go. However, they will look long and hard through this document for that information but they will not find it because it is not there.

Mr Speaker, the first paragraph in the appendix advises that the public sector 'accounts for 25% of total Territory product and 40% of total wage and salary employment'. I can understand a strategy to improve, that is reduce,

those proportions over time, and that should have been there, but I cannot understand a decision to ignore it as this document has done. In other words, it should have been possible for the government to signal to the people of the Northern Territory, both in the public and the private sector, that it wants to reduce the proportion of the public sector in the total Territory product and in total wage and salary employment. However, show me, Mr Speaker, where that aim is contained in that document, even in the broadest sense. It is not there.

Mr Coulter: No, you can't find it.

Mr SMITH: It is not there.

Mr Speaker, the essence of managing our economy is first to recognise it for what it is. Quite clearly, it is a mixed economy with a large public sector and, as I have said, a public sector that we all want to see reduced as a percentage of the whole. For this economic strategy to work, we must tailor our public sector, which the government directly controls, to support the goals of the government and a growing private sector. It must be managed to avoid dislocations in the economy, dislocations like that caused over the last few years by a rundown in government capital works at a time when private sector construction demand was taking a nosedive. Public policy has exacerbated that problem and it is interesting that this document can baldly say that government capital works are an essential element in the growth of the Northern Territory economy when, over the past 3 years, we have seen government capital works take a nosedive.

It is equally significant that, at page 5, the statement refers to the promotion of long-term jobs in the Northern Territory when this year's major government initiative, costing \$85m, will not provide a single, long-term job. This government cannot even make its actions consistent with its strategy document. That is why the people in the community will be very disappointed indeed with this document.

Other important issues which this document does not address are productivity and efficiency. It is all very well to dream of opportunities in Asia, of special niches in tropical horticulture and import replacement in the local market, but how do we overcome the problems of the small local market and of businesses traditionally cushioned from competition? How is the government going to use public policy to support business and, at the same time, increase productivity?

One of the Labor Party's policies adopted by the CLP was the creation of the Territory Insurance Office. It has become one of the most important investment vehicles in the Northern Territory. Surely the Territory Insurance Office must be part of any strategy. What goals does the government have for it? How do those goals fit into the overall economic development strategy? This document does not provide any indication whatsoever of how the semi-government organisation that will provide the major financial input into the Northern Territory economy in the foreseeable future fits into the economic development strategy. That is simply not good enough. With our limited financial resources, we cannot afford to have the TIO sitting out there on its own, outside of what is supposed to be a comprehensive economic development strategy for the government. That leaves out the major vehicle available to the government to generate growth and long-term jobs in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: Make up your mind. You tried to find where direction was given to the TIO and you could not find it anywhere. Now you are advocating it. Is that right?

Mr SMITH: Have you finished? I did not notice that the Chief Minister sought leave to continue his remarks.

Mr Speaker, where is the vision in this document? Where does the government spell out what it wants the Northern Territory to look like? Are we aiming for Darwin to be another Sydney, another Gold Coast, a Jakarta or even a Nimbin? What sort of society do we want to develop for the Northern Territory? This document says nothing about that. The government is asking potential investors in the Northern Territory to invest without having any idea at all about the government's broad priorities and what sort of Territory it would like to see in the next 10 to 15 years. That failure of vision and that failure to tell people clearly what sort of Territory we want leads to problems like those which occurred in relation to the Milatos development. Those problems would not have happened, as I have said in this House before, if we knew what the broad plan was and had in place a town plan that reflected that.

Mr Speaker, I do not know how many times we on this side of the House have to tell the government that the economy is going through a transitional stage and needs to be managed.

Mr Dale: Who wrote this for you?

Mr SMITH: The Labor Party knows this.

Mr Dale: Who wrote this? Someone down south?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Business knows this. Why is the government so incapable of learning? Instead, the Chief Minister is intent on washing his hands of the economy and leaving the unknown with the private sector.

Mr Speaker, before strategies are released, a broad vision is required. That vision is non-existent in this case and, as a result, what purports to be a strategy document is simply a collection of information and a wish list put together by a committee. Each person on the committee appears to have decided that either a new organisation or a review is needed. Let me list the organisations: a task force for secondary school curriculum, an office of investment facilitation, a Northern Territory trading company, a venture capital company, a technology development corporation and a joint public-private sector review panel on research and development. And this is from a government that supposedly wants to restrict the size of the public service!

Where new organisations are not proposed, reviews are proposed instead. Let us look at some of those: a review to look at the reasons for insufficient cattle slaughter in the Northern Territory; a review into industry, employment and training; a review into the poor targeting of government research and development advice; a review into why we have too many imports; a review into why we have too many regulations; and a review into why there is too little investment. That sort of approach, without any overview or framework, will dig a deeper hole for the Northern Territory economy. The member for Stuart will attack the statement's inconsistencies in more detail.

I would like to draw the House's attention to some of the questions that need answering and which were not answered by the document. What will the desired population be in 5 to 10 years time? What will cause that growth? What services will those people require? What consumables can be produced locally? What assistance is required to set up new businesses and are they worth it? What opportunities are there for new businesses and what does the government intend to do to identify, research and support new businesses in those areas? What are the targets for the public sector in terms of growth in numbers and expenditure? What strategies will be used to encourage efficiency and expansion in the public sector? What action will the government take to protect or encourage local businesses in the context of interstate competition? Will the government stick to the first-past-the-post tendering system or look at other issues such as local community benefit in economic and social terms? Will the government develop longer-term programs and capital works to allow for industry predictability? Search this document, Mr Speaker, and you will find no answers to any of those questions, the questions which are being asked in the community.

This document must have been developed in the space shuttle because it is weightless. With this document, we may have taken the first step toward establishing a waffle industry in the Northern Territory: it has a limited domestic market and no export potential whatsoever. The document speaks for itself because it refutes itself. At page 5, it says: 'The Territory's location is no longer a major obstacle to economic development'. At page 17, it says: 'The development obstacles include the Territory's isolation'. Mr Speaker, my point is proved. Further, when it does not refute itself, it repeats itself. At page 9, there is a list of ways in which the government can assist the private sector. There item 5 says: 'consultation and communication with the private sector'. Item 15 says: 'consultation and communication with the private sector'. It is obvious that the committee system has failed the government in what should have been the most important government document of the year. If this is a strategy, we need a new definition of 'shambles'.

I quote from page 5: 'The essential objective of any strategy for the future must be to encourage and promote steady growth in new employment opportunities'. That, supposedly, is the essential objective of this document. What does the document have to offer towards that objective? Page 9 states that a 'Northern Territory employment development strategy and implementation plan is to commence shortly'. In other words, to achieve the essential objective of this strategy, we have to produce another strategy. We have waited 10 years for this strategy and it has taken 9 months and 2 Chief Ministers to put it together this year. Nevertheless, we are told that, before we can implement it, we need another strategy. Mr Speaker, that proves that this is a very badly thought out tract. We also need a new definition for 'a state of transition'. Page 36 informs us that the 'buffalo industry is presently in a state of transition as a result of the BTEC program'. I suppose it could be argued that total destruction is a state of transition.

Nothing so thoroughly discredits this document as the section starting on page 29 devoted to minerals and energy. The departmental officers who produced this section attempted to apply some facts to the strategy. They were wrong on uranium because it is politic with this government to be wrong on uranium, but by introducing a notion that a strategy should be based on facts, they have exposed the whole exercise as a monumental embarrassment. For the average business battler, this strategy has all the merit of throwing a stone to a drowning man. That is the problem with the document.

There are people in the business community who have been waiting for a lead from this government for the last 15 to 18 months. They have been asking this government to provide them with a sense of direction and an indication of the future of the Northern Territory. Many hoped that the economic development strategy that had been promised for so long would provide the answer. Instead, we do not have any answers. By no means have all of the questions that need to be addressed been raised. We have some of the questions but we do not have any answers. Particularly, we do not have the answers to the basic questions that the small business men and women want from this government. Those questions are reasonably simple such as what the government sees as the future of the Northern Territory in the next 10 to 15 years. They do not want answers in the airy-fairy terms expressed in this statement but in terms of numbers of jobs, population projections, the type of work that might be expected and an overall view. Quite clearly, that is lacking in this document.

To conclude, the government, particularly the Chief Minister, had an opportunity with this document to turn around the state of business confidence in the Northern Territory. He had an opportunity, through a well-thought-out and a well-presented document, to give a message to the people of the Territory that this is a government that knows what it is doing, knows what its resources are and knows where it wants to go. However, he has failed dismally to put that point of view across. The document has done nothing for the confidence of business in the Northern Territory and that, unfortunately, will be the way the it is treated.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTION

#### Auditor-General's Annual Report 1987-88

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that the Auditor-General's Annual Report 1987-88 be printed.

Motion agreed to.

#### MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### Flynn By-election Results

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Leader of the Opposition. It is dated 4 October 1988.

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning the following matter: the judgment of the people of Flynn on the government's failure to adequately address matters of concern to the Territory and to Territorians.

Yours sincerely,  
Terry Smith.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is not supported.



APPROPRIATION BILL 1988-89  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 23 August 1988.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, the budget brought down by the Treasurer at the last sittings is an imaginative budget and one which I strongly support. The Treasurer raised some very good points in his budget speech. He set out guidelines for renewed development in the Northern Territory in the foreseeable future. It was an extremely well-balanced budget bearing in mind that, in the last few years, times have been a little tough. There has been a reduction in the population in the Northern Territory and, consequently, a slight fall in the revenue-earning capacity of this government, and we have had to make do with less than we have had in the past. Obviously, it could not be a budget whose maximum emphasis was on capital works. Nonetheless, it was extremely well balanced and, in my view, will enable the CLP government to turn the economy around and get the show on the road again.

Fortunately for my electorate, a considerable number of the capital works projects in this budget are in my electorate. I will refer to a couple of them. In the Hudson Creek area, a terminal substation will be built and a 132 kV transformer, with all its associated switchgear protection, will be installed. The cost of the project is \$1.95m. The Hudson Creek terminal substation area is already a substantial switching station and the major terminal for the transfer of power from the Channel Island Power Station to most of the Darwin region. It is the linking mechanism for the outer regions of the power distribution system. I have been lucky enough to have a look at that terminal and I was particularly impressed by the level of technology that had been used in the management of the switching systems and by the use of the latest technology for the transmission of power and the maintenance of power reticulation at all times to the residents of Darwin.

In the future, there will be plans to extend the electrification scheme throughout the Northern Territory and, at the moment, our government has plans in train to expand the switching and transmission of the power network grid throughout the Northern Territory to maximise the amount of power that we can generate and, in the long term, minimise the cost of power to Northern Territory residents. The intention will be to reduce that cost to the point where it becomes extremely attractive as part of our strategy to create windows of opportunity for people in the manufacturing industries. This will encourage them to take advantage of the lower costs and attract them to the areas that we are setting aside now for those additional manufacturing industries. I believe that the time is not very far away when we will start to see those benefits derived from the plans and strategies that the Power and Water Authority is working on at present.

An additional Snell Street zone substation was provided for in the budget this year at \$110 000. The Snell Street station is also in my electorate, just off the Stuart Highway, where it is planned to install a 6 MVAR capacitor bank and associated switchgear. That will assist in the electrification program around the Darwin regional area and will upgrade it.

Many comments have been made in this Assembly, and I am sure that comments will be made in the future in this Assembly, about the Trade Development Zone and I will refer to that again in a moment. In the budget this year, we have set aside some \$2.43m for the construction of additional warehouses in anticipation of the development at the Trade Development Zone in the future.

Quite apart from what has been debated in this House over the last couple of sittings about the Trade Development Zone - and I have no doubt it will be raised again at some stage during these sittings - I still have the greatest faith in the future prospects of the zone. Despite what the opposition keeps saying concerning the zone and its management arrangements, and the possibility that it may never succeed, I do not share the view that opposition members continue to put forward that the zone is non-viable and will probably collapse.

In March this year, I attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference and subsequently visited trade zones in the Republic of Ireland and in America. I attended the National Conference of Free Trade Zones in San Francisco in late March. As I have said before in this Assembly, the efforts that we have put towards developing our Trade Development Zone are showing results. In fact, when I spoke to the 146 members who attended the National Conference of Free Trade Zones in San Francisco about our activities in our zone in the short period of time it has existed, they all expressed considerable surprise. They were extremely generous in their comments to me about the fact that we had such a number of persons in our zone in such a short lead time. At the time, I thought that that was a bit strange until I was told that several zones in America have only 1 and 2 members in them after 7 and 8 years of marketing, and they still believe that they are on track for success.

Certainly, there are other zones in America that are very large and some of them have been reported on in this House. People have mentioned the Miami zone and the zone near the wharfing structures of San Francisco, but let us get it back into context. Some of those zones have been in force nearly 30 years. They did not start only 2 years ago. They did not start in an isolated area. They started in major areas. For example, the Miami Trade Zone is alongside the Miami International Airport, in an industrial zone that is almost as large as the industrial zone of the Sydney area. It is a very substantial zone at Miami with about 130 members in the zone.

As I said earlier, they were extremely gracious in their comments to me about the way in which we have gone about setting up our zone in isolation, it being the only one in Australia, and with our moves to our north to create interest in our area. They were extremely interested and very gracious with their comments about the way in which we had gone about our affairs. In fact, we set up links with the Free Trade Zones Association in America, following my visit. Those are ongoing at the moment and I have no doubt that, in the future, there will be interlinking between the free trade zones in America and our trade zone in Darwin, following discussions that have been taking place. I still have a great deal of support for the Trade Development Zone. I am certainly pleased with its activities to date, and I have great faith in its future.

One area in my electorate that I believe will provide a catalyst for enormous growth in the long term in the Northern Territory has been referred to in papers that have been tabled in this Assembly from time to time, and has been mentioned by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. I refer to the infrastructure development at East Arm, preparatory to introduction of the new fishing zone in my electorate. There is a provision in the budget of some \$580 000 for industrial land headworks and an allocation for the continuation of those headwork developments for the establishment of a \$6.2m wharf to service the fishing industry.

As recently as last Wednesday, I was in the area looking at some of the subdivisional development that is taking place at East Arm. Already, 1 operator has erected a \$0.5m shed and other infrastructure on that subdivided land. When power and water is reticulated to his block, and I understand water will be available to him this month and electricity in November, as soon as the roadworks are completed in the area, he will be operating his barge company from that block. I understand that there are proposals for developing land-based activities on the other blocks. Those will be activities consistent with the fishing industry and the servicing of that industry, and the wharfing structures in that area will include floating pontoon wharfs with access for vehicles for unloading the catches on that land also and, on the serviced land nearby, processing factories will be built at some stage in the future.

Whilst that does not involve an enormous expenditure on straight capital development in that area, one has to remember the enormous downstream effect of an industry of this type. It has always been considered that the downstream spin-off capacity of the fishing industry has a multiplier factor of somewhere between 5 and 7. Servicing of the fishing industry has always been something that has provided considerable additional employment in the Darwin region, and I commend the minister and the Treasurer for providing funds in this year's budget for capital infrastructure to enable this industry to continue to grow and to provide additional jobs for our school leavers.

For the first time in years, I am able to talk at considerable length about the amount of money to be spent in my electorate this year. I am extremely pleased, not only for people in my electorate but for all the people of Darwin, that \$1.4m has been set aside in this year's budget for the construction of an aviation museum on land abutting the eastern end of the airport, near the bomber replenishment area. Members who have lived in Darwin for many years will be well aware of the unstinting endeavours of private individuals who have been members of the Aviation Society and the Historical Society to trace aircraft that were destroyed, partially destroyed or that crash-landed in the Northern Territory during World War II. During the last 20-odd years, various artifacts, items and historical objects have been collected by these people, acting in a voluntary capacity. They have also worked extremely hard in writing to people who served in this region during the World War II and have collected an enormous amount of written and taped historical data, particularly relating the activities of British and American airmen in this area. That data has been documented and will take its place in the aviation museum.

An enormous stock of valuable aviation artifacts is stored in the buildings adjacent to the old victualling yards alongside the old railway reserve near Geranium Street in Stuart Park, and in the yards themselves. Many people would not know that at least that amount of artifacts is also stored in private historical museums around the Northern Territory and within the Darwin region. Those are held in trust for the Aviation Society and I understand that a very large proportion of them will become part of an extremely fine exhibit in the new aviation museum once it is completed.

This was the major conflict area of Australia during World War II and the erection of a new aviation museum is therefore most appropriate. Many of our overseas visitors are ex-servicemen who are returning with their wives to visit places with which they are familiar because of their wartime experiences. The new museum will certainly be an attraction to them as well as to other tourists who may not be as aware of Darwin's wartime history. As such, it will play an important part in our ongoing tourist development strategy.

The Transport and Works division of the capital works budget has also attended to some problems which were identified in my electorate during the last 12 months or so. I am pleased that the Minister for Transport and Works has seen fit to provide for intersection improvements for the McMillans Road-Stuart Highway intersection at Berrimah. I have been writing to him about that intersection for some 12 months now and pointing out the continual difficulties with the enormous traffic build-up at the Berrimah Road junction. It is the intention of the government to institute some intermediate remedies this year to alleviate the pressure on that junction and, in the long term, further matters will be brought to the minister's attention. Having seen some of the forward planning, I have no doubt there will be further substantial developments in years to come.

Tiger Brennan Drive is also in my electorate. Those members who use that road will have noted the considerable traffic build-up, particularly in the mornings. It is an excellent connector road from Palmerston and the northern suburbs region. It is our intention to continue work on that road this year and to pave and seal the Bowen Street to Hook Road section. There will be further works closer to town to alleviate the pressures on the bottleneck leading to the city.

A large animal post-mortem facility and a steriliser are being built at the Berrimah Research Farm at a cost of \$458 000.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about the private school that is to be there?

Mr FIRMIN: The private school as well.

Mr Speaker, this year's budget is well balanced, and I believe that it will set the seal on our future development. I support the Treasurer's comments.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I would start by saying that it is a little disappointing that members of the opposition who are shadowing portfolio areas have not been able to speak to date in this debate because it is important. I understand the reason why that is so, but it is important that, as ministers, we listen to the concerns that they express during the course of the debate so that we are able to respond to their comments initially. However, I will note the comments made by honourable members throughout the course of this debate and I will endeavour to answer the points raised by them at a later stage.

The Territory government's outstanding record of developing education in Australia's most challenging environment has been enhanced once again with major new commitments in the 1988 budget. The total budget allocation for education for 1988-89 is \$194.3m, almost 6% more than in 1987-88. Not only will this enable existing education services and programs to be maintained, it will allow increases in some areas. The fact that the Territory government has been able to hold the line and make some advances in education this financial year is a significant achievement given that there has been no dollar increase in the level of education funding from the Commonwealth government. In real terms, the Commonwealth contribution has declined for this financial year.

There have been claims that there has been a \$3.5m cut in allocations to schools. This is the type of thing that I was referring to earlier. You hear a comment and you are unable to respond immediately to the views that are

expressed and correct the perception that the opposition has in relation to this matter. A \$3.5m cut in allocations to schools? What a load of nonsense! I believe the method used by the opposition to calculate the apparent reduced funding for primary and secondary education for 1988-89 fails to take into account a number of issues. First, there is the effect of the national wage adjustments for which the department can expect to be compensated by around \$3.5m. Approximately 75% of this, or \$2.6m, will be spent on remote area education and in primary and secondary education areas. A 6.9% inflationary component was accepted and apportioned through operational components of school budgets, and we included that in our deliberations.

A further point that the opposition failed to take into account is that a 1.69% decline in student numbers has occurred in 1987-88 and numbers are projected to decline further. We do not provide services at the same rate. We look at what is required and we meet those requirements. If 500 students seek enrolment tomorrow, we have to provide education for them and we will do so. We have been able to maintain the existing services and, in some cases, to expand those services. To claim that funding for Northern Territory education has been reduced is totally incorrect. Funding has increased and it is the intention of this government to ensure that education continues to be a high priority.

The Northern Territory government has shown a strength of commitment to Aboriginal education, through the development of community education centres, to the provision of special needs staff in various schools and to the needs of students from isolated areas. A major program, the Home Loan Video Scheme, which was previously funded by the Commonwealth, has now been taken over by the Northern Territory. There has been an increase in allocations for repairs and maintenance and minor new works, and per capita funding for post-primary students in Aboriginal communities has been increased by 33%. Don't let us hear this nonsense about allocations being reduced.

The Northern Territory government has secured Commonwealth endorsement for the merger of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory. It is now in the process of negotiating for the first Commonwealth funding for university education in the Northern Territory. Despite this, the Territory government has continued to lead the way by strengthening its financial commitment to higher education in 1988-89 with \$28.5m allocated to the Darwin Institute of Technology and \$7.9m to the University College of the Northern Territory. The university college will build on the success of its law course with the provision of third year law in the old Ward 9 section of the university college.

Enrolments at the university college now stand at just over 430. There are 321 arts undergraduates, most of whom are studying law, 31 arts post-graduate students, 63 science undergraduates and 18 post-graduate science students. In 1983, it was estimated that this number would not be reached until the early 1990s. Because of this unexpected level of enrolments, some of the facilities provided are no longer adequate. Consequently, in addition to the budget allocation for recurrent funding, the government has allocated a further \$495 000 in the 1988-89 capital works program to provide essential additional facilities for science, especially for physics.

University courses in business, economics and education will be expanded and access enhanced when child-minding facilities at the Myilly Point campus become operational in the new year. The Darwin Institute of Technology will receive \$28.574m compared to \$25.859m expenditure in 1987-88. This represents an increase of approximately \$2.7m or 10% over last year's allocation. In the

advanced education sector, the increased allocation will enable the institute to introduce the third and final stage of the Diploma in Applied Science in Basic Nursing and also to pursue the development of courses in the field of Master of Business and Administration, thus consolidating the institute's offering at the higher education level. The implementation of these degrees depends on final negotiations with the Commonwealth concerning the profile of higher education in the Territory.

In the technical and further education sector, the institute's budget was increased by an injection of \$1.1m to offset the cuts which were necessary last year following severe reductions in Commonwealth funding to the Northern Territory. The institute will be able to restore most of the programs that were deferred and also to expand its courses in electrical and air-conditioning training and tourism hospitality. An injection of \$1m for capital items will enable the replacement of a significant proportion of the institute's plant and equipment which will render training even more efficient, effective and relevant to industry needs in the Northern Territory.

The joint Darwin Institute of Technology and Department of Education Computer Education Centre has been strengthened through the allocation of \$105 000. This will be spent on the replacement and purchase of equipment which will be the most up-to-date computer hardware in Australia. The facility is unique in that it provides both pre-service trainee teachers and in-service practising teachers with opportunities to become competent in all facets of computer education. Staff at the Computer Education Centre will use the funding also to research the best use of new computers within the classroom situation.

The Territory education budget reflects the government's commitment to providing strong additional support in the areas of greatest need. The Territory government is continuing to pursue incentives which will help set increasingly high standards in other areas of Northern Territory education. The member for Koolpinyah will be very pleased to hear that Taminmin High School is being developed as a centre of excellence in agriculture. At Tennant Creek High School, courses relevant to the pastoral industry are to be provided whilst, at the Katherine Rural College, post-secondary agriculture courses of quality will be available for Territorians and for students from interstate and overseas. At Taminmin High School this year, there will be extra support to provide plant and equipment including a tractor, a machine and tool shed, repairs to the school's 4-wheel-drive vehicle, to install security gates and to conduct new training programs.

An allocation of \$1.6m has been made for the employment of 48 teaching staff to meet special needs in schools throughout the Territory. This level of staffing is above normal entitlement and has been allocated to schools for programs designed to overcome disadvantages. These will ensure that small high schools are able to offer a reasonable range of subjects despite their small numbers of students and that schools with disadvantaged students are able to offer the additional counselling and education that these students require.

Urban schools to benefit from the allocation of above-formula staff members include Casuarina Secondary College, Darwin High School, Driver High School, Driver Primary School, Gray Primary School, Katherine High School, Millner Primary School, Taminmin High School, Alice Springs High School, Anzac Hill High School, Sadadeen Secondary College, Tennant Creek High School, Nhulunbuy High School, Bradshaw Primary School and Ludmilla Primary School. Aboriginal and rural schools which will benefit from the budget allocation for

above-formula staff include Batchelor Area School, Jabiru Area School, Maningrida School, Numbulwar School, Umbakumba School, Peppimenarti School, Yarralin School, Kalkaringi School, Papunya School, Ngukurr School, Shepherdson College, Yirrkala School, Ammaroo School, Utopia School, Yulara School, Alyangula Area School, Berry Springs School and Pine Creek School.

I would like to remind the House of some of the achievements of the government since the 1987 election. Katherine East High School has been built at a cost of \$12m and was opened in the 1988 second semester. The second stage of Sanderson High School was completed for the start of the 1988 school year, at a cost of \$1.3m. At Nightcliff High School, arts and science facilities were upgraded and new music facilities were completed in 1988 at a cost of \$400 000. The Milingimbi School Library and Resource Centre opened in 1988, costing \$400 000. The first stage of a new school at Berry Springs was completed in 1988 at a cost of \$1.4m. Ludmilla Special School was upgraded in 1987 at a cost of \$55 000. Tennant Creek Primary School was upgraded in 1987 at a cost of \$250 000 plus \$90 000 for repairs and painting. In addition, we have benefited from projects which have received a significant amount of Commonwealth funding, often supported by Territory money. For example, the new Gapuwiyak School was completed in 1988 at a cost of some \$580 000. The Ngukurr School was completed in 1988 at a cost of \$1.35m. There are new post-primary facilities at Yarralin costing \$160 000, Lake Nash costing \$160 000, Peppimenarti costing \$180 000 and Willowra costing \$330 000.

A great deal of money has been spent in providing facilities which are important to and needed in our communities. It is a partnership between the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth. We have played our part. The Commonwealth has played its part to some extent, but we need much more support from the Commonwealth if we are to meet our commitment to education in the Northern Territory.

The Commonwealth government has withdrawn its support for the Home Loan Video Scheme which it started some years ago. However, because of the importance of this scheme to isolated students, the Territory government has allocated \$186 000 in this year's budget to pick up where the Commonwealth has left off. Under the scheme, video equipment and materials are provided for isolated primary students enrolled with the School of the Air. The video material forms a valuable and integral part of their lessons. This year, the scheme will be extended to give access to loan video tapes to secondary correspondence students.

We have also placed a great deal of emphasis on providing assistance for independent schools. Funds for independent schools have been increased significantly to enable the continued expansion of the private school sector and therefore increase the range of education options available in the Territory. At present, non-government schools accommodate only 16% of Territory students compared with 25% of students nationally. In addition to recurrent funding, more than \$1.8m has been allocated for capital assistance and interest subsidies for independent schools. This will enable the development of facilities at St Joseph's School in Katherine, St Phillip's College in Alice Springs and St John's College, O'Loughlin College and the Marrara Christian School in Darwin. Assistance will be made available also for the Darwin International Grammar School if the project commences during this financial year.

I turn now to community education centres. Aboriginal communities will be major beneficiaries of the education budget. I would like to remind the House of some of the government's achievements in the past year. At present,

186 students are enrolled in the Batchelor College Teacher Training Course, with 115 undertaking the first year of the course in their own communities. Remote area training of Aboriginal teachers is being extended to include second-year students and will be expanded to southern areas of the Territory. 25 students are enrolled in training courses for Aboriginal adult educators.

In the 1988 budget, a total of \$1.3m has been allocated for 8 community education centres which will become fully operational, on a trial basis, from the start of the 1989 school year. The 8 Aboriginal communities concerned are: Milingimbi, Maningrida, Yirrkala, Galiwinku, Borroloola, Angurugu, Barunga and Yuendumu. The trial program is expected to provide a major advance in educational opportunities in these communities and, assuming it proves successful, it will be extended to many other communities in the near future.

Students attending the community education centres will have access to TAFE certificate courses in foundation studies - that is, basic literacy skills such as reading and writing, and in general studies, vocational studies and secondary studies. These courses are being developed in consultation with Aboriginal people who are represented on both the Project Steering Committee and the Curriculum Advisory Committee. As well as providing a general education, the community education centres will offer programs geared to the training needs of their particular communities. Not only will they provide much better educational opportunities for secondary-age students who want to remain in their communities, they will cater also for adults and for young people who wish to return to their communities. The budget allocation this year for community education centres includes provision for the employment of 22 additional staff in the Aboriginal communities concerned.

Provision has been made in the budget for a major new TAFE centre to open in Katherine at the beginning of next year. The new centre will use the facilities of the old Katherine High School which will be refurbished at a cost of \$250 000. A community library will be included as part of its facilities. Initially, the centre will operate as part of the Northern Territory Open College but, eventually, it is expected to become a separate TAFE college in its own right. It will provide a tremendous boost for technical and further education in the rapidly developing Katherine area.

I turn next to support for staff development. In the 1986-87 budget, the Commonwealth government withdrew its support for professional development programs for which previously it had been largely responsible. This meant that the Territory had no choice but to fully fund in-service courses for teachers. During the 1988-89 financial year, strong Territory government support for professional development of education staff will be continued. In addition to full-time study awards for teachers, the government will continue to provide paid leave and assistance for teachers who wish to upgrade their qualifications by undertaking part-time courses and external studies. The training of new teachers for the Territory will be maintained at high levels through funding of scholarships for school leavers and other Territorians pursuing teacher education courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology and the university college, and by support for Aboriginal employees of the Department of Education who wish to undertake teacher training at Batchelor College.

In respect of expanded cooperation, a total of \$250 000 has been earmarked for vocational and technical cooperation between TAFE institutions in the Northern Territory and those in the eastern provinces of Indonesia. This expanded cooperation follows the signing of a memorandum of cooperation in



December 1987 and will include the exchange of professional expertise and materials between the TAFE institutions concerned. It is hoped that this cooperative program between the Territory and Indonesia will attract foreign aid funds for upgrading the expertise of technical and vocational training staff in TAFE institutions in Indonesia's eastern provinces.

As a result of the savage cuts in funding to the Territory in last year's May mini-budget, the Territory government had no option but to reduce the level of per capital grants to schools. However, this was offset by a 20% increase in the \$1-for-\$1 subsidy scheme for school councils. This move proved highly successful and strong support has been provided again for the subsidy scheme in this year's budget. Nearly \$3m has been allocated for minor new works for schools. In addition, an allocation of \$7.4m will enable school repairs and maintenance work to continue at a very high level. If school councils so desire, they will be able to undertake minor new works and repairs and maintenance themselves under the government's optional devolution agreement.

At the time of attaining self-government in 1978, the CLP government faced enormous challenges. The lack of tertiary education opportunities presented the major obstacle to our aim of stabilising our population. We have come a long way in 10 years, devoting huge resources to education. We can boast of a system now that compares favourably with those in the rest of Australia. For example, the Territory now leads Australia in computer education. The Territory is the only state or territory offering universal preschooling. Overall, the student-teacher ratio of 21:1 in primary schools is equal to the best in Australia. High school student teacher ratios at 15.8:1 and junior secondary at 12.8:1, are among the best in Australia. Staffing levels in Aboriginal schools lead the way nationally, particularly in relation to the employment of Aboriginal staff. Nursing sisters are employed in all urban secondary schools. The Territory leads the rest of Australia with its community policing program in high schools. Secondary colleges have been established successfully in both Alice Springs and Darwin, and the range of senior courses in secondary schools has been increased greatly to meet community and student needs. The proportion of secondary students staying on from Year 8 to Year 12 at government schools has increased fivefold since the Territory government gained control of education in 1979, and matriculation pass rates have increased and stabilised since pre-self-government days. The 1988 budget will continue the good work which has been undertaken in education by the Northern Territory government.

In closing, may I indicate to honourable members that I apologise for not being in a position where I can respond directly to some of their concerns about the Appropriation Bill. As I said, I will listen to the comments that they make during the course of this debate and I hope that, at some later stage, I will be able to respond to their concerns.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the education system that we have in the Northern Territory is developing extremely well. We are able to provide to many people in the Territory a service which is second to none, and there are many areas where we have led the field and are still leading the field, and I have indicated some of those during the course of my speech. I welcome the appropriation for education, and I look forward to hearing the comments of other honourable members in relation to my portfolio.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, let us look at the context in which this budget was brought down. We had a new Treasurer and Chief Minister. It may be said that, during the development of last year's budget, some of the

problems that we are experiencing in the Northern Territory today may not have been absolutely crystal clear. I know that members on this side of the House raised the matter of the fall in building activity, the fall in the registration of new vehicles and various statistics which were becoming available, even at that time. We sought to demonstrate that the Northern Territory's economy was heading into real problems. It may be that the Chief Minister of the time and the then Treasurer were able to say justifiably that they took our statistics on board, had a look at them, but decided that it was part of a national slump and not particularly related to government in the Northern Territory. We would have disagreed with that, but that would have been as far as it would have gone.

By this stage, every one of those indicators has become worse and each of those indicators has shown to every Territorian that, by the time that it was framing this budget, this government should have known to a T where the problems were and the exact state of the economy in the Northern Territory. We had a right to expect that, knowing that, this government would have been ready to use this budget to take the economy by the scruff of the neck and say that it would achieve results. Through this budget, it should have been able to highlight exactly what it intended to achieve and what lay ahead for Territorians. We had every right to expect that, but we have now a so-called strategy paper which was presented to this House this morning, and the government used its numbers to guillotine debate on that paper. Obviously, after showing it around for an hour and a half, government members were so embarrassed by it that they themselves ...

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We are debating the budget, not the statement that was made this morning on the paper presented to this Assembly. It is on the Notice Paper and I believe that that notice should be debated at the appropriate time.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it is quite within the confines of standing orders to refer to a paper which has been placed before this House. I am not referring to the debate; I am referring to the actual strategy which was put before this House.

Mr Perron: We adjourned it so that you would have a chance to read it. It was clear that your leader had not.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable member may allude to another debate provided he does not seek to revive that debate.

Mr EDE: Exactly, Mr Speaker.

Unfortunately, we did not have a strategy of the nature that we required in place before this budget which would have enabled people to view exactly what the nature of the economy was, where its strengths were and where its weaknesses were, which people could have agreed with or disagreed with. In the context of that discussion, we could have led up to the budget. The budget could then have seen the allocation of resources towards the implementation of the strategy. That would have been an obvious means of solving the problems of the Northern Territory. Instead of that, however, the government adopted a cock-a-hoop method of budgeting that does not relate to any of the real problems.

Already, we have highlighted the problems in the capital works area and we now have a strategy paper coming on top of the budget which does not relate back to the budget at all. We will deal with this in much more detail during

the committee stage, when we will give the government the opportunity to indicate that there is a relationship of some sort. We certainly cannot find such a relationship, and I spent a large portion of last night looking for it. The business community certainly cannot find it. Members of that community have been talking to me ever since this budget was presented, and they cannot see any direction in it. They cannot see any evidence that this government has a vision for the Territory, belief in the economy or belief in itself. The government has nothing to offer and this budget has demonstrated that.

Mr Speaker, this is a do-nothing budget: 'Steady as she goes. Let us hope that everybody will forget about all the problems that we have created. Let us hope that everybody will allow us to continue on for a year or 2, and maybe something will magically turn up. We can go ahead and spend 21 shillings when we have only earned 20, and maybe something will turn up'. Maybe the government is still waiting for the roar as the cavalry rides over the hills with bugles blowing. That is not the way to treat the economy of the Northern Territory. It is not the way in which we should be developing strategies and appropriating funds. We need to secure our strategies and use them as the springboard for development. Unfortunately, we have a do-nothing government. It is tired, it is aimless, it is uncaring and it no longer listens.

Mr Finch: Give us an example.

Mr EDE: An example? Look at the number of businesses that are going bankrupt in the Northern Territory and compare them with the figures nationally. The percentage increase in bankruptcies in the Northern Territory over the last year is at least twice as high as that in any state. That is based on 1986-87 and 1987-88 figures, which are now a little out of date. Another indication came in an article in the Centralian Advocate of 21 September. Mr Max Stewart of ProServe, a local bailiff and mercantile agent, is a person who is very close to the reality in terms of bankruptcies and the serving of the various notices involved. He is quoted in the article as saying that business confidence in Alice Springs is at an all-time low and that it is worse in Tennant Creek. He said that small businesses in central Australia were folding at the rate of 1 every 2 days and that there had been an average of 4 bankruptcies a week in Alice Springs this year.

Those figures are an absolute indictment of this government. Certainly, some businesses go broke, particularly in their first year of operation. It is a well-known fact that a large percentage of small businesses do not realise the difference between projected profit and cash flow. The danger is that cash flow is inadequate and the business then folds. That is tragic for the individuals involved. It is even more tragic where such failures occur in the context of an uncaring government that is doing nothing to assist them. In fact, there are specific instances where the government is taking action which is sending them broke.

The Northern Territory government talks often of the flow-on effect of new projects. It refers continually to what was called the Anderson proposal. It is trying to con us that it is a State Square proposal now, or something like that. It refers continually to the flow-on into the economy, particularly in respect of jobs that will be created. It forgets the fact that the jobs created will not be permanent. This does not fit in even with one of the points that was correct in the strategy paper and which reflects statements that I have made often to this House: we want quality jobs, secure jobs and numbers of jobs. Those are the 3 elements that are missing from the State Square project.

Put that aside for a moment, Mr Speaker. I want this government to start looking at the reverse effect of failed businesses. We have talked often about flow-on effects and the multiplier effects of further jobs on particular government projects. Does this government realise or take into account the flow-on effect from failed businesses which also sends ripples through the community? As a result of failures around them, businesses which had every right to believe that they would be profitable and would achieve their niche in the economy, themselves fail and their workers have to be laid off. If we have a look at the job-loss figures that we have talked about before in this Assembly, they bear out as nothing else can just how tragic the last year has been for Territorians. The CLP promise was that the total employed labour force in the Northern Territory would comprise over 70 000 people at this stage. We now find that the total employed labour force has fallen from 70 000 to below 64 000. The danger is that it will go into free fall because this budget has not taken any of the steps necessary to address those matters.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the meat processing industry which was mentioned in the strategy paper. I happen to have the figures up to 1987 and I hope to obtain the 1988 figures soon. These show very dramatically the difference between the turnoff in the cattle industry in the Northern Territory and the numbers that are slaughtered locally. From 1982 to 1987, the average turnoff was 270 000 to 280 000. That has now increased to around 360 000. Turnoff has had its ups and downs as a result of droughts, but generally it has been increasing. What has been declining constantly is the number slaughtered locally. The figures are: 142 000, 138 000, 96 000, 81 000, 33 000 and 76 000. What is happening is that our wealth is being exported instead of being turned into a value-added product in the Northern Territory to the benefit of the Northern Territory. The potential for jobs has been exported interstate.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjecting from the government benches. The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

For many years, this government has been talking about projects such as Mudginberri and blaming the union. It said that the union's tally system was causing the problems. We have the farcical situation where, after the new award in the Territory - which lays down absolutely no baseline conditions for employment - people are sending their cattle down south to be slaughtered under full AMIEU conditions with the very tally system that this government spent millions of dollars trying to defeat. That is the absolute truth. This government guaranteed the Mudginberri abattoir for millions of dollars to assist 27 workers to hold their jobs because of their philosophical bent. I want to know what this government intends to do in respect of the tragic circumstances in Alice Springs where fire ravaged the slaughter floor of the Alice Springs meatworks. That meatworks, which employs some 150 people, will now have to close down. The operator has been working hard to build up the industry in the Northern Territory and to regain the confidence of the pastoral industry.

Mr Perron: Are you blaming us for burning it down or something?

Mr EDE: It is up to you.

I hope this government will look more closely at that industry. The government seems to have been so tied up with BTEC that it has been unable to address the very real problems in relation to the cattle and buffalo industry. We know the problems with buffalo slaughter. We know that this government is talking in terms of a domestic herd of some 50 000 and hoping to hold some 70 000 disease-free animals out bush. We know that current export contracts call for some 30 000 per annum to be slaughtered to satisfy them. Anybody who can count knows that you cannot supply 30 000 per year out of a 50 000-head herd. Presumably, the government is hoping that the 70 000-head out bush will come good. I hope that our new Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries will present a ministerial statement during these sittings on BTEC and how it is progressing because, obviously, the numbers do not add up as far as the buffalo industry is concerned. At the moment, that is another industry which I am told by ...

Mr Perron: Tell us who and we will tell you if it is accurate.

Mr EDE: ... Mr Doug Aitken, who speaks in terms of 1000 jobs in that industry which ...

Mr Perron: An unbiased observer, perhaps?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: He's a good constituent of mine.

Mr EDE: I do not think that there are many unbiased observers around, to take up that comment, Mr Speaker. When we are talking about the economy of the Northern Territory, we certainly are biased. We want something done about it. And I will admit my bias as well in that regard; I want some growth and development. I want to get back the pride that I used to have in this Territory as a vibrant, dynamic place, a pride that has been killed by the government opposite. I find it very difficult now to face my friends down south who say that the Territory is a bit of a backwater these days.

The government has continuously justified the shoot-out of buffalo on the basis that the United States requires us to do it or we will lose our export licences. I would refer honourable members opposite to an article in the Sunday Territorian of 4 September which referred to Senator Cook, the Western Australian Senator in charge of resources. He said that the United States authorities have never provided to Australia documents which insist that our beef herds must be free from tuberculosis and brucellosis and that deadlines for the national BTEC program are set by Australia. The United States government has not attempted to set deadlines for the campaign.

It is time that this government took another look at BTEC. I am becoming extremely concerned about it. There are many authorities who say that, in fact, we will never be able to eradicate brucellosis satisfactorily in the Top End. It is my personal view that it is time to have another look at it. How many million dollars are we going to spend on trying to find and destroy that last scrub bull, that last ...

Mr Perron: Ask the federal Treasurer.

Mr EDE: ... wild buffalo, Mr Speaker? The 1 in 10 000 that may have brucellosis. I have not heard this government making any statements on that.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again, I remind honourable members on the government benches that the member for Stuart will be heard in silence. Of those members who are interjecting, I understand a number have still the right to speak in this debate.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will move on quickly because I have a great many areas to cover.

In employment and training, one thing that has really worried me has been that the number of commencements of apprenticeships has been trending downwards since 1985-86. These commencements in apprenticeships, which are figures which I believe were provided by the Northern Territory government, are in stark contrast to what is happening nationally. In fact, since 1982-83, the apprenticeship intake has increased by some 60% on a national level. Nationally, we have had an increase of 60%. In the Northern Territory, at the very best, the figures are bumping along at an equal level, but to me they appear to be trending downwards. We are not keeping up with national programs to allow for an increase in the number of apprenticeships.

It would appear to me, and it is starting to appear to everybody around the Territory that, almost alone, this Northern Territory government has slumbered while the states have been getting on with the job. What ever your political views are, Mr Speaker, you have to admit that the states like Victoria, with the highest growth in the land and the lowest unemployment, South Australia which has moved into technology and defence-related industries, Western Australia with West Australia Incorporated, were all affected by the slump in terms of trade. But, instead of sitting back and saying, 'Oh, the federal government, the federal government!' all the time, they got stuck into it and got on with the job. They got on with the job and now they are reaping the benefits in terms of jobs and growth, which we in the Northern Territory are not doing. They did not pass the blame on. They were determined to fix it themselves. And that is what we need in the Northern Territory. We need a 'fix-it' government, not a 'later on' government, not a government that is tired, which is what we have at the moment.

A member: The bloody Hawke government.

Mr EDE: In the education portfolio, Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member, and I am sorry I did not see who it was, will withdraw that reference to the Hawke government.

Mr FIRMIN: Whoever it was, I am sure I will withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable member for Ludmilla.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in the education portfolio, we finally have the possibility to plug the university college drain which was tearing so much money out of our education budget. Now it is necessary to get that legislation right and to have the new university operating efficiently from 1 January. We will be debating the university legislation this week and I will go into that at that stage. What I am sorry to see is that, in this budget, it is not evident where the savings from the merger are. On looking at these budget papers, one would not think that a merger was to occur, and that will be discussed further during the committee stage.

Certainly, we are not doing as well in relation to education as the minister would like us to believe. A couple of years ago, the proportion of

our budget spent on education was lower than in any state. A government minister denied that and said that he would eat his hat if it were true. I am trying to find out just how we rate now. I hope that we have improved, but I cannot see how that could be when there have been real cuts in education every year. I hope that the money that was ripped out of the broad education system to finance the university college will be directed back into the system, because it is absolutely essential that the Northern Territory government stops assuming that we will always be able to meet our skill needs by recruiting interstate and that we do not have to train our own people. That attitude condemns Territory youth to being hewers of wood and carters of water, and it is not good enough for Territorians who want their children to have good jobs in the Northern Territory. Young people do not want to discover that their skills are not sufficient to obtain employment because training facilities have not been available. They do not want to see local jobs being taken by itinerant people from the south. Not only is that not good for our children, it is not good for local industry because it has already been shown that the best thing for industries such as tourism is to have Territorians employed within them.

Mr Speaker, I would like to highlight a number of other issues in the brief time that is available to me. I am most disappointed that the Tanami-Lajamanu road will not be bituminised this year. The government is quite happy to rip the gold tax out of the goldmines in the Tanami area but is not prepared to put some money back in to fix up that road. The previous Minister for Transport and Works started work on it, but nothing at all has occurred during the term of the current minister.

We have heard a great deal from the Minister for Education about expenditure on school facilities. The minister spoke about an allocation of \$55 000 for extensions to school facilities at Nyirripi. I can tell him that there is no way in the world that another unit can be built for \$50 000. The cost will be about \$80 000. Will two-thirds of a facility be built? Will the roof be left off or 1 wall not be built?

The Minister for Education spoke about \$330 000 being spent at Willowra. That is federal money, not Northern Territory money. The federal government put the money in for the capital works on the basis that the Northern Territory government would fund the staffing. The facility is not staffed this year and the minister just said that it would not be staffed next year. Thus, for 18 months, the place will remain vacant. What sort of planning is that? A community education centre worth \$330 000 sits empty because this government has not honoured its part of the agreement.

There are crucial needs in post-primary education in the Utopia area, and nothing has been done to address them. There is not even 1 teacher per school there: teachers have to share schools, and the vehicles provided to transport those teachers are inadequate. Young women who are committed teachers have to drive back and forth from their base to the schools in vehicles which are not even equipped with radios.

We need to upgrade classrooms in the rural areas. A long time ago, I provided the government with statistics in relation to the problems with educationally-significant hearing impairment caused by conditions such as 'glue ear'. Students cannot receive an adequate education when they cannot hear the teacher. The problem is compounded in many bush schools by the noise of air-conditioning systems. There is no noise abatement. An officer from the National Acoustics Laboratory compared the degree of noise interference for hearing-impaired children in those classrooms with that which you or I

would experience in trying to hear a normal conversation with a road train thundering past 20 feet away. How can anybody learn in that sort of environment? I wish the government had taken that on board and done something about it.

In the whole of the Ammaroo-Utopia region in my electorate, where about 1000 people live, there is not 1 permanent house. When will that issue be addressed? What about the development of employment opportunities out bush? We have talked about Aboriginal people being involved in the service industries in their communities and in tourism. That is fair enough. We have been able to get that message across to the government, but I want to know more about people out bush being able to be involved in new initiatives, such as seed-gathering. There is a big market for eucalyptus seeds in the Middle East and there is a big market for bush foods. There are big markets for bush medicines but we need the research skills which the government can provide. Its economic development strategy says that it will carry out research. It has to get out there, give the people a hand, inform people about where the markets are, give financial guidance and show people how to develop such schemes. The strategy does not mention initiatives like that. It does not mention bush foods or bush tucker. It does not talk about genetic engineering programs which might allow bush foods to be cropped more intensively in existing environments. I might say here that I have talked to a professor from the ANU who said that it would be quite simple to do that, Mr Speaker.

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

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, during the course of his speech, the member for Stuart stated that I had said that the Willowra School was funded with Northern Territory money. I did not say that. The Commonwealth funded that project to the tune of \$330 000.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I have listened to this debate, both during the last sittings and this afternoon, with some degree of fascination. I have been particularly interested in the contributions, if you can call them that, of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart who, thank goodness, has just resumed his seat. It is all very well for members opposite to rattle on about development strategies, to say the Territory economy is going bad and to ask the government why it has not done this or that. One of the opposition's great joys is nitpicking. It is always possible to find something that has not been done, simply because resources are limited. It is easy to accuse the government of not doing anything about genetic engineering. Perhaps it just does not rate highly enough in the priorities, with the very limited resources which the Northern Territory government has to allocate in its budget.

I have sat in this Chamber since February 1984. I have listened to members opposite carrying on, year in and year out, about the gross overfunding of the Northern Territory by the Commonwealth and extolling the generosity of the Commonwealth. Eventually, their federal counterparts jumped on the bandwagon. Members opposite had convinced Senator Walsh of the wisdom of their cause. Territory politicians were arguing that the Territory was overfunded, and Canberra listened. As a result, we suffered severe cuts in 1986-87 and 1987-88. Everybody in this Chamber knows that we have lost in excess of 15% in real terms in Commonwealth allocations in the last 2 years.



Historically, the Northern Territory government budget has been the major driving force in the economy of the Northern Territory. Although that is gradually changing, cuts of that size in the government budget inevitably knock the hell out of the economy. The effects have been: fewer people working for government, reduced capital works, reduced services to the community and reduced funds flowing into the community. Inevitably, the small business retailer and the small business contractor have been badly hurt. In turn, manufacturers have been hurt. As job growth has slowed, the housing construction industry and all those who depend on it have suffered. The consequences have not been purely local; they have spread right across the Territory. People who assumed that a magic wand could be waved to stop that occurring were kidding themselves. A number of people who did make that assumption were members of this House and misled the Northern Territory community with their comments.

No member of the government had any illusions about the difficulties which the Northern Territory faced 12 or 15 months ago. Nevertheless, we had to frame a budget to live with reduced lower capital works and to address the challenge of reducing the cost of staffing in the public service. We had to face disputes with unions and an outcry from community groups whose grants-in-aid had been reduced. What was amazing, Mr Speaker, is the extent to which services were able to be maintained across a wide spectrum of government in such a crisis.

Some 1000 people came out of the service of the Northern Territory in 1987-88 and that has to flatten the employment market. Anyone who assumes that it will not is kidding himself. I ask everybody in this Chamber to look at the budget figures, at Budget Paper No 6 and at the budget speech: growth, growth, growth. In all the private enterprise propulsive industries, there is growth. That was, and will continue to be, the sustaining force in the Northern Territory. In 1987-88, the government was able to rebalance its books and reorganise the delivery of services. There was considerable pain, but it achieved it and brought its budgetary structure back into shape so that now it does not have to make any further cuts. Despite a further real cut in available funds again this year, the government has been able to bring down a budget that not only retains all services and increases no taxes or charges on the community - except water charges which increased only by the CPI - but also delivers over \$20m-worth of direct incentives to sponsor and promote the expansion and development of the private sector of the economy, the wealth-creating sector of our economy, to rebuild our tax base.

That is an amazing achievement in a single year, given the circumstances that the Northern Territory was facing. It is very easy to nitpick about \$100 000 here or \$50 there. Look at the global picture of what we were confronted with 12 months ago, what we have achieved and where we are headed now. Increases in the last 12 months include: tourism - 17%; minerals - 25%; horticulture - 58%; oil and gas production from \$24m to \$350m in a couple of years; fishing - 40%; and buffalo turnoff - 13%.

Look at what the budget is doing in terms of providing direction and growth. The figures for tourism were announced recently. This year, there will be some 22% growth in tourism although the opposition was telling us that we had had a downturn. The opposition managed to turn 22% growth into a downturn in the minds of the community. It is damaging the Northern Territory with the garbage that it goes on with. We have heard members opposite say continually that there is no direction, no development, no growth. What do we hear when the facts come out: 'I won't talk about that. Let me find \$5 somewhere that was not spent on something else'. That is their style. They

cause untold damage to the Northern Territory simply by not telling the community the truth. That is the problem in the Northern Territory and it is about time somebody said it. It is about time the media publicised the damage that the opposition is causing to the Territory in its negative approach to achieve a single goal: to mislead the people to the point where it can win government by default. In the 4 years that I have been in this Chamber, not once have I heard any member opposite come up with a single, practical suggestion in relation to the Northern Territory economy.

Mr Palmer: They wanted to build the Victoria Highway in Western Australia.

Mr HATTON: I said 'practical', Mr Speaker.

Look at what is occurring to promote tourism and to protect the environment. Look at the expenditure on park development, to spread the tourists, to cater for growth and to ensure that our important natural resources are not being degraded as a result of the growth in tourism. Look at the work that is being done at Kings Canyon, the West MacDonnells, Tolmer, the upper Roper River, Florence Falls, Sandy Creek and the entire Litchfield National Park area. Look at the work at Gregory National Park and the other parks. Look at the ministerial statements that have been made and the press releases that have been issued on the priority programming of the development of parks. The development plans are there and they are backed up by the budget and the development strategy.

Link that with what this side of the House put to the Northern Territory people in February-March 1987 and you have a comprehensive statement of where we are going and how we intend to get there. The resources are now in place to achieve that. That is what this does. Forget the nonsense about where the 5¢ and 10¢ coins have gone. Let us look at where the Territory is going and at the \$4.6m that has been earmarked specifically in these tight times to provide incentives for private industry development in the Northern Territory, and in the secondary and tertiary fields particularly.

Look at the money for further resources availability in the Trade Development Zone. I am not going to stand here and apologise for it. Perhaps some people became a bit over-enthusiastic about that zone but, Mr Deputy Speaker, read the original consultants' report and it is clear that we are on track or perhaps doing better than the projection of how fast that zone would develop. The resources must be maintained for that. It is an exciting and important concept to develop a manufacturing base and fill a significant gap in our Territory economy. If any member does not think it is significant, I urge him to read some of the background material incorporated in the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy which identifies the gaps and provides strategies to fill them. That is what a development strategy should be doing. The budget puts the resources into place to enable that to occur. I refer members to the budget speech. I am not doing anything special. I ask them to read it and assess it honestly, and not to listen to the nonsense from the opposition.

It is true that we have had troubles with buffalo. Fundamentally, BTEC has meant that we will have to do away with the feral buffalo herd. We will have to replace that with a managed herd.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You will be sorry in 10 years time.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, basically, that decision is outside of the control of the Northern Territory government. It happens to be a national program and we are obliged to undertake that process. But, equally, it is essential that we develop and maintain a growing, viable and managed buffalo industry for the future.

\$1.9m is provided in this budget specifically for producers to purchase and develop breeding stock and for other measures to improve the size of the breeding herd behind wire. There are other facilities available through the budget of the Department of Lands and Housing for land to open up new buffalo blocks. The aim is to encourage a genuine transition and the building of herds. We could justify a turnoff of 50 000 a year and, to do that, we will need a herd of about 200 000 held under controlled conditions. That is a pretty large task. I hope that we can find a means to move buffalo from the feral situation to behind wire and test them. I believe that is possible in the southern Arnhem Land region. However, our great difficulty is that we cannot undertake King Canute exercises. It so happens that people can obtain twice the price for a buffalo by putting it on a boat to Asia. Unless we devote an inordinate proportion of our budget to this, we simply cannot convince them to give us the buffalo. We have to address the realities of the marketplace and, at the same time, build a herd. I believe the processes that this budget applies deal with that satisfactorily.

For several years, members have debated the development of the plan for the Northern Territory fishery. I remind honourable members of the Norgaard Report, a 4-part study that was carried out over 3 years to document exactly how we would build the fishing industry in the Northern Territory and what resources we would need. This budget starts to put the essential infrastructure in place to support the safe anchorage in Frances Bay and the Gove harbour wharf. There is now to be development of the fishing harbour at East Arm. Funds are provided also for the further development of this industry. I refer to specific funds for research into the aquaculture of barramundi. I believe other crops are being researched in relation to aquaculture. An exciting potential for central Australia is the work on beta carotene.

The growth and development in horticulture is spectacular - 50% last year alone. Extensive research is being undertaken by the government. It is a long-term project. I remind honourable members of the research that has been occurring at Wildman River for several years to develop a cashew industry. Work is being done towards the development of a date palm industry in central Australia. Suitable land has been identified, the water resources have been identified and varietal trials are taking place. There is other work being done on citrus fruits and nut varieties for central Australia and for the Tennant Creek area.

A water resources study is being undertaken and funds are available in the budget for that. There is geological work being done in the Department of Mines and Energy that is geared towards the provision of the necessary support, information and infrastructure to enable those industries to develop. These are not fly-by-night things; they are well-planned, well-researched, developing projects.

In addition to other longer-term projects in the development phase, which agriculture and horticulture necessarily are, we are in the middle of a 3-year project in the Douglas-Daly area to research kenaf for its potential for paper pulping. That project has exciting potential, but it will take time and effort to achieve results while we do our homework on marketing technology and

agronomic techniques. However, it is there and it is happening, and the finances are available to enable it to happen.

This budget is full of allocations of that kind to provide for future, rational, economic development. Funding is available for the provision of an environment in which the support of information, research and advisory services can be provided to the community to sponsor and encourage those forms of development. Exciting work is being done through the Trade Development Zone and in the encouragement of manufacturers of local inventions through the Department of Industries and Development to turn local inventions into locally-manufactured products. All that is happening, and it is all supported by the budget. It all fits into the framework of a development strategy that has now been released. That strategy will be revised annually in updated, 5-year rolling programs and it will improve year by year. It is a good document to work from.

In addition, it builds on the vision that was put to the Northern Territory people in 1987 when they had to go to the polls. It is all there. It indicates our direction and deals with the radically-changed economic circumstances that confront the Territory and it does so in a way that will enable continued growth. We have had 1 year in which we have had to stop and collect our breath. We have done that as a community. Growth is on the horizon now and the early signs are showing themselves within the business community. As much as the members of the opposition might like to knock it, they are talking about it. I do not have to spend quite as much time in administration of government these days, and I can get around and talk to people much more, and there is ...

A member: Interesting, isn't it?

Mr HATTON: It is a pleasure, Mr Speaker, to have the time to do it again, and I really am enjoying mixing with the community. It is pleasing to recognise those early signs of recovery. There is still some confusion in people's minds as to why it is happening, but they are noticing that their bank balances are not quite as bad as they have been. I am not saying they are good, but they are not quite as bad as they were a few months ago, and that is a good early sign.

On the economic side, this budget and the work of the government goes beyond that. Mr Speaker, when you look not only at this budget but at the initiatives that have been announced continuously over the course of the last year, you see the work that is occurring in respect of building and the improvement in the quality of life for the citizens of the Territory. I am not talking just about park development, urban beautification and educational services. Opposition members like to knock the provision of educational services. They really love to knock it. They like to get stuck right in and criticise. We still hear about this mythical \$6.5m budget cut that supposedly occurred last year. The original figure that was proposed was, I think, \$6.5m over the space of the month before the budget was brought down. It was reduced by \$1.5m or so down to about \$5m. If honourable members were to check last year's budget outcomes, they would find that the end result of budget cuts was in the order of about \$2.5m - nothing like the \$6.5m.

If one looks at the health and community services area, the range of services that has been maintained is being maintained again this year, even with significantly reduced available resources. It is being done because of some very professional and hardworking people in the public service who, under very trying circumstances, have addressed a genuine problem and have found

ways of doing things better and cheaper. I have no doubt they will continue to do that and continue to improve the efficient presentation of services and facilities to the community because that is one of the outcomes of the restructuring and redirection that occurred and the better coordination of services through government that were addressed, particularly during 1987. That is showing itself in the results that are flowing through in the provision of services to the community.

The Minister for Education addressed a range of areas. The Minister for Health and Community Services addressed an even wider range of areas. The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government referred to a number of areas in local government. These speak for themselves, and I urge members not to allow themselves to be carried away by the negative propaganda from the members opposite. Look at the facts. I say to honourable members opposite who have not spoken yet in this debate that it may be good fun to criticise the approach that has been taken to the provision of additional resources for the town camps, but I would remind them that there is a significant increase in funds compared to what was available before, and it is a joint program of the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. It has taken considerable effort to negotiate it and put it in place. It is dealing with an important and needed service. It can always be argued that somebody else should be getting a slice of the action this year, but at least some people will obtain an improvement in services. I certainly hope that this is not the end of a program, but the start of an accelerated program to deal with the genuine physical needs of communities.

A significant amount is allocated to Alice Springs and Tennant Creek - or is it Tennant Creek and Katherine? Certainly, Tennant Creek is doing very well. I hope that the member for Barkly supports us. Often he likes to criticise us for not having any money available for his electorate. This is one occasion when his area is doing well. I congratulate the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government on his handling of the very difficult task of arranging a rational distribution of available resources among the multitude of very small outstations that are scattered throughout the Northern Territory. Pilot work is being done with Jurnkurakurra, operating out of Tennant Creek and covering virtually all of the outstations east of Tennant Creek in the Barkly area. There are significant numbers there.

Work is being done to develop a form of community government through that organisation, representing all of those small communities. I think discussions started in the first week in July. We were in Tennant Creek at the time. If we can get it together, it will provide a model for the rational provision of services to the outstation communities through a coordinating mechanism in a local government format. It would link them into the Local Government Grants Commission system in a rational and logical way and would be a genuine vehicle for self-determination in the allocation and prioritisation of resources into those communities. I support the honourable minister's work in that area.

It is early days yet, but it may well prove to be the way to crack what has seemed to be an almost insoluble problem for years, if not decades, in the Northern Territory. We must look forward to some development in that area because, without doubt, there are significant needs in those communities and the provision of services there will assist in overcoming some of the health and other problems that exist in those communities. I might say also that the work in those areas, combined with the involvement of the land councils in putting together this development strategy, augurs well for bringing the

Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory more integrally into the mainstream of society in the Northern Territory, both economically and socially, whilst retaining their own cultural diversity - to use a current, popular phrase.

This budget provides not only for a continuation of the improvement of services in education but for the development of tertiary education, and there will be more discussion in this Assembly about the development of tertiary education at the university level. Universities make an important contribution beyond their role as teaching institutions. A university's value as a research institution should not be underestimated. Having been involved in the decision to fund the university college, I take considerable personal pride in the contribution it has made to the Northern Territory, and I believe that the University of the Northern Territory will play a valuable role in the Territory's future.

The development of choice and diversity in education has come about through the increasing proportion of available places in private education in the Northern Territory. We are still well below the national average of 25% of available places being provided through the private system and I hope the number of places will continue to expand to provide the range of choice available elsewhere in Australia. The creation of more places for students to board has enabled children from rural areas to complete their education in the Territory rather than being forced to go interstate with all the family trauma that that entails.

In respect of health services, the development of private hospital facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs offers additional choice to Territorians. Many people appreciate that choice. It is all part of improving the quality of life of citizens by giving them the diversity and choice which should be available in a pluralistic and liberal society.

This budget has addressed every issue which I have raised. Despite that, members opposite call it a 'do-nothing budget'. Mr Speaker, you have to wonder what they read or who reads it for them. This is a very good budget, and I must say I am particularly proud to have had some input into its structure.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I note that, recently, the Minister for Mines and Energy has found some funds to expend at the Telegraph Station in Alice Springs to establish the feasibility of building a dam wall in that area for flood mitigation purposes. This matter has been of great interest to me for a long time and, as the minister is aware, has become a very important issue since the Easter floods. At this stage, we have only heard him speak about the project. The minister has said that he will proceed with the dam wall. He certainly has my full support in that. No doubt, he will have to battle for funds in next year's budget for the project which is an insurance policy for Alice Springs.

At this stage, the project will not create wealth. That causes me some heartbreak because I am very keen on government projects which have wealth-creation possibilities. It is possible that, if agreement can be reached with all parties, including the Aboriginal people involved, that dam wall may well become a flood mitigating dam as well. In this context, I would urge the honourable minister not to become caught up with the propositions put by the member for Stuart on various occasions in terms of implementing the Lloyd Report, which recommended a series of low walls across the catchment area, the benefits of which have not been proved. It may well be an effective

approach but that certainly has not been proved, in contrast to what has occurred through the work of the Snowy Mountains Authority which has produced models of a dam wall at the Telegraph Station. We know that such a wall will work, and I caution the minister not to become involved with the member for Stuart's suggestions, which are certainly politically unwise. What is the point of building a series of low walls which would no doubt cost as much as a dam wall at the Telegraph Station when they could never be used to create a recreation lake if agreement is ever reached in the future?

The wall must be built. A couple of 6 ft diameter pipes should be placed at the bottom of the wall with no valves to stop the egress of water. Obviously, that will cost some extra money and engineering studies will be required to ensure that the 2 pipes do not undermine the wall. Although extra money will be needed, it is the only sensible thing to do in terms of political reality. A recreation lake would be possible if agreement were reached in the future, as I trust it will be one day. That, however, is not the key aspect. Flood mitigation is the priority, and we should never lose sight of that. However, if agreement is reached at some time in the future, valves can be installed and the dam wall can be used to create a recreation lake with wealth-creating potential for the town. This could hold the interest of visitors for a longer time by making the town a more enjoyable place to stay in, and would generate new business opportunities. I wish the the honourable minister well in his fight to have the dam wall built. I urge him to build it at the Telegraph Station and not to be put off, because I believe that agreement will be reached at some stage in the future, and we will be able to achieve the dual objectives of flood mitigation and the creation of a recreation lake.

The second matter I wish to discuss relates to something which was raised this morning as well as during the recent election campaign: sewage treatment in Alice Springs. At the urging of a number of people in Alice Springs, I have written to the minister to ask him to consider the fact that sewage effluent is a valuable resource which can be treated and used to water certain parks, as happens in Darwin and Canberra and in other parts of Australia. I believe he should consider that possibility before he goes to the great expense of piping the sewage out to the Brewer Estate.

The problem with the Alice Springs water supply is salinity. The town water supply contains 500 parts per million of salt. That is not very much but, nevertheless, it means that tonnes of salt go into Alice Springs every day. It goes into gardens and down into the Todd River, which acts like a drain. The water which is being put back on the golf course is ...

Mr Coulter: The water at the sewage ponds has 3 times that amount of salt in it.

Mr COLLINS: That would be because the salt is concentrated. I am still asking you to look carefully at that water because, if you take it to the Brewer Estate, it will be totally uneconomic to bring it back into Alice Springs if it turns out to be usable.

I would like to inform the Minister for Education about a matter which was raised at a meeting of the Sadadeen Secondary College Council last week. A paper was presented claiming that the various faculties were, in total, about \$30 000 short of the money required to maintain their courses. I did not have time to study the documents in toto but I believe that officers of the Department of Education agree that the claims are fair and reasonable. That concerns members of the council and it concerns me. The wives of

2 members of the Assembly are members of that school council and I ask the minister to check on the situation and to make some changes if that is appropriate, because we are concerned for the education of the kids at the secondary college.

Mr Speaker, like yourself, I attended a recent meeting of the Australian Institute of Management in Alice Springs. The Chief Minister discussed the Territory budget and addressed the issue of capital works in Alice Springs. I might not have the wording exactly right, but the essence of what he said was that the government has organised the contracts in Alice Springs so that they are in bite-sized bits which would be suitable for contracting businesses of the size of those in Alice Springs. They will be able to compete against one another and tender for the contracts. There were no huge contracts which would attract people from outside Alice Springs and the approach was very well-received as being appropriate in tight economic times. It was encouraging to local contractors. The government knows what they are capable of and they are able to handle the contracts. It made a great deal of sense.

However, I must ask the Chief Minister why the same strategy was not applied to Darwin. I note that other members have made little of the issue which is my main beef with the budget. The big project mooted for Darwin is the new parliament house and the new Supreme Court building. I want to know why the proposals for capital works in Darwin were not tailored along the same lines as those for Alice Springs. Apparently, people from all over Australia are registering so that they can tender for the major works in Darwin. Nobody - and certainly I do not - says that Darwin does not need an injection of funds. Darwin has been hit hard. People are leaving and other people want to leave. They are not leaving at present. They are hanging on because they know the value of their properties is way down and they would lose if they sold now. They are hoping that things will change.

There is no guarantee that the \$100m project for a new parliament house and courthouse will go to local people. I recall the Minister for Transport and Works saying at the last sittings that construction companies were queuing up to get on the tender list. Of course, they would do that. It is the only thing they have to go for, but there is still no guarantee they will get the work because the project is so big.

Mr Finch: Trust me!

Mr COLLINS: No, I do not trust you, nor do the people of the Territory, Mr Speaker.

I have been overwhelmed by people in Alice Springs and in Darwin who have been telling me that I must stop this project. I think one of the most significant things in this debate is that the people on my right, the official opposition, have not been saying anything about it, and why should they? They have said so very little. They are keeping quiet on it, and it is a good strategy to keep quiet on it because, if you are out there reading the people, you know that people do not support this proposal which has no wealth-creating aspects to it.

Mr Finch: Go and talk to the people at Berrimah.

Mr COLLINS: I have talked to people everywhere. I talked to enough people around town yesterday about the project. It is playing right into the hands of the opposition in this House. I say to the government that it lost Flynn because of the parliament house project. There is no support for it because it will not create wealth.



It is to be \$100m project. I was briefed by the Minister for Transport and Works. You do not have to do too much homework to realise that, at an interest rate of about 13.5% - that is, 8% plus 5.5% inflation rate, which is most probably a fairly conservative estimate - over 30 years, the project will cost Territorians about \$400m. Mr Speaker, it is the wrong time for it. Is there a right time? There may be. However, I can tell you that when you have a modest House as we have here and our economy is in trouble, you can borrow money. If you were an ordinary person, there is only 1 thing that you would do with that borrowed money. You would use it to make your business work. You would create wealth and pay off your debts and the interest on your debts.

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: That is exactly the point. You certainly do not create business out of a home and therefore you do not run around saying: 'Things are tough. I will feel a much better if I build myself a flash new home'. You will go broke if you do that. Governments are the only bodies that can do it because they can put their hands in people's pockets or they can commit my kids and my grandchildren to be responsible for the next 30 years for paying for this non-wealth-creating project. I think it is most significant that the ALP members are saying so very little, because they know the feeling in the electorate.

Mr Palmer: That is a nonsensical argument.

Mr COLLINS: They are saying little, because it is playing right into their hands.

Mr Bell: What is?

Mr COLLINS: The new parliament house project.

Mr Bell: How? How is it playing into our hands, Denis?

Mr COLLINS: Oh, Neil! Do not try and act as if you do not understand. It is just too stupid of you to do so.

Mr Dale: Tell us about grape farmers becoming politicians.

Mr COLLINS: A couple of the best politicians that this country has ever seen always worked on their farms whenever they could. I refer to Tom Playford and Joh Bjelke-Petersen. They were in for a long time and each did a great job.

Mr Dale: Joh was one of the best politicians, was he?

Mr COLLINS: Over all, I think you would have to agree that he certainly was.

Mr Finch: Tell us why we wouldn't spread that over 50 years, if 50 years use comes out of the facility?

Mr COLLINS: That is what the member over there is suggesting. It is a matter of wealth creation and that is what the Territory needs. Australia is like a person who has a big foot stuck on his windpipe. I am talking about the fact that there is no rail link between Alice Springs and Darwin. I said at the last sittings, and I say it again, that Darwin should be the front door of Australia, not the back door.

Mr Finch: That is not very original.

Mr COLLINS: Maybe it is not, but nothing seems to be being done about it.

Mr Speaker, during the last month or so, Sir Arvi Parbo, a well-known Australian in the mining industry, issued a statement saying that, by his calculation, some \$900m every year was lost on our waterfronts because of over-manning and corrupt practices. I recall a time when Australia said it would not deal with Indonesia because the only way to do business with Indonesians was by greasing the palms of officials to get things going and that was not the Australian way. It was quite a revelation about the Australian waterfront when one learnt a few months ago that, to get your container off the waterfront, it was no longer a question of a bottle of whiskey or even a carton of whiskey being needed to grease the palms of those involved. It started to involve huge sums. If you did not pay the big dollars, your goods and your business suffered.

Mr Dale: How do you know about that?

Mr COLLINS: It was in all the papers, Don. I happen to read the papers. Do you read? Maybe you do not have the time to, and that is a pity. That is why your feet are not on the ground.

Mr Finch: It would not happen in Darwin though, Denis.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I hear the Minister for Transport and Works saying it would not happen in Darwin. It is a problem, but a problem that can be overcome. One of the first things that would be necessary would be to privatise the Darwin port and make all those who worked there shareholders in the project on the understanding that they would lose their shares if they did not do their jobs. The project would need to be designed so that the workers would benefit very substantially if they made the port work and, if they did not make it work, then they would be out. I do not believe that that is impossible, and \$900m could be saved there.

I say that another \$1000m a year could be saved on shipping costs that arise at present through container ships calling in at Fremantle, Port Adelaide, Melbourne and so forth, unloading a few containers and taking a few on. There is a new revolution in the container shipping business. The ships want to come to 1 place, unload the total cargo and then completely reload and go to a new place. It saves them pots of dough. I would like to think that the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, would like to save \$1900m every year on the import-export balance. It would certainly improve our balance of trade figures considerably, and that is the sort of thing the Territory has to offer. It will not happen overnight, but we need that railway line. I say that, at this stage, the money which is being borrowed for a parliament house etc should be put into projects which would come on-line and be useful, if not immediately, at least in time when that rail line is built - and built it must be.

Mr Coulter: Trying to run it at a profit is the problem though.

Mr COLLINS: Bringing containers into Darwin and sending them to Perth by train would save the 4 days sailing time that it would take to reach Perth by sea.

Mr Dale: You have been misled.

Mr COLLINS: If I have been misled, I find it hard to believe it. It certainly deserves checking out. The government study in relation to the railway line said that it was an economic proposition, if not a commercial proposition, to build a railway line to Darwin on the basis of freight coming northward. If you have a container ship that is unloaded completely in Darwin, it becomes also a vehicle for the back-freight.

These are some of the bigger projects in which the government should be investing its money in order to put Darwin back in a position whereby its economy will improve. There is a chance to create wealth again and, certainly, the parliament house project will not create the wealth. It will create a real problem for the government within the community. I have had it put to me on a number of occasions in the last few days that, if our Chief Minister lays the foundation stone for a parliament house, he will not be the person who unveils the plaque for the opening of that parliament house. The people in Flynn gave a message to the government - and nobody in the CLP had believed that it could possibly lose Flynn. The parliament house project and the debt that it will be put around the necks of our kids and our grandchildren was the deciding factor. It is better to lose one, and learn a lesson, than not to learn a lesson and lose the lot.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make some comments in respect of the Appropriation Bill under various headings as shadow minister for health and community services, lands and housing, and shadow attorney-general. There are comments that I want to make in relation to each of those portfolios, and I will close by making some comments in relation to a couple of projects that are proposed in my electorate and the value thereof.

I had a very depressing lunch break today as I read through the second-reading speeches of the Minister for Health and Community Services, and the Minister for Lands and Housing. If they could be believed, their speeches suggest that all is rosy in the garden. I think that it would be clear to the meanest intellect observing the proceedings of this parliament, the conditions around the Northern Territory and the result of the recent Flynn by-election, that people do not believe that things are as rosy as both the government ministers to whom I have referred have suggested. In the time that is available to me, I will be able to demonstrate that. The fact is that the Minister for Health and Community Services is administering a health system in crisis. Time after time, he has endeavoured to paper over cracks that keep appearing. Despite fine rhetoric, he fails to address some fundamental questions, both at a system-wide level and at a specific level.

The citizens of Palmerston were somewhat concerned at his insouciance at their plight. They were somewhat concerned about a variety of issues including the removal of the medical practitioner from the Community Health Centre there. If they were deeply concerned about that and associated issues, they were even more concerned when the Minister for Health and Community Services was busying himself around the globe in Brazil, Rome, Geneva and wherever else one smokes Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes. Suffice it to say that is the sort of contempt for the electorate that the electorate does not tolerate. The 21% swing that the Northern Territory government recently suffered in the Flynn by-election is a result of that sort of refusal to come to terms with reality.

To turn more specifically to some of the items to which the minister referred, I will return to the Palmerston problem for a minute. When the Howard Springs Health Centre was closed, the minister mentioned that certain services of the community health clinic - the domiciliary care and

immunisation programs - would still to be provided to the local community. I presume that, when he referred to the 2 private, general practitioners who have established practices, he was referring to 2 private, medical practitioners in Palmerston.

Mr Dale: You are wrong. You have not got anything right in your speech so far.

Mr BELL: The Minister for Health and Community Services says that the 2 private general practitioners to whom he referred in his second-reading speech were not the private general practitioners at Palmerston. In case he has not been brought up to date with this, let me advise him of the degree of anger among the aged population at Palmerston. These people have been encouraged by this government to take up residence in Palmerston and are not able to be provided with the sort of services that aged persons require. This latest corner-cutting measure by the government in respect of the removal of the medical practitioner from the Community Health Centre at Palmerston has incensed people. I suggest that, instead of making rosy comments such as those in his second-reading speech, he should actually find out what is going on out there.

Mr Dale: Done that.

Mr BELL: If he has found out what is going on out there, as his interjection suggests, I suggest that he is doubly culpable because he has done nothing about it.

In his second-reading speech, the minister gave us this doozey: 'Not only did my department respond with vigour to the challenge of undertaking a range of initiatives introduced by this government, but it ensured that the level of services to our community was maintained, and improved in some areas'.

Mr Dale: That is right.

Mr BELL: You tell that to the meeting that I addressed at Palmerston and you will find that your rhetoric does not match your performance and it is about time something was done about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister patted himself on the back about the career structure for Aboriginal health workers that was so long in the gestation period that they really wondered what was going on. Those Aboriginal health workers are still paid less than cleaners.

Mr Dale: Do you know why?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister is trying to tell me that there is some explanation for that. I will be interested to hear it.

Time and time again, the minister tells us how important the work of Aboriginal health workers is and how skilled they are.

Mr Dale: Do you agree?

Mr BELL: He frequently tells us how important the recognition of traditional health knowledge is.

Mr Dale: Yes.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would appreciate a warning for the Minister for Health and Community Services. These are persistent interjections and I believe that the minister ought to be encouraged to listen in silence as the transcript of his comments indicates that he was listened to in silence. He has given such a pathetic performance in respect of his portfolio that he does not like a few truths being brought home to him. It is unfortunate that the comments you make in this parliament are written down and they are thrown back at you. That is one of them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the fact is that this government's record in respect of Aboriginal health workers, the delay in implementing a career structure for them and the low level of payment for those health workers is not acceptable.

The honourable minister referred to negotiations for the construction of a private hospital in Alice Springs, and thereby hangs a tale as well. The private hospital in Alice Springs would have been built 6 months ago if the minister had not put the kybosh on an excellent private proposal.

Mr Dale: You would have been the first one to kick my head in if I had taken that up.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition does not carry a brief for or against private hospitals. If the demand is there for a private hospital and if somebody comes along with the dollars in his pocket or he can persuade a bank to finance him and the Department of Lands and Housing identifies an area of land for the purpose, that it is not good enough for the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Mr Dale: Jobs for the boys.

Mr BELL: We will get on to jobs for the boys in a minute. This is not jobs for the boys. I thought that private hospitals were supposed to be entrepreneurial ventures. I thought that entrepreneurial ventures meant that somebody who had a good idea and was prepared to risk a quid would be allowed to do so.

Mr Dale: Oh! You support the State Square proposal?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if the people of Flynn had been able to listen to some of these interjections, poor June Tuzewski would have been lucky to scrape together 20% of the vote. Goodness me, I will not respond to that interjection. I do not have the time to do so. It just takes my breath away.

Let me turn to the minister's comments about the Royal Darwin Hospital. The plain fact is that the work on the chilled-water air-conditioning system and the fire safety system at the Royal Darwin Hospital has created huge problems for patients and staff. The minister attempted to obfuscate this issue in his second-reading speech. He is attempting to ignore the fact that many of his constituents who live at the hospital are absolutely horrified by the impact of some of the rearrangements, including the taking over of the public hospital by the private hospital.

Before the Minister for Health and Community Services interjects, let me tell him this. The opposition is prepared to support somebody who wants to build a private hospital independently, in the same way as we are prepared to support somebody who wants, independently, to provide any private service, be it educational or whatever. What we cannot cop is the partial privatisation

of expensive public assets which this government is involved in. The minister tries to say that he is doing an excellent job and that his government is doing an excellent job with public expenditure and public investment in health care. However, the fact is that, since he took over the portfolio, the government has crawled from one disaster to the next. It is about time somebody had a good hard look at what he is doing.

Mr Dale: You are really well across your portfolio, aren't you?

Mr BELL: I will just show you how well across my portfolio I am, boyo. I do not have the advantage of utilising the services of armies of public servants but I do have the advantage of being aware of considerable concern in the community in relation to the performance of this government. People come to members of the opposition and tell us about matters which need to be investigated. I will cite one such matter.

You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, how the honourable minister tried earlier this year to convince the House that the radiological equipment at Royal Darwin Hospital was terrific.

Mr Dale: I never said that.

Mr BELL: I see he is trying to go back on it now but, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will recall the debate. I am sure every member of this Assembly will recall the debate which, if my memory serves me correctly, occurred during the May sittings. The opposition repeatedly presented evidence that things were not as they should be and the Minister for Health and Community Services said: 'No worries, boys. It is all under control'. Mr Deputy Speaker, we were very heartened to hear that \$1.7m is about to be spent on radiological equipment. I am quite sure that patients at the Royal Darwin Hospital, and the Territory community in general, will be pleased that they have a hard-working opposition which is able to prod this government into activity despite its efforts to cover up its inadequacies. Unfortunately, having announced that he intends to spend \$1.7m, the Minister for Health and Community Services has blown it again. At this point, I want to table 3 documents, Mr Deputy Speaker. One of them is a memorandum to the ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will seek leave to table the documents.

Mr BELL: I will seek leave, Mr Deputy Speaker. At present, I am just explaining what the documents are.

The first is a memorandum to the Treasurer from the Minister for Health and Community Services in relation to an application for a certificate of exemption to negotiate the purchase of x-ray equipment and a service contract. The other 2 documents are letters from the Chairman of the Assessment Committee to, firstly, Toshiba Australia and, secondly, Medical Applications Pty Ltd. I seek leave to table those 3 documents.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, most Year 11 accountancy students would be able to come up with ...

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I have some protection from the minister's interjections? It is very difficult to explain some of these issues when he interjects so persistently. No? All right, I will press on although it is painful.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thought the member for MacDonnell was doing very well on his own.

Mr BELL: Let us imagine that a Year 11 accountancy student at Casuarina High School is given a little problem. His accountancy teacher tells him that \$1.7m worth of x-ray equipment is to be purchased for the Royal Darwin Hospital. The student is asked how he will ensure that this public money is spent in the most appropriate way. I am quite sure that he would reply that the thing to do is to call for expressions of interest and then to short-list the firms which appear to be capable of supplying the goods. Is that the approach which the minister took? Of course not.

With the obvious exception of the Minister for Health and Community Services, most members know that Treasury Regulations exist for a purpose and that the tendering process is designed to ensure that public money is expended as effectively as possible. I appreciate the nod from the former Treasurer. I have that right. However, he should consider giving some instruction to the Minister for Health and Community Services because he plainly does not understand it. Instead of calling for broad expressions of interest, as our putative Year 11 accountancy student would have done, the minister has decided that only 2 firms are to be allowed to submit prices. This is outrageous, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I believe quite a few firms would be rather surprised to learn that the only 2 starters for this particular contract are Toshiba Australia Pty Ltd and Medical Applications Pty Ltd.

Mr Hatton: Name one.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up the interjection from the honourable 'minister' for Nightcliff. I am quite happy to name other firms which are able to carry out this work.

In preparing my comments on the Appropriation Bill, I regret that I was unable to do any in-depth research into firms that provide radiological equipment in Australia, but I will endeavour to provide a list of firms for the benefit of the honourable member, provided that he nods his head to indicate that, if I can find another firm in this country that would be capable of providing those services and that equipment, he will rise in tomorrow's adjournment debate and support a call for expressions of interest in respect of this \$1.7m expenditure. Will he do that? No, he is ignoring me now.

Mr Hatton: Do you know what the total job is?

Mr BELL: Instead of making smart interjections, he should talk a bit of sense. Mr Deputy Speaker, I have demolished the position of the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Let me turn briefly to the Minister for Lands and Housing. I do so because the Minister for Health and Community Services has attempted to obfuscate so many issues in his second-reading speech that it is not possible for me to deal with them all in the time available. A variety of issues arise from the comments of the Minister for Lands and Housing. His extraordinarily self-congratulatory tone was almost as unctuous as that of the Minister for

Health and Community Services. Here is a doozey, Mr Deputy Speaker: 'I now turn to my portfolio responsibilities for Lands and Housing. I see the issue of forward planning and provision of land for future development as perhaps the most crucial task of the Department of Lands and Housing in future years'. That is fine, but he then goes on to say that this has been one of the success stories of the Territory government in the past 10 years. Goodness me, Mr Deputy Speaker, tell that to people in Alice Springs. Tell people in the construction industry anywhere in the Territory that the way this government has turned off land has been a success. Tell that to the people in Palmerston who are not provided with backup services because this government did not do the long-term planning that it should have done. That is an absolutely outrageous suggestion.

Let me flag a couple of issues in addition to those I have already indicated to the Minister for Lands and Housing that I will be seeking to address in the committee stage.

Mr Dale: You know you only have 6 hours.

Mr BELL: Yes. I had intended to mention that before I finished, but since the Minister for Health and Community Services has said we will have only 6 hours, I will bet he is breathing a sigh of relief that that is all we will have. I imagine he hopes we will not get to his area before the 6 hours have expired. I imagine that the chances of that happening are not all that good.

I was interested to see that \$700 000 is to be spent in the Western MacDonnells. Obviously, that is in my electorate and I know the country well. I am pleased to hear that that money has been allocated. Tourist numbers have gone through the roof there. Visitor numbers to the Western MacDonnell Ranges in the 1986-87 financial year equalled those to Ayers Rock in 1981-82. I think that is about the ballpark figure area, and it is most welcome. I noticed the minister's reference to the Strehlow Collection. I am concerned and many of my constituents are concerned about the arrangements to be made for that. I look forward to taking that up with the honourable minister in the committee stage.

The minister spoke of the Land Information System. Whilst endeavouring to find information about special purposes leases, I was concerned to find that, in response to a question on notice, the honourable minister was not able to use the Land Information System to provide me with the answers I sought. Obviously, that is of concern.

I want to mention 2 housing issues. The minister did not mention the shared equity scheme. I do not know what has happened to that. It may be another of the CLP's election promises that bit the dust. It received no mention in the Appropriation Bill. I do want to pick this up, by the way. In his comments on the Housing Commission, the minister said: 'I emphasise that the Territory's concessional scheme for pensioners and beneficiaries is the most generous in Australia'. Let me point out just how generous it is. Mr Speaker, do you know what this mob did when the Commonwealth government introduced the family allowance scheme which was an excellent attempt on the part of the federal government to provide support for families to keep mum and dad and the kids together? It started off at \$300. If the family income was \$300, and there was 1 child, there was a family allowance supplement of \$22, and that increased by \$12 for each child. It was graded. That was a scheme which was particularly important in the Territory where costs were much higher than elsewhere. It was developed in order to get those people out of



the poverty trap, and the federal government is to be congratulated heartily for its efforts in that regard. Do you know what these blokes did with that, Mr Speaker?

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell has consistently used inappropriate terms in reference to honourable members on this side of the House, and I draw your attention to those disparaging terms.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker. Do you know what these honourable members opposite me did, Mr Speaker? Do you know what these honourable gentlemen, these worthy office holders of this parliament did? With their keen regard for the human condition, they lumped it in, as far as income was concerned, and grabbed their 25% of that for Housing Commission rental in a thoroughly unconscionable way. And we see these blokes rising to their feet here and having the gall to make comments such as the 'Territory's concessional scheme for pensioners and beneficiaries is the most generous in Australia'.

Mr Manzie: It is true. Show us another that is better.

Mr BELL: Codswallop.

Mr Speaker, in closing let me refer you to a couple of positives. The health centre at Mount Liebig is excellent. I am delighted to see that sort of project occurring. One thing that I am concerned about is an item in the capital works program and I want to place that concern on the record. It relates to the \$1m that has been allocated for the Areyonga-Tempe Downs Road. All sorts of rumours have been flying round about whether this road will be built. I am reliably informed by many of my constituents that they are not happy about this road going ahead. I hope that, in other circumstances, I will be able to dilate on my concerns in that regard.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill this afternoon, I would like to say that I endorse the budget speech delivered by the Chief Minister and Treasurer, in particular his comments that the 1988-89 budget is a platform for another decade of sustained economic growth. Indeed, it is, Mr Speaker.

Earlier today, the Chief Minister presented a strategy for future development in the Northern Territory. In spite of the carping criticism that we heard from the Leader of the Opposition, there is no doubt that that document contains a very sound basis on which this government can continue to develop the Northern Territory right into the 1990s. The budget, as laid out in that policy speech, establishes the pattern for growth in the Territory to be driven by the private sector. Of course, that continues from the 1987-88 budget in which we had to restructure our whole developmental thinking as a result of federal government cuts. We did that in 1987-88, and we have continued that theme through into 1988-89. If I could use the words of the Chief Minister again, he referred to 'developing, in the Northern Territory, a real economy'. A real economy is one driven by the private sector.

I sit here and I smile from time to time when I hear this gaggle of economic mismanagers opposite whom I call 'born again economic capitalist socialists' because they really do not know where they are. The fact is that Treasurer Keating and his comrades have moved way to the right in their economic thinking, philosophy and policy. The normal Labor Party people - the

old guard, if you like, and we see many of their representatives over there - are quite confused about where they should go or which way they should jump. I will come back to that a little later when I refer to some comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in his reply to the Treasurer's budget speech.

The Chief Minister and Treasurer announced a whole range of new initiatives which will take this government and the Northern Territory into the 1990s. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition continued with his carping, whining, criticising, knocking and scaremongering. We hear it day after day in this place. We know that the community at large has no confidence at all in the economic ability of those people opposite to manage the business of the Northern Territory. It is common knowledge that they cannot even count up to 5. There is ample evidence of that. How could the community at large have any confidence in their ability to manage the economy of the Northern Territory?

It was quite obvious that the speech by the Leader of the Opposition was written by one of his Johnny-come-lately staff. He changes his staff as often as he changes his socks. I am quite sure that the person who wrote that speech is one of the people who has floated into town, probably with quite a reputation down south but with no understanding whatsoever of the recent developmental history of the Northern Territory. As you read through the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, that becomes quite evident. He was standing there, mouthing the words that were written by this person who had floated into town, and who does not know the first thing about what has been going on in the Northern Territory. I hope that he is a fast learner because, boy oh boy, he will need to be. He will have to shape up because he will not last long with the Leader of the Opposition if he does not.

The Leader of the Opposition claimed that the government had no vision for the future and that it lacked direction. One has only to move around the Northern Territory to see the lie in that statement. I was at the NADC Conference last week and I spoke to a number of people from interstate, people who are good economic managers in their various fields. They were quite astounded at the development that had occurred in the Alice Springs area since their previous visit. Most of them had been there 4 or 5 years earlier and they were absolutely amazed at the development in Alice Springs. For the Leader of the Opposition to claim that we have no vision for the future and that we lack direction is absolute nonsense.

I referred to Alice Springs, Mr Speaker, but if you look at most other centres in the Northern Territory, you will see exactly the same sort of thing, particularly in Darwin. Have a look at Katherine. We heard Newcastle Waters mentioned earlier today. Within a year or 2, somebody will have the initiative to establish a small, general store or perhaps open an hotel in Newcastle Waters because there will be droves of tourists visiting there. It has been featured on national media over and over again in the last several months. They will be queueing up to go to Newcastle Waters and I am convinced that there will be people with enough initiative to set up a little store to take advantage of the hundreds of thousands of tourists who are flocking to the Northern Territory. There are many examples of that sort of activity in the Territory.

Would you say we lacked direction, Mr Speaker? Would you say that we had no vision for the future? Mr Speaker, I am sure that you would not say that, but he does. It simply shows his ignorance of economic matters, and that ignorance is shared by his comrades who sit opposite with him.

Over the last few years, we have heard continual criticism of the tourism infrastructure that has been developed in the Northern Territory. I do not need to remind members that, 5 or 6 years ago, when the concept of Yulara Tourist Village was debated in this House, it was knocked by members opposite. Things were tough in those first couple of years and the opposition continually drew attention to the low occupancy rates. Do we hear that today? We do not, because Yulara happens to be one of the enormous success stories of the Northern Territory and it is a shining example of the developmental policy of this CLP government.

Let us look at the casino and at the Sheratons. Mr Speaker, go anywhere in Darwin on a Friday or a Saturday night and ask the average citizen what he thinks about the casino. Ask him how he would feel if the casino were removed from Darwin. He would be absolutely horrified because it is now an integral part of the tourism infrastructure of the Northern Territory.

Ask all those people who work at the Sheraton and in the service industries ...

Mr Hatton: Those who supply the Sheraton.

Mr SETTER: Exactly. Ask those who supply the foodstuffs and those who launder the sheets and the towels, ask the citizens of Darwin and the tourists who flock here what they would think if that Sheraton Hotel did not exist today. They would be horrified.

Nevertheless, I have sat in this House on many occasions and heard the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues knock the Sheratons, the casino, Yulara and everything else. But, ask them how they would have structured the Northern Territory's budget and you will hear nothing. We have heard nothing but carping criticism. They are completely devoid of ideas, but ask them to whinge and whine and, oh boy, don't they tap dance. They are experts at that. But, when it comes to having an idea, there is nothing between their ears. I know that the community at large recognises that, and that is why there are only 6 of them over there. That situation will not change for a long time to come.

Look at that tourism infrastructure. Look at the way that we are developing Litchfield National Park which is now one of the most popular spots in the Top End, as compared to the development within Kakadu. Whilst Kakadu is enormously popular, the development of infrastructure by the Commonwealth is almost negligible. The development that has occurred, such as Cooina and the Crocodile Motel, has been on the initiative of the Gagadju Association, an Aboriginal association which has benefited from royalties from Ranger Uranium Mine. I compliment the Gagadju Association for having the foresight and the initiative to put its money into tourism infrastructure within Kakadu National Park. Apart from a few barbecues, what has the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service done? Nothing. Mr Speaker, I ask you to cast your mind back to the banner headline in the NT News in 1983, when the federal minister of the day said that the federal government would spend \$70m on developing Kakadu. Did we see it? It was another broken promise, just like the railway, the airport development and numerous others. Do we hear much about that from members opposite? We do not.

Let us look at the fishing infrastructure. Just 4 or 5 years ago, there was no marina at Frances Bay. The concept was knocked and knocked by those people opposite. Just before the 1987 Territory election, John Who?, the ex-member for the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives,

Mr John Reeves - who happened to be the candidate for the Labor Party standing against the member for Casuarina - went down to Frances Bay, accompanied by television cameramen, and knocked that marina over and over again. He tried to exploit it because it was just getting off the ground. He tried to use it to assist his own campaign in that 1987 election. I am pleased to say that he failed miserably because this community will not be sucked in by misinformation put about by the people opposite. Mr Reeves failed. I do not doubt for one moment that he will try again somewhere in the northern suburbs but, Mr Speaker, I can assure you that he will never become a member of this House.

Mr Speaker, look at the John Holland small ships facility, a tremendously successful private enterprise project. Facilities like that provide an enormous amount of work for small business in this community. Engineering workshops, electrical fitting workshops and suppliers of parts for the shipping industry are all small businesses that have grown up around that facility. The government has now allocated \$6.2m towards the construction of a fishing industry wharf on the other side of the harbour. That is the sort of initiative that this government is prepared to take. It is an expression of the government's vision for the future. Do you call that a lack of direction, Mr Speaker? Of course not.

Let us look at what is happening at present in relation to manufacturing infrastructure. When I speak about the Trade Development Zone, I do not stand here and shudder. My knees do not knock because, in the past week, the Leader of the Opposition has been moving around this town conning the media about some great story he would tell here to embarrass the government. I challenge him to do it. Let us hear his story.

I believe that the initiative of the Trade Development Zone has been well founded and I have tremendous confidence in its future. It was always a 5- to 10-year plan. We always knew that it would be difficult to encourage people to uproot themselves from South-east Asia and relocate their businesses here. That is not surprising. Certainly, things have not gone as smoothly as we would have liked, and that will probably continue to happen from time to time in the future. That is only to be expected. At the end of the day, however, the Trade Development Zone will be one of the most successful developments ever initiated by this CLP government. Mark my words, Mr Speaker. In another 5 or 6 years, we will be employing up to 1000 people in the zone, and the service industries of this community will be feeding off it. The multiplier effect will be considerable. Do you call that a lack of vision, Mr Speaker? I certainly do not. Some \$2.5m has been allocated this year to construct 2 new factories and supply 14 additional serviced sites in the zone. That confirms the confidence of this government in its future. Again, I invite the Leader of the Opposition to divulge any information that he has, anything secret that he wants to use to embarrass this government. Let us hear it!

There is no doubt that the work of Nortrade and the Department of Industries and Development in promoting the Northern Territory in South-east Asia is coming to fruition. Our horticultural industries are benefiting from the hard work that has been done there during the last 4 or 5 years. Our exports of melons and other products are growing every year and, this year, we have accessed Hong Kong for the first time. That is only the thin end of the wedge. There are enormous markets to our immediate north. I am on record in this House as speaking on a number of occasions about those as are many of my colleagues. If we have the gumption to plug away at those market opportunities, there is no doubt that our efforts will come to fruition.

Let us talk about horticulture and agriculture. Let us talk about the Douglas-Daly farms and horticulture throughout the Northern Territory. It has had a long and difficult history but, particularly since self-government, an enormous amount of research has been carried out and we are seeing the results of that. At last, we are smelling success. I spoke to you about melons and other products, Mr Speaker. Cashews are being grown at the pilot farms on the way to Jabiru. The Douglas-Daly farms, whilst suffering as a result of some fairly difficult seasons, have been mildly successful, and I believe that this government will be able to hang in there and continue to support those farms until they pay off in the long term. We should remember that, only a few years ago, the Territory had no grain industry to speak of. That industry now employs quite a number of people, supplying the beef industry and other industries, such as the poultry industry, which consume grain. Formerly, grain was freighted from the south at enormous cost. Members are well aware of the cost of freight in the Northern Territory.

If ever there has been a success story in the Northern Territory, mining must be it. In the last 2 years, our income from goldmining has grown from \$40m per annum to \$181m. The Territory is now rated as the second-highest gold producer in Australia, and that has occurred in the span of about 3 years. The Granites goldmine is the seventh largest producer in Australia. Renison, at Pine Creek, is rated twelfth and new goldmines are coming on stream almost daily. It is an enormous growth industry.

Let us have a look at oil and gas. Mr Speaker, 5 years ago, there was virtually no activity in this area. However, there are now 4 or 5 rigs drilling for oil and gas offshore and we know that there are enormous reserves. I understand that BHP is currently producing something like 40 000 barrels a day. Elf Aquitaine has identified enormous reserves of gas in the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf and those reserves will be exploited one day for the benefit of the Northern Territory and Australia. In the last few years, we have seen the construction of the longest gas pipeline in Australia, from the gas fields just south of Alice Springs to the Darwin power station. We have seen also the Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs power stations connected into that gas system. I understand that there is a future possibility of other major consumers taking advantage of those gas reserves, thereby reducing overall operating costs for business and increasing the economic viability of the pipeline.

The uranium province has huge potential at Koongarra and at Jabiluka which, I understand, is the richest uranium deposit in the world. Those resources have been locked up, to the detriment of this country and the Northern Territory, at the whim of the Australian Labor Party with its 3-mines policy which makes no economic sense at all. Enormous mines at Jabiluka and Koongarra could produce billions of dollars of income for Australia, but the uranium is locked up under the ground simply to appease the greenies down south and a few left-wingers. It makes me sick to the stomach.

We have heard allegations that people outside Darwin believe that the Berrimah-Line mentality still exists. I do not believe that is so. The Berrimah Line does not exist, except in the minds of a few people down the track who are still living in the past. I invite them to forget about the Berrimah Line, which is long since gone, and to cooperate and work with the Northern Territory government in developing the potential of this wonderful Northern Territory of Australia. The fact that the Minister for Industries and Development lives south of the so-called Berrimah Line proves my point. There is no Berrimah-Line mentality.

I am just about out of time but I want to look at what the Leader of the Opposition had to say. He spoke about Labor's broad principles in relation to the present state of the Northern Territory economy. He went on to tell us that he wanted another inquiry. 'We need to establish a small, interdepartmental, multi-disciplinary task force to research and plan major project development in the Northern Territory'. I call that another inquiry, Mr Speaker.

He went on to say that he wants an audit of the Northern Territory's books of account. Obviously, he has no confidence in the Auditor-General. He then said that, as part of this audit or review, he wanted to take a close look at areas of debt, particularly the continuing debt contributions of Yulara and the 2 Sheratons. Mr Speaker, I told you what I thought about those a few minutes ago.

He told us that we should encourage the burgeoning Aboriginal economy, and the member for Stuart supported that particular view when he told us we should be supporting the move to gather seeds in central Australia. Yes, that is very appropriate. He went on to talk about providing venture capital, and this is why I say that these people are confused. He said that the government has a role to play in providing venture capital to business in the Territory. He then told us that, under a Labor government, such a scheme could be run either in conjunction with the private sector or perhaps entirely by the government - and that is getting a bit socialistic for me - but it would be managed by commercially-oriented people.

Mr Speaker, if this government introduced such a scheme, do you know what he would say? He would say that we were featherbedding the private sector and looking after big business. What he does not understand is that small business feeds off big business. Where it is appropriate that government award contracts to big business, whatever it might be - to construct a new parliament house or a new courthouse - small business will benefit also. Contrary to what the member for Sadadeen and the member for Barkly have said, the parliament house will not cost \$100m. It will be about a third of that value. However, the reality is that, whilst big business might score those jobs, small businesses will benefit equally, because they supply the materials, the subcontractors and the services. To say those big contracts benefit big business alone is absolute nonsense.

Mr Speaker, one point in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition did hearten me. Perhaps he made a mistake, but he condescended to say that there are 'some good things in this budget'. I would have to agree with that. There are many good things in this budget and I support the Chief Minister and Treasurer.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in replying to the budget speech delivered by the Chief Minister and Treasurer, I would like to say that, once again, remote communities have not been treated well and that seems to be the case every time we rise to speak on their behalf. Several developments are under way in Darwin. We have heard about the proposed State Square project. We heard in the budget speech about a new fishing venture at East Arm. Very rarely do we hear of job-creation projects in Aboriginal communities. I will dwell on that a bit later on, Mr Speaker.

In relation to the speech given by the Minister for Conservation, I certainly support the development of Litchfield National Park and I am sure that the people of the Batchelor community will benefit as a result of the development there. I have always given very strong support to the

Conservation Commission. I believe it has done a very good job. Batchelor is an example, and the way in which Litchfield National Park and Holmes Jungle are being developed is certainly commendable. I once sat with the Board of the Conservation Commission and it is interesting work in which people become involved. I am sure that the residents at Batchelor will benefit from the development of Litchfield National Park.

In the capital works program, I was pleased to see that a \$3m police station is to be provided at Groote Eylandt. It is a wise move to have a station on the island because it is a very costly exercise to bring people in from Groote Eylandt all the time. I have heard stories that DC3s used to be chartered to carry people from Groote Eylandt to Darwin every Christmas. I certainly support the move and I am sure that the police at Groote Eylandt will be pleased to see that, at last, in its wisdom, the Territory government has decided to build a station there. I believe that it will improve the relationship between the police and the community, but I only hope it does not encourage people to go in to the cell just because it has been built there. I am sure that, with the task force supervisor who has been working in the area for some time, it will help some of the juveniles on the island.

I was pleased to note that Galiwinku will have a police lock-up cell and units for visiting police. As the member for Nhulunbuy said earlier, sometimes it is difficult for the police aides based in these communities who have to operate without the backup infrastructure that we heard the member for Jingili talk about at length in his last speech. Sometimes, these police aides do not have the facilities that the police have at Batchelor, for example, or at Alice Springs. Due to the isolation of the communities, they experience considerable difficulties in those areas.

As I said earlier, I was disappointed that job creation is not reflected in this year's budget. I would certainly like to see more employment created in the communities because it would eliminate some of the existing difficulties. For example, quite often we hear people saying that Aboriginal people sit around drinking kava and picking up unemployment benefits. I would support any program or any idea that the Northern Territory government developed that was committed to creating jobs and positions for people in my area, especially in Arnhem Land. Many of our people come into Darwin, and when they get here they tend to get into trouble. They create a bad reputation for themselves and for the communities from which they came. In order to help them to remain in their own communities, I believe it would be a wise move if a venture were to be undertaken in remote areas by the government, and I am sure that that would be supported by the local communities if the government consults with them.

I would like to take some time to talk about tourism because that is one of our major industries in the Northern Territory. I believe Aboriginal people have not been placed within the tourism industry for a sufficient period of time for them to be able to come to grips with it and learn to understand the tricks of the trade. It would be a great concept if, over a period of time, the Territory government had a plan through which to establish a percentage of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory within the tourism industry by the year 2000. That would certainly attract many tourists from interstate and overseas. However, with a concept like that, you cannot rush things. It would be impossible to give Aboriginal people the necessary experience over a short period of time. Aspects of access to Aboriginal land have led to difficulties between the Northern Territory government and the Northern Land Council and other councils. If the Northern Territory government proposed a plan, which would run over a period of time, I am sure a

considerable number of jobs could be created within the tourist industry, and that Aboriginal involvement would add flavour and colour to the industry. That would create employment and enhance the self-esteem of my people in the long term.

Mr Perron: Are you talking about on Aboriginal land?

Mr LANHUPUY: Yes, on Aboriginal land. The Territory government could approach the councils and establish those things. People are considering prawn farming and crocodile farms in Arnhem Land. I wondered if the government would be interested in assisting with that sort of project. That is the sort of venture that I am talking about. It would lead to the creation of employment in the remote communities.

On this side of the House, Mr Speaker, every year we seem to rise in the budget debate and stress the fact that we need employment in those communities. Milingimbi has a community of 600 to 700 people. The council employs only 170. The government should be very concerned about the high unemployment rate within the area generally. We see a few developments commence in Darwin these days which might chop off a job somewhere else. Because the government has decided to inject money here in a project such as the State Square, we will lose a few bob at Numbulwar or Roper River as a consequence. As you will appreciate, Mr Speaker, that leaves people without jobs. They have families to care for and they have to earn their bread at the end of the day.

Certainly, it would help them to be able to hold their heads high and say that they earned money through training and working instead of receiving it through unemployment benefits, which most communities in my electorate have refused to accept for themselves. In fact, they use some of that money as a resource pool to assist outstations, because services to outstations have sometimes been very inadequate. I strongly support the creation of jobs for the people in those communities.

I was really pleased by the ongoing commitment of the Territory government to seal the Milingimbi airstrip. We appreciate that very much. There are also some roads within my electorate that are doing well. Recently, I travelled the road from Nhulunbuy to Darwin, and it was in very good condition. I must commend the honourable minister for giving that assistance to the outstations. It has reduced the number of vehicle roll-overs. We rarely see buffalo on the road now because it is a much better road. For 6 months of the year, it provides access for the people from the outstations to travel to Nhulunbuy to do their shopping. It has assisted many people in my electorate. I would like to put on record, on behalf of the electorate, that the job that the boys at Nhulunbuy do is to be commended.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, as other honourable members have reflected, the range of issues to be spoken on is so vast that it is pretty difficult to touch on them all as one would like to. I will touch on a few that I think are important. I will start with those relating to my electorate.

Generally, the funding for roads in my electorate is very pleasing this year. I guess that is the culmination of the bicentennial roads program. It was one of those things that had to be done sooner or later and, because there was not much else to do, it was decided to finish it off. However, it really is a credit to everybody concerned to see our Stuart and Barkly Highways in the condition that they are at present. There are a couple of bad stretches



but, on the whole, we must be very pleased with the roads we have. Certainly, tourists coming here would be suitably impressed with the standard of roads that they have to drive on, with those 1 or 2 exceptions.

Bus traffic is increasing tremendously throughout the Territory. For example, this year I believe that one bus company alone will be carrying 92 000 passengers between Alice Springs and Darwin. That is a pretty fair effort when you consider that 3 major companies service that route. There is an absolutely desperate need for us to start to provide proper interchange facilities for these buses in all our major centres or we will not have the patronage that we would like for as long as we would like. You can only fool some of the people some of the time about what they are getting.

I raise this matter with particular reference to the need for a bus station in Tennant Creek. It is rather like a fishing facility in that it is nobody's real responsibility. The bus lines will use it if it is there. It is not local government's responsibility. It would not be appropriate to ask the Tourist Commission to build it, and the federal government says that it has nothing to do with it. The Tennant Creek people do not have the money to build it. However, I say to the government that there is a need for the Tennant Creek Town Council, the industry and the government to come to some arrangement to provide a proper bus station facility in Tennant Creek so that the interchange between the eastern states, Darwin and Alice Springs can occur in a reasonably satisfactory fashion. At this stage, the interchange takes place on the footpath outside Brians Tavern. When that falls apart, they move to the Threeways Hotel and, when things do not go well there, they move back to town.

All we have managed to do in all this is upset the bus companies and the tourists, and that is not what we are all about. It is pretty pointless having an enormous tourism budget and attracting people at the rate that we are, and then treating them in this way. I would say to the government that, while it does not have money allocated in the budget to rectify this matter, I think it is as important a part of our tourism development at this time as any other particular thing that I can think of. In fact, it would be as important to the bus industry as the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports are to the airline industry. It is a matter that needs to be addressed.

I draw to the attention of the Minister for Conservation the need for something to be done with the 7 Mile Station which was purchased recently. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, it was one of the original repeater stations and was built in 1862 or 1864. It served the Territory well and then was used for quite a number of years as a private homestead. Recently, it was acquired by the government. I raise this matter this afternoon because this is one of those heritage buildings that I believe is of great importance to the Territory. It needs to have some work done on it soon or it will fall down. It is not reasonable for us to be talking about protecting our heritage and involving ourselves in maintaining things of interest to tourists while we have a building in the possession of the government that is not being cared for and which is being left in a such state that it is likely to collapse and will be very difficult to reinstate.

Mr Ede: Just bulldoze it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggests putting a bulldozer through it. There comes a point when that sort of thing does happen, and it should not happen. We have an asset there that is in the same league as the Powell Creek repeater station, the Barrow Creek

repeater station and the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Reserve. We really need to do something so that tourists can stop at all of these places and admire them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you drive down the west coast of America, between San Francisco and San Diego, there is a tour that enables people to visit every mission that was built in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries by the monks who looked after the Indians in those days. Whilst some of them are still lived in and used, others have simply been preserved. People can enjoy a good 10-day holiday calling into these places. They are very interesting. I think we have the opportunity to present our old telegraph stations in the same light.

The other issue that I would refer to in relation to my electorate is the redevelopment of the government battery. This is one of those on-again, off-again, gone-again, Flannigan-type projects that really requires only a little bit of determination on the part of the government, the tourism promotion association and the local council. It is accepted pretty widely that the battery does not have an economic life or an economic future, but it does have a future as a living museum for people who want to see how ore was crushed in the early days. It is very unlikely that it will ever function satisfactorily while it remains with the Department of Mines and Energy which is not geared to run things like that. That department is more interested in opening oilfields and uranium mines. That is its job and it should get on with it.

I think there is a good argument for handing the battery over to the Tennant Creek Town Council or another suitable body so that it can be run and presented to the touring public. It is a very important part of our history and, whilst there are 1 or 2 of them left in Australia as museum pieces, I do not think we should miss the opportunity to present the 1 that we have left in the Territory. I would say to the Minister for Mines and Energy that this is not an insurmountable problem. Compared with building a pipeline, it is chickenfeed and he should not have any trouble organising it.

Another matter that I would like to raise is the provision of psychiatric facilities. I have jumped into the ring in the last few days and had my penn'orth on psychiatric facilities. I say to the honourable minister that I understand how difficult it is to provide this sort of infrastructure. I guess that, when I was Minister for Health, I was lucky that I did not have to. In my day, and indeed when the member for Casuarina was Minister for Health, we had the good fortune of having most of our psychiatric patients cared for by the states. We knew that that would come to an end and that, at some time, we would have to do something about it. As an interim measure, in the early 1980s, we put the more difficult psychiatric patients out at Berrimah Prison and used the revolving door facilities at Royal Darwin Hospital to satisfy the need. It was pretty obvious that that sort of situation could not continue. The refusal by the prison warders to look after these patients was bound to come and the need for a proper facility will not go away.

There are 2 problems with the situation that we have at the moment. The first is the lack of community confidence in the concept of having a major psychiatric facility built into Darwin's only public hospital. Whatever the reality is in terms of security for the patients and the staff, it is very difficult to convince the public that all is well in the kingdom. It is unlikely that the government will ever be able to do that and I think that reflects badly and unnecessarily against the hospital.

The other more important problem that is emerging is a determination on the part of the minister to utilise what was previously the nurses' accommodation for psychiatric patients on the campus. That is pretty close to all the other accommodation for medical staff. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to attract and retain staff in the various professions. That is a sign of the times. However, when we seek to recruit medical staff of some significance in terms of their expertise and prospective employees make inquiries about the job and find out that the campus on which they will be accommodated also accommodates acute psychiatric patients, it does not take very long for their enthusiasm to evaporate. Unless we make proper provision for the care of psychiatric patients, we will find it more difficult to retain the staff needed to run the rest of the hospital.

I accept that it is difficult to find \$6m to \$10m to spend in one hit on the facilities required. However, it is not all that difficult to commit some money each year over a period of 3 or 4 years to provide a facility that can be expanded as the need requires. Whatever perception the minister may have about the security of the staff and the patients on the campus under the present arrangements, it is not shared by the community. People are very concerned about it - not only the staff, but other people who have to use the hospital complex.

This leads me to the recruitment of medical staff and education staff in remote areas. About a year ago, the government removed certain benefits from public servants. That has had quite a debilitating effect in the bush in the sense that, in money terms, people no longer find it worth while to go there to work. The states have started to match the Northern Territory in terms of employment conditions since we have reduced some of ours, particularly in relation to air fares. People simply say: 'If that is the score, I will go somewhere else and I will work somewhere else'. The Minister for Education is aware of situations where, having arrived in a remote area like Rockhampton Downs or one of the other stations, teachers have looked at their first pay packet, assessed their terms and conditions of employment and said: 'Tootle pip! There are better places in Australia to draw this sort of money than here'. The reality is that we need to review this situation before the problem becomes more acute.

The same problem exists with the employment of medical staff. I have sent letters on to the Minister for Health and Community Services from individuals in the community and from organisations. Senior citizens say that they desperately need the services of physiotherapists as their limbs and their bodies fail, but we are not able to recruit physiotherapists. To a considerable extent, this is simply because we are not paying the dough. We have a very simple choice. We have either to be prepared to pay people what they require to go to those places or accept the fact that we are not going to offer the services. If we do not want to offer the services, people will not live in such places. When they decide to pack their bags, they do not move from one town to the next; they move to one of the states. The subject of our decreasing population, of course, has been canvassed several times during the course of the budget debate. It is a very real concern.

All members of this Assembly know plenty of people who have left, are about to leave or are thinking of leaving the Territory because things are not the way they used to be. I meet a great number of those people on the road as I drive back and forth. I see them loaded up with all their gear, with bikes and other bits and pieces on top of their trucks, and I ask them where they are going. They say: 'We have had enough. We are on our way. No hard feelings, it has been a great time but it is over, and it is time we moved

on'. Collectively, we have worked pretty hard to keep people in the Northern Territory. We have tried to keep them here long enough to make them feel that the place is their home and that this is where they want to spend the rest of their lives. We have not succeeded totally, and the number of people who are leaving is having a serious impact on our economy.

I had the good fortune to work with the member for Flynn during the recent by-election. I doorknocked in Flynn, as did other members of this House. You would be amazed, Mr Speaker, at the number of empty properties that I encountered. Many flats and houses in Flynn obviously have been empty for a considerable period. Almost an entire street of Housing Commission homes was empty. The homes had been repaired, closed up and left. I do not know whether they are to be let at some stage or whether the commission is holding them in reserve because they are in an area that is flooded from time to time. Maybe they are the last stock that the commission uses.

There is no doubt that the number of people leaving the Territory is having a bad effect on others who feel that those who are left may find it very hard to survive. The cost of remaining in the Territory is becoming an ever-increasing burden that people are not prepared to accept and something has to be done about it or the drain will continue.

I would like to touch on a couple of other issues that are dear to my heart. One is the possibility of the gas pipeline being extended from Mataranka to Gove. I know that the Minister for Mines and Energy is doing a considerable amount of work on this proposal and that it is looking pretty good. I see it as the key to keeping people in the Territory in the long term. The use of that additional gas from the pipeline, in the course of time, will reduce overall costs to such an extent that a direct impact will be felt in terms of lower electricity prices. That project is desperately needed because, if we do not put a ceiling on electricity prices or reduce them, there will be fewer and fewer people to consume what we generate.

People often complain to me that they cannot afford to pay their electricity bills. I have felt sometimes that they were being a little emotional about the matter. However, recently I received an electricity bill for \$440. I have a family of 3 and we live in a house with fans, a solar hot water service and no air-conditioners. I find it a bit of a strain to have to pay \$440, but there are other people in the community who are paying much more than that. Quite frankly, I do not know how they afford it. Obviously, there are many people who cannot afford it and they cannot see their way to pay it in ...

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: I missed the minister's interjection, Mr Speaker, but I would be happy to pick it up if he wants to repeat it.

Mr Manzie: I think you were the last one to put the price up.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I do not think that is quite correct, but I am happy to leave it on the record if the minister does not want to withdraw it.

Mr Manzie: I will have to read it and see.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, we are going to rely very heavily on the Minister for Mines and Energy getting on with the pipeline and I encourage him to do it.

Another matter which has been raised several times during this debate is the prospect for the railway. I took a great interest in the paper delivered by Mr Lou Marks at the recent North Australian Development Conference. I was a little deflated after hearing Mr Marks because his comments did not give the impetus to the railway project which I was hoping for. Perhaps there is some good news to come. It was obvious, however, in quiet discussions with people associated with the railway that everyone is leaving the issue of freight tonnage to somebody else. It is very hard to find anyone who is working on that issue although they all know of somebody who is supposed to be doing it. That is a matter of great concern because our railway does not have a prayer without the tonnage. I am not saying the tonnage is not there; I believe that the tonnage is there. However, somebody has to get cracking and put the tonnage into a perspective that financiers, bankers and construction people understand and will believe. Certainly, not enough confidence is being generated over that end of the railway project to give anybody the enthusiasm to believe that it will happen.

I would like to reflect on the parliament house proposal for a moment. I say to the government that, certainly, it has the capacity to borrow sufficient funds to build a State Square or Anderson project or whatever it is to be called, and maybe some individuals or sections of the community think that the construction of that project will be a really good thing. I heard the Minister for Transport and Works say earlier that the people in Winnellie think it is great. I would like to say to the honourable minister that some people in Winnellie may think it is great and, on the other hand, some people in Winnellie may benefit from it tremendously and think it is absolute nonsense, but that, if the government is silly enough to do it, then they are silly enough to take its money.

There is very great concern in the community about the parliament house project. Very few people, and I am one of them, will argue with the need for courthouse facilities. If we have a situation where our judicial system requires better or bigger facilities, then I am not going to argue against that, and maybe it is one of those projects that can be handled in the normal course of events by the Department of Transport and Works within its capital works program. But the concept of spending \$100m on the total project, \$100m that is to be paid back at unknown interest rates over a period of time, simply floors people in the community and destroys their confidence. I say again, many people look at the idea and ask who is going to pay for it. The bottom line is that they know that they are going to pay. But most of them are so desperate now in terms of trying to pay their bills that the prospect of having to pay even more to provide a parliament house for 25 politicians does not entuse them at all.

The government is on a loser with the parliament house proposal. It will be given a hard time in the electorate, and I shall be one of those who contributes to that ...

Mr Perron: And distorts it as well.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister and any of his colleagues could solve the distortion problem almost immediately by providing some specific information about the project so that people could look at it dispassionately. I was one of 4 members of this Assembly to be briefed by the Minister for Transport and Works during the last sittings on the government's overview of how the project would be put together, and no one in his right mind would go down that trail of spending \$100m under any circumstances. If someone did it in the private sector, the Corporate Affairs Commission would

probably whack him in the neck but, because we are in here, we seem to think we can get away with it. The truth is that people do not want it and, ultimately, the people will have their say the way they did in Flynn.

Mr Speaker, there are several other issues that I wish to raise and one is the Trade Development Zone. I am a supporter of the trade zone. I think it ought to happen, but there is no doubt in the mind of anyone who is moving through the electorate that the trade zone has lost the confidence of the people who happen to provide the money to make the zone effective. We are now reaching a point where very few people want to support the zone. They are the citizens of the Territory, and they all have a range of reasons why they think we should extricate ourselves from it or wind back. There has been an enormous loss of confidence in the zone, and the people on the other side can say that Terry the Terminator or myself or others have contributed to the image of the zone being reduced in the eyes of the public but, quite honestly, the image of the zone in the eyes of the public has really been created by the management of the zone itself. The perception is that we have put a great deal of money in and we have got very little out of it, and it is quite likely that we will have to put a great deal more in to achieve an unknown result at the end of the day. I think the enthusiasm of Territorians for backing projects of that nature has waned completely.

I know that the trade zone will not go away and that it will come back over the weeks ahead of us, but I say to the government it is time for us to stand back and have a look at the zone. We need to ask ourselves what we set out to achieve there 4 or 5 years ago. Is it relevant to today's economic and trading climate? Can we really continue to do what we were doing or should we alter our emphasis and change our direction? Should we walk away from it altogether? I think it would be quite reasonable for the members of this House to form a committee to assess whether that really ought to happen, because we are the ones - and I say all of us, Mr Speaker, because essentially I think everybody in this Chamber is a supporter of the zone - who should have an opportunity to be involved in its reassessment.

The last matter I want to raise concerns the Port of Darwin. We have a pretty fair investment in the port and we spend a fair amount of money every year running it. Now we have attached to it the fishing facility ...

Mr Hatton: We are still paying it off.

Mr TUXWORTH: I accept the honourable member's interjection that we are still paying it off. Regrettably, we are paying that off, and a few other things with it. I would say to the government that perhaps it is time for us to consider seriously offering the operation of the port to people in private enterprise to tender for. They could do with it as they wish and expand the trading development of the Territory accordingly. It is quite obvious that there will be a limit to what we can do with the port under its present regime and with the government's involvement whereas private people may have the enthusiasm to take innovative steps and make the port pay. I know, and I have advocated it myself, that including the port in the railway project is very important. Even if that were not so in the future, because the present port would not be required for the railway if we were to build a new port for the railway over at East Arm, there is an opportunity for us to bail out of the existing port.

Several years ago, the government commissioned a report to investigate the expansion of the fishing industry in the Territory. That report recommended that development should occur in stages and that one of these would be the

completion of the fishing marina that we now have. Another stage was to be the development of onshore facilities needed by the industry for repairs, maintenance, fish sorting and distribution, manufacture and so forth. I say that, if we have money to spend and if we intend to encourage people, we should provide the rest of the infrastructure needed to make that fishing facility really viable. It is not really viable in its present state because it does not offer all the facilities which the industry needs.

A member interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable member says that we need time to settle the soil down. I would say, respectfully, that the soil is well and truly settled. We should be looking at programs for the remainder of that development to make it completely viable. The \$6m that we have spent there is worthless until we build the rest of the infrastructure that needs to go with it. If we are not going to build the rest of the infrastructure, let us give the facility to somebody who might. Let us not sit around waiting for a sunny day when we might have a chance to do that.

Mr Speaker, there is a range of other matters that I will raise in the committee stage, and I will leave the remainder of my remarks until then.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that this is the member for Flynn's maiden speech and that he should be heard in silence without interjection.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, I stand before you proudly as the newly-elected member for Flynn. I would like to thank all those people who voted for me and to assure them that their trust has not been misplaced. I believe it is important also to place on record my thanks to those members of the Territory Nationals and the community generally who worked and contributed so generously towards my election.

Mr Speaker, I am of Italian descent and I was raised in the post-war period as one of those little 'dago' kids. My parents emigrated to Australia on an assisted passage before the war. Although they had taken Australia as their new home, Italy's entry into the war made them aliens in their new land and they were not allowed to move around without registering at the local police station. My parents moved to central Australia in 1947, and my father was one of the early mica miners at Harts Range. My father died when I was very young and my mother was left with the unenviable task of raising 5 children in that post-war period when things were very tough. She was a woman of great resource and, as a result of her success, we have all done well and we owe her much. Four members of the family remain in the Northern Territory.

Although I am an Australian of Italian origin, I have a deep understanding of the traditional Italian values and of the Italian way. I have a great empathy with Nick Greiner who supports multiculturalism, and I understand Aborigines when they talk about their links with their culture. I bring to this parliament a background built on the family as a way of life and as the

cornerstone of our society, without which we would all be the poorer. I have youth, I have energy and I, too, have a vision for the Northern Territory. I have been working in community groups in central Australia for the last 20 years. These have ranged from sporting teams to groups involved in refugee settlement and the organisation of the Pope's tour. I have been involved because I enjoy it, and I intend to maintain those links. I have a thorough understanding of the commitment that entrepreneurs and small businessmen have made to central Australia. I realise also that many people in our community are struggling to keep their families together and that they need help.

Mr Speaker, I see my role as one of assisting people to get things done - things that they want to do. I am quite prepared to work with the government and the opposition to serve the people on such issues as heritage legislation, town planning and flood mitigation, all of which are important to my electorate. I foreshadow that I would like to speak to all the parties involved in order to have these matters resolved. If we do not hit it off, I will campaign strongly for those things that I believe my constituents need.

My vision for the Territory is of a well-governed, thriving community built on the premises of fairness, equity and Christian values. I have a strong desire to see young Territorians achieve excellence in their training and fulfilment in their lives. I share the government's vision of Territorians becoming an integral part of the Asian scene. I crave to see the Northern Territory economy become a truly private-enterprise economy, and I will be putting forward strongly in this House views on how that may be done. From my experience in my accounting practice, and as a leader in the Australian Small Business Association, I believe we need to give Northern Territory businesses special recognition and support if they are to survive.

This century has seen the Northern Territory develop a unique capacity to merge its ethnic groups for the greater good of the Territory, but the division between the Aboriginal community and the rest of the Territory saddens my heart. We cannot be anything if black and white Territorians are always at loggerheads, and I will be using my time in this parliament, and as the member for Flynn, to see the 2 groups working more closely together.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the role played by and the support given to me by my wife throughout our married life and in the challenge before me. Without the support of Bernie, my children and my extended family, I would not be here, and to them I extend my sincere thanks for the dream that they have made come true and the life that is about to begin.

Mr Speaker, I have made this speech in English but, for the benefit of those in the Italian community, I seek leave to have an Italian translation incorporated into Hansard at the end of the English text of my speech.

Leave granted.

Mr FLOREANI: I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, sono fiero di essere di fronte a voi come il nuovo membro eletto per Flynn.

Vorrei ringraziare tutte le persone che così saggiamente hanno votato per me. Li assicuro che la loro fiducia non verrà delusa.



Credo anche che sia importante ringraziare i membri del partito nazionale e la comunità in generale che ha lavorato e contribuito così generosamente a questa mia elezione.

Mr Speaker, sono di discendenza Italiana e sono cresciuto nell'immediato dopoguerra, come uno di quei piccoli dago bambini.

I miei genitori sono emigrati prima della guerra con un viaggio sovvenzionato.

Tutto sommato hanno accettato L'Australia come la loro nuova casa, la comparsa dell'Italia in guerra li spinse come estranei nella loro nuova terra e non potevano muoversi senza essere registrati alla stazione di polizia.

I miei genitori si sponstarono nel centro Australia nel 1947, e mio padre è stato uno dei primi minatori di mica a Harts Range. Mio padre morì quando io ero molto giovane e mia madre rimase con il non invidiabile compito di far crescere cinque bambini in quel dopoguerra dove tutto si presentava così duro. Lei era una donna di grandi risorse e come risultato del suo successo tutti noi abbiamo fatto bene ed è a lei che lo dobbiamo.

Quattro della nostra famiglia siamo ancora nel North Territory.

In ogni modo io sono Australiano di origine Italiana ed ho una profonda comprensione dei valori della tradizione Italiana.

Ho una grande ammirazione per Nick Greiner che sostiene il multiculturismo e capisco gli Aborigeni quando parlano dei loro valori con la loro cultura.

Mr Speaker, porto a questo parlamento un passato costruito sulla famiglia. La famiglia come una forma di vita, la famiglia come un angolo della nostra società e senza questo angolo tutti saremo poveri.

Ho giovinezza, ho energia, ed ho anche una visione per il Northern Territory.

Ho lavorato in gruppi comunitari nel centro Australia per gli ultimi venti anni, questi gruppi hanno variato da squadre sportive a riassetto di profughi ed a programmazione ed organizzazione delle visite del papa, sono stato involto perché ho avuto piacere ed intendo mantenere questi legami.

Ho una sincera comprensione degli impegni che gli affaristi ed i piccoli commercianti hanno preso con il centro Australia.

Ho una concezione che molta gente nella nostra comunità sta combattendo per tenere le loro famiglie assieme e che hanno bisogno d'aiuto.

Mr Speaker, io vedo il mio ruolo, uno come assistere la gente a portare a termine qualcosa. Un qualcosa che vogliono fare.

Sono preparato a lavorare con il governo e l'opposizione per servire la gente su questi scopi come retaggio legislativo, pianificazione del paese ed alleviare gli allagamenti.

Io prefiguro che mi piacerebbe parlare a tutti i partiti involti per portare a termine questi inconvenienti, se non risolveremo questi problemi, Mr Speaker, mi battero fortemente per quelle cose di cui i miei costituenti hanno bisogno.

Ho anche una visione per il Northern Territory, Mr Speaker, un ben governato vigoroso Territorio, costruito su premesse di imparzialità, uguaglianza e valori Cristiani.

Ho un forte desiderio di vedere I giovani del Territorio raggiungere eccellenze nella loro educazione e traguardi nella loro vita. Condivido la visione dei governi di vedere la gente del Territorio diventare parte integrale dello scenario Asiatico. Io domando di vedere l'economia del Northern Territory, diventare una vera impresa economica privata ed io porterò avanti con forza in questa casa, suggerimenti di eventualmente la maniera di fare.

Dalla mia esperienza di pratiche commerciali, Mr Speaker, e come presidente dell'Associazione per Piccoli Commercianti d'Australia, credo che abbiamo bisogno di dare al commercio del Northern Territory una speciale riconoscenza e sostenimento se per ragione di sopravvivenza.

Questo secolo, Mr Speaker, ha visto il Northern Territory svilupparsi con una capacità unica ad unire I suoi gruppi etnici per il bene del Territorio, ma la divisione tra la comunità Aborigena ed il resto del Territorio mi spezza il cuore. Non possiamo essere niente se i neri ed i bianchi del Territorio sono sempre in lite, userò il mio tempo in questo parlamento e come membro per Flynn per vedere i due gruppi lavorare più vicini e più uniti.

Mr Speaker, in conclusione vorrei marcare il ruolo ed il supporto che mia moglie mi ha dato durante la nostra vita matrimoniale.

Senza l'aiuto di Bernie e dei miei figli e tutta la mia famiglia non sarei qui, ed a loro porgo un sincero grazie per il sogno che loro hanno contribuito ad avverarsi ed una vita che è appena cominciata.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 11 am.

STATEMENT  
Broadcast of Question Time

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, unfortunately, because of the late starting time of the Assembly this morning and due to prior commitments of 8 Top-FM Radio and Radio 8CCC in central Australia, question time will not be broadcast today. I advise honourable members that ABC television will be upgrading its file footage of the Assembly this morning without sound.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR  
Ms Dawn Lawrie

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Ms Dawn Lawrie, a former member of this Assembly, who has recently been appointed Administrator of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome her to the gallery, congratulate her on her appointment and wish her well in the future.

Members: Hear, hear!

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
Health, Safety, Economy and Heritage of Alice Springs

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Leader of the Opposition, dated 5 October:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this afternoon, the following matter: the government's failure to protect the health, safety, economy and heritage of the people of Alice Springs.

Yours sincerely,  
Terry Smith.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, to say the least, what happened yesterday was unfortunate. The issues that we want to raise in this discussion are important and deserve the attention of the House. If you want any evidence of that, the Minister for Health and Community Services was confronted by the member for MacDonnell in this House yesterday with the truth about his and his government's neglect of Alice Springs. He was confronted with the fact that, for 2 years, this government had known that the health, safety and economy of Alice Springs was under direct threat. The minister was not asked by my colleague to do anything about it. He was not asked to make any promises or give assurances. He was asked merely to confirm the fact that he knew about it. He was asked to tell the people of Alice Springs the truth that he had known about but had kept a secret, and yet he refused.

Now we are informed that the government has decided to take steps to remove that threat, 2 years after the minister concerned had information clearly outlining it. The member for MacDonnell will talk further about that. That decision was not taken out of any sense of responsibility for the people of Alice Springs. The government did not step into the breach voluntarily to

make good its neglect. It had to be shoved into it by the sheer force of the voting power of the electors of Flynn.

For 2 years, the government knew the sewage ponds were a breeding ground for mosquitoes which carry such diseases as Ross River fever and Australian encephalitis. Knowing these dangers, any moderately competent and caring government would have taken action immediately but, unfortunately for the people of Alice Springs, this government did not. That lack of action typifies this government's approach to a range of serious matters relating to Alice Springs. It was the previous member for Flynn, Mr Ray Hanrahan, a man with a talent for hitting things on the head, who described the Country Liberal Party as a 'spent force'. The government's failure to do anything about the situation at the sewage ponds is proof enough of that, as the people of Flynn demonstrated.

The Flynn debacle was all of the government's making. It chose the timing, it chose the issues and it chose the tactics. It revealed its complete lack of interest in the key issues of health, safety, economy and heritage, and it paid the price. It finished third in a field of 3. The President of the Country Liberal Party, who is rapidly assuming a reputation for being a political genius of the highest order, described perfectly the cynical CLP approach to the health, safety, economy and the heritage of Alice Springs in his speech at the opening of the Flynn campaign. By that stage, we had already identified 2 key issues in the by-election: flood mitigation and heritage protection. Shane Stone stomped down hard on both and blew his toes away. Let me quote from his speech:

Terry Smith told us there was no money for flood mitigation. Well, it is just as well he never went down to the Todd River to check the facts because he would have been run over by a front-end loader. The work has already begun.

Indeed, at the very time that Shane Stone spoke, a front-end loader was in the Todd. It was operated by a company which had not then been awarded a contract for sandmining in that area. The contract was due to be issued a week later. The operator was hustled into the Todd and told to look as though he was working on flood mitigation. To be fair to the operator, he tried hard. As the television cameras rolled, he dug and flung the sand about whilst the Minister for Transport and Works looked on proudly. The hole got deeper and deeper until, at the casino on the other side of town, all the phones went dead. The front-end loader had ripped out a Telecom cable. For the rest of the campaign, the people of Alice Springs could point to their flood mitigation scheme: an abandoned hole in the Todd with a bandaged Telecom cable and a sluggish puddle of seepage water at the bottom. So much for the concern that the Country Liberal Party has for the safety of the people of Alice Springs. That episode, as the member for Flynn would no doubt agree, demonstrates that the Country Liberal Party treats the voters of Flynn with contempt.

Back at the campaign launch, Mr Stone had moved on to demolish the heritage issue. Mr Speaker, you will recall your no-nonsense stand on the destruction of Marron's newsagency. I certainly recall the headline in the Centralian Advocate and, at the risk of offending the delicate ears of honourable members, I will repeat your remark because you summed up the feelings of people in Alice Springs when you described the demolition as 'a bloody disgrace'. It was a disgrace, and you made that abundantly clear. Having been forced to witness the destruction of Marron's newsagency, you were then forced to endure the remarks of Mr Stone at the campaign launch of

the CLP. How great must have been your embarrassment when Mr Stone ploughed on regardless to challenge the people of your electorate. He said, no doubt in ringing tones: 'Look around you. Actions speak louder than words'. Those who bothered to look around saw Marron's newsagency destroyed and the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre still under threat.

Between 1983, when the CLP vote was 61%, and 1988 when it fell to 29%, the economy of the Northern Territory has undergone massive change, and the inability of the Country Liberal Party government to manage this change has led to an exodus of people and jobs from the Territory. That is a general statement, and at the moment we are talking about Alice Springs. I did a lot of walking around in Alice Springs during that campaign. I knocked on many doors and talked to many businesses during that campaign and it really is a very flat economic position in Alice Springs. The member for Barkly referred yesterday to the number of empty houses in Alice Springs. On top of that, there is an incredible number of vacant shops in Alice Springs. In fact, the whole operation of the Mall in Alice Springs is jeopardised by the fact that one side of it is basically unoccupied. Everywhere that you go, Mr Speaker, you see the signs of an economy in the doldrums: empty houses, empty shops and a population that is declining.

All that the people of Alice Springs were offered in the Flynn by-election campaign in response to these serious issues was - wait for it - the State Square project in Darwin! That went down a big treat in Alice Springs, I can tell you. Like the member for Barkly, I was surprised at the impact that the State Square project was having in Alice Springs and, like the member for Sadadeen, I believe that it probably resulted in the present member for Flynn being elected. It was a red-hot issue in Alice Springs: a government wanting to spend \$84m of taxpayers' money on constructing a new Supreme Court building and a new parliament house in Darwin and, in Alice Springs, where the economic problems were basically the same, nothing except reduced capital works expenditure.

Mr Perron: Prove it.

Mr SMITH: Prove it! You fellows spent 3 weeks on the by-election campaign trying to disprove it, and I think the voters of Flynn have shown their judgment on that particular issue as well.

Mr Coulter: How did your brother go down in Victoria? All right?

Mr SMITH: He didn't win, unfortunately.

The people of Alice Springs realise that what we need is expenditure on production capital works, projects that will give long-term jobs and benefits to Territorians, not monuments to the arrogance of the Country Liberal Party government. That was the problem that the Country Liberal Party had in this by-election. It is not only the people of Flynn and members on this side of the House who are giving advice to this government on its arrogance and lack of direction, it is also members of the Country Liberal Party itself. I am sure those members, like the member for Nightcliff who now, in his own words, has 'time to get around', are carrying those messages back. But with the standing that the member for Nightcliff has in his own political party at present, I doubt that those messages are being heeded.

The government's failure to address adequately health, safety, economic and heritage issues has led the people of Alice Springs to a number of conclusions. First, the Country Liberal Party government is out of touch with

the needs and aspirations of Territorians. It has been unable to come to grips with the changing economic climate, Mr Speaker, and if you want any evidence of that, have a look at the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy which was tabled yesterday. Hasn't that been a successful document? It really landed with a bang. It fails to deliver to Territorians what they need: jobs and security. In particular, this government has failed consistently to come to grips with regional issues. Again, if you look at the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy, there is very little on regional issues, and that is recognised by the people of Alice Springs.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from recent events is that Territorians do not approve of the public brawling in the Country Liberal Party. Four Chief Ministers and countless Cabinet changes in 5 years is too much. Of course, that has been going on while the economy has been undergoing a dramatic transition. While that has been happening, the Country Liberal Party has been navel gazing and personal ambitions have been worked out in public with a complete disdain for the feelings of the electorate, and that was judged and voted on in Alice Springs.

Thirdly, the arrogance that allows the Country Liberal Party to use this government as its plaything is not acceptable, and that was judged by the people in Flynn. The prime example is the State Square development. Supposedly, the previous Chief Minister was dumped because of his promotion of the State Square development. Certainly, it was the last straw for a number of people. Nevertheless, the new Chief Minister decided that he wanted to get his name on the plaque. We now have the current Chief Minister pushing ahead along the same track that led to his predecessor's downfall. Despite their population loss, despite their job loss, despite the empty houses, despite the empty shops, despite the decline in business confidence, the people of Alice Springs still get nothing out of this government.

Territorians want and demand clear, efficient government. They are sick and tired of cronyism and abuse of power by ministers. As CLP President, Shane Stone put it again: 'The people of Flynn were not happy with the Poole affair'. That is putting it pretty mildly, Mr Speaker. At least, it was honest of the President of the Country Liberal Party to recognise that the Poole affair did cost votes in Alice Springs because there was no doubt that it did. The whole Poole business epitomises the fact that the government has 1 set of rules for itself and another set for the rest of us. The government must know that the public thinks that Doctor's Gully smells of more than just fish.

This government has created an ethos in the business community whereby people believe that they are not dealt with according to their own merits but according to their closeness or otherwise to the Country Liberal Party. If the Territory, and particularly Alice Springs, is to recover from the economic malaise that this government has brought on us, it will be because business is confident that hard work and enterprise will be rewarded. It will be because business is confident that it can work within a broad direction set by government. Unfortunately, we do not have even that broad direction. Business people want to get on with the business of creating jobs, not having to second-guess members of the Country Liberal Party.

I turn briefly to the matter of heritage and, again, this will be picked up primarily by the member for MacDonnell. There is a genuine feeling that some of this Territory that we love so dearly should be saved for our children and their children. By not protecting our heritage, this government is allowing the destruction of those things and memories that make us uniquely

Territorian. It is a tragedy and it is one which the people of Alice Springs want stopped. Unfortunately, despite a clear need for heritage legislation, despite a clear opportunity given in the House at the last sittings, this government has failed and is still failing to address heritage issues adequately. It is a shame that we still have a minister opposite who is not prepared to commit himself to making a decision on the future of the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre. It is no wonder that the nickname for the honourable minister in his electorate is 'Do-nothing Daryl'. He is well known for his inability to make a decision. That is one of the problems that he has in running his particular portfolios and one of the frustrations that members of his departments have with him. 'Do-nothing Daryl', he is called.

Returning for a moment to the question of capital works expenditure, on a number of occasions, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Transport and Works have sought to discount the expenditure figures in Alice Springs last year by an amount of \$9m that was spent outside Alice Springs. An effort was made to muddy the waters further by lumping capital works and repairs and maintenance together. Members on both sides of the House often make the mistake of underestimating the intelligence of the electors. The lesson of Flynn is that the voters know when they are getting less, and they know that the government is mortgaging their future for a parliament house in Darwin and that their friends are leaving the Territory because of the loss of jobs. The government must understand that the development of the Territory and the management of its economy means looking at all competing interests and satisfying them as far as possible.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude by outlining the remarks of the Chief Minister in opening the Flynn by-election campaign. He began by saying:

The Country Liberal Party was born in Alice Springs. The CLP President, Shane Stone, is an Alice Springs lawyer. The vice-president, Richard Lim, is an Alice Springs doctor. The Speaker in the Legislative Assembly, Roger Vale, was still in Alice Springs when they used camel trains for transport. The Minister for Tourism, Eric Poole, is from Alice Springs.

How much longer will he be the Minister for Tourism? The Chief Minister did not mention that. Having nailed all those party luminaries to the wall, the Chief Minister proceeded to nail himself. He said: 'I stand by the Country Liberal Party's record in Alice Springs and central Australia in the 10 years since self-government, and I do so with pride'. He offered up to the people of Flynn for judgment his party, his government's record and himself. He offered that up in the very place where his party was formed, and the people made their judgment. The people made their judgment on his party, his government's record and himself. They made their judgment of the government's failure to protect the health, the safety, the economy and the heritage of the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, having now heard the Leader of the Opposition's speech, I can understand why his colleagues did not support him in moving yesterday's MPI. He must have done a great deal of threatening and chomping at the carpet to get them in here today because they were obviously aware of the shallowness of his contribution to the debate. Now we have all heard it.

The MPI claims that, among other things, the government has not done everything it could to protect the economy of Alice Springs. In reflecting on whether the Territory government has made a good job of protecting the

economy, the people of Alice Springs ought to consider how the Labor Party would manage the economy - the party which began by opposing self-government for the Northern Territory, the party which claimed that the establishment of Yulara would be a tourism funding disaster, the party which argued that the pipeline was nothing more than a pipedream ...

Mr Bell: What pipeline?

Mr PERRON: ... the party which argued that it was a mistake to establish the Sheratons in the Territory, our first 5-star hotels.

Mr Bell: The gas pipeline? We knocked that?

Mr PERRON: You certainly did. Mr Deputy Speaker, if the member for MacDonnell does not know what ALP spokesmen have said in relation to the pipeline, he should refer to the public record. We can imagine what the state of the economy of the Northern Territory would be, particularly in Alice Springs, if the ALP had been in power and had refused to proceed with the projects I have mentioned because it considered them to be undesirable.

We have protected the economy of Alice Springs to every extent possible, having regard to the constraints placed on the Territory and I will outline a couple of them to refresh the memories of honourable members. The opposition has acknowledged the continuous reduction in real terms of federal funding to the Northern Territory. We operate under constraints resulting from federal legislation in respect of sacred sites and that has caused considerable agony in years past in relation to urban development in Alice Springs. All that is well recorded in the Parliamentary Record. There is also the lack of action by the federal government in relation to the Alice Springs Airport, which is now an absolute disgrace. Close to 500 000 people pass through that airport each year. Alice Springs Airport is a great embarrassment to us all. There is the refusal of the federal government to run Uluru properly and to honour its commitments. There is the appalling state of the road between Ayers Rock and the Olgas - a matter that is totally outside the Northern Territory government's control but which impacts on the centralian economy.

Then, of course, there is the classic of all broken promises - the railway. We all remember it: 'Only the Labor Party can be trusted to build the railway'. The Prime Minister himself said that many times on television in an effort to win our votes, but it is a broken promise. That has affected the future of Alice Springs because that is where the railway was to start to meander the last 1000 miles across northern Australia.

To the extent that we have had the power to assist the economy in central Australia, we have exercised it. We have exercised it by doing things such as building Yulara, licensing the casino, bringing the 5-star Sheraton Hotel, constructing the Araluen Arts Centre, constructing 2 bridges over the Todd River with a third one in the planning stages, and introducing schemes and housing policies to assist Territorians to take up permanent residence in the Territory. Those are the sorts of things that I was prepared to enunciate during that recent election campaign as proud records of the Northern Territory government. They are still proud records, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Labor's election campaign - and I touch on it because the Leader of the Opposition devoted the whole of his debate to the election campaign - started with the lie over the level of capital works for Alice Springs.

Mr Smith: It wasn't a lie at all.



Mr PERRON: It was. Mr Deputy Speaker, the Darwin Labor Party machine fed its party's candidate with the line that capital works funding had been cut to \$20.7m, ignoring the real figure of \$42.6m for capital works in Alice Springs and the region.

Mr Smith: And the region.

Mr Ede: It wasn't in my part of the region either.

Mr PERRON: There was another \$11m on repairs and maintenance. It is interesting to note the very useful help that the ALP received in pushing that line from the Centralian Advocate of Friday 19 August. Most newspapers in the Northern Territory take the opportunity to receive budget lockup briefings in the few hours prior to the budget being delivered in the Assembly. However, we went to the trouble of sending Treasury officers to Alice Springs in advance of the budget, armed with all the budget papers, to sit down with the Alice Springs press in a lock-up briefing. I understand that the Centralian Advocate did not bother to attend that. Instead, it decided to run a lead item on the budget of the Northern Territory which featured totally, or virtually totally, an ALP press release which was headed, 'Capital Works Funds Slashed'. Had it sent representatives to the budget briefing, it would have realised that that was not the case. I will quote from the newspaper article in order to demonstrate to honourable members that the opposition really did receive considerable assistance from the Centralian Advocate.

Government funding for capital works in Alice Springs was being slashed by \$11.5m in the budget announced on Wednesday, according to opposition figures. The ALP figures showed that, in the past 2 budgets, Alice Springs capital works funding had dropped from \$56m to \$20.7m. 'The Berrimah Line is thicker, higher, stronger, and harder to penetrate than ever before', Labor candidate for Flynn, Di Shanahan said in releasing the figures.

Of course, she did not release the figures. The ALP issued a press release. No doubt, it emanated from Darwin, and that was the lead line in the centralian newspaper.

I thought that one of the sad aspects of the campaign was the idea of the so-called divisions between Territorians, north and south, that was perpetrated by the Labor Party and reinforced daily by the member for Barkly to the maximum extent that he could manage. There were a number of examples of that in the campaign. The Labor Party stressed the so-called 'Berrimah Line', and I despise that action because it was attempting - and, to some degree, successfully - to set Territorian against Territorian. I am sure that honourable members are aware of that attitude. One Labor Party political statement sought to demonstrate unfairness in the treatment of Alice Springs by the Territory government because of the 'subsidisation of a private school in Darwin'. Of course, all members know that all private schools in the Northern Territory are entitled to government funds and that a private school in Alice Springs receives government funding. To drag out such an issue with the emphasis on the word 'Darwin' was nothing more than an attempt to divide Territorians, and to some degree it was successful.

In relation to planning and development decisions, the Labor Party claims in some of its propaganda that one of the problems in Alice Springs is that planning and development decisions are made in Darwin. If that is not an attempt to reinforce some sort of Berrimah-Line mentality, I do not know what is. Of course, by and large, the planning and development decisions are made

by the Planning Authority in Alice Springs, the majority of which is comprised of Alice Springs people. The council is involved in many of the planning and development decisions in Alice Springs. The town plans and structure plans go on display in Alice Springs, are commented on by Alice Springs people and are referred to the Alice Springs Planning Authority. To suggest that total control of whatever occurs in Alice Springs is decided in Darwin is simply nonsense, but of course that does not stop the ALP.

Claims about the budget, including the State Square proposal, have also been part of that campaign to create division. The buildings proposed for the State Square development are buildings for the Northern Territory. We are talking about the Northern Territory Supreme Court and the parliament of the Northern Territory, but somehow we are supposed to feel guilty because it happens that those 2 buildings will be built in Darwin.

The ALP continued the lie that there was no money in the budget for flood mitigation. Not only was there money in the budget for flood mitigation, exploratory drilling work was under way at the time of the ALP campaign launch. However, it was taking place out of town and out of sight. I am sure Labor Party members were very pleased that it was out of sight. That was an activity that we have been trying to get down to for many years. As honourable members know, construction of a dam at the Telegraph Station has been an aim of this government for a very long time. Most of the opposition's election launch was simply a deliberate deceit, but I think the ALP did it fairly successfully by distorting so many of the figures.

Once again, it trotted out nonsense that we put the lie to during the last sittings of this Assembly. I refer to the nonsense about the so-called \$14 000 of debt incurred for every Territory man, woman and child by the government since 1978. That falsehood was demolished in the last sittings, assisted by the mathematical ineptitude of the Leader of the Opposition who, embarrassingly, used to be a schoolteacher. We all recall that he had to admit in this House that he had made a mistake by double counting \$250m. That certainly caused him considerable embarrassment, but it did not prevent him from going to Alice Springs a few weeks later and talking about a debt of \$14 000 per head of population in the Northern Territory. As I have demonstrated, the actual figure is about \$7000 per head, which is less than the per capita debt in Tasmania.

At the same time, the public was told that 6000 jobs had been lost in the Territory since self-government. Of course, the record shows that there has been a 40% increase in jobs for Territorians over the past 10 years, most of those being in the private sector.

I thought the Labor Party's comments about electricity charges were a pretty nasty piece of work. Sadly, the complexity of government makes it difficult to get the message on almost any subject across to the whole community. The message peddled by the ALP, that Alice Springs residents pay more for electricity than other Territorians, was pretty low. Honourable members opposite know perfectly well that electricity charges are the same right across the Northern Territory. They are uniform charges directly related to usage and they have been pegged for a couple of years. Sadly, I am sure that a number of people in Alice Springs now believe that we have a discriminatory charging system for electricity and that they pay more for electricity than do the people of Darwin or other Territorians. It saddens me that politicians go to such lengths in election campaigns to spread distortion and lies because, sadly, a number of people believe them.

Mr Smith: What about the 1983 election campaign? You have a convenient memory. Remember when Ayers Rock was going to disappear over the border?

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, members opposite know the facts and they choose to ignore them totally. I will just touch for a minute on heritage issues because, although the Leader of the Opposition did not touch on them today, much play was made in Alice Springs about how the Northern Territory government does not care about heritage matters and how it has no regard whatsoever for the Northern Territory's heritage. Members opposite trot out that line repeatedly in the hope that people will believe them. I guess that, if they repeat it often enough, more and more people may well believe them. The fact is that the list of heritage properties that the Northern Territory government has supported financially and otherwise is quite long.

I will quote some examples. Alice Springs would be one of very few towns in Australia where the original settlement, the Telegraph Station, has been preserved. It has been preserved because of Northern Territory government policy. The old Residency has been restored as a museum by the Museums and Art Galleries Board at a cost of about \$39 000. That is not a great deal of money, Mr Speaker, but we are talking about principles here. We are not talking about how much has been spent but about what action the government has taken to preserve some of the heritage of the Territory. If one listens to the opposition, we have taken none and have no regard whatsoever for heritage.

The old Connellan hangar has been established as an aviation museum. Recently, the Minister for Conservation handed over to the National Trust a 10-year lease on Hansen House, which was renovated by the Housing Commission back in 1983. The original police cell block, the Stuart Town Jail, was restored by the National Trust. Adelaide House, the first hospital in Alice Springs, has been restored and preserved by the National Trust. The old courthouse, adjacent to the Residency, now houses the Department of Law. The Minister for Conservation has given a commitment to have it set up as a static museum display when the Department of Law moves out in a year or so. It was restored at a cost of \$50 000 before the Department of Law moved into the building in 1981.

The Ghan Project, which has been in the news a bit lately, includes restoration of the old telegraph line between the MacDonnell and Ewaninga sidings and restoration of the old fettler's cottage at Ewaninga. The original Alice Springs police station, south of Heavitree Gap, has been restored. The old Hartley Street School has been restored and was opened recently. There is also the Olive Pink Flora Reserve, and the town council has spent \$6000 on preservation and restoration of the Pioneer Cemetery. There is the Arltunga mining settlement, with which members would be familiar, on which \$426 000 of bicentennial funding has been spent to restore buildings. At Hermannsburg, west of Alice Springs, the old church and Pastor Albrecht's residence have been restored with bicentennial funds at a cost of \$518 000.

The list of funds spent on heritage matters Territory-wide since 1983 is quite extensive. Since 1983, Territory government heritage grants for 65 projects have totalled \$0.5m and funding by the National Trust since 1981-82 has been \$442 000. The Commonwealth National Estates Program in the Territory has spent \$2m in the Territory since 1978. The bicentennial program has spent \$1.2m and there was a Northern Territory contribution to that program of \$600 000. In total, about \$4.5m has been spent specifically on the restoration and preservation of buildings of significance to the Territory's heritage. To listen to the members opposite and to see this frivolous so-called matter of public importance that we are wasting the time

of the House on today, one would have to believe that the Territory government did not care and was not interested in these matters.

We reject totally this so-called matter of public importance. It is nothing but a face-saving exercise by the Leader of the Opposition to try to overcome the gross embarrassment, which he will wear forever, of being the first leader in the history of this Assembly ever to fail to bring on a debate as a result of lack of numbers in his own ranks.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, what an extraordinary performance from a man on his back foot. I do not think that I have ever sat through a less convincing 20-minute speech from the Chief Minister in the 7 years that I have been in this place - and, my word, doesn't he have a lot to hide? There is no doubt that this matter of public importance debate should be supported by both sides of this House. For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I will reiterate the terms of the matter of public importance debate: 'This government's failure to protect the health, safety, economy and heritage of the people of Alice Springs'. That is not the opposition's judgment alone. Quite clearly, it is the judgment of the people of Flynn.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, my role in this debate is to consider the government's failure to protect the health of the people of Alice Springs and to make adequate arrangements in that regard, and its failure to consider the heritage of the people of Alice Springs. The Chief Minister endeavoured to demonstrate that he has done an adequate job in respect of the latter, and he failed quite dismally. It really made me almost physically sick to hear the sanctimonious nonsense about setting Territorian against Territorian. The fact is that Alice Springs is 1000 miles away. Time and time again, this government has indicated an inability to take into consideration the real needs of central Australians. The efforts of the opposition and members of the opposition based in Alice Springs to draw that to the attention of this uncaring government must produce results eventually. The people of central Australia have indicated through the ballot box their support for those efforts. In the Flynn by-election, the opposition achieved a 15% swing. For the Chief Minister to rise in this Assembly and say that somehow we are setting Territorian against Territorian is to fly in the face of 2 facts that I will remind him of.

One of those is the 1983 election, to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, where the Chief Minister and his predecessor as Chief Minister were quite happy to divide the Territory population and set one section against another. What a vicious campaign that was! Do not let him ever rise in this House to accuse the opposition, when it draws attention to regional neglect on the part of the Chief Minister and this government, of setting Territorian against Territorian. That is one element of the sanctimony that he has expressed today. The other element is that all members opposite, ministers and backbenchers - and we even had a dose of it in the Chief Minister's speech - love the good old Canberra-bashing. You can always shuffle off any of your shortcomings on to the Labor government in Canberra. There is no problem with that. Is the Chief Minister now going to say that he is quite happy to divide Australian against Australian? It is the sort of sanctimony and hypocrisy that really does him no good. My word, it was a woeful 20 minutes' worth.

Let me turn to the question of the health of the people of Alice Springs, which this government has failed consummately to take into consideration. Mr Speaker, as somebody who lives in central Australia, you know that the concerns about mosquito-borne diseases have been in the air for a while - and

no pun is intended. I wonder whether you knew, Mr Speaker, that there had been a Cabinet submission.

Mr Coulter: What Cabinet submission?

Mr BELL: I am quite happy to table it. I presumed you had seen it.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, could you ask the honourable member, who is reading from a document, to table the so-called Cabinet submission.

Mr Tuxworth interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Are you supporting him or what? You have put your colours on the table. We know which side your are on.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I appreciate that the Deputy Chief Minister probably has a fair bit of trouble keeping one piece of paper on top of another. I am quite happy to table this. I am rather surprised that he has not seen a copy of it.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will seek leave.

Mr BELL: I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am rather surprised that the Deputy Chief Minister, who is in charge of the Power and Water Authority, has not seen this document. I had always assumed that the Deputy Chief Minister was part of the Cabinet. However, given his garrulous capabilities, I imagine that the rest of the Cabinet would find his company as painful as I do whenever I am in this House.

Mr Dale: Have you ever been to a Cabinet meeting?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, suffice it to say that, if I had to attend any meeting with the Minister for Health and Community Services, it would be as short as possible.

Mr Speaker, I am surprised that the Minister for Mines and Energy has not seen this. A variety of issues are discussed and attached to it are recommendations from an authority for which he is responsible, namely the Power and Water Authority. It contains a memo to the chairman in relation to the Alice Springs sewage treatment strategy, and a variety of other correspondence. I am very surprised that the honourable minister has not had the opportunity to see this.

Mr Speaker, in order to establish my case for the purpose of this debate, I ask the minister to turn to paragraph 10 on page 3. This is the damning bit of this document. This is the part that demonstrates the failure of this government to plan adequately for public facilities that would protect the health of the people of Alice Springs. I quote the paragraph:

The Department of Health and Community Services considers that there is a very real risk of an outbreak of mosquito-borne diseases such as epidemic polyarthritis and Australian encephalitis. This could have serious health and economic implications for the resident and tourist population of Alice Springs.

The government had this in March this year. No mention was made of it in the budget. Talk about Johnnies-come-lately, Mr Speaker! The first we heard about any government action was about a week ago. I quote from the Centralian Advocate of Friday last. There was a lovely mug shot of the honourable minister above an article headed: 'Sewage Ponds to be Upgraded Soon'.

This government stands condemned for its failure to act and, more importantly, the people of the Northern Territory, particularly the people of Alice Springs, can be thankful that they have a hard-working opposition that puts up high-quality candidates, as we did in the Flynn by-election, and which is preparing itself to take over government from these people. It will happen, Mr Speaker, be in no doubt about that. These people are starting to flake at the edges. We will win, and we will not be guilty of the sort of failure that this matter of public importance debate is about.

Let me turn to the other failure of the government that needs to be addressed. The Chief Minister attempted - and failed consummately, I might add - to say that his government had made adequate arrangements for the protection of the heritage of the people of Alice Springs. Heritage is about people and that is why this matter of public importance is couched specifically in these terms. Heritage provides a resource whereby people can understand where they have come from so that they can know where they are heading.

The facilities that the Chief Minister read out to us, the Residency, the old courthouse and so on ...

Mr Finch: They are authentic buildings.

Mr BELL: Oh, the Minister for Transport and Works is sharp. They are authentic buildings which do exist.

Mr Speaker, compare the list that the Chief Minister read out with the 3 buildings which, in the last 12 months, have been the subject of serious concern to the people of Alice Springs. They are all commercial buildings. This government has failed through not making the sort of provisions that Labor governments around the country have been able to make because they have been able to develop constructive relationships with the business community to ensure that commercial buildings that have heritage value can be incorporated into future development.

We have seen Turner House and Marron's newsagency destroyed. Our new fight is over the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre. Maintaining a lordly indifference over there is the Minister for Lands and Housing. I think he has responsibility for this under the conservation portfolio, which indicates a shortcoming of this government. The fact is that heritage protection ought to be part of the planning process. It ought to be in the minister's portfolio as Minister for Lands and Housing. It should not come under the Conservation Commission. Let me refer briefly to the value of the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre and the minister and the government's failure in this regard. An expert opinion has been prepared by a well-respected heritage architect in the Territory - and I am quite prepared to provide a copy of this to ministers. I would prefer to have the sources absolutely squared away. Suffice it to say that this report on the theatre provides a fascinating glimpse of its place in the social history of Alice Springs. It has some lovely vignettes. Some of these come from a man who is well known to everybody in this House - our former Senator, Bernie Kilgariff. He refers to the Walk-in Theatre as a social centre during the time that he grew up in Alice Springs. He refers to

silent films being shown on a fortnightly basis. These were synchronised with the coming and going of the Ghan passenger train. The proprietor of the cinema was Bernie's uncle, Joe Kilgariff, and he employed his 6-year-old nephew to walk the streets ringing a handbell to advertise the programs.

The report itself makes strong recommendations that the theatre be retained. The report says:

In researching this report, it became patently obvious that the Pioneer held a special place in the townsfolk's hearts. Always remembered with a smile, it had character.

I think that sums it up pretty well. The report also refers to conversion suggestions, and outlines various possibilities such as a cinema, conference centre, performance centre and so on. Mr Speaker, the minister is sitting on his hands. He intends to exacerbate the government's already appalling record. Patently, the government has failed.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, let me commence my contribution to this debate by looking back into history. We heard both the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell say that the opposition had never knocked the pipeline. I have a document that makes for very interesting reading and I would like to quote from it. On the 6.30 Report on Channel 6 on 16 April 1984, the then Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins, said:

Let me assure you that the information that I have got from the gas industry itself is that, apart from being a ludicrous proposal in any case, if you get the gas at the end of the pipeline for nothing, which of course is not going to happen, but if they got it at no cost, it will still not justify the expense of the proposal.

I note that members of the opposition are leaving the House. As soon as a little bit of truth comes home, as soon as one provides them with the facts, they leave. That is why they left the House yesterday and would not support the Leader of the Opposition.

On 16 April 1984, Mr John Reeves, the then member for the Northern Territory, said: 'The federal government may have to review its commitment to Darwin's Channel Island Power Station if the Territory goes ahead with a proposal to fire the station with natural gas'.

On page 1438 of the Parliamentary Record for Wednesday 28 August 1985, Mr Terry Smith, the member for Millner is reported as saying: 'We have consistently supported the gas pipeline project'. That is an example of the opposition's ludicrous claim that it has never knocked the gas pipeline. Where does the member for Stuart stand now that I have presented him with the facts? He has nowhere to go. He has tried to claim that the opposition has supported the pipeline consistently.

Mr Ede: No member of this opposition has ever knocked the pipeline. Jon Isaacs promoted it, if you want to go that far back in history.

Mr COULTER: Members of the opposition speak out of both sides of their mouths at the same time, Mr Speaker. That is what is wrong with them. The people realise that, and that is why the ALP lost the election in Flynn.

Remember Maggie Hickey, Mr Speaker? She was doing all right as an independent until the Deputy Leader of the Opposition came along to help her.

As an independent, she came within 14 votes of beating the member for Barkly. Along came the member for Stuart to help out and she lost by hundreds of votes. The same thing happened in Victoria the other day. The Leader of the Opposition went down to help his brother, who should have had more sense, and his brother lost. He has started a dynasty of failures and he has demonstrated that in this Assembly time and time again. However, I digress.

Mr Speaker, I rise to satisfy the concerns of the opposition in this debate as they relate to sewerage and flood mitigation matters. I can do that easily in 1 simple sentence: whilst the opposition has been talking about these things, we have been doing them. We have taken the decisions which will bring about improved sewage treatment facilities and which will bring about improved flood mitigation protection. In Cabinet decision 5727, the government enacted the recommendations of Cabinet submission 4904. I mention those numbers because I do not know which Cabinet papers the opposition has. The thrust of the opposition's breast-beating in relation to the recent Flynn by-election was that a submission was before government in respect of the upgrading of sewage treatment facilities. I said at the time that it would be considered by Cabinet within a month. It was considered within the month and it was approved. That was what the opposition said should happen and it did happen. Why have opposition members attempted to crank it all up again? What are they complaining about? They had their run with it during the by-election.

The member for MacDonnell was the bagman with the Cabinet submission, posting it in plain wrappers around the countryside. It was a cute, if somewhat underhanded, trick that was staged deliberately during the by-election for political motives. No doubt, it had some effect. The opposition ran a scare campaign, warning Alice Springs residents that they were in imminent danger of falling down dead from mosquito bites. Of course, the likelihood of people in Alice Springs contracting a fatal disease in such circumstances is about the same as of them being struck dead by a meteorite or an Exocet missile.

As I understand it, for a human being to contract a disease, a mosquito of a particular species, which may or may not have been bred in the Alice Springs sewage ponds, has to bite a member of a particular species of bird or a particular species of marsupial which itself has to be carrying the particular disease. This particular mosquito then has to fly directly to a human and bite him. In such circumstances the human might - just might - contract the disease. Even then, the disease might or might not develop and, in the most extreme circumstances, it might prove fatal. This is the Alice Springs 'shock horror' health hazard story which was foisted on the town by the opposition. It is a set of natural circumstances which, of course, is not confined to Alice Springs. Everywhere mosquitoes breed, and that is anywhere in Australia, such circumstances apply. It can be argued, without in any way diminishing the importance of the health of citizens of Alice Springs, that they are considerably less at risk than are those people in the wetter parts of Australia. The average resident in the northern suburbs of Darwin probably experiences more mosquito bites in a wet season month than the whole of Alice Springs suffers in a year.

I make these points to put into perspective the basis of the opposition's concern. The bagman did his job in the Flynn by-election and that is politics in an election scenario. There is no election on today, and it is time to return to reality. The opposition has claimed excessive and unwarranted delays in the process of upgrading Alice Springs sewage treatment facilities. It is correct that the process of review of the Alice Springs water and



sewerage plant started in June 1985 when a submission reached Cabinet putting a case for decommissioning of all treatment lagoons in the commonage and the development of lagoons and effluent basins in the Brewer Plain.

It was the member for Barkly who sponsored that submission. It was a poor submission which was prepared against the best advice from the Department of Transport and Works at the express request of the member for Barkly. It was rejected because it had been prepared in haste, without proper and adequate technical studies. Government departments were then instructed to make a full and complete study of Alice Springs sewage treatment facilities and the options properly open to the government. The study was to include a range of environmental circumstances which had not been fully addressed at that stage. It included a substantial report on environmental considerations which was completed in April. That resulted in the submission which Cabinet approved 2 weeks ago. As a result of the Cabinet decision, all these issues will be properly addressed.

The processes involved installation of a new effluent pipe and rehabilitation of the margins of the old pond, and this was completed earlier this year. Desludging of the old lagoons is to start shortly when Ilpapa Swamp levels allow draining and drying of accumulated sludge. Rehabilitation of the forestry plot irrigation system is scheduled for completion in early 1989, and the calling of tenders for components of the construction work is scheduled for January and February of 1989.

Mr Speaker, you will realise the nature and extent of the work involved and the wider implications of that work, apart from any health considerations. You will note that the government has taken the proper course of action. This so-called matter of public importance has been fashioned with the utmost political cynicism. I do not see what point the opposition can make, particularly in relation to the upgrading of the sewage treatment facilities, because the basis of its by-election complaint was that no decision had been made by the government even though I had said at the time that a decision was imminent. The decision has been made, and it is in keeping with the concerns that the opposition expressed. According to their own arguments, opposition members should be congratulating us, not raising this as a matter of public importance.

Whether or not there had been a by-election and whether or not this had been raised as an issue, the submission on upgrading sewage treatment facilities would have been addressed by Cabinet at the time that it was addressed. In other words, it is spurious to claim that the opposition had anything to do with it at all. The opposition had a copy of the Cabinet submission and it knew that it was scheduled to go before Cabinet. That is how government decisions are made. Members opposite merely made political gain out of it.

As a result of the government's decision, work will start next month on the new sewage treatment lagoons, a connecting pumping station and a rising main. An amount of \$2.7m has been allocated for that project in the current financial year. The project is an ongoing one, with eventual disposal of effluent at the Brewer Plain. As part of the project, lagoons in the commonage area will be upgraded so that the ability for mosquitoes to breed will be diminished substantially - end of story, end of opposition concern and end of that section of this tedious, cynical and unnecessary matter of public importance which, in the very words of the Leader of the Opposition, is a 'stuff-up' anyway.

Let us now look at the issue of flood mitigation for Alice Springs. Again, while the opposition was wringing its hands, the government had acted. We cannot be further progressed along the road towards a complete flood mitigation scheme than we are at the moment. It would seem to be appropriate that I outline for the benefit of honourable members the general issue of flood mitigation in Alice Springs.

The magnitude of potential flooding problems was recognised in 1979 following studies for a multipurpose dam on the Todd River and completion of floodplain mapping for Alice Springs. A number of flood mitigation measures have been put in place following those studies. These include: the flood-proofing of buildings, including key structures such as the hospital and the telephone exchange - and all new buildings are being built on flood-protection pads; rezoning carried out by the Department of Lands and Housing since the early 1980s; building and development controls, with limitations set on types of development in different areas of the floodplains; flood insurance for Alice Springs residents through the Territory Insurance Office; public information and education, and exhibits at Alice Springs shows; articles and advertisements in newspapers; talks and discussions at schools and with community groups, and information pamphlets distributed to all householders; flood forecasting, warning and evacuation planning with installation of an electrical, flood-forecasting system and a 24-hour professional service to analyse flood warnings; levees and bund walls constructed at various places in the Todd River - for example, the bund wall around the Roe Creek water pumping station kept flood waters out in March this year and allowed uninterrupted supply to the town; retarding basins used, where appropriate, in newer residential areas to reduce flood levels and feed excess water into creeks; channel improvements through a river bank stabilisation program; sand extraction from built-up areas in the Todd River; and, of course, advanced planning for a flood mitigation dam.

All this has involved government expense well in excess of \$0.5m, apart from the considerable cost of staff input from a range of government departments. The contract was let during the by-election and, in fact, work started before the by-election was over. Sand, which has built up in sections of the Todd, particularly in the vicinity of the casino causeway, is currently being removed under the direction of the Department of Mines and Energy. This 5-year project will examine constantly the sand build-up and undertake remedial action. Meanwhile, construction of a flood mitigation dam moves closer to becoming a reality.

In 1984, a board of inquiry and earlier investigations indicated that the Telegraph Station site was the best site for a flood mitigation dam. It was found that upstream sites at Wrigley's Gorge and Junction Waterhole would be much less effective. The board of inquiry report stated that flooding of Aboriginal sacred sites was the critical issue in respect of the construction of a dam at the Telegraph Station site. It was a highly-emotional issue, as honourable members will recall, both then and in the 12 months or so that followed. Because of these sensitivities, further work on a flood mitigation dam proposal was held in abeyance due to the need to consult further with the custodians. It is remarkable that many of the people now calling for a flood mitigation dam at the Telegraph Station site, and presently sitting in this House, opposed its construction vigorously in 1984 and 1985.

However, the issue became a more urgent priority after the March 1988 floods and, since April, the government has moved positively and firmly towards the construction of such a dam, which is expected to cost between \$10m and \$15m. Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey was commissioned in April to

undertake a feasibility study of the Telegraph Station site and other sites in the region. As part of that study, technical tests were completed at Emily Creek and the Telegraph Station during the period of the by-election. A report on the feasibility study on flood mitigation schemes is being prepared. I expect that report to come before Cabinet for examination at the end of the year. At that stage, the government will be in a position to make decisions, and not before.

A necessary part of that decision process is an environmental impact review which will involve public comment on any proposals. Obviously, it has to be determined properly and technically whether such a dam will work. What does the opposition want us to do? Should we build a dam regardless of the scientific studies and spend many millions of dollars without being certain of success? I say again that the matter of flood mitigation for Alice Springs is being addressed properly and with as much urgency as possible. In that process, there has been extensive consultation with the Aboriginal custodians, both at the Todd River and at the Telegraph Station. I undertook personally to guarantee those consultations in meetings I had in Alice Springs with Aboriginal people, and I have kept my word. From time to time, members of the opposition like to castigate this government for lack of consultation with Aboriginal people. There is usually no factual basis for their complaints and, in this case, they have no grounds for complaint whatsoever. In fact, the custodians have thanked the government and myself for the cooperation that has ensued. Even the Director of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority wrote to me to thank me and to congratulate me on the process, and I seek leave to table his letter.

Mr Perron: A letter from whom?

Mr COULTER: None other than the Director of the Sacred Sites Protection Authority. He thanks me. A good fellow.

Leave granted.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the whole intention of this matter of public importance has been to suggest that important government projects for the people of Alice Springs have been ignored. I have demonstrated that they have not been ignored, and that they have been implemented in a proper manner. This spurious matter of public importance is rubbish. It is merely a face-saving exercise for the Leader of the Opposition who bungled his strategy in such an amateurish and bumbling fashion yesterday. If he had any courage or any credibility, he would have admitted his failings and taken it on the chin. Instead, he has come up with this nonsense. I reject the opposition's pale and unconvincing case and I suggest we proceed with the proper business of the House as soon as possible.

APPROPRIATION BILL  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 4 October 1988.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I will concentrate primarily on the Leader of the Opposition's response because, as honourable members are aware, he is the lead economic spokesman for the opposition. He made his contribution to the budget debate during the last sittings. His response to the Appropriation Bill was predictable. It was so predictable that I thought that he had edited his speech from last year and delivered it again.

Mr Smith: Well, nothing has changed.

Mr PERRON: As he says, nothing has changed: it was whinge, whinge, whinge. I sometimes wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition has ever had a positive thought. If he has, he has made a marvellous job of keeping it to himself. Certainly, there was nothing positive in his response to the budget. It was simply a rehash of vague rhetoric right down to a repeat of the 6 magic principles which, in his view, will solve all the problems of the Northern Territory. Let us look at the 6 major principles.

First, the Leader of the Opposition would identify population targets and the level of social and economic infrastructure required to facilitate our emergence as a state. What a marvellous bit of motherhood stuff that is, Mr Speaker! Why hasn't he done it for us all? He has a highly-qualified economic guru on his staff and I am sure that he could enlist the support of a certain DIT lecturer, who also looks like a bit of a guru, who no doubt would be willing to help him out with some of the facts and figures. Why hasn't he identified the targets and the sort of social infrastructure needed to achieve the goals? The reason is that it is much safer for him to continue using rhetoric. One of the few advantages of being in opposition, and I am pleased to say that, on this side of the House, we have not experienced those few advantages and are unlikely to, is that you do not need to accept responsibility for anything at all. I guess that is what leads them to knock, knock, knock all the time. The Leader of the Opposition is safer with rhetoric because, as he demonstrated with the public debt fiasco at the last sittings, he is totally out of his depth if he attempts to deal with the facts.

The second principle, according to the Leader of the Opposition, is that we must ensure that there are training opportunities for all Territory kids. Why doesn't he tell us how he would do that instead of simply knocking what we are proposing? The government has established an excellent education system right throughout the Territory, from preschool to secondary school. We have established a university college, no thanks to the Commonwealth, and a top-quality institute of technology in a city with a population of only 75 000. In addition, we have colleges in Alice Springs and Katherine.

In this budget, we have reduced payroll tax to provide up to 300 companies in the Territory with the flexibility and the opportunity to take on young trainees. New jobs, many of them for young people, have been created in the Trade Development Zone and, if honourable members opposite do not believe that, let them watch some of the advertisements on TV by the Commonwealth Employment Service seeking to recruit young Territorians into those jobs.

The budget provides for an additional 26 constables and 12 cadets who will be employed in the police force this year. \$800 000 has been allocated to assist school leavers in obtaining employment. \$350 000 has been allocated to a private sector scheme designed to teach needed skills to young Aboriginal people, and this is in addition to the successful public sector scheme. Another \$300 000 has been allocated to provide employment for young Aboriginal people in rural areas. This is how the government has gone about the task. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition overlooked those items in his very cursory examination of the budget documents. We still do not know what the Leader of the Opposition would do to create employment opportunities for all Territory kids or how he would do it better than the government has done. Again, he avoids specifics like the plague. Motherhood-type rhetoric is all we ever hear from what is supposed to be an alternative government.

So far, I have covered only 2 of the 6 magic principles. The third should be the Leader of the Opposition's best shot at showing us that these principles are more than simply hot air. The third principle is that the Leader of the Opposition would minimise red-tape costs for entrepreneurial businesses willing to risk their money in the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition did not take the opportunity to identify even 1 example of the red tape that he wants minimised.

Let us turn to the fourth principle which is that the Leader of the Opposition wants to establish an effective, efficient and motivated public service. I will leave him to tell the 15 000 Territorians that he says are ineffective, inefficient and unmotivated exactly what he would do to sort them all out. He does not give us a single hint.

The fifth principle indicates that he wants to keep Territorians' money in the Territory through investment strategies - really good motherhood stuff. I am happy again to leave it up to the Leader of the Opposition to define the so-called investment strategies that he would use to keep Territorians' money in the Territory in the full knowledge that he does not know what he is talking about. The fact is that 'investment strategies' is a very fine-sounding phrase. It has a definite motherhood ring to it but, on its own, it is meaningless. I am prepared to stand corrected, Mr Deputy Speaker. All the Leader of the Opposition has to do is explain to honourable members exactly what he means. We do not know what money he is talking about. Nor do we know how he would keep it in the Territory, and I guess that we never will because he will never get down to specifics and tell us.

The sixth principle is that the Leader of the Opposition wants to ensure that thoughtful social development policies are aimed at improving the quality of life for all. He has left the Chamber, Mr Deputy Speaker. He cannot stand hearing any more of his own words. This is motherhood at its very best. Of course, the quality of life for all Territorians could be improved if the financial resources were available. That is self-evident. But, again, the Leader of the Opposition has not told us how he would do it. He has not told us because he does not know. He does not know because he does not actually have policies in this regard or in any other regard.

The Leader of the Opposition is like a man who spends his life dreaming of becoming a millionaire and who dies wondering why he never became a millionaire. His 6 magic principles represent nothing more than a wish list. He thinks he knows where he wants to be, but he does not have a clue about how to get there.

However, the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply did not consist solely of his wish list. Even he could not fill 12 or 13 pages of rhetoric with 6 wishes and therefore I will address a few of the other points that he made. He began by saying that we should capitalise on the Territory's resources and build a community that provided satisfying jobs for us and our kids. If I did not know better, I might have thought that the Leader of the Opposition was ...

Mr Ede: Get off the script, Marshall, and give us something sensible.

Mr PERRON: No, I have to stay on the script.

The Leader of the Opposition was quoting from a leaked copy of the earlier released economic development strategy that he criticised so strongly. Again, the difference is that the government has such a strategy whilst the Leader of

the Opposition has only rhetoric. His criticism of the capital works budget indicates only that he still has absolutely no grasp of government financing. What he is saying is that, because \$Xm has been spent in capital works in a particular area in 1 year, the government is not doing its job unless \$Xm plus an adjustment for inflation is allocated in the succeeding year. The essence of the Leader of the Opposition's capital works strategy is that, if the government builds a \$5.5m school in Tennant Creek in 1990, it must build something else worth \$5.5m in Tennant Creek in 1991. If it does not, it will be criticised for neglecting the town.

That may sound ludicrously naive, but it is a fact that the Leader of the Opposition used that argument in Alice Springs during the recent Flynn by-election campaign. According to him, a \$9m generator that was installed in Alice Springs last year should have been duplicated this year, whether it was needed or not, because the government was neglecting Alice Springs by not repeating that capital investment. Of course, the \$9m generator in Alice Springs did not enable \$9m to flow into the economy of Alice Springs at all. That is obvious, since it had to be purchased in Europe and only the installation would have produced a flow-on to the Alice Springs economy. Such facts are conveniently swept aside when the opposition wants to make a point about cuts in capital works expenditure. I guess that is the nature of politics. We all have to try to do our best to battle such things.

As an aside, the Leader of the Opposition proved yet again that his calculator is in dire need of new batteries - or perhaps, which is more likely, a new operator - with his assertion that capital works spending in the Alice Springs area had been slashed. The government was able to prove that the cash allocation for Alice Springs was in fact over 20% of total Territory expenditure this year, up 2% on last year and 9% on the year before. I have no doubt, however, that the Leader of the Opposition's campaign of misinformation took its toll during the Flynn by-election.

I turn now to the incredible comments of the opposition's economic spokesman in relation to public debt and balanced budgets. If anyone wanted the perfect illustration of the member for Millner's paucity of understanding of public finance or, for that matter, private finance, this is it. He alleges that the government, for the first time, admitted that the Territory has a public debt, thanks to his sterling efforts to expose that tightly-held, 10 year-old secret. The real revelation is not that the NT government has a debt but that the Leader of the Opposition did not realise it until a couple of months ago. He cannot be serious and he cannot really believe that the people of the Northern Territory are stupid enough to be taken in by such a spurious argument.

Every government in Australia has a debt and, with the exception of the Leader of the Opposition, every Australian realises that that is the case. The Leader of the Opposition's approach becomes worse. He claims that, because we have a debt, we do not have a balanced budget. I suppose he is saying that this year's budget should really show a deficit of \$1300m. In that case, the federal budget of the world's greatest Treasurer should show a deficit of \$100 000m, not a surplus of \$5000m. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition will correct me if I am wrong, but I can place no other interpretation on his argument. I have seen no public comment by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Treasurer Keating's failure to balance the federal budget. Clearly, he has different rules for Labor and conservative governments. I will therefore put the argument in terms simple enough for even him to understand.

If a family pays all its bills out of its income, including its mortgage and personal loan repayments, then the family has balanced its budget. Every family in the Territory would have to accept that argument. Families do not fail to balance their budgets just because they have a mortgage and personal loans outstanding at the end of the year. If that were the case, nobody buying a house or car would ever balance his budget. The same applies to governments. The budget of every government in this country covers recurrent expenditure and debt interest repayments, not debt capital repayment. This argument is so simple that it is hard to believe that the Leader of the Opposition cannot come to grips with it.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about establishing a venture capital company, in the full knowledge that the government is already conducting a feasibility study into that very concept. Perhaps he has only just snipped it away from us. He talks about encouraging value-added processing of Territory resources, or backward and forward linkages, in the full knowledge that this is existing government policy. He has certainly seen it clearly now in our economic development strategy. He wants as much work as possible to go to local business, in the full knowledge that this is existing government policy. In short, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's reply to the budget was a combination of motherhood rhetoric and existing government policy. He is bankrupt of original thought.

Mr Speaker, I will just touch on a couple of comments made by the member for Stuart in his contribution yesterday. In his view, it is a do-nothing budget. I find it difficult to imagine how anybody could spend \$1600m and do nothing with it.

Mr Ede: I find it very hard to imagine myself.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member should reflect on his motivation when drafting his reply to the budget. His approach went beyond absurdity. He believes that we should stop shoot-outs under BTEC. Of course, he fails to acknowledge that it is a nationwide program and not a Territory program at all. Nearly \$900m has been spent on the program to date and its final stages are taking place in far north Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory cannot go it alone. We cannot draw a line across the Territory and say that it is not part of Australia as far as animal disease is concerned. The world will not accept that sort of action and neither will the beef industry in Australia that contributes 50% of the costs of BTEC through a levy on abattoirs. The federal government contributes 20% and the state governments contribute 30%. They all have a very real interest in the completion of BTEC. It is all very well for the member for Stuart to say that he believes that the shoot-outs in the Territory should be stopped, but he must have a little more depth to his arguments than that.

He said that, because the rest of Australia is doing very nicely, we should not be using the excuse that the Territory economy is going through a bad time. I noted that he quoted Victoria and Western Australia and he may have quoted South Australia. Before making that statement, I wonder whether he considered that there might be a difference in the degree of control over their own affairs that those states have as compared to the Northern Territory. I wonder if he considered the fact that those states probably receive about 50% of their budget from the Commonwealth government. Fluctuations in Commonwealth funding to the states is not nearly as dramatic for their budgets as they are for the Territory's budget because the Territory receives more than 80% of its funding from the federal government. I wonder if he considered the fact that those states may control all activities that

take place within their own boundaries without having their powers limited very significantly as the Northern Territory government does through the Land Rights Act. I wonder if he thought that those governments might have total control of the mining in their states rather than the partial control that the Northern Territory has. Power in relation to uranium mining is excluded from the Northern Territory government.

Mr Ede: And from them.

Mr PERRON: South Australia? I wonder if those states have control of their national parks? I wonder if those states have control of their airports and their stage of development. Of course he does not worry about those things. He is simply not interested.

Mr Ede: Do yourself a favour and sit down.

Mr PERRON: I will sit down shortly, Mr Speaker, because it is very hard to find much more to say about the member for Stuart's shallow contribution to the budget debate.

There was plenty of rhetoric and, like the member for Barkly, he referred to programs that the government should pick up. There was no suggestion of where money might come from. Of course, that is the beauty of being in opposition. You need not be responsible for identifying where the money will come from.

The member for Stuart said that there was no correlation between the budget and the economic development strategy that the government has now identified. I would refer him to a number of things ranging from employment, training, infrastructural development in various industries, industry assistance, the fostering of manufacturing, funds provided to projects such as the buffalo domestication program, the funding of Aboriginal cultural centres, work on developing downstream gas industry processing, work in developing tourism infrastructure - Litchfield National Park, Berry Springs, Holmes Jungle, the West MacDonnells, Kings Canyon - expanding horticulture through government research programs, the beef industry and research into goats. If he referred to any of those matters, he would be able to find the correlation between the development strategy and the budget allocations in relation to them. There are very real connections but, of course, he did not have time to undertake that study. At least, he could have refrained from commenting and making a fool of himself by saying that there was no correlation. There is.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. Some members made valuable contributions to the budget debate. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Mr CHAIRMAN: I remind honourable members that, in accordance with the sessional order adopted on 25 May 1988, the committee stage will be for a total of 6 hours.

Schedule 2:

Appropriations for divisions 14 and 15 agreed to.



Appropriation for division 16:

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, could the minister provide details on reduced spending on fire service operations and emergency services operations? What services will no longer be provided in these areas and what alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that people will have access to necessary emergency services? Does the allocation of resources between the Southern and the Northern Commands reflect the number of incidents and offences reported in those regions during 1987 and 1988?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the 1987-88 expenditure was distorted by a one-off legal payment of \$15 000 under 'Operations'. The 1988-89 allocation for 'Operations' has not increased by as much as would normally be expected due to savings expected from the planned closure of the Daly Street Fire Station. Additionally, costs associated with the commissioning of the new Iliffe Street Fire Station, from which an improved level of service would be expected, are shown under 'Corporate Management'. No reductions in the level of services will occur.

The 'Operations' expenditure for 1987-88 on emergency services included \$50 000 for the Alice Springs flood. When this is taken into account, it can be seen that funding, especially for equipment in rural areas, has been increased and no reductions in services will occur.

The member asked whether the allocation of resources between Southern and Northern Commands reflects the number of incidents and offences. It is assumed that this refers to the police vote rather than the emergency services vote. Resources are not allocated to commands primarily on the basis of reported offences and incidents. If this were the case, there should be fewer staff allocated to areas such as Nhulunbuy, Jabiru and Alice Springs where factors such as remoteness and geographical areas of responsibility are dominant. Allocation of funds on the basis of reported offences and incidents would at best only address the reactive aspect of police operations whereas a substantial part of the police budget is allocated to proactive activity.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I have already asked the Chief Minister a question regarding an item which I thought only appeared in isolation in Consolidated Fund receipts from Territory sources, in relation to Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I refer to the Commonwealth diesel excise rebate. It appears also in relation to the Departments of Transport and Works, Education, and Primary Industry and Fisheries. Nevertheless, as the Chief Minister is the first cab off the rank, could he tell me why this item is placed in Consolidated Fund receipts from Territory sources?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I thought that the honourable member would ask why it occurred only in relation to police and not other areas. However, she has rightly identified that there are other areas. I understand that the funds allocated to the police are paid back to Treasury for payment to the Commonwealth. Treasury pays the Commonwealth the excise on behalf of the government. However, to reflect the true costs of departments, we give the money to them. It is a rebate from the Commonwealth for the use of diesel for non-taxable purposes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, that answer begs my next question, which is not entirely connected with Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. This item appears in relation to the Departments of Transport and Works, Education, and Primary Industry and Fisheries but does not appear in

relation to other government departments where I would have expected it. I do not know whether to address this matter to the Chief Minister as Treasurer.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I suggest that the honourable member ask each responsible minister at the appropriate time.

Appropriation for division 16 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 11:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, there has been a dramatic increase in advisory fees from \$662 000 to \$1.173m. Could the Chief Minister explain how that has occurred?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I will respond to the first 3 items on the list given to me by the Leader of the Opposition.

Budget allocations for advisory fees and constitutional development allow for the costs of obtaining specialist services which are not available from within government. These costs include fees, travel, accommodation, reports etc. The government recognises now, as it has in the past, that it is necessary to obtain and use a range of experts to provide advice which is not available from within government.

The 1988-89 budget allocations for advisory fees and constitutional development are not based totally on specific consultancy arrangements but on expectations consistent with the experience of previous years. For example, the government is committed to the attainment of statehood by the Northern Territory and, where practical, resources available from within government have been and will be used. However, where necessary, specialist services are arranged outside government to support and complement the work being done by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. At present, there is an estimated commitment of \$790 000 against these combined budgets. However, it is early in the financial year and whether or not all of the 1988-89 budget allocations will be needed will depend on the nature and scope of any additional tasks set by government.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, if we continue to receive blancmange answers like that, there is really not much point in this exercise. There has been an increase in the allocation for advisory fees from \$662 000 to \$1.173m, an increase of almost 100%, and the best that the Chief Minister can say is that it is for the seeking of advice in certain areas. He really owes this Chamber an explanation, in broad terms - no one wants to know the names of the advisers - of how he expects that additional money to be spent. Frankly, if he does not give that information, he will fail to answer my question.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the increase is primarily due to increased expenditure by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development. Increases include the full year's effect of salaries, the provision of secretarial support to the executive officer, provision for travel and associated allowances to cover a comprehensive itinerary of evidence-taking meetings throughout the Territory and the costs of advertising and printing.

Mr SMITH: The Chief Minister has just answered the wrong question. I am asking about advisory fees, not constitutional development.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the advisory fees include fees for the Northern Territory Digest, NCOM support services, the Territory's representatives in

Canberra - Neilson, McCarthy, MacIntosh Parkes - the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia project, the final accounts for self-government celebrations and general consultants.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, whilst the 1988-89 allocation is a significant increase on the actual figure for 1987-88, if my memory serves me correctly the budget allocation for 1987-88 was in excess of \$1m. Because of very tight constraints, the awareness programs were not implemented and, when the 1988-89 budget was structured, provision was made for a potential to run awareness programs and to allow for a range of consultancies which might be required during the course of the year. It is prudent, in a budgetary sense, to make sufficient provision particularly in the advisory fees section of the Chief Minister's budget to ensure that there are funds available to carry out consultancies that may arise from time to time during the course of the year.

I remind honourable members that a number of consultancies are being carried out in respect of matters such as the Alice Springs to Darwin railway and certain issues associated with statehood. Sir John Moore, the former President of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, is carrying out such a consultancy. Earlier today, the Chief Minister mentioned Major Les Hiddins, the Bush Tucker Man, who is engaged as a consultant by the Northern Territory government. Other issues are likely to arise during the course of the year and it is prudent that provision be made within the Chief Minister's budget to enable the government to obtain advice from consultants when the need arises. That is not to say that the money will be spent. It is simply prudent budgetary practice to ensure that there are funds available for those sorts of activities and it would be irresponsible not to do so.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for Nightcliff, who gave a much clearer explanation than the current Chief Minister. Obviously, he knows more about these matters.

I have a problem with the increased allocation for constitutional development. For a start, I have a problem with the nomenclature. I believe the item should refer to statehood awareness or something like that. This House has a Select Committee on Constitutional Development and members will note that there has been an increase in funding to the committee generally because of the perceived importance of promoting constitutional development. I want to know whether it was just a slip of the tongue when the Chief Minister said there was a need for an increased allocation for constitutional development because of the cost of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development or whether in fact the constitutional development section of his department is funding this House's Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I began to read an answer relating to the Select Committee on Constitutional Development in response to the second item on the list I received from the Leader of the Opposition, which contained questions relating to Legislative Assembly committees.

As the member for Nightcliff said, amongst those constitutional development requirements for funds were the consultancies involving Major Les Hiddins, Sir John Moore, Dr Alistair Heatley, and general consultancies for unprogrammed areas as they may be approved. Obviously, where departments believe that there may be requirements for expenditure during the course of a year, they seek to set aside some funds to pay for those so that they do not have to prune existing allocations unreasonably.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like clarification of what work the ABC Bush Tucker Man, Major Les Hiddins, is performing in relation to constitutional development in the Northern Territory.

As I understand it, the Chief Minister is joining together constitutional development and advisory fees and is answering questions on them both at once. If we add last year's figures for those 2 allocations and compare them to the total for the 2 allocations this year, we see that there is a 100% increase. The only explanation we can think of is that the allocation represents a bit of extra fat in the budget, with the possibility that it may be spent later. I would have thought that, if there was a need to allow a significant amount for possible expenditure arising during the course of the year, the amount would have been retained in the Treasurer's Advance, which is the traditional source of funds of this nature where specific requirements arise during the year which could not be foreseen at budget time.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I must rise to dispute that proposition by the member for Stuart.

Members interjecting:

Mr HATTON: I will take the interjection of the member for Arafura. This happens to be a debate, not question time in the House, and all members of this Assembly are entitled to participate in a debate in this Chamber. If the opposition would start to address this as a debate rather than trying to turn it into a 6-hour question time and filibuster, we might get through some of the business of this Chamber.

As a member, I disagree with what the member for Stuart said when he claimed that this is the sort of thing that can be provided for appropriately by way of the Treasurer's Advance. It is historically demonstrated that moneys in this sort of order are called on within the wide-ranging activities of the Department of the Chief Minister and the functions of the Chief Minister. It is sensible to make provision for this sort of funding instead of taking the view that it is not necessary to budget for it and leaving a bit of fat in the system somewhere else, in the Treasurer's Advance or wherever. That could be done and, if we go over budget, we could start to sort it all out when we came to the first or second budget review. That would give the opposition a chance to say that we were blowing our budget and would end up with a deficit. That is what the opposition would run with if we did that.

This is a prudent, rational budgeting approach. It says that there is a provision made for advisory fees in the order of \$1.173m. If that provision is exceeded, as it may well be in the course of the year, because of necessary and important actions taken by the Chief Minister and his department, that will be resolved in the first or second budget review. Conversely, it may be that, through tight management or because the circumstances do not arise, those moneys, as they were last year, would not be spent and the Department of the Chief Minister would be in a position then to hand those funds back to Treasury during the first or second budget review. However, to suggest that we should not budget for that is very irresponsible and I would totally oppose that course of action.

Mr EDE: A final word, Mr Chairman. The point then is that, on advisory services and the pursuit of statehood, we spent \$925 000 last year. This year, the government has a wish-list figure of \$1.873m, for those 2 figures, which it cannot identify in relation to any specific programs whatsoever. All that is clear is that possibly another \$950 000 will be spent over and above

what was spent last year. As the member for Nightcliff admitted, it is included in the budget to cover the possibility that it may be needed elsewhere or the government might think of something else to do with it in that area later on during the year.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, reluctantly I climb to my feet to refute the allegation from the member for Stuart. He should have been listening. Some of these are the full-year effect of programs started last year. I have listed a number of them. He can refer back to that in the transcript in due course. Of course, other programs will be developed from time to time during the course of the year.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I think it is important to establish what this is related to. The purpose of the committee stage is to obtain information on how and by whom money is to be spent. If there is an allocation which is double the allocation made last year for a particular activity, I think that members have a right to an explanation of that. What new programs are being developed and what is that money to be spent on? I do not think it is unreasonable to ask those questions.

The Chief Minister and the member for Nightcliff have said that some activities are being pursued in this financial year and that there are some carry-over costs from the last financial year which are to be borne by this budget. I will accept that, but what are they? Why the extra allocation? It is a fairly large amount. We are not talking about 10% for inflation or anything. We are talking about an increase of over 100% in this allocation. The only thing that opposition members have asked is what it is to be spent on. What particular activity justifies that increase and that amount of money? I do not think that that is an unreasonable question to ask.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask a question of the Chief Minister in relation to the item of \$293 000 in 1987-88 to the Office of Women's Affairs and the figure of \$499 000 in the budget for 1988-89. I apologise for not giving him prior notice of this question. Can he give me some indication as to the increased activity of this office, and does he anticipate that this allocation will increase from year to year? This is an increase of almost 100% from 1 year to the next which, in anybody's book, is quite a leap forward.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I was trying to recall whether the planned, public programs for education in regard to domestic violence was to come under my portfolio. I am not quite sure. I know the Commonwealth is to commence a program nationally in relation to domestic violence. As honourable members are aware, we have tabled draft legislation in relation to domestic violence. Part of the program is certainly a Territory public education program which has never been run before. I expect that will include TV coverage as well as other forms of the media and no doubt that will be expensive. I would think that that would contribute part of it.

Mr Coulter: That is part of it.

Mr PERRON: Numbers on the Women's Advisory Council have been increased from 14 to 16, and a women's fellowship award has been established as well.

Mr LEO: I intend to pursue this because I think it will set the tone of these committee proceedings. I do not intend to let it rest until the Chief Minister indicates quite clearly to this House that he does not intend to or cannot provide the information that is being sought by the opposition. I mean

to ask other ministers some questions and I hope that the Chief Minister is not seeking to set the tone for these committee proceedings.

In division 11, could the Chief Minister explain the increase in advisory fees from \$662 000 to \$1.173m? That is the increase over the 12-month period. I do not doubt that the Chief Minister can provide this House with a very plausible and laudable explanation but I want to hear it. Obviously, some new advisory capacity has been set up, new advisers have been appointed or there is some new undertaking being entered into that justifies an increase of some 100% for that particular activity, but I have not heard yet what that is. On this side of the House, we can only assume that the pursuit of these committee proceedings will be an absolute farce.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I could undertake to write to the honourable member with further advice that I do not have here. I read a list of the items for which the \$1.173m is being used.

Mr Leo: Most of those are being undertaken now?

Mr PERRON: Yes. What we are talking about is a full-year cost of some of those. Some programs that started last year may not have been paid for last year. It depends on the timing of accounts coming in to the government. I do not have before me a break-up of last year's figures. I have an element of the break-up for this year, which I have read out. It includes an element for the Department of the Chief Minister to engage consultants on matters which are expected to arise but which may not be completely defined. The Department of the Chief Minister must have the ability to respond to events which may arise.

Mr Leo: You have a 100% increase and no explanation.

Mr PERRON: Obviously, we expect to spend it as well.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, whilst the expenditure for advisory fees in 1987-88 was \$662 000, I have taken the opportunity to check the actual budget allocation. It was \$897 000. Considerable restraint was exercised during 1987-88 and programs were delayed to contain expenditure in a very tight budgetary year. In fact, the increase this year compared to last year's figure is nothing like 100%. It is an increase from \$900 000 to \$1.1m - about \$200 000. There have been additional consultancies, to which the Chief Minister referred, such as Major Les Hiddins, the permanent consultants in relation to the railway development, and others. Those more than account for the additional \$200 000. They came in very late in the last financial year. There is also provision for circumstances that may arise, as there was last year and the year before.

With respect to constitutional development, the budget allocation last financial year was \$708 000 even though expenditure was only \$263 000. That was in anticipation of a promotional campaign in relation to statehood which did not occur because of the very tight budgetary restrictions and dissatisfaction with some of the promotional programs that were suggested to us.

There was expenditure on work on industrial relations and statehood by Sir John Moore. Some of that will carry over into this year. Sir John did most of his work after 30 June. A number of such expenditures are occurring. There is an allocation to enable a number of those programs to be picked up within the budget of the Department of the Chief Minister. Equally, they

could arise out of the work of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development which may be seeking funding for a particular program. These must be taken into account and provision made for them.

Appropriation for division 11 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 10 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions of which I have given notice to the Treasurer. I might start by altering the tone of the first one slightly. Is it the government's intention to adopt the national accounts form of presentation and delete loan funds from revenue as is done by the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments in determining the budget result?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the Territory has presented its budget in national accounts format in table 2 of Budget Paper No 3, the Budget Overview. This supplements the traditional format used in other budget papers. To gain a good understanding of the Territory budget, it is important to have the information presented in a number of different ways. The national accounts format is only one of these. The Territory budget information has been presented by program, portfolio and the purpose to which the expenditure is applied. Revenue has also been classified in a number of ways.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, does the Territory Insurance Office make a contribution to the Consolidated Fund and, if it does not ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: When he has sorted out the disagreement opposite, Mr Chairman, will he tell me when he will ensure that it does?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, there is legislative provision for the TIO to make a dividend payment to the Northern Territory. The payment would be based on the level of company tax the TIO would have to pay if it were not tax exempt. It will make a contribution once the requirements of the legislation have been met and the responsible minister is satisfied that it is prudent for it to do so. Because I am the responsible minister, I can bring honourable members up to date.

I believe the TIO will be making a contribution to consolidated revenue next year. It was debatable whether or not to require that to take place this year because the TIO did make a small profit. However, I am informed by the TIO that there is a suggestion from its legal advisers that a small amendment to the act may be required to clarify this matter further. I will certainly have that addressed in the coming months to ensure that, depending on the results of the TIO's financial performance next year, it will contribute to consolidated revenue as has always been the intention.

Mr SMITH: That is good news.

Turning to payroll tax, to what extent is compliance activity directed at abuse of the tax thresholds by the use of an artificial number of entities where those entities effectively are owned or controlled by one individual partnership, company or trust?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, no measure is made of the extent to which Tax Office resources are directed to the specific issues of splitting business activities to take advantage of the tax threshold. As all members are aware, legislation prohibits the splitting of a business to avoid tax. However, the Payroll Tax Act contains specific provisions, called group provisions, to overcome avoidance. When applying for registration, all employers are required to furnish information to enable the determination of whether one employer should be grouped with any other employer. The employer's status is reviewed at least annually. During all investigations carried out under the field audit program, it is standard practice to review the grouping status of an employer. I point out to honourable members that the Tax Office has 7 inspectors. There are another 3 staff who are involved from time to time in validation work for tax purposes. That is in the Tax Office generally and not specifically for payroll tax policing.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, did the Territory have a foreign currency exposure as at 30 June 1988? If it did, could that be described? What impact did the 19 October stock market crash have on those investments? What cash and securities were held by the Territory as at 30 June 1988?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, as at 30 June 1988, the Territory had no foreign currency borrowings and therefore no foreign currency exposure in respect of any borrowings. However, there is a little more information that the honourable member may appreciate. Two Territory authorities had an ongoing foreign currency exposure. The main areas of exposure is in respect of electrical generation equipment and the roll-on roll-off facilities at the port. As at 30 June 1988, the value of contracts subject to exchange rate variations was just over \$8m. The exposure was in United States dollars and Japanese yen. This exposure has since been reduced by hedging to less than \$1m. By way of explanation, these are not borrowings in overseas currencies. For example, we bought the roll-on roll-off facility in United States dollars and we are paying for the item with Australian dollars.

As at 30 June 1988, the Territory had current balances and investments totalling \$18 551 542. This included loans totalling \$458 541 which have been made pursuant to section 33(2)(c) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. Of this amount, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority received \$400 000 and the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission received \$58 541. Those are 2 loans by the Northern Territory to its own statutory authorities. In the case of the ADMA, it is a loan advance for crop purchase so that farmers can be paid. The loan is repaid by the ADMA to the Territory government when the crop is sold. The loan to the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission was on-lent by that commission to the greyhound track.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, there is a sum of \$200 000 for the expansion of computer services and a sum of \$310 000 for a training program. What systems will be developed from the expansion of computer services? What will expenditure of the sum of \$310 000 for training programs involve? Will those training programs be given by NTPS employees and, if not, by whom?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the \$200 000 covers 11 technical positions to meet increased demand for computing services and to improve and maintain data management processes. I can inform honourable members that the workload has grown seriously beyond the manpower resources of the computer section. A decision was taken to make a quantum step upwards in its resources. It was not a result of specific new programs being adopted under computerisation. We are a very computerised government and we did not pay enough attention to the resource. The \$310 000 is for ongoing staff training for technical computer



staff and new trainee programs in computing and accounting. The money will be spent both internally and externally on specialist courses from technical suppliers and contract training organisations.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we come to public service superannuation. There is a statement in the papers that says the 'reduced provision for employer contribution is explained by the pending clarification of new federal income tax laws'. What exactly is the impact of those rules on superannuation contributions? Why is the unfunded liability being allowed to increase? Has provision been made in the allocation for the 3% NTPS superannuation scheme, and what would be the difference in liabilities in 20 years if the employer contribution were funded rather than unfunded?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the new income tax rules for superannuation may result in the Northern Territory being penalised financially for making prudent provision for future superannuation entitlements. However, the extent and nature of any financial penalties remain unclear. Accordingly, it has been decided to limit the contribution to this fund pending clarification of the new income tax rules. I understand that other governments in Australia are also taking this cautious approach. The foreshadowed new superannuation rules or taxes by the federal government - and it would be tragic - may make it more beneficial for governments to unfund their current, partially-funded or wholly-funded schemes. Whilst that sounds very strange, economic advice from Treasury is that, until such time as this matter is completely clarified and a decision can be made definitely to stop putting aside funds, we should be cautious towards it. It may be that the new Commonwealth taxes will mean specifically that people who are funding the schemes will lose out.

The impact of the new income tax rules on public sector superannuation schemes is unclear because the federal government has not yet introduced the necessary legislation to give effect to the superannuation taxes proposed in the May economic statement. The Territory government is waiting to determine to what extent Territory employer contributions for superannuation may be taxed. The important issue for all government superannuation schemes is the capacity of a government to meet superannuation benefit payments when they fall due. In any given year, part of those obligations will be met from the accumulated fund and the balance from the Consolidated Fund or Territory authority earnings. However, the Territory government partially funds its public superannuation liabilities and has an employer reserve fund for this purpose. The employer fund currently has assets of approximately \$84m which is more than adequate for the estimated benefit payments of \$47m for all Territory government superannuation schemes over the next 5 years.

The 3% NTPS superannuation scheme benefit payments have been taken into account in setting the level of employer contributions for superannuation in 1988-89. The employer reserve fund is also able to be used to meet the 3% benefit payments as necessary. There would be no difference in the liabilities for benefits in the 3% NTPS superannuation scheme in 20 years time whether the scheme were funded or unfunded.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I cannot understand that. Surely, if we had a fully-funded scheme, there would be no liability at the payout. That is the actuarial system on which to operate to achieve that result. On the other hand, if it is a totally unfunded scheme, there would be a total liability.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, we are probably splitting hairs. Whatever the source of funds, the liability to pay out is unchanged. That was the point that I was making. However, if the scheme were fully funded, there would be

assets to match the liabilities of approximately \$75m in 1988 dollars at that time. In 1988 dollars, \$75m is the expected liability in 20 years time.

Mr Smith: That is the 3% scheme, right?

Mr PERRON: That is what your question was.

Mr Smith: No, it was not.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I refer to the budget development and management program which takes into account 3 major components: budget policy and operations responsible for advice on budget policy issues etc; revenue policy and operations, which aims to optimise the amount of revenue to the Territory's coffers, and Commonwealth/state local government financial relations; and taxation policy and operations. I note that, during 1988-89, there is to be considerable work done to enhance the presentation of budget information and on improved techniques for reducing tax avoidance and evasion. These are 2 issues which the opposition has raised previously - the presentation of the budget, and the means of developing the budget etc.

Can he advise how that development program, which has been running for a couple of years, can continue to develop when the amount of money available to that division has been reduced from \$4.18m to \$2.547m?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, could the honourable member indicate the line that he is referring to?

Mr EDE: On my copy, it is at page 39 and is under 'Financial Policy and Operations'. 'Budget Development and Management' is shown.

Mr PERRON: You cannot get any answers from the text on the next page?

Mr EDE: No. Mr Chairman, the text talks about significant developments in 1988-89, enhancement of the present budget information and the introduction of improved techniques for reducing tax avoidance and evasion. Obviously, these are items which we applaud and they seem to represent an enhancement to the operations of the section. However, the actual allocation has been reduced by some \$1.6m which is close to a 40% reduction.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I cannot help the honourable member with the details he seeks at this stage. I am sorry.

Mr EDE: Will he seek advice on it?

Mr PERRON: I can seek advice for you. Do you want to hold up proceedings while I seek advice?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, while the Chief Minister is seeking advice on that point, could he also obtain for me advice on the item beneath it, 'Accounting Development and Services'. The allocation for that has been reduced by a lesser amount, from \$2.834m to \$2.609m. We are told that that division provides for 5 new trainees who will develop skills in the operations of the system and be available to departments. It covers the development, implementation, monitoring and improvement of financial recording and reporting systems. This has been the subject of substantial comment by the Auditor-General over the last couple of years. Again, I would have expected the maintenance of at least the previous allocation or an increase, given the statements made by the Public Accounts Committee as well as the Auditor-General on that. In fact, there has been a decrease.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we turn to trust fund accounts. There has been a significant increase of \$26m in the total amount of money held in trust fund accounts. Some uncharitable people have suggested that this money is being salted away so that the Northern Territory government can bring it out just before the next election and throw some goodies around. Not for one moment, Mr Chairman, would I believe that the honourable members opposite would sink so low as to use such a common, political trick. To prevent that impression being circulated in the community ...

Mr Dale: By you?

Mr SMITH: By us and others, unless we get a good answer here tonight.

Mr Chairman, let me go through the questions in order. Has the government specifically determined that the balances should be increased by this magnitude? What are the reasons for the increases in the trust fund accounts? Is the government satisfied with the levels or will they be reined in? What specific comments can the Treasurer make in relation to the Transport and Works operations account, the Northern Territory Loans Corporation account, the BTEC account, the Government Printer operations and the Housing Commission accounts, which are amongst the major increases?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements show that the increase in balances in the internal trust funds was some \$18m. This represents less than 2.5% of total receipts for the year and is considered to be a minimal increase in that context. The increase in the closing balances for external trust accounts was held at some \$16m, which represents some 3.6% of total receipts for the year. Again, in this context, the increase is considered minimal. There has been no specific direction by government to increase the trust fund balances or to rein them in.

With regard to the Transport and Works operations account, the very great bulk of the balance is in the form of routine rebates for recoverable works. Recoverable works are those works for which funding is provided to sponsor departments and authorities, but the actual works are conducted by the Department of Transport and Works. These have all been taken into account in the development of the 1988-89 budget.

Honourable members will realise that the trust fund balances do not appear in these papers with the possible exception of the Housing Commission. They are available from the annual accounts which are public documents. I think the Leader of the Opposition meant to ask about the Northern Territory Land Corporation. This says the Northern Territory Loans Corporation, but I think that is a mistake. As honourable members will appreciate, that is a non-government body.

Mr Smith: I am sorry. You are right.

Mr PERRON: The balance there was in the process of being paid to the government as at the end of the financial year - that is, paid from the corporation to Consolidated Revenue. It was in the process of paying.

For BTEC, \$444 000 of the additional \$1.280m represents committed loans that are not drawn down. This category of costs was held in an ADMA account in previous years. The balance has been taken into account in the development of the 1988-89 budget.

The allocation for Government Printer operations has an additional \$895 000. Due to a change in administrative arrangements during 1986-87, the Government Printing Office was transferred from the Department of Transport and Works to the Department of Labour and Administrative Services. This resulted in the closing balance of 1986-87 being treated as an ongoing receipt not reflected as an opening balance in 1987-88. There has been no increase in the moneys appropriated to the Government Printer.

The allocation for the Housing Commission is up \$7.494m. Of the increase, approximately \$6m is unexpended appropriation for loans to borrowers which was not utilised due to the downturn in the real estate market and \$2m is revenue from an unanticipated sale of assets. This has been taken into account in the development of the 1988-89 budget.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, on receipts, I note that there is a provision for \$26 000 in recovery of principal and interest from the Alice Springs abattoir. Given the unfortunate fire that occurred there yesterday, can the minister advise us whether that loan is covered by the proprietors or lessees who have operated the abattoirs? If so, could he advise us whether it is normal practice for the government to ensure that such operations are fully covered in the event of this type of misfortune?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I have a feeling that loans such as that to the Alice Springs abattoir date back to before self-government. That is certainly the case with the loan to the Katherine abattoir which we inherited from the Commonwealth. I believe that the liability for the loan would rest with the owner rather than the lessees of the premises and would be secured by way of mortgage against the property. I really cannot help the honourable member further than that.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I ask the Treasurer to assist me here. I cannot see any reference to receipts from the bed tax. Do they appear elsewhere, and could he advise me as to how much was received in the last financial year and how much is expected to be received during this financial year?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I do not have any information on this. If the honourable member is referring to the tourism marketing levy, I believe that those funds go into a tourism marketing trust fund which relates to the Tourist Commission's income.

Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 26:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, some mischievous people think that the Treasurer's Advance is another area where the government can salt away money for the lead-up to an election campaign. In order to dispel that nasty rumour, can the Treasurer advise the House how the advance of \$44.8m allocated in 1987-88 was disbursed? How much of this year's advance has been disbursed already and where have those amounts been allocated? What proportion of the Treasurer's Advance, if any, will be applied to the Anderson project?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer's Advance last year of \$38.1m was disbursed in accordance with a schedule that is available in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements which I propose to table tomorrow and to present in considerable detail.

To answer the member's next question, the Treasurer's Advance is a provision for expenditure in excess of an appropriation or for an item not provided for by appropriation. It is an advance which may be repayable or written back by transfers to heads of expenditure for which appropriation exists. Therefore, the amount disbursed in a financial year is not finalised until the appropriation for that year lapses on 30 June. This information is provided in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements. In other words, it would be highly unusual for any application to be made to the Treasurer by any minister for an advance from the Treasurer's Advance at this stage and even later in the year, except for an extraordinary item that was not budgeted for. That, however, does not stop access to such funds if there is a need.

The last question refers to the State Square project. Under the current arrangements, it is not expected that any funds available in the Treasurer's Advance will be used for the State Square project. As I have indicated at press conferences, the developer is expected to project finance during the construction phase on terms agreed to by the Northern Territory Treasury. In other words, the developer will raise the funds during the construction phase in much the same way as occurred a few years ago with deferred financing schemes such as that used in the construction of the Magistrates Courts. The builder financed the project until its completion and it was then paid for. Thus, whilst there are funds available in the Treasurer's Advance, it is not currently anticipated that they will be needed for the State Square project.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, that is news to me because, as I understood the situation as described by the Chief Minister at the last sittings, the government was considering 2 options. One was for payment to be made out of consolidated revenue, possibly including the Treasurer's Advance, and the other was the project finance option which has just been outlined. Is the Treasurer saying that the option to fund from consolidated revenue and semi-government borrowings is out and that the project will be financed by the developer?

Mr PERRON: No, that is not correct. The Leader of the Opposition is confusing project construction finance with end-financing. If we wish to, we can fund the total project through semi-government borrowings. The government can raise funds through public subscription, through government bonds or through borrowings from private institutions at normal semi-government rates and can then pay for the project in that form. We could then pay for the project from the commencement of construction or at its completion.

If the government paid for the project at its completion through borrowings at semi-government rates, it would require someone to pay all the people involved in the construction and to pay for materials. Someone has to pay. If the builder pays, that is a form of bridging finance. The government does not pay progress payments, as it were. That is an option.

Mr Smith: Is that the option the government has chosen?

Mr PERRON: No. We have not determined the final financial arrangements and we have not entered into any financial arrangement with the developer for the financing of the project. The government still has the bottom-line option of using semi-government borrowings to pay for the project. I said at my press conference that one of the options was that we could take out a loan when construction was complete in which case the developer would be required to fund construction.

Mr Smith: But that is what you said before. You said the developer would provide the funds for the construction stage.

Mr PERRON: I am saying that it is currently proposed, It has not been decided. We have entered into no agreements that the developer will fund the construction period.

Mr Smith: Is that your favoured option?

Mr PERRON: That is my favoured option at present. The Territory government has the option, which has not been established, of accepting a developer-offered financial package from that period onwards.

Mr Smith: From the end of construction?

Mr PERRON: Yes. However, if it is more attractive to us, we have the option of semi-government borrowings. Those options are both totally open.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I want to support the comments of the Chief Minister. I would remind honourable members that, during the course of the budget speech, the Chief Minister referred to an unallocated capacity for semi-government borrowings of some \$30m, less \$10m which related to the Darwin Airport and the State Square project. We have the capacity for that funding to be allocated within our global limits because of the negotiations that occurred in respect of the Premiers Conference. That borrowing capacity is not yet reflected in expenditures or capital works in the budget. It is a matter for government decision as to whether those global limits are picked up or whether they are notionally picked up by way of the alternative financing package. The Chief Minister's remarks in this debate are in no way at odds with what he said in August or in his press conferences. Final decisions on the method of financing are yet to be made. The government will decide whether to incur up-front costs on a year-by-year basis from this year or whether to commence meeting those costs in a later year. In either case, as with every capital works program, the costs will be met over a period.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the Chief Minister about alternative ways of financing the proposed State Square development. If the Cabinet decides on developer project finance, obviously the developer will not provide this out of the goodness of his heart. What will the developer get out of it? Will that include development rights over certain blocks of land in the city centre or anything else that will cost the taxpayer money?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, this has nothing to do with this budget debate but I will quickly allay the fears of the honourable member. If she wishes, I can give her a copy of the press release that I made shortly after becoming Chief Minister in which I announced that I was proceeding with the State Square project and that its scope would be limited to construction of the 2 buildings. No land will end up in the hands of the developer. There are no ongoing development rights and there will be no office block.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You can change your mind.

Mr PERRON: I do not intend to.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to take up the issue raised by the member for Koolpinyah. In a briefing given to some members on this side of the House at the time of the last sittings, the Minister for Transport and Works indicated quite clearly that there would be a percentage for the

developer in the construction of this project, a percentage that was yet to be determined but was expected to be between 8% and 15%. The member for Koolpinyah's question is perfectly reasonable in terms of establishing what sort of percentage the developer will receive for his contribution.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I would remind the member for Barkly that, at the moment, we are discussing division 26 which relates to the Treasurer's Advance. A question was asked by the Leader of the Opposition as to whether funds had been made available in the Treasurer's Advance for the State Square development. The Chief Minister has replied in the negative and the question that the member for Barkly is pursuing should be addressed to the Minister for Transport and Works when we get to his division.

Mr TUXWORTH: I will be happy to do that, Mr Chairman.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the Treasurer advise whether money from the Treasurer's Advance is currently being used for the preliminary work on flood mitigation in Alice Springs? If so, how much has been spent and how much is intended to be spent on that project this financial year?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I cannot tell the member how much will be spent on the project. It is possible that the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority will be able to do that when we reach the appropriate division. I can assure the honourable member no funds from the Treasurer's Advance are being spent on flood mitigation works in Alice Springs.

Appropriation for division 26 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 29:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, what proportion of the loans outstanding are former NTDC advances? How many are in arrears on repayments? What action has been taken? How many bad debts are there? How much has been written off?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the answer to what proportion of loans outstanding are former NTDC advances is 100%. You cannot get a more unequivocal answer than that!

How many are in arrears? As at 31 August 1988, 31 were in arrears. What action is being taken? In all cases, there have been follow-up letters or legal representation. How many debts are bad? The Territory Loans Management Corporation's provision for bad debts as at 30 June 1988 was \$4m. As for bad debts - I think the Workers' Club would be a fair bit of that.

Mr Smith: Is it? That is what happens when you try to buy votes.

Mr PERRON: Come on! Mr Chairman, to take the honourable member's interjection, anybody who thinks he can buy votes off ...

Mr Smith: Paul Everingham thought he could.

Mr PERRON: How much has been written off? The Territory Loans Management Corporation has written off \$373 252 in the 12 months to 30 June 1988. Information on previous amounts written off is shown in the published annual reports.

Mr Smith: That is a clever way of avoiding the topic.

Mr Perron: Why would we be avoiding the topic? We are talking about this year's budget, not the annual reports for the past 5 years.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the figures that have been given to me, and I am not sure where they came from, indicate that loans given under these arrangements total some \$27m, and that the total amount of money written off, in one way or another, was \$11m. I am not stuck with those figures. Would the honourable minister be prepared to comment on that.

Mr COULTER: You are wrong. We will just try to sort those figures out.

Mr Chairman, I thought that the TLMC total loans portfolio, including write-offs of the \$373 252 and \$4m delinquent-type loans which are out there at the moment only came to a little over \$11m in total. I will check that for you now. Was \$27m the figure you mentioned?

Mr Smith: Yes.

Mr COULTER: Certainly, that is way out.

Appropriation for division 29 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 46:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for taking the trouble to have one of his officers ring my electorate office and ask me if I had any questions. I hope he has had sufficient notice to enable us to get through these questions as rapidly as we can.

The first question I have against division 46 is in relation to receipts for electricity. There is an expected increase in receipts of some 4.9% which is shown in Budget Paper No 2. Given that there has been an undertaking that there will be no increase in electricity charges, how does he envisage the increase in receipts will be achieved?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the expected increase of 4.9% in electricity receipts is due to load growth reflecting an anticipated increase in electricity usage of \$3m, and increased revenue from the introduction of billing in remote communities, which is up \$2.8m.

It is interesting to note that we are always in a slump. It is gloom and doom and the Territory is going backwards. Nevertheless, one of the greatest performance indicators that we have - electricity production - seems to continue to rise, even through bad periods. A good example of that is Katherine. We built the powerhouse down there at 19.5 MW and already, because they are 6.9 MW sets, our load growth is increasing. The member for Katherine might be able to help on this. Certainly, the supermarket resulted in nearly 1 MW increase and the opening of the abattoir in 1.5 MW. There has been tremendous load growth even when we are allegedly in periods of doom. Really, natural growth has contributed considerably.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, my next question derives from Budget Paper No 4, the detailed estimates. It refers to page 53 of that paper. What proportion, if any, of the \$35m saved on power generation costs is applicable to efficiency measures and what saving is due to capital works cash reduction?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, \$33m of the reduction relates to capital works and \$2m reflects a reduction in operating expenditure. I think that accounts for the \$35m.



Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, why has the amalgamation of the Power and Water Authority agencies and the power and water activities which were undertaken formerly by separate authorities not yielded staff level savings? At least, that is not indicated within the salaries vote within that particular activity.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, could I go back to the previous question about the \$35m. I have been supplied with some further information on that. In 1987-88, \$160.925m was spent and \$125.861m is allocated for 1988-89. The variation is caused mainly by a reduction in expenditure on capital works as a result of progress towards completion of installation of new generating equipment in Darwin and Katherine. That information is a bit more specific.

With regard to the amalgamation of the Power and Water Authority agencies and savings on staff levels, the integration of water agencies prior to 1 July 1987 resulted in a reduction in the number of positions. Following the establishment of the Power and Water Authority, further reductions in staffing levels were achieved. However, progress with the rationalisation of the power functions, which would result in significant staff savings, was delayed until April this year pending resolution of Power and Water Authority award negotiations. Since the agreement on 1 award for all authority employees was negotiated, the authority has commenced consolidation of its organisational structure, together with rationalisation of services in the commercial and operational area. Staff savings will result as the rationalisation of functions progresses.

Mr LEO: From what the minister said, would it be reasonable to assume that that will be reflected in next year's budget?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, one would hope that it will be reflected in next year's budget. At this stage, it is highly unlikely that we will achieve the savings.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I have given notification of this question to the minister. Could he give details about the Consolidated Fund receipts from Commonwealth sources in relation to irrigation and other water projects and water conservation and efficiency improvements. In other words, how will the money be used?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I thank the member for Koolpinyah for the details that she supplied to me and the questions she has asked about the irrigation and other water projects and water conservation and efficiency improvement items which form the Consolidated Fund receipts from Commonwealth sources.

For 1987-88, specific recurrent purpose payments for environmental restoration and water were \$232 000. The specific purpose payment for urban flood mitigation was \$56 000. This year, the urban flood mitigation program has an amount of \$116 000 but there is no amount specified for environmental restoration.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Do know what you will do with it?

Mr COULTER: There is no amount. They were specific recurrent purpose payments for environmental restoration. I can find out what the project was. Obviously, it was a specific-purpose payment for a particular project which dropped off after 1987-88.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is not right according to this. The \$75 000 has been allocated for this year and there was nothing last year for water conservation and efficiency improvement.

Mr COULTER: I am talking about environmental restoration. You are quite right. The water conservation and efficiency improvement figure is \$75 000. I am speaking about the first line item on that article. I was going through it one step at a time.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did not ask you about that.

Mr COULTER: Let us move on then. I will not give you the irrigation and other water projects or the urban water supply and treatment figures because you are not specifically interested in those.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did want to know about irrigation.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the 1988-89 budget figures formed the basis of the Northern Territory's application to the Commonwealth for assistance for the Rum Jungle project and the federal water resources assistance program. Senator Peter Cook, Minister for Resources, has since responded with the Commonwealth's offer of assistance which is less than that applied for. Nevertheless, the various projects which formed the basis of the application will be carried out in 1988-89.

The details of each item and its current status is as follows. For environmental restoration, the \$232 000 is the Commonwealth's contribution to the Rum Jungle rehabilitation project as per its agreement with the Northern Territory government. The 6-year agreement terminated in August 1988. Funds were for preventative maintenance and monitoring programs.

The urban flood mitigation provision includes a number of projects associated with the development of upgrading of flood warning systems, floodplain mapping studies and studies associated with floodplain management plans. The budget of \$116 000 for 1988-89 represents total expenditure of \$240 000. Eligible projects attract either \$1-for-\$1 or 40:60 Commonwealth-NT funding. Projects in 1988-89 include upgrading the Alice Springs flood warning system, floodplain mapping studies for Katherine upstream of the town, Adelaide River township, Darwin rural area and the lower Daly River and continuing work on Alice Springs flood management. The Commonwealth has allocated \$86 000.

Irrigation and other water projects include a range of water planning studies. There are no irrigation projects. It is made up of the NT Water Resource Plan, the Darwin water supply short-term and medium-term augmentation studies and the Alice Springs water management study. The bid of \$170 000 represents total expenditure of \$340 000 and this is \$1-for-\$1. The Commonwealth has provided funding assistance for only one project - a \$45 000 contribution to the NT Water Resource Plan.

Water conservation and efficiency improvement includes 2 projects. One is the NT Water Demand Management Program, the public awareness program on the need to conserve water, and the NT Leak Detection Program. The budget bid of \$75 000 represents total expenditure of \$150 000 and, once again, it is \$1-for-\$1. The Commonwealth has provided funding assistance for only the water demand management program which is \$50 000. Urban water supply and treatment ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I do want to know.

Mr COULTER: You are not interested in that one. Let's do it for the benefit of honourable members anyway. This covers works under the Country Towns Work Improvement Program. Funding to each of the states and the NT is based on a formula developed by the Commonwealth. The NT has a number of projects in Aboriginal communities and in small towns which qualify.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have 4 questions which relate generally to the development of a private transmission system to various parts of the Northern Territory. I will link them all together and perhaps the minister will be able to give us the answer somewhat expeditiously. What arrangements have been made and contracts have been signed for the building and operation of the private transmission lines and what will be the impact of the privately-owned distribution lines on the PAWA's cost schedule? Is the PAWA protected against unreasonable cost escalation on these transmission line contract costs? What will be the extent of the actual and contingent liabilities arising from these contracts?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, as I have mentioned, the growth of Katherine is the reason for the transmission line. One option was to put in another turbine. In fact, the bed has been poured and the wires are already in place to take another solar 7 MW set. However, it was decided to develop the 132 kV transmission line.

Contracts have been signed with the firm known as NT Power Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Balfour Beatty Pty Ltd. The firm has given an undertaking that there will be a substantial local content in the project including manufacture of precast concrete foundation materials and some of the structural steel. This is estimated at 42% of the contract. The majority of the balance of the contract is for manufacturing materials such as transformers, switchgear, insulators and conductors not produced locally. NT Power has also given an undertaking that there will be 90% local content in its ongoing operations. As part of the agreement, NT Power will be given a non-exclusive mandate to sell electricity to certain customers within 50 km either side of the transmission line but excluding present Power and Water Authority customers.

There will be no significant cost impact on PAWA from private ownership as opposed to public ownership. It is anticipated that the lines will reduce future generating costs in Darwin and Katherine. In addition, NT Power will be able to make additional electricity sales along the line between Darwin and Katherine. These benefits will contribute to the containment and reduction of future power costs.

In relation to whether or not PAWA is protected against unreasonable cost escalation on the transmission line contract costs, the contract is managed by the PAWA and is not subject to price escalation other than for exchange variations.

Mr Leo: Foreign exchange rates. Is that what you are talking about?

Mr COULTER: Yes. Most of the cable is coming from Thailand and the insulators are from Singapore.

The actual liabilities under the electricity purchase agreement provide that the PAWA purchases electricity from the line with the tariff to be paid consisting of 3 components: a minimum payment to meet the lease payment obligation of the NT Power Company, a viable energy charge and an operating charge.

In relation to contingent liabilities, in support of the obligations of the PAWA under this project, in June 1988, the Territory agreed: (1) in the event of default or termination of the project prior to completion of construction, to indemnify the proposed purchaser against all losses associated with the requirement to repay the funds extended by the financiers; and (2) upon entering the operation phase, to indemnify the financier against any failure by the Power and Water Authority to meet its obligations. We have to supply the power to the line.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have a final question. Unfortunately, it is not included on the list of questions that I provided for the minister because the matter arose relatively recently. It relates to the cost of development of the Alice Springs sewage treatment plant. Where in the budget estimates is the cost of those works included? Mr Chairman, I would be very pleased to know if it is included in the budget.

Mr Coulter: The \$2.7m?

Mr LEO: Yes. Where has it come from?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I do not have my briefing papers with me at present but I can provide that information in a few minutes. I am sure that it will be a very simple answer.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, my question to the minister is related firstly to water. The Treasurer's speech contained a reference to an increase in water charges of 2¢ per 1000 kL. Can the minister advise me whether any announcements have been made relating to increases in sewerage charges? I ask my question in the context of a notice in last week's NT Government Gazette which announced increased sewerage charges of about 25%. I would ask the minister whether that is in fact the case and, if so, what impact does that have in terms of increased revenue for the government?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will supply that information shortly.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister why he is putting in a line to run power from Darwin to Katherine when, in the last Assembly sittings, he made much of the fact that our gas pipeline is not large enough for the purposes we would like it to fulfil. Would it not make far more sense to take gas out of the pipeline at Katherine and leave more capacity for power to be supplied to Darwin?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, there are greater economies of scale to be achieved by using the large turbines in Darwin. We also have the opportunity to pick up quite a number of power consumers, such as some of the larger mining camps. If electricity were to be generated in Katherine from gas, \$10m or \$11m would have to be spent on another turbine which still would not give the continuity of supply and the interconnector capabilities which exist when electricity is supplied from Darwin with a backup capacity in Katherine. Supplying the electricity from Darwin offers greater economies of scale. In terms of the capacity for the projects that I am talking about, we are looking at some \$200m-worth of modifications to the pipeline to accommodate those projects including 13 compressor stations, looping and perhaps even another 6-inch powerline from Mataranka to Darwin.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like the minister to advise where the money that has been spent this year on the first part of the Alice Springs flood mitigation proposal has come from and where the amounts for the balance of the works this financial year will come from.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, officers are working on that now. I think the figure is \$320 000 which has come from the Power and Water Authority appropriation. In terms of where we go next, the report from Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey will be received on 9 December. That will complete the initial phase and decisions concerning further expenditure will have to be made by Cabinet. The total expenditure on flood mitigation could be somewhere in the order of \$10m to \$15m and that will have to be budgeted for in due course. I understand that the \$320 000 has come partially from capital works and partially from the flood warning allocation that I mentioned previously.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I note also that there is an amount of \$305 000 allocated for repair to flood-damaged sewers and water mains arising out of the floods earlier this year. The minister may be aware that there has been considerable concern in Alice Springs that the water mains were unable to cope with the flow of water during the floods and were actually breached, which constituted a possible health problem for the people of Alice Springs. Can the minister advise whether the \$305 000 is simply for repairs to restore the pipes to their former state or whether they will be upgraded to the extent that they will be able to withstand floods of that size in the future?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, off the top of my head, I believe those pipes are to be upgraded to withstand flood pressures. I can remember receiving a briefing on it, but I cannot be more specific at this stage. I am happy to write to the honourable member and give him the exact information in due course.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, my question to the minister relates to the annual payment for the pipeline. I understand that the formula for payment on the pipeline makes provision for the Territory to benefit from any interest variations that occur during the course of the year. Were there any savings in the last year and does the minister anticipate that there will be any this year as a result of variations in interest rates?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, savings have been made as a result of variations in interest rates which have occurred over the past 12 months and they are expected to occur over the next 12 months. The member for Barkly asked whether there was a decrease in payments for the rental of the pipeline. The rental payments cover the leverage lease and return tariff payments which the authority is obliged to make on a regular basis to the banks, which funded the debt capital, and NT Gas, which funded the equity capital. The debt to equity funding of the project is in the ratio of 80:20 approximately. Repayment of the equity portion of the pipeline financing obligations remains basically unaffected by fluctuations in interest rates. However, repayment of the debt portion of the pipeline financing obligation is affected by interest rate variations, as the debt is funded using a floating interest rate, namely the 180-day bank bill rate.

In the past 12 to 18 months, interest rates have come down and hence the leverage lease payments have reduced. Lease payment No 1, due on 17 June 1987, was \$16 168 862. No 2, due on 17 December 1987, was \$13 381 971 and No 3 on 17 June 1988 was \$13 385 466. The short answer to the member for Barkly's question is that the rental payments for the pipeline have decreased. However, it would be imprudent to suggest that interest rates will remain relatively low over the next 12 months. The bottom line is that rental payments move in line with fluctuations in interest rates. It is perceived that the member for Barkly may want to use this information to justify his argument that electricity charges should be reduced. At this point, it should be noted that, in real terms, electricity prices have decreased in the last

2 years - that is, the authority has not increased charges in that time. Furthermore, the proposed flow-through of savings from the pipeline rental reductions would mean a 0.0034 kW.h reduction to the price of electricity, which is fairly marginal.

Mr TUXWORTH: Marginal as it is, Mr Chairman, it would be greatly appreciated by consumers.

Mr Chairman, the honourable minister provided quite an adequate briefing there, but the question I asked was: how much were the savings in the year against what was anticipated in the last budget?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I can only go by the variations that have come through over the year from June 1987 to June 1988. The honourable member can see that that has been \$2.8m.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I see that the honourable minister is indicating that there is a \$2.8m difference between the first payment and the second or third payment there, but it is quite possible that the first payment was well below what was anticipated in the budget, and that is my question.

Mr COULTER: It could have been higher.

Mr TUXWORTH: I do not think that is likely, but that is the question. Is the amount that was saved on the payments less than was anticipated by the government, and by how much?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am happy to provide the exact details to the member for Barkly, at a later stage.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I am grateful for the honourable minister's assistance. I am sorry that I did not make my question clearer to him when I received a phone call the other day. In view of the honourable minister's forecast that interest rates are likely to rise, what impact is that likely to have on the budget? If there is an increase, how is that likely to be funded from the government's revenue?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will provide the information to the honourable member.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I am grateful for that. If the honourable minister could provide the information on the basis that interest rates might rise by 1%, 2% or 3% during the next 12 months, then I would be pleased to have his assessment of what the increases would be for that range of interest.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, let me put into perspective where the savings are, what really should be passed on to the consumers and how we are approaching this particular problem so that we are not talking about 0.00034 of a cent per kilowatt hour, but about real savings.

The leverage lease payment plus the operational cost payment plus the return to NT Gas payment - which comes to some \$30m a year to operate and pay for the pipe - is divided by the gas flow. The more gas we can get through that pipe and the return we can get, as well as royalty payments on gas etc, will bring down electricity prices in the Northern Territory. That is what we are trying to achieve. There are any number of gas-related projects that we have set in place and that we are negotiating. Last week, in Alice Springs, we talked with Mt Isa Mines, the Aluswiss people who are at Gove and the

proponent of the major chemical complex that is proposed for Darwin. If those projects come on line, then we can talk about real reductions in electricity costs, perhaps as much as 50% reduction.

Whilst I appreciate the member for Barkly basing the savings on the fluctuations in interest rates, which might go up or down, that is really not the crux of the matter. What we really have to get into is some of these big projects. We need to get the gas flowing through so that we can lessen the burden in terms of the operating costs and the leverage lease payments as well as the return to NT Gas.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable minister for stating the obvious. There is no doubt that he is absolutely correct. However, he has missed my point and I will put the question again. I am not just looking at the amount of saving that has been achieved as a result of the good fortune of interest rates falling. That is a part of it, but I am asking the minister, if it goes up by \$10m or \$20m or \$2m, how does the government propose to accommodate that from the budget expenditure? Who will miss out? Someone will have to miss out if the government has to find money for that.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I do not have a crystal ball with me. I hear Paul Keating telling me that oil prices are going up and oil prices are going down, and interest rates are going up and interest rates are going down. That is a fact of life. If the rates do increase, we will have to meet those payments. It is as simple as that. They would have to be funded in one way or another, and they would be. That is a fact of life; that is the deal that we have entered into and those payments will be made. The member for Barkly knows that. In terms of where the money would come from, whether it would come from the appropriation for the Power and Water Authority or from savings, we are definitely jumping at shadows there. It is a fact of life that interest rates may rise or they may fall. I can assure honourable members that the payments will be made or the savings will be realised.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I would like to return to the the question I asked in relation to the \$2.7m allocated to the sewage treatment plant in Alice Springs. Is he able to advise me on that point?

Mr COULTER: Certainly. The \$2.7m has been approved by Cabinet as a supplementary item for the construction of sewage treatment lagoons and a pump station. It has been approved by Cabinet as a supplementary item.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, either I did not understand the answer or the minister did not understand the question. Basically, where does the \$2.7m come from? The Treasurer's Advance? Obviously, it has been appropriated into the PAWA budget, but from what source? Has it come from consolidated revenue, the Treasurer's Advance? Where has it come from?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, it is simply a budget appropriation from the Treasury. Probably, the honourable member would need to ask the Treasurer about that. He had to find the money, and it was found.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I want to turn from large and very important items to small, but no less important items. Can the minister provide a list of the amounts that it is being planned will be spent on minor new works in Aboriginal communities in respect of the provision of water supplies? Certainly, I would like a full listing of them and I am sure other bush members would too. I note that some \$690 000 is allocated for works estimated to cost \$100 000 or less. I know that myself and other members representing

rural communities always experience difficulty when attempting to have water supplies provided at outstations and sometimes for communities that have been established for some time. Particularly, I would like the honourable minister to refer to 2 in his answer and I have written to him about them. The first is Mirirridi, which I spoke about in the last sittings of the Assembly, and the other is Anningie which I think I must have spoken about at every sittings in the last 5 years. The latter is a community the Minister for Health and Community Services did in the eye. He convinced the people to move out of their community, where at least they had a spare pump in the creek. He lambasted this opposition, and myself personally, for not being a party to encouraging the people to move from that place. They have now moved to another area, following that pressure, and have no water.

I have written to the honourable minister about this particular community recently, asking him what he will do about that, and I ask him to take that on board along with other places where there are proposals to spend money for a bore and minor reticulation, in my area and also in other members' areas, because I am sure that they will be quite keen.

Mr Dale: Is there water there?

Mr EDE: In response to the interjection from the honourable minister, the problem is that, where they have moved to, the water is also salty.

Mr Chairman, the people themselves do not have a crystal ball to enable them to work out the quality of the water some 100 m down. They need some assistance from the government. They need government officers to undertake a proper survey and determine where it is likely that water will be located. They moved back to Ti Tree Station. They have not received that assistance, and I would ask the honourable minister to take that up.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will. The answer on the gazettal notice today is that there will be a net decrease in revenue as a result of that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, the minister stated the obvious when he said that, if the interest rates rise, payments on the pipeline will rise and we will pay for it. There is absolutely no doubt about that. Everybody will make sure we pay for it. My question to him is: if it rises by a considerable amount, how has the government allowed for that in the budget? That is really a very simple question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, as a matter of contingency planning, some money is put aside for increases in interest rates or unforeseen expenditures. The Leader of the Opposition referred to this as a type of slush fund or campaign fund. Money could be made available from the Treasurer's Advance or at the first budget review. Once again, the member for Barkly is jumping at shadows. He knows full well that there is nothing in the 1988-89 budget that was not in the 1987-88 budget. The same thing applies and it will apply for ever.

Mr Chairman, I will say again that we must develop our gas projects in the Northern Territory so that we can pay off the debt on the leverage lease. The operational costs will then rise, as will a number of costs, but they will all be met. In the words of a very good friend of the member Barkly: 'Don't you worry about that'.

Appropriation for division 46 agreed to.



Appropriation for division 47 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 45:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister why mining royalties are estimated to increase by some 21.7%. Could the minister please explain to what extent the increase is explained by changed production levels, profitability or commodity prices?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the actual revenue receipts for mining and petroleum royalties in 1987-88 totalled \$10 642 000. Estimated receipts for 1988-89 have been predicted at \$12 938 000. That increase is 21.575% above the previous year's receipts, not 21% as the member for Nhulunbuy stated. The major portion of the expected 21.575% increase, or \$2.296m, is expected from 2 commodities produced in the Territory: gas and gold.

Gas production from the Amadeus Basin Palm Valley gas field is expected to increase as a result of a larger consumption by the Power and Water Authority, with an expected increase in royalty receipts from \$1.054m to \$1.418m. Recently, 4 new goldmines have commenced production and are expected to pay \$1.2m in royalties this financial year. In addition, 1 major mine is projecting markedly increased production, which is predicted to net the government an additional \$468 000.

Mr Ede: Is that the Granites?

Mr COULTER: I do not think so. I think it is Cosmo Howley.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, the remainder of my question relates particularly to the allocation for the geological database. What outlays will there be, apart from wages and salaries, what proportion of this expenditure will be subject to cost recovery and what protective measures will be taken against persons with access to relevant information profiting from land lease deals?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, miners and people involved in the mining industry are a very suspicious lot, and the member for Barkly has told me many stories about why that is the case. Another question, which the member for Nhulunbuy might have raised, concerns the value of the work of employees of the Department of Mines and Energy who are head-hunted by mining corporations and taken out of the system for whatever reason. That is a very real concern because it does happen. In fact, it happens on a weekly basis.

In the Appropriation Bill for 1988-89, the Northern Territory Geological Survey is allocated \$1.234m for its normal ongoing activities plus an additional \$1m to provide accelerated geological programs to expand the information available to the mining and exploration industry. I have a briefing note which gives information on current expenditure to date. In summary, the airborne geophysical surveys receive an allocation of \$500 000, of which \$463 000 is committed. Hydrocarbon resource studies receive an allocation of \$275 000, of which \$157 000 is committed, and which includes petroleum basin consultancies. Commodity study packages and maps receive an allocation of \$190 000, of which nothing has been committed at this stage. The Tennant Creek research project receives an allocation of \$25 000, and that has all been committed. Of the total amount, \$990 000 has been committed.

Ongoing geological database activities include the current projects, regional mapping, finalisation of the Barrow Creek and Litchfield projects, continuation of the Kulgera and McArthur Basin projects, and commencement of

the Musgrave-Petermann Ranges project. In the mapping area, they include the finalisation of the Calvert Hills project, the continuance of the Pine Creek project and the commencement of the Tennant Creek project. In geophysics, they include the finalisation of the Musgrave-Petermann Ranges airborne survey project and the completion of the Ayers Rock survey.

Mr Chairman, the accelerated geological program undertakes projects to assist in the stimulation of the mining exploration industry. The current situation is that the geological survey has commenced in a number of programs. In the Granites area, a contract for \$178 000 has been let to Geoterrex of Sydney and flying is due to commence early in October. In the Marumba area, a \$260 000 contract has been let to Aerodata of Perth with flying due to commence during the second week in October. The department has provided new aerial photography for the survey at a cost of \$25 000. In terms of petroleum basin studies, 4 separate contracts have been prepared, with the initial consultancy costing \$147 000. Expressions of interest have been called to undertake consultancies for the production of a mineral map of the NT as well as a commodity package and an exploration series map. Tenders close on 6 October and offers will be assessed and processed by mid-October.

In terms of the geoscience resource database, work is in hand for the installation of new computer software to facilitate easier access to information. Staff training is in hand to assist the industry in this project and 2 additional limited-tenure staff have been employed to speed up the data processing. In the Tennant Creek research project, the survey has joined with the University of Tasmania and some of the mining companies to undertake special investigatory studies as part of the Tennant Creek metallogenic project. The funding to date is \$25 000.

This brings me to the matter of the security of the database. The trendsetter in this field is an American company which has a very strong Jewish background. It carries out all the testing in wells for the oil industry and has facilities on most rigs which enable it to deliver information directly to the operators on a particular well. That ensures that the information is available only to the operators. Stringent safeguards are used in the industry to ensure that information goes only to the people who have commissioned the studies. I take the member for Nhulunbuy's point that the department has been involved in geophysical work for many years. To my knowledge, it has never been wracked by any scandal and no one has used departmental data to stake claims after leaving the employ of the department. I cannot offer any security measures that would be greater than those in force at the moment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is a point in relation to the question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy on which I am not clear. He asked what proportion of the expenditure will be subject to cost recovery. Take the Granites program as an example. As the honourable minister knows, there are a number of companies which have moved recently into the Highland Rocks area. Those people have applied for exploration licences. Obviously, if those were finalised prior to any knowledge that the government would do this work, the knowledge that this other work would be done would have added value to the licence. To what extent does a cost recovery component come into this? Is it a windfall profit to those people or do they have to purchase the information? How is that problem sorted out?

Mr COULTER: There are several answers to the question. We are trying to stimulate mining exploration in the Northern Territory. There may be areas that are not being worked as hard as they could be. The industry is paying us

some \$12m in royalties and our aim is to stimulate the industry to develop more mines by turning that back into the industry.

Honourable members may be aware of an animal that I call the Minerals Development Corporation which I have been talking about. It is a facility whereby you could develop a database of packaged information and not only of geophysical information. It would include marketing, finance, joint ventures etc that would enable a total package to be put together. This has been tried in South Australia and a number of companies are specialising in this type of material. They sell the total package, the total information.

Mr Chairman, I am not down that far at this stage in terms of a return on the investment. The purpose was to stimulate interest in areas which, for various reasons, are underexplored at this time. I take the member for Stuart's point in respect of the perception of windfalls to companies. I can assure him that I am in close contact with most mining corporations and I am aware of their activities in certain areas. There would certainly be no duplication. I would be aware of problems that might arise as a result of our doing work for them. I can assure him that that will not happen.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I do not want there to be any implied criticism. A good argument can be mounted for this work, even if it does eventually result in a windfall profit for some people, in terms of the overall returns to the Territory, jobs, investment, flow-ons, mineral royalties etc. Are we talking about the new corporation this financial year or ... ?

Mr COULTER: It is only a figment of my imagination at this stage, but it is something that I think we should head for.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, in relation to Consolidated Fund receipts from Commonwealth sources, in 1987-88 \$8000 was received for assistance to tin mining. There is no sum this year. Could the minister enlighten us on the reason for this?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I have considerable information on tin miners. The problem with the commodity was that a virtual cartel and quota system existed, throughout Malaysia and Thailand in particular. It was very hard to break into that quota system. The whole thing collapsed when Malaysia pulled out. It is now deregulated.

In 1985, dramatic falls in the international tin price caused severe problems to small tin operators. On 1 December 1986, the Territory and Commonwealth entered into an agreement to provide financial assistance to small operators engaged in tin mining in the Territory who held tin export quotas as at 24 October 1985. Payment was to be by way of an interest subsidy, not exceeding \$8000, to any 1 small tin mine operator for assistance in rationalising operations, restructuring debt or transfer of operations to activities not related to tin mining. Applications for a subsidy, to be considered within a 3-year period, will terminate on 30 September 1989. All eligible operators have been informed of the scheme and the conditions applicable. Only 1 application has been received to date and assessed as qualifying for the subsidy. The department is unaware of any other tin mining operation which could qualify for assistance and, as a result, has not made any budget provision for 1988-89.

Appropriation for division 45 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 23:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we have given the minister a number of questions. Firstly, what amount of the projected revenue of \$183 000 will be gained from factory rentals, and what will be the source of the balance of the revenue?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, we can do this in a number of ways. If the Leader of the Opposition would like to do it 1 question at a time, I am quite prepared to do that.

The budget calculations have been based on zone fee income and rent of \$180 000 and \$3000 from interest on the Zone Tenant Bond Payment Trust Account.

Mr SMITH: What does 'zone fee income' mean as distinct from rent?

Mr COULTER: These fees are applied to people coming into the zone. They pay a one-off fee.

Mr SMITH: Secondly, how much of the marketing incentives and assistance is for overseas activity and how much is for interstate activity?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, we have never broken this down before and used it as a one-line item. You are referring to the 1987-88 budget, aren't you?

Mr Smith: Yes.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I would like to comment on that because there is an amount of \$1.6m in the budget papers which relates to 1987-88 expenditure. That is a one-line item. I have come here to talk about the Appropriation Bill for 1988-89. I accept that there is an item there of \$1.6m but we do not intend to break down the figures from the 1987-88 year in great detail. The Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity last year if he wanted details of that nature. However, I can tell him that about \$800 000 was spent on overseas activities and \$260 000 on Australian activities.

Mr SMITH: Where was the rest spent? There was \$1.6m and he has accounted for \$1.06m.

Mr COULTER: You have some other questions, haven't you?

Mr SMITH: I refer to that particular question.

Mr COULTER: You want to know about the total of \$1.6m?

Mr SMITH: That is right. Mr Chairman, what we are trying to do is obtain an idea of the percentage spent overseas and the percentage spent in Australia. The minister has said that \$800 000 was spent overseas and \$260 000 in Australia. There isn't anywhere else. You are either overseas or in Australia. Where is the rest of it? It does say 'interstate'. Is the rest of it spent on marketing centres and assistance within the Northern Territory?

Mr COULTER: The question was how much of the marketing incentives and assistance is for overseas activity and how much is for interstate activity.

Mr Smith: That is correct.

Mr COULTER: Right. The question now is?

Mr SMITH: The question concerns the difference between the \$1.6m, which was the total amount allocated under marketing incentives and assistance, and the \$1.06m that you have accounted for. Where was it spent?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I am becoming a bit confused about exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is asking. If he is asking what proportion of the marketing value was allocated overseas versus what proportion of the marketing vote was allocated interstate and perhaps what proportion of the marketing vote was allocated within the Northern Territory, that is 1 question. If he is asking how much was spent on incentives and assistance, that may be in respect of marketing activities but also may well be for incentives and assistance to operations that currently exist within the zone.

Mr SMITH: Of course, but let him give the answer.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the other amount of money was the money paid to K.K. Yeung.

In question 3, the Leader of the Opposition has asked me to break down the moneys paid to K.K. Yeung by category. I do not intend to do that. I have given him an answer to written question No 61. Question No '5 will suffice to answer question No 3 that he has asked. Moneys paid to K.K. Yeung since 1985, in conjunction with his activities on behalf of the TDZ, total \$624 127. The specific components of this amount are not appropriate for release as public information; they are a matter between K.K. Yeung and the TDZA. If the honourable member wants the figure for 1987-88, I think he will find the figure is \$572 000.

Mr SMITH: For Mr K.K. Yeung?

Mr COULTER: Yes, that is for other subconsultants and the whole thing. Subconsultants are included in that figure as well. That was in his domain at that particular time.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, in answer to the written question, which was given to me last Friday - and I must say that I found it rather strange that I received the abusive letter 2 months before I received the answer to the written question ...

Mr Coulter: Abusive? A lot of people write to you like that.

A member: That was fair.

Mr SMITH: Yes, that was fair. It gave me time to digest the abusive letter, that is for sure.

Mr Chairman, it says: 'Since 1985, in conjunction with his activities on behalf of the Trade Development Zone, Mr K.K. Yeung has been paid \$624 000'.

Mr Coulter: \$624 127 - be accurate.

Mr SMITH: The minister is now saying that, in the last financial year, he has been paid \$539 000 ...

Mr Coulter: No, I did not.

Mr SMITH: You what?

Mr Coulter: I did not say that.

Mr SMITH: You just said that the difference between the amount expended of \$1.06m and \$1.6m ...

Mr COULTER: I said 'approximately'. We are talking about approximate amounts. It is actually \$572 000.

Mr SMITH: All right, \$572 000. Are you expecting me to believe that, in the period from 1985 to the beginning of the 1987-88 year, that man received only \$70 000?

Mr Coulter: Now you are starting to understand a few things. Now you understand why he is not getting enough money and why he does not know it.

Mr SMITH: Do you expect me to believe that?

Mr Coulter: That is right. You are on the right track at last.

Mr SMITH: For your information, I refer you to the comprehensive answer supplied to this House in 1986.

Mr Coulter: What did that say?

Mr SMITH: You have an essential contradiction on your hands in this matter. That is just another question that you will not answer and which will not go away. I ask you to resolve it and, perhaps before we finish this section, to come back with an answer on that matter.

Mr Coulter: No, I will not.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask another question whilst I am on my feet. In that sittings 2 years ago, we were able to ask the then minister a comprehensive set of questions on the terms and conditions of the consultant employed by the Trade Development Zone and other issues. I would like to ask the honourable minister whether the decision not to supply information of that kind any more is his decision or his government's decision.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I think the honourable member will find that the consultancy agreement itself has stipulations in relation to the release of that type of information.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the questions that we asked in October 1986 were asked during the same consultancy period as now exists. Is the minister trying to tell us that the honourable minister at that time was breaking the terms and conditions of the contract with Mr K.K. Yeung? If so, did Mr K.K. Yeung make representations to the Trade Development Zone Authority or the minister at that time?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I do not have that information in my head at the moment ...

Mr Smith: No, and you don't have much else there either.

Mr COULTER: I do not know whether he has had 1, 2 or 3 contractual arrangements. I really do not know the answer to that question at the moment.

Mr Smith: You do not know how many contractual arrangements the man has had?

Mr COULTER: No, that is right. I do not know how many times the arrangement has been renewed, and what the conditions and the details of that arrangement are. It is that simple.

Mr Smith: I am staggered.

Mr COULTER: You raise it and we will debate it later.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, unless my addition is as bad as that of the Minister for Industries and Development, the figure is \$549 000. That is \$549 000 in 1987-88 and \$75 000 spread between 1985-86 and 1986-87. The first point I would like to make is that it would appear that Mr K.K. Yeung gave us more value for money when he was getting something like \$37 000 a year than he is now when he is receiving over \$0.5m a year, given that the figure has gone up.

I would like the honourable minister to advise me why it is all right for us to know that, in the last financial year, he has grossed \$549 000, but it is not appropriate for this House and the people of the Northern Territory to know the break-up between the retainer, commission letters of intent, travel, seminars, subconsultancies or any aggregated grouping of those particular subitems. Previously, it was asked how that amount was totalled with regard to retainer, contract fees, data fees and reimbursement of expenses. Surely, Mr Chairman, if it is fair enough that we know the total amount, it would be fair enough for us to know something of the break-up of that amount. I ask the honourable minister whether that is not the case. If, as he said, that is precluded by the contract between this government and Mr K.K. Yeung, will he table that contract in this House so we can have a look at it? Obviously, he will be quite happy to demonstrate that that is the case, and then he can start to explain why it is that he entered into a contract which does not allow this House or the people of the Northern Territory to know what this figure covers, given that, for some years, this has been a very controversial issue.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I would simply make the point that, as honourable members would realise if they gave it any thought, there must be dozens or hundreds of contracts of engagement and contracts for work being done by people on behalf of government the details of which are commercially confidential. It is natural. The honourable member does not get detailed breakdowns of consultancies let by the Department of Transport and Works to have buildings designed or whatever. The total sum is available, as far as the taxpayers' outlay is concerned, but there are myriad contracts in the commercial world the details of which are simply that - commercially confidential. There is nothing special about this case.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we have heard from the honourable minister tonight that, in the last financial year, the sum of \$549 000 has been paid to K.K. Yeung. In answer to a written question, we have heard about an amount of \$624 000. Can I refer the honourable minister to an answer given by the minister on 13 November 1986 ...

Mr Coulter: Which minister?

Mr SMITH: The late, unlamented member for Flynn.

... that 'total expenses paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants to date are \$186 000'. \$186 000 on top of the \$549 000, on top of what has been paid in the financial year in the meantime totals much more than \$624 000. I want to know why you have lied to this House. Give us the answer. Stop mucking around and give us the answer.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the word 'lied'.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I withdraw 'lied' and replace it with 'deliberately misled'.

Mr Coulter: Who has?

Mr SMITH: You have. Come on, give us the answer.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You have to withdraw.

Mr SMITH: I withdraw. Are you going to answer that?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, probably the minister made a forgivable mistake in his additions and subtractions to determine whether \$549 000 had been paid or \$575 000 or whatever, but that was irrelevant compared to this point. What the Leader of the Opposition, soon to be Chief Minister, has pointed out is that we have a figure for a period until 1986. That was over and above the \$75 000, which is the difference between the amount which was paid out last financial year and the total amount. The total amount, we are told, is \$624 127.

Mr Coulter: That is between 1985 and ...

Mr EDE: Up to date. The figure given for the last 12 months was \$549 000.

Mr COULTER: \$572 000.

Mr EDE: \$1.06m less \$609 000 comes to \$549 000. The difference between those 2 figures is \$75 000. If, in fact, it is \$579 000, then the difference is \$45 000. Whether it is \$45 000 or \$75 000, it is a far cry from the figure of \$186 000 which 1 of the honourable minister's predecessors said was paid for part of the period that we are querying. For part of that period, he was paid \$186 000. Mr Chairman, we are now asked to believe that, for the total period, he was paid somewhere between \$35 000 and \$75 000, depending on whether you trust my calculator or the minister's.

Mr SMITH: You are an absolute disgrace to this parliament. You have been caught out providing misleading information to this parliament on a written question. You had 3 months to get the answer right and all you can do is sit there and not respond. Let me go through it again in case you happen to be a slow learner.

You have just said that, in the last 12 months, the last financial year, the consultant, Mr K.K. Yeung, earned about \$572 000. In response to the written question, you said that, since July 1985 up until Friday's date presumably, he earned \$624 000.

Mr Coulter: \$624 127.



Mr SMITH: The honourable minister at the time, in 1986 ...

Mr Coulter: Yes, now let us get that straight for a start.

Mr SMITH: ... said that Mr K.K. Yeung, management consultant ...

Mr Coulter: Got \$186 000.

Mr SMITH: ... earned \$186 000 up until November ...

Mr Coulter: Of what year?

Mr SMITH: Up until November of 1986.

Mr Coulter: Right.

Mr SMITH: Already we have \$572 000 plus \$186 000, which is about \$750 000. On top of that, we still have an amount that has not been accounted for the period November 1986 through to 30 June 1987. Would the honourable minister feel free to inform this House how he can explain the essential contradictions in all of those figures?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am happy to look at the previous response in relation to \$186 000 that was given in November of 1986 by a minister previously responsible for the Trade Development Zone and to report back on any discrepancies that may be apparent as a result of answers given by that previous minister.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we were also advised that 21 companies had signed letters of intent with the Trade Development Zone, that 6 had signed primary agreements and 1 local company, Railex Fadelli, signed an agreement without a letter of intent. Of those 7 agreements signed, 5 had established themselves in the zone and 1 other company was currently finalising a start-up agreement.

I would like the minister to comment on the relative returns from Mr K.K. Yeung's activities since 1985, given the numbers of letters of intent that we have been able to secure and the number of companies that have commenced operations in the zone during the period for which we paid him \$75 000 or \$124 000, depending on whose figures are accepted, as against the number of letters of intent that were signed in 1987-88, during which period he received the extraordinary sum of more than \$500 000.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the question has nothing to do with this year's appropriation and I do not intend to answer it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, can the minister advise of the cost of the 2 new factories?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the cost of the 2 new factories will be \$1.7m. The 1000 m<sup>2</sup> factory will cost \$450 000 and the 2000 m<sup>2</sup> factory will cost \$1.2m. In addition, the new operators will spend in excess of \$200 000 on specialist fit-out costs within those buildings.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how many jobs presently exist in the zone and how many of those are located within the zone authority?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the member for Barkly, who happens to be a writer of some note in the Sunday paper, should take note of this answer. The

zone operators employ approximately 70 workers and the TDZA separately employs approximately 19 people. On the same day that the member for Barkly was castigating the zone for employing only 21 workers, which is about the same number of people employed in the TDZA, the very same newspaper in which his article appeared carried an advertisement for 100 positions within the zone.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister has said that he will not answer questions about payments to K.K. Yeung in 1987-88. I would like the minister to advise the House of what the TDZA foresees as the break-up between overseas and interstate categories and payments to K.K. Yeung for 1988-89, given the \$1.446m which has been allocated to that area.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, at the rate at which members opposite are sabotaging the zone, perhaps there will be huge savings and then they will be happy. Mr Chairman, I cannot provide that information at this time. We believe that the zone will have considerable success next year and that a number of businesses will sign and enter the zone. However, the zone has suffered in the past from premature announcements and I do not intend to supply that information at the moment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am not asking for any premature announcement about the number of businesses coming into the zone. I am asking simply for an estimate which...

Mr Coulter: It is an estimate, a projection, and it is something that you are not going to get.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the figure of \$1.862m is an estimate of how much the government thinks it will spend on marketing incentives and assistance during 1988-89. Is the honourable minister serious when he says that he will not provide us with any breakdown of that figure? I am simply asking him to give me a breakdown of what he believes will be spent overseas, interstate and on K.K. Yeung. Surely, Mr Chairman, that is quite within the bounds of the process we are engaged in.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, as the minister faces the increasingly impossible task of putting these sets of figures together, I refer him to page 1027 of the debate of 13 November 1986 when I asked what amount of money had been set aside in the 1986-87 TDZ budget as a retainer for K.K. Yeung Management Consultants.

Mr Dale: What did you ask?

Mr SMITH: I asked a previous minister responsible for the authority. At that time, there was at least some pretence that we had a system of responsible government with an obligation on members of the government to explain themselves. Let me read from the record of the debate.

Mr HANRAHAN: A retainer of \$90 000 has been set aside for K.K. Yeung Management Consultants in the 1986-87 budget. A further \$108 000 has been set aside for retainers for the subconsultants.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I do not think the minister understood the intention of the question. I will rephrase it. How much money has been set aside in the 1986-87 budget, as the possible maximum amount of money that may be paid to K.K. Yeung in that period?

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! It seems to me that the question that is being posed at the moment by members of the opposition has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the matter before this committee. It is entirely inappropriate.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, in speaking to the point of order, I point out that the minister has given 2 sets of conflicting figures. My questions are intended to help the minister sort out those conflicting figures.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, in reply to the question I asked him, the then minister, Mr Hanrahan, said: 'The total amount of money in 1986-87 for consultants is \$480 000'. We are reaching a situation where we not only have \$624 000, but \$572 000, \$186 000 and \$480 000, which gets very close indeed to the figures that I put out yesterday. The Chief Minister said that I was making snide and insidious remarks.

Mr Coulter: This is going to be pretty embarrassing for you.

Mr SMITH: I know who is going to have the last laugh on this one.

Mr Chairman, my question is: how can the minister accept those separate amounts, totalling over \$1m, when his answer to the written question says the total payment to K.K. Yeung is \$644 000?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will not go into this in any great detail, but the Leader of the Opposition has asked 4 different questions. One is about consultants. Another concerns payments to K.K. Yeung.

Mr Smith: It won't work.

Mr COULTER: What do you mean 'it won't work'? You have asked 4 different questions. Are you asking how much K.K. Yeung was paid or, to use your words as you quoted them, how much consultants were paid?

Mr Smith: He received the money, didn't he?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition has asked 4 different questions. He reminds me of the fellow who had an axe. It was the best axe he had ever had. It had had only 4 handles and 3 heads. He is asking different questions and giving different figures using different quotes. He is going back far too far.

Mr Smith: It won't work.

Mr COULTER: We will see if it won't work tomorrow, because I am sure it will be a matter of considerable concern to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: We will look forward to this with interest.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, now that the Leader of the Opposition has established that one of the minister's predecessors was prepared to provide forward estimates of the breakdown between consultancies and other types of marketing, will the minister reconsider his refusal to provide us with that breakdown for 1988-89?

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how many guest workers are employed in the zone, and are their terms and conditions the same as those for the Australian workers?

Mr COULTER: At present, 8 guest workers are employed in the zone under Australian terms and conditions.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, would the minister advise the House what he means by 'Australian terms and conditions'? Is he referring to specific awards? Could he elucidate further?

Is the minister willing to answer any of my questions on this division or does he intend to continue to sit there like a stuffed mullet every time I ask one?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The phrase 'stuffed mullet' is not parliamentary and I ask the member to withdraw it.

Mr EDE: I withdraw.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister how many potential Australian and overseas investors were brought to the Territory for a Trade Development Zone briefing in Darwin during the year ended 30 June 1987 and the year ended 30 June 1988, and how many of those prospects were followed up?

Mr COULTER: All prospects have been or are still being followed up. The exact number of potential investors brought to the zone cannot be easily quantified. However, in 1986-87, 5 groups came from overseas with participants totalling 97. In 1987-88, 7 groups visited from overseas, with participants numbering in excess of 104.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to inform the House that the opposition intends to divide on this division. It is the first occasion in my time as a member of this parliament that this has occurred and probably the first time in the history of this parliament that the committee of the whole has divided on a division of the Appropriation Bill. If it is not the first time, it is certainly a very unusual practice.

We intend to call for a division for 2 simple reasons. One is that, in stark contrast to the attitude of his fellow ministers and in stark contrast to his own attitude in other portfolio areas, the minister is refusing consistently to provide the opposition with information that it seeks, information of a type which does not break new ground, and information of a type that was generously supplied to us in 1986 by the minister then responsible. For all his faults, that previous minister had some respect for the Legislative Assembly and some respect for his obligations as a minister. It is quite clear that the current minister does not have any of those qualities and that is why we are not getting the information.

The second reason we intend to call for a division is because we have witnessed what is probably the most embarrassing effort ever by a minister on a division of the Appropriation Bill. He was confronted with figures that were clearly inconsistent. He was faced with a very real prospect that he had supplied us with a wrong answer in response to a written question and he was certainly faced with the fact that the figures available in the public record did not support the statement that he had made in response to the question.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, if we call for a division, that will take up time. Therefore, I would like to give the minister 1 last chance. He has refused to provide me with any breakdown on how the money will be spent during 1988-89 on marketing incentives and assistance in the zone. Are there any breakdowns that he would be willing to provide in relation to that? Is he refusing to provide any break up whatsoever on that item within the budget?

The committee divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 10

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

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

Appropriation for division 23 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 91:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how will the \$4.5m set aside for the creation of new industrial development agreement support be administered? What conditions will apply, whom will it go to and what sectors will be targeted?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the \$4.5m for the creation of new industrial development opportunities will be administered by the Department of Industries and Development. It will be directed towards large-scale projects which are considered by the government to contribute to the basic commercial infrastructure of the Northern Territory and which have the potential to offer the widest possible benefits to the Territory in terms of its economic and industrial progress. It will be distributed in the form of assistance packages tailored to suit the particular needs of individual projects.

The conditions that will apply include preference for pioneer projects, no competition with existing businesses, demonstrated potential viability, and having a business plan in place and adequate security will be seen as relevant. The range of projects will be subject to feasibility analysis and prioritisation within the priorities of government. Processing and manufacturing industries, especially those adding value to existing primary industries, and the trading and warehousing sectors will be awarded particular attention.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how much of the tourism infrastructure support of \$19.2m is paid in respect of Yulara, the Alice Springs Sheraton and the Darwin Sheraton and others - although I do not think there is any other - and who is the money paid to in each case?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, has the Leader of the Opposition dropped question No 5? That question was: 'What is the sum of \$16.612m for industries and development assistance actually for?' Would he like the answer to question 5 or not?

Mr Smith: Yes, if you are happy to answer it.

Mr COULTER: The \$16.612m for industries development assistance is divided as follows: salaries for 27 departmental staff - \$1.303m; administration expenses - \$1.115m; capital items - \$0.099m; property management - \$0.021m; and other services - \$14.074m. That includes drought relief, fertiliser freight subsidy, crop underwriting, rural adjustment, grain industries support, Industrial Supplies Office, ADMA departmental servicing, Imparja, water supply assistance, milling industry support, small business services, national industry extension services, the Buffalo Development Scheme, ongoing assistance to industry and new initiative assistance to industry.

Mr EDE: The strategy plan referred to an office of investment facilitation, a northern trading company, a venture capital company and a technology development corporation. I cannot see where they would be funded except from the particular item which the minister was talking about. He read out the whole list and has not mentioned 1 of the components of the strategy plan which we are told is linked into the budget.

Mr COULTER: A great bit of socialist philosophy, Mr Chairman. Nobody thinks that the venture capital company or a trading house can be funded by a private enterprise at all; it has to be by the government. There is a whole range of options available for the government in the establishment of all those facilities that were mentioned in the strategy plan and we will be investigating them.

Mr EDE: In other words, Mr Chairman, the minister is telling us either that the strategy plan was born in another hospital from that in which the budget was born and they are not related, or he is trying to tell us that the office of investment facilitation, an office of the Department of Industrial Development, will be run free of charge. The Northern Territory trading company will be set up completely free of charge and the promotion work etc will not cost us anything. The venture capital company will not cost us anything nor will the technology development corporation. Could I have the minister's word that that in fact is the case?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, he cannot have my word. The appropriations are to be accommodated within existing resources. I simply point out to the member for Stuart that his tunnel vision has got him into trouble again because he does not understand some of the other options that are available to private enterprise governments which look to the private sector for growth as outlined in the Economic Development Strategy.

The Leader of the Opposition asked about the budget allocation of \$19.2m for tourism infrastructure support. The expected expenditure is: Investnorth Management Pty Ltd for operational expenses - \$400 000; Yulara Nominees Pty Ltd for the Yulara Tourist Resort - \$9.8m; Territory Loans Management Corporation for the Darwin Sheraton Hotel - \$7.2m; and Investnorth for the Alice Springs Sheraton - \$1.8m.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, why are the administration staffing levels in the department being increased?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the answer is that the department was split with the Department of Primary Production and Fisheries. The new Department of Industries and Development was created.

Appropriation for division 91 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 55:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, there are several questions that I have passed across to the Attorney-General. I seek the views of the minister about the appointment of an additional Supreme Court judge. He made some comments to me yesterday about some changes in that regard, particularly given the very unfortunate resignation of Mr Justice Maurice. In addition to the replacement of Mr Justice Maurice, is it the Attorney-General's view that another Supreme Court judge will be appointed?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it is my intention to appoint a new Supreme Court judge on the retirement of Mr Justice Maurice. I should advise that I have discussed the need for an additional judge with the Chief Justice. He considers there is a need for an appointment for fairly obvious reasons and I am certainly guided by him. I must apologise. I have a throat infection which causes me some problem in raising my voice.

Mr BELL: The maximum staffing level in the Department of Law has been reduced from 121 to 120. What is the reason for that and which position has been removed?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, there is movement up and down all the time. We are in the process of reviewing what we are doing and how we are doing it. With the new Aboriginal Land Commissioner taking on the function of the Family Court and other areas, we have seconded some staff to his office and we have moved other people from other areas. Even though the MSL is down 1, I believe the number of actual bodies is up. I have not been able to find out exactly where the bodies have come from. The MSL is down but we have made many changes in view of the change to the Family Court.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, turning to a more contentious issue, the requirement for a new building is not referred to in the department's allocation. Obviously, an issue that is of concern to people in the Territory is the putative requirement for a new Supreme Court building. I have argued in debates in the Assembly that that is not required. The Attorney-General will be aware that the Chief Minister made a fool of himself when he tried to point out that, because we have only 4 courts and we have 6 Supreme Court judges, it is needed. Basically, I would be very interested in what sort of justification for vacating the existing Supreme Court building the Attorney-General is able to come up with.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, in rising to my feet to answer that particular question, I suggest that the honourable member possibly should become more familiar with the circumstances of the Supreme Court in Darwin. I think that, if he made contact with the Chief Justice and discussed the matter with him, he would find out himself that there are particular problems in a number of areas - for example, space and security. Mr Chairman, for the member to intimate that the Chief Minister was incorrect in saying there was a need shows a most disappointing attitude.

However, I would like to inform honourable members that the present building was completed in 1964. It was built to accommodate 1 judge,

1 magistrate, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and the Commonwealth Police. The building was not designed solely as the courthouse. It was designed for the accommodation of those other groups. Some very significant alterations have been made to the building over the years so that it could cater for the expanding needs of the Supreme Court. By way of example, in the period between 1980-82 to 1986-87, over \$2m was spent on alterations alone. The building itself is very expensive to maintain. Major work is required on the air-conditioning and the power supply at the moment. That is becoming very critical, and it involves quite expensive work in the order of \$1m-odd. The other very important aspect is the lack of security. That is becoming one of great concern.

Presently, there are 6 Supreme Court judges, 1 Master and 1 Deputy Master, each of whom requires courtroom facilities. This is on top of the magistrates operating out of the magistrates courts. There are 4 courtrooms in the building, 1 of which is totally unsuitable for use as a courtroom because of security factors. It is beyond the pale. There is no room for expansion within the building now, and it is used exclusively by the Supreme Court.

To surmount the problems resulting from that lack of space, the Department of Labour and Administrative Services has negotiated with the TIO for the provision of courthouse premises at the old Mitchell Street police station. That has been fitted out in a temporary fashion to provide 2 courtrooms. That arrangement has been in operation for the last 2 weeks. But that is only a temporary development. The TIO will be utilising that particular building in the near future. I think honourable members are aware that it has been developed and used as a courthouse for quite some time. I think the Chamberlain Inquiry was held in that building.

We have a situation whereby we have insufficient courthouse room. We have security problems which allow only 3 courts to operate in the Supreme Court building. We are utilising, on a temporary basis, 2 courts in another building and the Supreme Court building itself requires major work done on it. I think it is important to know that, in 1986, Cabinet requested a review of the requirements for additional courtroom accommodation and, as a result of that review, it was concluded that there was a need for new courthouse accommodation. A number of scenarios have been looked at, including extending the present building.

To cater for our courthouse needs, in the foreseeable 25 years, there is no doubt that we need to have another building. As a result of that, discussions commenced with the Supreme Court personnel, representatives of the judiciary, and the Departments of Law and Transport and Works regarding the requirements for the Supreme Court building, which I am very pleased to see will be built in the very near future. Mr Chairman, it is something that I believe the judiciary will welcome as being long overdue.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, does the minister have figures on usage of the Supreme Court? Is he able to tell us how often all the courts are in use, creating a problem of overcrowding?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I do not have figures of the day-to-day use and the number of matters heard. Obviously, the court operates independently of government, and so it should. I know that there has been a great deal of discussion among the administrative people regarding rationalisation of staff and the available buildings and about ways and means to utilise them to their maximum capacity. As I said, considerable pressure has been applied to have more space made available and, since they have ceased as Aboriginal Land



Commissioners, both Justice Maurice and Justice Kearney are sitting on the bench of the Supreme Court. I have not mentioned the fact that we now have a Territory Court of Appeal. That sort of work cannot be done unless there is provision for proper and secure facilities. A simple room is not an adequate facility for a Supreme Court hearing. Obviously, the work of the court - the ability for juries and barristers to operate - requires more than a room that has been fitted out. It requires specialist construction, especially from the point of view of security. Security is becoming extremely important.

I cannot give numbers, but I can give a guarantee that I have been informed that the facilities are inadequate, and I have no reason to doubt that that is so. Certainly, it will not be able to cope in the very near future unless something is done.

Mr BELL: Will the Attorney-General make available to me, on a confidential basis or however else he chooses, the 1986 review that he referred to before?

Mr MANZIE: No, I will not make available the actual review, but I certainly can provide information on it and discuss with the honourable member the findings on our requirements with regard to why extensions for the Supreme Court were placed on our design list a number of years ago. I would be quite happy to do that.

Mr BELL: I am a little at a loss, Mr Chairman, to understand why the Attorney-General is reluctant in that regard. I would have thought that, if he is so confident that the security requirements and the maintenance bill provided such overwhelming evidence that there was a need for a new Supreme Court building, he would be quite happy to provide the review.

To what extent has the creation of a separate Family Court and a separate Federal Court building relieved pressure on accommodation in the existing Supreme Court building?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am not reluctant to supply information to the honourable member, but I would not give a guarantee to provide Cabinet documentation to him. It is quite important that it is understood that that was what I was talking about. I will supply information regarding his queries but I will not be making available confidential Cabinet documents.

In terms of the changes made on the creation of a separate Family Court facility, as I said earlier, it has put greater pressure on our facilities because it has freed up 2 judges for full time work in our Court of Appeal and our Supreme Court. As a result, we actually require 2 more courts to enable us to utilise those people.

Mr BELL: I will not pursue that issue any further at this stage, Mr Chairman. I will take up the Attorney-General's offer of the opportunity to be briefed further on the need for a new Supreme Court building. As I say, I am yet to be convinced that it is necessary.

To make it clear, it was not my intention to seek access to confidential Cabinet submissions.

Mr Manzie: I was just making sure you understood.

Mr BELL: I was interested to see the review on whatever basis was acceptable, in confidence or otherwise. The confidence was an offer I was making to the Attorney-General.

The final matter I want to tease out with the Attorney-General relates to a commercial causes list. There has been concern about the process of settling commercial disputes, and various ideas have been expressed to the opposition in this regard. This particular initiative was one of them. I am interested to hear what the government's view of it is.

Mr MANZIE: Whether a commercial causes list is established or not is obviously a matter for the court. Discussions have taken place on that subject and I understand the Chief Justice does not intend to establish such a list at this time. I have not received any proposal from the private legal profession regarding the creation of such a list. If it were to suggest the establishment of a list, I certainly would not have any difficulty in raising the matter with the Chief Justice on its behalf although I am quite sure members of the profession are quite capable of raising that matter themselves.

Mr Chairman, I would like to add that the reasons for the creation of a commercial causes list in some other jurisdictions do not necessarily apply here. Simply, there are not the delays in our Northern Territory system that exist in other jurisdictions and not the same quantity of complex, commercial litigation as opposed to general litigation. Of course, an argument against the creation of a commercial causes list is whether such a list should actually be an urgent cases list which probably would seem to be of wider benefit to litigants. It is possible that the court would be disposed towards such a list. I do not think there is anything further that I can add that would be of help at this stage.

Appropriation for division 55 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 31 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 30:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have several questions. You will be aware that the opposition has sought information of various sorts from the government on a number of areas. To start with a less contentious area, pages 101 and 103 of Budget Paper No 4 refer to various consultancies which will commence in 1988-89. I am interested to learn which of these will be carried out by outside consultants - that is, consultants who are not employed by the department - and how many of those are likely to be let outside the Northern Territory. I would also like some explanation of why that work cannot be done within the capacities of the department.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the simple answer is all of them will be done by outside consultants. The consultancies are: the NT land use model, Darwin region, stages 1 and 2, costing \$60 000; the East Arm-Bleesers Creek preliminary design study, costing \$20 000; the Gunn Point-Shoal Bay preliminary design study, costing \$12 000; the Southport land use concept plan, costing \$12 000; the Elizabeth River lake preliminary design study, costing \$30 000; the NT land use model, Katherine region, costing \$5000; and the East Arm draining study costing \$30 000. Hopefully, none of these consultancies will go to firms outside the Northern Territory. We have not yet approached consultants to ascertain whether that the expertise is available in the Northern Territory. The work is not being done within the department because the department does not have the necessary internal expertise or resources to carry it out. Further, government policy is to ensure that the private sector participates in this type of activity as far as is possible.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I gave prior notice to the minister that I would like him to give me a brief explanation as to why consultants are to be engaged in respect of the Southport land use concept plan and the Elizabeth River lake preliminary design study.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, obviously Darwin and Palmerston will be expanding down that way.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not know when because many people are leaving now.

Mr MANZIE: If people are pessimistic about what is to happen, we will not get anywhere. The figures I have seen indicate that building activity is starting to expand. Of course, these things will take time but I am certainly optimistic about the future of the Northern Territory. I always have been. Planning for the future is an expression of that optimism. The Southport land use concept plan has an important part to play. What will we do down there? Will we do anything down there? Will we go around it?

In terms of our development timetable, our situation is comparable to that of Perth in the 1880s and 1890s when its population figures were much the same as Darwin's are at present. Today Perth has a population of close to 1 million and I certainly envisage that, in another 90 or 100 years, Darwin's population will be around that level. In that context, the Southport land use concept plan has some significance. It is not a detailed study; it is only a \$12 000 study. Just 5 years ago, members on the opposite side of the House were saying that Palmerston was a crazy vision and that no one would ever live there.

Mr Bell interjecting:

Mr MANZIE: It is a bit like the pipeline, Neil. If you look at the record, you will be able to see what your predecessors had to say about the concept of Palmerston. Some people obviously had heart and were optimistic about the future of the Territory. Palmerston is going very strongly and the Elizabeth River lake preliminary design study will investigate the possibility of establishing a lake on the Elizabeth River up from the bridge. This idea has been canvassed over a number of years. The study is preliminary. It will investigate whether anything can be done and, if so, how it could be accomplished. I envisage that, in years to come, it will be a most pleasant venue.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, on page 19 of Budget Paper No 5, under the heading of 'New Works', there is an entry which refers to an allocation of \$350 000 to provide access and services to the Darwin shooting complex. Does that refer to the shooting complex at Marrara? My information is that, when the new airport terminal goes ahead, there could be some question as to the shooting complex continuing at Marrara. A new site may have to be found. If the Darwin shooting complex referred to is really the Leanyer site, my information is that that is presently Department of Defence land which still has not been handed over by the Commonwealth. If that is the case, why is the Northern Territory government providing access and services when it does not hold tenure over the site?

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, Mr Chairman, we will not be spending any money on land over which we do not have tenure.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, but which site is it?

Mr MANZIE: The \$350 000 is for provision of access to the Leanyer area, which has to be obtained for the future shooting range of the Top End.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is a bit dicey at the moment.

Mr MANZIE: Eventually, Tiger Brennan Drive will cut the present Darwin range in half and members of the Gun Club have been quite forceful in explaining that they wish to move to an alternative site. Departmental staff are working on plans for the Leanyer range.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, I have seen them all and they are very nice. But the Commonwealth still owns the land.

Mr MANZIE: That matter is presently under negotiation and, obviously, we will not be doing any work there while the Commonwealth owns the land. We have no reason to believe that the Commonwealth will not hand over the land. Everything from sewage ponds to rubbish dumps have been located on what was originally all Commonwealth land in Leanyer and I do not foresee too many problems. I can assure the honourable member, however, that we will not be spending a penny on any land that does not belong to us.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, as far as consultancies are concerned, the reality is that, with the projects that are occurring from year to year in the Lands and Housing portfolio, any particular job will require a broad mix of professional skills. In a very small public service like the Territory's, it is virtually impossible to draw on a wide range of skills, particularly if they are not to be used continually. Consultancies are a more effective and efficient use of funds because they make use of the professional skills required for a particular job without the need to pay for those skills on a continuing basis. It makes more sense to use consultants in many areas than to try to build up the whole range of skills in the public service. For example, land use modelling requires skills which differ from those required for a drainage study. It is logical to use a consultant with specialist knowledge, and budgets have traditionally provided for that. The improved presentation of this year's budget is enabling people to see more clearly where the funds are going. The government should be complimented on its presentation, which gives a better understanding of where the money is being spent in this year's budget.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I do appreciate the fruits of the experience of a former Minister for Lands and Housing. To pick up the point made by the member for Nightcliff, the department does in fact employ its own town planners.

Mr MANZIE: We have 14 positions and 7 vacancies. We just cannot get them.

Mr BELL: Can we get a run down on those proposals? I am particularly interested in the Alice Springs structure plan. Of course, I was under the impression that the structure plan had been completed and that the Undoolya option had been chosen. In addition to my interest in the letting of consultancies outside, I was under the impression that that work had already been done.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the honourable member should be well aware of the situation in respect of the structure plan. I have stated it repeatedly. I think he would be well aware that a draft is presently with the Alice Springs Town Council. It has not yet come to Cabinet. After that occurs, the processes will move through until it is finally stamped, sealed and delivered.

Mr Bell: It was supposed to going through in June last year.

Mr MANZIE: Pardon?

Mr Bell: This was the one that was supposed to be finished by June this year.

Mr MANZIE: I believe my predecessor said that it would be ready by June this year, and it was not. I do not believe in doing something in a rush if that means it will not be done properly. The honourable member may think otherwise, and that is fine. I certainly intend to ensure that all these things are done properly and correctly and that the appropriate people are consulted along the way, and I will do that. It is contrary to some of the rather wild accusations that have been made, over the last 6 to 9 months, regarding the Alice Springs structure plan. I believe that those words will return to haunt the honourable member. However, it is he who will have to suffer for those statements and the community will judge the truth of those utterances.

The sort of things that will be occurring with the consultancies in the Alice Springs area are listed there. Hopefully, most of those will be undertaken by consultants located within the Northern Territory. When we approach consultants, we will find out whether they have the necessary expertise to carry out those roles. The reason why that work is not to be done within the department is that we do not have all the necessary expertise. We have trouble getting town planners. There are 14 positions and only 7 are filled. It is quite an active role of our government to encourage the development of private enterprise in all areas that can be handled by the private sector and to ensure that the private sector does that work. The philosophy of the taxpayer paying for services which can be provided by the private sector is a negative way in which to spend the hard-earned tax dollar and, as history has shown, the work is not done as effectively by the government.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I will pick up the questions of philosophy and wild accusations before I return to the Alice Springs structure plan because I would like to pursue some of those questions in this context. I believe it is important for the growth of Alice Springs and, clearly, the electors of Flynn believe it is too.

On the point of philosophy and the use of outside consultants, I am fairly stating Labor philosophy. We do not carry a brief for either the private sector or the public sector in this regard. Our interest is to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are well spent and that people get the value from their tax dollar in the provision of services such as those. At times, this is in contrast to the ideological commitment that the Country Liberal Party government has to privatisation and these quasi-private arrangements that it makes at certain times. I am not particularly interested in getting into a broad-ranging debate about that, but I was not prepared to let the honourable minister's comments go by without making some response to them.

As for the wild accusations about the Alice Springs structure plan, I really must make some comments about those. I really do want to find out what is going on with this. To refresh the memories of honourable members, it has been debated 2 or 3 times in this Assembly over the last 12 months or so. A previous Minister for Lands and Housing, as the current minister admits, was saying that an Alice Springs structure plan would be made available by June of this year. This is what the business community in the Territory wants. It

wants a clear identification of what government's priorities are. So often, business people are forced to plan in a vacuum. Time after time, the government appears, either actually or apparently, to favour a particular operator, and here is a classic example ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I am sick and tired of the unsubstantiated allegations continually made by the member for MacDonnell alluding to so-called 'looking after your mates and looking after special people'. If he has 1 example that he wishes to put forward to substantiate those crazy allegations, let him do it now. Otherwise, I would ask him to behave like a gentleman and withdraw the innuendo. I am sick to death of it, and I think everyone else is.

Mr BELL: I said the government does, or appears to, favour particular operators. I suggest, for the benefit of the honourable minister, the refusal of the Deputy Chief Minister to come clean after persistent questioning by the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr Manzie: Are you talking about the Lands portfolio? Come on. You should be ashamed of yourself. Address the subject we are talking about, Neil, or haven't you the intestinal fortitude to do so?

Mr BELL: Really, the honourable minister has such a myopic view of government. At least members of the opposition work hard. We have the advantage of seeing things from a distance, and that is a perspective that the honourable minister has never had. He does not realise how shonky things appear to the community. I made 2 propositions: that the government does favour particular operators, and ample evidence has been raised at these sittings that that happens; and that it appears to favour particular operators. We had the debate about the Emily Hills subdivision and the operation of the Planning Authority in that regard. What has occurred with the Alice Springs structure plan is a perfect example of why there is a chaotic perception of this government - because of the dithering that has occurred and the conflicting statements that have come from the government about it. This is not just a matter of a simple extension of time for the preparation of the plan. Why is this new consultancy being ...

Mr Manzie: Sit down.

Mr BELL: Oh, gee whiz! If the government is saying that sensible decisions have been made on this structure plan, what is this consultancy actually going to do?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the member for MacDonnell brings forward the structure plan as an example and says that it is dreadful that it was not ready in June. We could have produced a structure plan in June which was pretty well complete. It had not gone to members of the council. It would have been a rushed job, and I do not think that is appropriate. I was not going to be forced to do such a thing simply for cheap electoral and political purposes, and I will never be pushed into that position.

I know the attitude of members of the opposition, because they follow the philosophy of: 'She'll be right, mate. Anything goes. Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. It does not matter whether it is good enough or not. We will fix it later'. We have seen that time and time again with the Australian Labor Party throughout the country. The Country Liberal Party does not operate like that.

I challenge the member for MacDonnell again, as I have done many times in this House, to produce 1 shred of evidence to substantiate any of his crazy, wild allegations or to behave like a member of this House should, with some honour, and stop continually throwing allegations at the government. The fact is that he cannot find a shred of evidence. He has no intestinal fortitude. He is gutless. He continually throws out innuendoes and whining cries of 'Wink, wink, nudge, nudge: you know, their mates'. He does not have any facts. It is disappointing to see him behaving continually in the same way in this House, and we all have to sit and listen to it. I am becoming sick of it and I am telling the honourable member that, in future, every time he comes up with an unsubstantiated claim, I will ask him to put up or shut up.

Mr Chairman, I think the honourable member's question has been answered. We could certainly do with some positive input from him here instead of having valuable and limited time wasted by him.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, with regard to the Leanyer shooting complex, the honourable minister said that the Northern Territory government would not spend money on land that it did not have title to. How long is he prepared to let negotiations continue before this work is done and, in the eventuality of the Commonwealth holding out too long on passing title to the Northern Territory government, does the department have any other land in mind for a shooting complex? If the department does not know where to locate it, I do. I am not referring to a site that the department has told the shooters would be suitable, at Darwin River. I could tell the department and the honourable minister of 2 sites that are closer to Darwin if the Leanyer site does not go ahead and the title is not handed over.

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, the honourable member would consider an area adjacent to where she lives, where the cavalry will be camping. That might be a possible site, although the goats and the chickens might end up as moving targets.

In all seriousness, we are in the process of negotiating with the Commonwealth and discussing possible alternatives. A number of alternatives have been looked at besides the Darwin River site. Members of the gun club have been quite definite in pointing out their requirements. It is similar to the situation at Alice Springs. In moving the location of the club, we have to ensure that its members will have something equal to what they have now. They have had control of it for a number of years and they have controlled it very well and have produced some Territory champions and some very high-class shooters.

I do not know what the timing of the construction of Tiger Brennan Drive is but I dare say, in another 12 or 18 months, there will be the rumble of bulldozers down that way or maybe even sooner. That will create problems. We are well aware of the pressures and we have people working very hard on the matter. At this stage, I think the Leanyer site will be the area that is selected. If the honourable member has a suitable site that she thinks is worth looking at, I would be most happy to receive a representation from her.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, at the risk of once again exciting the ire of the Minister for Lands and Housing, let me refer him to the revenue sources for the department shown at page 27 of Budget Paper No 2. What I am interested to explore is the matter of conversion of special purposes leases. The minister will recall that there was vigorous debate in the Assembly earlier this year about the conversion of special purposes leases to freehold. At that stage, he girded himself with all sorts of sophistry leaving the implication in the

public arena that current market value had been paid for many of these special purposes leases.

I would like the minister to explain for me - soberly and calmly, but explicitly - under which one of those heads is the cost of special purposes leases being freehold included? I assume that it is under the amount of \$8.13m for the actual return for land sales in 1987-88 and the budgeted amount of \$6.615m for 1988-89. What proportion of the actual return from land sales in 1987-88 was from special purpose leases and is there a projected return for the freeholding at current market value?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it certainly has upset the member for MacDonnell that he was caught out this year when he made outrageous claims regarding conversion of special purposes leases. I remember accusing the member on a radio program of telling lies regarding the matter and asking him to give 1 example. He was unable to provide an example to back up his claim. It has marked him ever since because he was caught out doing what he usually does - run off at the mouth without any facts.

Conversions of special purposes leases are pretty few and far between. Could you imagine a person who owns a special purposes lease such as a roadhouse paying market value to convert it when he can sell the special purposes lease with the roadhouse on it? I know what I would be doing. Obviously, it would come under either 'land sales' or 'miscellaneous'. I can assure the honourable member that, when such conversions do occur, it would go into consolidated revenue. I find it quite amusing that the honourable member still cannot let go of his bone. It is growing teeth and it will turn around and bite him one day. I must give him an A for his perseverance, but a Z for intelligence.

Mr BELL: How much was included in the 1987-88 figure for the conversion of special purposes leases? Am I to conclude that he will not tell me?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I do not know whether we had any conversions last year at all. I can certainly find out and let the honourable member know what the amount was. It is pretty sad.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I hear that the honourable minister is quite prepared to be sanguine about it. I remind him that there were some holders of special purposes leases who converted their properties to freehold at considerable expense. \$35 000 was one example for a conversion in 1983. Then, there was a policy change and the honourable minister was surprised to find that people were now able to do it for nothing. Or has it been changed back again? We have the committee stage of this bill in order to get at the truth. I submitted a written question about these special purposes leases asking how many had been converted and how much would be paid. I was told that there was no way that the government would tell me.

Mr Manzie: No you were not.

Mr BELL: On that issue, I would like to put another question to the honourable minister. He has what people around the country accept as one of the best land information systems available. On what basis is the opposition able to access information about special purposes leases from the Land Information System.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I cannot leave this alone. The honourable member seems to believe there was some sort of big change in policy. He has been



told that there has not been. He must know it, but he cannot bring himself to say that he has made a mistake. I will provide any information that the honourable member wants to ask me regarding any specific special purposes lease. I can say no more than that.

Mr Bell: I put a question on notice about it and you would not!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, he had a question regarding leases. Every block of land in the Territory is a lease. It is like asking the Minister for Education to provide the details of every pupil in the Northern Territory since self-government. Those are the crazy lengths that the honourable member has been going to in an effort to justify his inane attacks. He cannot get it through his head that the situation that he imagines exists does not exist and never has existed. He would probably sleep much better at night if he faced facts instead of trying to live in a dream world. Really, Neil, I reckon your wife would probably appreciate it better too.

Mr Bell: Don't get personal.

Mr MANZIE: He becomes uptight when he even thinks about it. He goes red and has flushes. It must affect his home life.

Mr Bell: I will keep your wife out of this, and you will keep mine out of it too.

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, the computer system can only provide the information that is put into it. The Land Information System is directed primarily to providing correct, up-to-date information on identified parcels of land in the Northern Territory. The information available on particular parcels varies considerably depending on the tenure and the activities related to that parcel. The system has not had all historical information entered, nor is it intended that that be done. Ownership records are quite extensive but administrative details and conditions date only from 1984 as changes have occurred. Thus, he would have to ask a question in relation to a specific parcel of land and we would be able then to provide a specific answer. I urge the honourable member to relax and to try to look at the real situation.

Mr BELL: I will not pursue that any further, Mr Chairman. Obviously, the minister is sufficiently embarrassed about the actions of so many of his predecessors in this regard that he is unable to give direct answers. I will simply leave it at that and move to another area that has caused the opposition concern. I refer to the activities of the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation.

The Northern Territory Development Land Corporation is a company set up by the government to trade in land, using public money for the purpose. In the committee stage of this bill, it is quite appropriate that consideration be given to its dealings. I put a question on notice to the minister earlier this year in respect of the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation and I was pretty much told that the information would not be given. I presume that that will be the minister's attitude again in this case. However, I ask him what details are available to the public concerning the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, that would be a matter entirely for the chairman of the corporation. It is an independent entity to such an extent that the concept has been tested in court where it has been found to be independent of government. Such a question would have to be addressed to the chairman of the

corporation. I certainly cannot provide it and I think that the member for MacDonnell is fully aware of that. He is just trying to play little games and waste some more time to show everyone what a big hero he is. I do not know how many times he has to ask these questions. He pretends that no answer has been given and he just goes on his merry way. He must have been a difficult pupil at school.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, let me say that, as a student, I gave my teachers far less trouble than I give the Country Liberal Party government in this House. I can appreciate the difficulties that the minister has with that.

To get back on the rails, the fact is that the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation holds land that it bought with public money. That being the case, this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory have a right to know how it does its business and whether its business is aboveboard or not. For the minister to sit there and refuse to give information about the dealings of the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation is outrageous. It is absolutely outrageous that public money can be spent in this way without any accountability. The minister ought to be ashamed of himself, as the whole government should be ashamed of itself in that regard.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the details of parcels of land held by the corporation are available on record, as are details of all land held by people in the Territory. The details of what money has been spent by the corporation and what money has been returned can be provided on request. It is certainly unbecoming of the honourable member to try to roll out the old chestnut of dirty dealings. He simply cannot help himself.

Mr BELL: The minister is misleading this House. I put a question on notice about those matters on which the minister just said he will provide information. That question on notice was refused.

Mr MANZIE: Only because we were unable to provide what you asked. Can't you get it into your head that I do not have any control over that corporation?

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I presume that your aural capabilities are equal to mine. Did you or did you not hear the honourable minister say that, if we were to request information about the dealings of the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation, it would be provided.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I said that, if the honourable member wished to know what land was held by the corporation, he could look through the records that are available to the public in relation to who holds land. That is available to anyone. I also said that, if he wanted to ask questions regarding what amounts of money had been allocated to the corporation and what money it had returned, we could provide that information on request. It is not my corporation. I do not have any control over it. I do not have the ability to interfere with it, as the High Court has indicated. Once the member for MacDonnell understands that, he will have no trouble understanding any other bits and pieces of information that are provided.

Mr BELL: I think this issue is worth exploring further. Does that mean that any corporation or any private-sector organisation can be given public money with no accountability and no responsibility to government in terms of how the money is received, disbursed and acquitted? That is outrageous.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the minister comment on the amounts of money provided for Aboriginal land excisions? I note that an expenditure of \$356 000 last financial year has been reduced in real terms by some \$50 000. The actual amount this year is \$337 000. Could the minister give an undertaking to provide the number and the details of the excisions that have been processed over the last financial year, at some stage during these sittings?

Mr Manzie: Yes.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I refer to the figure for revenue from Aboriginal housing administration which appears at page 27 of Budget Paper No 2. The 1987-88 figure was \$780 000 as compared with an estimated \$1.373m for 1988-89. Can the minister explain that substantial increase?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it might relate to picking up a shortfall which occurred when the Commonwealth walked away from the ADC. Tangentyere had a big problem with administrative moneys. I would have to check, but I know that we have come into the breach where the Commonwealth walked away from a particular area of administration. I will provide that information later. I can certainly say that the Commonwealth's action caused some trauma for Tangentyere.

Mr EDE: I am probably more aware of that than the honourable minister. However, I am not talking about an expenditure item. I am talking about a revenue item. The revenue is coming from somewhere, whether it be the federal government or not. Can the minister provide the information that I am seeking?

Mr MANZIE: Yes, I will.

Appropriation for division 30 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 86:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, you will recall that yesterday I made a comment about Housing Commission rents and the government's inclusion of income under the family assistance scheme in terms of eligibility for subsidised rentals for low-income families. I am hoping that the minister will be able to advise this Assembly that that particular policy has been reversed.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am glad that the honourable member has raised this matter. Yesterday afternoon, in his normal folksy style, he referred to members of the government as 'youse blokes' and used some of the descriptive phrases that he likes to employ when he is running hot. He did this after I had pointed out that the Northern Territory government provides the best pensioner assistance scheme in Australia in relation to house rentals. We are quite proud of that fact. This government has never shirked its responsibility to help those who cannot help themselves and to provide assistance to people who are in need.

Regardless of that, we were subjected to abuse from the member for MacDonnell. At best, his comments could be described as sanctimonious and at worst they were grossly offensive. In his normal sneering style, he took issue with my comments. He asked if the Territory government had the gall to include the family allowance supplement as income for the purposes of calculating rent for low-income earners. It really was another classic example of the honourable member making totally unsubstantiated claims. He is

an expert at this. He does it time and time again. Every time I attack him for being wrong, he gives his usual response. He whines and wails and tells me to play the ball and not the man. I am quite fed up with his approach. The family allowance supplement is included in revenue as a result of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the states under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement. The Commonwealth proposed and the states agreed that about 15% of the family allowance scheme should be payable as rent.

I would like the member for MacDonnell to rise and admit that all his comments about the Territory government also apply to the Labor government of Western Australia, and what will probably soon be the former Labor government of Victoria, the former Labor government of New South Wales and the Labor government of South Australia. If his comments did not apply to those governments, I would like him to explain why not and to apologise to members of the government for getting it wrong again.

I do not hold much hope of his taking that honourable course of action but I certainly challenge him to name a state that is more generous with its scheme than the Northern Territory. I also challenge him to be man enough to apologise for the accusations and the way he made them in this House yesterday. We certainly have nothing to hide. This is the most progressive place in Australia and a bit of recognition of that certainly would not go astray.

Mr LEO: How many mortgagee auctions of Housing Commission properties have taken place in the last 12 months and how much has been lost?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, as of 30 June 1988, 15 mortgagee auctions had been conducted and settled resulting in losses totalling \$241 000. A further 3 auctions have been held since 1 July 1988 relating to unsecured debts of \$63 000. I do not have the exact figures for those because they have yet to be finalised.

Mr LEO: How much money is outstanding in back rent and back payments on mortgages?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, resident rental arrears are presently \$431 000. Of this amount, we expect to recover about \$370 000 or 85%. That results from payments from people's salaries. If it is a day late, it is shown as an arrear. Thus, in real terms, the figure is about \$60 000. Out of our total loans portfolio, there are arrears of \$1.5m. In reality, it works out to about \$1.2m or 0.3% of our total loan balance.

Appropriation for division 86 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 51:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have a question for the honourable minister in respect of the Spencer and Gillen Gallery. What details is the minister able to provide about the financial arrangements between the Northern Territory government and the private owners of the putatively public museum in the Ford Plaza in Alice Springs?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the original agreement with the Ford Plaza people was predicated on the museum's contribution of \$350 000 per annum. In the event of a shortfall, the Capel Court consortium would absorb it. The Capel Court consortium is proposing to charge a rental fee whether we reach the \$350 000 or not. An entry fee was to make up the \$350 000 and anything

over the \$350 000 would go to the museum. I do not believe that \$350 000 income has been reached.

As the newly-proposed lease arrangements are not satisfactory, we will certainly be negotiating a new agreement. The director will be discussing the matter further with me. The present situation is that a fee is charged which goes to the Ford Plaza people. If the amount exceeds \$350 000, the excess goes to the museum.

Mr Bell: The Museums and Art Galleries Board pays \$350 000 a year to Ford Plaza for the space?

Mr MANZIE: A fee is charged for public entry and any amount up to \$350 000 goes to the owners of the building. Anything over that will come to the museum. I believe that it has not quite reached that.

Appropriation for division 51 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 85:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, could the minister explain the significant reductions in expenditure on Executive/Policy and Administration Services Programs in the Conservation Commission's corporate management sector? Could he also explain what positions have been eliminated, what functions these related to and how the commission will continue to provide effective policy advice to this government with cuts of up to 50% in the Executive/Policy Program and an associated cut of 25% in the backup administrative system?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the question is based on data which is provided at page 119 of Budget Paper No 4. In essence, the reductions are caused by a change in accounting practice where the allocations have been transferred to another program which is directly incurring the expenditure and the termination of one-off items of expenditure. For example, significant transfer and reductions in allocations to programs referred to under the corporate management activity have occurred. Executive/Policy of \$1.81m in 1987-88 is down to \$0.848m in 1988-89. That is an approximate reduction of 50%. \$504 000 in capital items is transferred to programs under park management for conservation activities. There is a \$225 000 one-off payment associated with the Strehlow Collection, \$233 000 in miscellaneous reductions include a purchase of a stand-alone word processor for the previous director, savings resulting from the transfer of the Conservation Commission from Alice Springs and general economies in administration expenses.

The Administration Services figure of \$5.561m in 1987-88 is down to \$4.4773m in 1988-89, a reduction of 15%. There is a \$301 000 one-off payment associated with the relocation to Palmerston, a \$214 000 one-off payment associated with Alice Springs floods and a \$200 000 transfer of telecommunication costs to Treasury.

No positions have been eliminated. In fact, under the Administration Services Program, an additional 8 positions have been created for support services, registry personnel and word processing so that that has increased from 51 in 1987-88 to 59. Under the traineeship program, the reduction of 14 positions reflects the fact that 14 trainee ranger positions have been converted to Ranger Grade 1 positions so that trainees completing their training can take up operational employment in those 14 positions. Since there are no staffing cuts in the Executive/Policy and Administration Services Programs, it is clear that the commission is well placed to provide good policy advice to the government.

Appropriation for division 85 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 70:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, given the reduced expenditure in the Urban Community Health Program, can the minister explain where the cuts will be made in order to achieve the proposed savings in real terms of \$152 000? Secondly, what public health arrangements will be made to ensure communities such as Palmerston will continue to receive the services of a doctor at their community health centres?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the 1988-89 program allocation is \$10.692m compared with \$10.135m expended in 1987-88, a growth of 5.5% in dollar terms. After adjustment of the 1987-88 expenditures to take into account one-off items such as the back pay of the nurses career structure into 1986-87, this growth is more likely to be in the order of 7%. In line with normal practice, the 1988-89 allocation is based on prices existing at 1 July 1988. The allocation would not include the latest 3% national wage case. A provision to meet such emergent expenditures or unforeseen expenditures is included in the appropriation under the Treasurer's Advance.

Accordingly, it is not correct to say that savings in real terms of \$152 000 will be made. Budget efficiency measures introduced as part of the 1987-88 budget and implemented during the course of the financial year have certainly reduced the potential cost of urban community health services in 1988-89. These efficiency measures include the relocation of a community health centre in Tennant Creek, closure of the Howard Springs Community Health Centre and the privatisation of some community health services in the East Arnhem region.

The 1988-89 budget allocation in fact allows not only for the maintenance of ongoing services but also for new initiatives in a number of areas, including the provision of an additional 2 community health care nurses in Palmerston, in addition to 2 therapist positions, a palliative care nursing position and a social worker in the Darwin region, costing in the order of \$105 000 in 1988-89 and \$201 000 in a full year.

In regard to public health services in Palmerston and other similar communities, of course they will be maintained. In respect of Palmerston, the advice of the department's experts on the provision of health services is that 2 general practitioners are adequate to supply the required health services. That was the basis for the removal of the service provided for a couple of hours on 1 day a week by a government-paid doctor. The services he was providing were detracting from the viability of the 2 general practitioners who have set up business there.

Mr Chairman, I am fully aware of the concerns of some people in Palmerston. Those concerns are really not an attack on the policy of the Northern Territory government which is to privatise general practitioner services wherever possible. Our policy is to attract to the Northern Territory as many medical practitioners as possible. The Darwin Private Hospital is another classic example of how the range of medical practitioners in the Northern Territory will be enhanced as a result of government policy.

It is economically impossible for any government to provide all general practitioner services to all people in any state or territory. If anybody believes it is possible, he is kidding himself. Nevertheless, I am keeping a very close eye on the provision of services to Palmerston because it has some

special problems. For example, some elderly ladies may have some difficulty when the only general practitioners in the area are very young. Such problems need to be dealt with very sympathetically, and I am prepared to do that. I can certainly say that the services provided in relation to community and general health in Palmerston and other areas will be maintained.

Mr BELL: That was an extraordinary performance. The minister has basically said that there has been a cut in real terms but that he will fiddle around the edges and hope that nobody notices. As for his suggestion that there have not been serious problems with the health service at Palmerston, I suggest that, if he had been in Palmerston instead of Peru, Bolivia or Brazil or wherever he has been, he might have had a clearer understanding of the issues.

Mr Dale: I can do both because I can work hard.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I gave the minister notice of my next question. Can he provide exact details on how and when \$1.7m will be spent on radiological equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital in the context of a long-term replacement program for the unit? In other words, exactly what equipment is to be replaced, at what cost and when will the replacement take place?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the budget allocation of \$1.610m for radiological equipment at Royal Darwin Hospital provides for the following items: 2 general suites, 4 linear tomography suites, 2 special procedure suites, 1 mammography suite, 5 mobile x-ray units, the upgrading of image intensifiers and 1 ultrasound unit.

The certificate of exemption to allow consideration of only 2 companies is being sought in respect of all items except the ultrasound unit. The decision to seek a certificate of expediency was not taken lightly. It was arrived at in the context of the review of all aspects of the Royal Darwin Hospital which I initiated some 18 months ago, well before the member for MacDonnell became aware of the issues. The decision was based on the diagnostic quality of the equipment, its reliability and ease of use, the standardisation of the equipment, the cost of supporting the equipment and the commitment of companies to supporting their equipment. Those factors had to be considered because we are not only looking at a purchase of equipment but the service and maintenance of that equipment over a period of 3 years. The decision offers dollar savings to the people of the Territory which are in line with the other savings and efficiency measures being implemented at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

A certificate of exemption was sought on the grounds that only 2 companies could supply all of the x-ray equipment contained in the package, to the specifications established. Both companies are major Australian suppliers of state-of-the-art diagnostic x-ray equipment that can satisfy the current and future requirements of the Territory. The decision was not taken lightly. I took into account the expert advice of a number of people, including 2 people well-known to the member for MacDonnell, Dr Sutton and Dr Edwards who were involved in the evaluation of the companies named in the application for a certificate of expediency. Those people, who so often went running to the Rip Van Winkle of the opposition, put forward propositions for the purchase of \$306 000-worth of equipment whereas I am talking about equipment worth more than \$1.6m.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the Minister for Health and Community Services explain his reference to Rip Van Winkle?

Mr Dale: You have been asleep for 7 years.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the minister has given a most extraordinary explanation. For somebody who prides himself on knowing something about commercial arrangements, he has made a very poor fist of explaining himself and has only justified my initial concerns in this matter. I accept that Medical Applications Pty Ltd and Toshiba Australia provide state-of-the-art facilities. I have no doubt that both those companies are well and truly able to provide the after-sales service that is so absolutely necessary with x-ray equipment, as it is with the family car. I have no doubt about that. I have no doubt that Dr Sutton and Dr Edwards, worthy practitioners, had confidence in both those firms. However, what the minister ignores or does not seem to understand is that normal commercial practice dictates that expressions of interest be called for and he has not said why that has not been done.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, it is pretty hard to educate the honourable member opposite. Apparently, he specialised in one field only: words. He did not specialise at all in understanding. According to all the expert advice available, there are only 2 companies in Australia that can fulfil our requirements. I see that the member for MacDonnell is dozing off again. The only time he ever raises a sweat is when he goes for a gallop. My advice came from many experts. Perhaps, when he wakes from his sleep, the honourable member would like to give the names of a couple of other companies which can compete with the 2 that we are talking about.

One of my aims has been to complete the negotiations and purchase the equipment as quickly and as expediently as possible. If the honourable member wants me to go through the process of dealing with organisations like the Ford Motor Company, which has about as much ability to compete for this particular line of equipment as the phantom companies he has not been able to name, he is ignoring reality. I sought the certificate of expediency on very sound advice, and it received appropriate scrutiny from the Treasury. The acting Chief Minister of the day considered it at length and subsequently signed it.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have one simple question for the minister but, before I ask it, I will simply point out that, if it were the case that there were only 2 companies able to meet the tender specifications, that would be sorted out in the tender process. That is where it should be sorted out. That is why the tender process exists. It is designed to reassure the people that the government's actions are aboveboard. On the basis of the information that I gave the minister yesterday, it is abundantly clear that people in the community have some cause for concern. I have been assured that there are more than 2 companies which are able to provide the equipment and the services.

I will put the same proposition to the Minister for Health and Community Services now as I put to the member for Nightcliff yesterday. He would not take me up on it. Maybe the Minister for Health and Community Services will. If there is another company that is interested in tendering for that \$1.7m contract, will the minister give an undertaking to this Assembly that he will advertise for expressions of interest?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I have named 2 of the expert people who have been advising me on this matter and who have been looking Australia-wide over some 18 months in relation to this matter. It is on that advice that I have taken



the course I have taken. In fact, we will be going to public tender on the other equipment that I mentioned a little earlier. These 2 companies, of course, have to compete for supply of this particular range of items.

Mr Bell: Why don't they have to compete for the lot?

Mr DALE: Because there is nobody else that has the ability, firstly, to provide the equipment and, secondly, to provide the service. I will not comment any further, Mr Chairman. I will take the member outside and talk to him quietly later if he needs any more details.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, let me put on record, that that is one invitation I am most unlikely to take up, particularly since it is now 8.24 pm and it is dark outside.

Mr Dale: You do your best work in the dark, don't you?

Mr BELL: Unlike the minister, I think I am used to working elsewhere.

Let us move to another serious issue which the opposition has raised on previous occasions. The minister has indicated that money is to be spent on the Aboriginal health worker program. Can he explain when and how many positions will be created, where they will be located and at what salary levels they will be paid?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the 1988-89 program allocation of \$21.024m for rural community health services includes provision for an additional 6 Aboriginal health workers for the Katherine region of the department. Incidentally, this allocation represents a growth of some 12% on 1987-88 expenditure. The additional 6 positions will be used to service places like the Yarralin area, Mataranka-Roper area, Hodgson Downs, Pine Creek and Urapunga Station. The position levels will be 1 Aboriginal health worker Grade 2, and 5 Aboriginal health workers Grade 1. Their salary levels can be determined from an examination of the current Rates of Pay Manual and I am happy to provide that if the honourable member has not yet got it.

The revised Aboriginal health worker career structure is under consideration at this moment. I think I mentioned that earlier today. In August 1986, the then Secretary of the Department of Health commissioned a task force to report on the classifications, levels and career structures for Aboriginal health workers in the Northern Territory. The task force was evaluated and discussed with the department, endorsed by the Minister for Health and Community Services and formed the basis for some discussion with the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union. A submission for an expanded career structure for Aboriginal health workers was adopted by Cabinet. In June 1988, the Public Service Commissioner proposed to the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union that the Aboriginal health workers' career structure be expanded in accordance with the submission provided by Cabinet. The Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union rejected this proposal in the form in which it was put, but has accepted it as a basis for negotiation. Those negotiations are continuing.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the minister provide details on how much is to be spent on preventing hearing impairments amongst Aboriginal children in remote communities? In addition, can he provide details on how this is to be achieved and what time frame he is operating on?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, expenditures of this nature are spread across a number of programs, the major ones being urban and rural community health services. A specific funding allocation of \$124 000 is set aside for such activities as the costs associated with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Hearing Program Coordinating Committee grants to a number of communities - for example, Galiwinku and Nguu - for the employment of part-time Aboriginal health workers for ear-associated duties, and expenses associated with specific departmental programs associated with ear health. Funding support has been sought from the Commonwealth in the form of grants for projects associated with Aboriginal ear health and the education of hearing-impaired Aboriginal schoolchildren. The above figures cannot take into account the significant contribution in both time and effort of departmentally-employed medical officers, nursing sisters and Aboriginal health workers for whom ear health is only one of the many facets of their day-to-day involvement with Aboriginal patients.

The Department of Health and Community Services is currently examining the paper prepared by the Northern Territory Aboriginal Hearing Program Coordinating Committee entitled 'Proposals for 1988-89 and Beyond', and is developing programs to combat the problem. The nature of the problem makes it difficult to set in place realistic, clear time frames to operate on, but the honourable member may be assured that the matter will remain a high priority and subject to regular reassessment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, given that this problem is so severe and afflicts some 70% to 80% of the students at Lajamanu and comparable figures around most of the desert regions to the extent that children's education is being severely affected by it, has he considered the idea of attaching a health worker to those schools where there are sufficient numbers of affected students to justify it? That would enable those health workers to provide treatment on a full-time basis and to teach children ear hygiene etc and would allow them to attack the habitat problems that also contribute to this disease.

Mr DALE: Clearly, we need to concentrate on 2 areas in connection with this problem as with many other problems. Of course, one is the treatment of those that are now afflicted with ear damage and the other is the most important of all: the prevention of any further infection. The report that I mentioned, 'Proposals for 1988-89 and Beyond', is being examined at the moment. Those issues are addressed in that particular report. We will be looking at where we will go from there as a result of that particular paper. We had a consultant from interstate to do the referencing.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, as the Minister for Education said, I have a question on notice on this subject. I would like to know to what extent the honourable minister is relying on the preventive approach and traditional means of treatment. My other question is what is being done to provide facilities for people so that, once they have permanent ear damage, they can still hear. The other approach is the one that the Menzies School of Health Research has been talking about. It involves attempting to find some form of vaccine as a means of treating this disease. Has any progress been made on that?

Mr DALE: I cannot be specific, Mr Chairman. Suffice it to say that we are looking at all areas relevant to the problem. There is the question of the types of hearing aids that can be supplied to some individuals. Apparently, certain types of hearing aids are easily damaged and rendered useless. We are genuinely concerned and working on developing various means by which to combat the problem, and we will continue to do so.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I understand that the honourable minister is concerned, as we are on this side of the House. However, the parents and the children affected are even more concerned, and this matter has persisted over a number of years. It is not something which has come to light suddenly in the last year or so. It has been around for many years. I believe its significance was tested by another report in 1984 which indicated just how savagely the middle-ear infection was affecting children's ability to absorb information and to progress through school.

Is the honourable minister satisfied, on the basis of the information that he has in relation to the extent and spread of the problem, that we now have that aspect of the program under control? Do we have adequate data as to the extent of the problem within the Territory so that, when we have the results of the current study he mentioned, we will know where to direct the resources?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I will not be satisfied that we have all the resources in place until such time as there is not 1 child in the Northern Territory who has an ear infection. It is as simple as that. An indication of the fact that we do not believe we have the total answer to combating this problem is one of the reasons why we asked a consultant to come to the Northern Territory in order to report to us on the subject.

Mr Ede: Do you know where the problem is?

Mr DALE: I am sorry, what do you mean?

Mr Ede: Do you know where the problem is? Which communities are affected and what percentage of children are affected?

Mr DALE: I am sorry, I misunderstood your meaning. Yes, we have data within the department.

Mr Ede: Are you satisfied that it is accurate?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I have no reason to doubt the information that we have. This particular consultant certainly played a part in ...

Mr Ede: Territory-wide?

Mr DALE: Yes, as far as I am aware, it is Territory-wide.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the minister provide details on how the upgrading of the fire safety system at the Royal Darwin Hospital is being implemented? At what cost and within what time frame is it to be achieved?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I will give the short answer and no rhetoric on this particular subject because I have explained its history often enough. It will be carried out in 3 major stages. Stage 1 will cover the basement, lower ground, ground and ninth floors and is due for completion by the end of October this year at a cost of \$690 000. Stage 2 will cover the central core areas of most floors. A contract has been let with work scheduled to commence on 3 October 1988 and a targeted completion date for 14 February 1989 at a cost of \$314 000. Stage 3 covers the first floor and all ward areas, including the operating theatre and delivery suite complex on the eighth floor, and work on the wards will be progressive, up one side of the building and down the other, with 2 wards being vacated for the work at 1 time. Completion is scheduled for 1991 at a cost of \$1.6m.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the minister explain how he intends to ensure the Sexual Assault Referral Service at the Royal Darwin Hospital will be adequately staffed and how this service will be expanded to all regional Territory hospitals, as promised in a CLP election commitment? I call on the minister to provide details of how much money has been allocated to this program and, in particular, the amount allocated to ensuring an after-hours service is provided by a professional counsellor.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the staffing levels will be maintained in accordance with Public Service Act procedures. The Alice Springs service is now in place and appropriate services to all the other regions that we mentioned are being assessed. The total current cost is \$75 000 per annum.

Mr BELL: Can the minister provide details of the budget allocation for the establishment and maintenance of the assessment team to be established in Alice Springs to assess the psychiatrically-ill and intellectually-disabled, which was promised as an election commitment and which was to include the appointment of a psychiatrist, a psychologist, social workers and support staff? When does the minister anticipate that the team will be established?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the assessment team, funded as a new initiative in the 1987-88 budget, is expected to cost \$187 000 in 1988-89. I have a brief on the matter if the honourable member wishes to have more information. The team has been in partial operation since February 1988, pending the filling of the senior psychologist position. It is planned that this vacancy will be filled in the very near future, thereby allowing the team to become fully functional. It has been the usual problem of attracting staff.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the minister explain what component of the \$7.7m capital works program will be allocated to the upgrading of the detoxification unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital to enable the acute psychiatric Ward 5A to be relocated there, and when will it be completed?

Mr DALE: The answer is \$35 000 and 30 November 1988.

Mr BELL: Can the minister provide details on how many positions exist in each regional office for the purposes of child protection work? How many vacancies currently exist and how long have they been vacant? What are the designations of the positions? How are the 20 new positions to be incorporated into the regional structures and what strategy is to be used to attract qualified staff into the positions.?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I will use the notes I have here but I am quite happy to give the honourable member far more detail in writing later. The description of positions in each regional office for the purposes of child protection workers is as follows: senior community welfare worker, community welfare worker and Aboriginal community worker. The following positions from those listed above are currently nominally - I stress that word - vacant. At Casuarina, we have 1 senior community welfare worker and 1 community welfare worker; at Darwin, we have 2 community welfare workers; at Palmerston, we have 3 community welfare workers; at Alice Springs, we have 2 Aboriginal community workers, 2 community welfare workers, 1 A7 adoptions worker and 1 senior community welfare worker; at Tennant Creek, we have 1 senior community welfare worker; and, at Nhulunbuy, we have 1 Aboriginal community worker. All positions are temporarily filled pending recruitment and interviews are currently being undertaken.

The recruitment action that has been taken has been Australia-wide with officers visiting Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia to advise on the job opportunities that are available in that area in the Northern Territory. Training positions have been filled to ensure ongoing courses in child protection and a number of schools of social workers have been contacted regarding vacancies in the Northern Territory.

Some 23 additional positions were funded as a new initiative this current year. The distribution of these new positions is as follows: a child protection specialist and 2 protective behaviour and community workers in the Darwin region; 2 senior community welfare workers in the Alice Springs/Barkly region, 4 in the Darwin region, 1 in the East Arnhem region and 1 in the Katherine region; 1 community welfare worker in the Alice Springs/Barkly region and 1 in the Darwin region; 1 community project worker in Darwin; 2 administrative officers in Darwin and 1 in Katherine; and 1 adoption substitute care worker in the Alice Springs/Barkly region and 1 in Darwin. That is a total of 22 personnel.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can I return to the question about the detoxification unit. Can the minister advise the House that he has now rejected a proposal to relocate the detoxification unit in the staff village at the hospital?

Mr DALE: No.

Mr BELL: Can I conclude then that the government is still determined to go ahead with the relocation of a detoxification unit in the staff village?

Mr DALE: Yes.

Mr BELL: I want to place on record that I regard that as most unfortunate.

As the minister has indicated that more support services will be provided in the mental health area in each of the major geographical regions, can he provide details on what positions will be created, what their role will encompass, what levels of salary will be paid and when he anticipates the positions will be filled?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, additional funds of \$255 000 are provided in the 1988-89 budget. The full-year cost of the initiative will be in the order of some \$450 000. Positions are all psychiatric nurse positions and are allocated as follows: 8 in Alice Springs, 2 in Katherine and 1 in Nhulunbuy. The salary applicable is roughly \$30 000 per annum but the Rates of Pay Manual should be consulted if a more accurate figure is required. The positions will be filled as soon as suitable applicants can be found and necessary orientation completed.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, may I return to a previous question on the Sexual Assault Referral Service at the Royal Darwin Hospital? I have some further questions, particularly in respect of the position of an after-hours service provided by a professional counsellor. I understand that, currently, there is only 1 such position at the Royal Darwin Hospital, that this has been vacant for a long period and that there is a crying need for more positions. Is the minister able to advise the Assembly that more positions will be made available?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the full-time coordinator position has been vacant since 23 May and we are having some difficulty in filling that position. As far as the service is concerned, we have a full roster of local female doctors on call. I believe that they are providing the best possible service. We are looking at having the coordinator position filled as soon as possible.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, we come to another contentious matter. I refer to the minister's recent excursion. In the light of attempts to reduce expenditure on essential services, could the minister provide details on his recent overseas trip: where he went, who accompanied him, for what purposes, how much expense was incurred by each individual and of what benefit the trip will have been to people living in remote areas who need services - that is, the hearing-impaired children throughout the Territory, the burnt-out welfare staff, the overcrowded prisoners and the under-resourced hospital staff? Can the minister indicate when a report on his overseas trip will be available.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, this gives me an opportunity to respond to such a question for the first time in this Legislative Assembly because it is the first time that I have ever been overseas. However, I have listened on many occasions to cynical comments of the honourable members opposite about various members of this government going overseas for various reasons.

The honourable member used the expression 'in light of attempts to reduce expenditure on essential services'. That certainly has not been established by honourable members opposite despite their questioning here tonight. In fact, it is quite clearly the aim of this Northern Territory government to provide ever increasingly better services to the people of the Northern Territory. I suppose what the honourable member is setting me up for - as he likes to think in his own mind - is that he will be able to write some of his fictitious items for various newspapers. He will quote some very large figures of what it has cost for myself and my staff to go on what was quite an extensive trip. Let me say that I do not think I have worked harder in my life than I worked during the 28-odd days that I was away. I would suggest that, if the honourable member ever worked as hard in his entire life as my staff did on any 1 day during that entire trip, the quality of the opposition would certainly be enhanced.

There is no doubt that there is a cost factor and I do not have the figures yet because one would understand that I am very keen to account accurately for all of the expenditures that I have made in the past month. About a month ago, I would have thought that was a pretty easy task. I now know that it is almost impossible, in a short time, adequately to satisfy even oneself that one has accounted accurately for various expenditures, given the exchange rates etc. I do not know what the figure will be. It could be \$10 000, \$20 000, \$50 000 or \$60 000. However, let us be realistic about what it was all about. I can indicate to members that there was value for whatever the amount was merely in the first part of that very vigorous month. I refer to the visit to Singapore and then to Japan.

The first thing I would like to say is that we secured a further \$200 000-worth of sponsorship from Honda for the sponsorship of the 1990 Honda Central Australian Masters Games which I would estimate will attract 3000 to 4000 visitors to Alice Springs. I do not need to tell the honourable member opposite who asked this cynical question what the benefits to the people of Alice Springs are in that alone. Secondly, we were able to secure and finalise some \$300 000-worth of sponsorship for a car rally from Ayers Rock to Darwin in 1989. I am sure that the member will also appreciate the benefits of that.

I met some 28 dignitaries whilst I was away, including Mr Suzuki, a former Prime Minister of Japan. I was interviewed in a 5-minute slot on a program that was to go to a television audience of 65 million. I will not continue this travelogue although I have many exciting episodes to tell the honourable members opposite about. I suppose the cost of the trip will come to \$50 000 or \$60 000, but I can assure all members that it was of great benefit to myself and the Northern Territory people.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, given the minister's commitment to community-based services, could he provide details of the amount that is to be allocated to the Northern Territory Council of Social Services, the local equivalent of the Australian Council of Social Services which is a body that is called on by the Prime Minister of this country in the development of social justice policy and programs?

Mr DALE: Funding of \$27 000 has been approved under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program this year.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, given the Northern Territory government's responsibility under the Work Health Act to provide a rehabilitation service, will the minister provide details on how much money is to be allocated to ensure that the public service is available? In addition, could he provide details on exactly how the service will be provided - that is, by whom, at what location and at what cost to the range of clients? What contractual arrangements have been undertaken with the private hospital and the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I will give a short answer now and will furnish further details later if the member so desires.

Rehabilitation services from the department are provided by 2 means. The Darwin Rehabilitation Centre, jointly operated by the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth, covers initial hospital care and long-term community care. The Northern Territory cost is \$240 000 in 1988-89. The cost of the normal range of hospital-based rehabilitation functions in such areas as occupational and physical therapy is not possible to assess accurately. A major review of rehabilitation services was conducted in 1987, and this continues to be assessed. Proposals from the Darwin Private Hospital to lease its rehabilitation facilities to government were rejected on a number of bases, the primary one being the government policy that the private sector should develop and provide such services.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the minister provide details on the long-term budget allocated to the implementation of different stages of the chilled-water air-conditioning system at the Royal Darwin Hospital and explain why it has become necessary to replace the current system as opposed to ensuring an effective maintenance operation?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I have answered this question previously. However, the upgrading of the chilled-water air-conditioning system at the Royal Darwin Hospital is being carried out in 2 major stages. Stage 1, in the 1987-88 capital works program, involved \$3.75m. Stage 2, in the 1988-89 capital works program, involves \$300m. Replacement is the most cost-effective method of proceeding. Major factors which influenced the decision included economic considerations, the need for extra capacity, the reliability of the existing chillers, the age of the existing chillers and the recently-signed international protocol on the use of CFC refrigerant gases.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, my question refers to Budget Paper No 2. I must apologise to the minister for not giving him prior notice of my question but I am sure he will be able to answer it. Under the heading, 'Consolidated Fund Receipts from Territory Resources', there is an item 'Private Practice Trust Funds'. Could the minister give me some details about that?

Mr DALE: I cannot do so at this stage. I will get the details later.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the minister has indicated that \$736 000 will be made available for the construction of a new dormitory at Berrimah Prison, to house 56 prisoners. Can he explain why this is necessary and, if the demand is already too great, how prisoners are being accommodated at this stage? How many prisoners are there and what is the nature of their accommodation?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, it has been necessary to make funds available for additional prisoner accommodation at Darwin Prison for a couple of reasons. The design capacity of the Darwin Prison was originally for 150. This was increased by 25 to 175 when an auditorium, a recreation area, was converted into a 25-man block. This was clearly a short-term solution to the problem.

The occupancy levels at Darwin Prison peaked on 13 May 1987, when 262 prisoners were held in the institution. Since that time, due entirely to this government's initiatives, such as the crime default program and home detention, imprisonment rates have declined significantly to the extent that there has been a more than 20% drop in imprisonment rates over the past 12 months. Currently, as at 3 October 1988, 216 prisoners are held at the Darwin Prison, 41 over design capacity. However, across the system, there are 373 prisoners, as at 3 October 1988, with an overall design capacity for 392. I will therefore closely review prisoner numbers and their distribution across the Territory prison system before finally committing funds to the construction of additional prisoner accommodation at the Berrimah Prison.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, how much money is to be allocated for the installation of a computer system for pathology services at the Alice Springs Hospital? When will it be installed and what staff will be required?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the budgeted cost for the computerised pathology system is \$60 000. It is proposed that the system will become operational early in the new year after completion of staff training and associated measures. No additional staff will be required. The new system will allow staff to become more productive and improve the efficiency of this service. I opened the new pathology system at the Royal Darwin Hospital earlier this year.

Mr BELL: In this year of AIDS and communicable diseases, how does the minister plan to ensure that health promotion campaigns will continue, given that the budget clearly identifies a reduction in expenditure?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the published program classification figures indeed show a reduction in health promotion from \$481 000 in 1987-88 to \$426 000 in 1988-89. However, 1988-89 is the first year of program budgeting for the Department of Health and Community Services and it seems apparent that, in adjusting the 1987-88 expenditures for comparison purposes, the apportionment of expenditure for program classifications may have been inaccurate. Members may rest assured that there will be no reduction in health promotion expenditure. In fact, the reverse will be the case. Health promotion occurs across all facets of departmental activities, including drug and alcohol



services and communicable diseases, and these services provide their own specific allocations to campaigns and education programs. The communicable diseases program allocation of \$2.143m for 1989 contains significant funding for AIDS prevention education programs.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have a final question which I was not able to give notice of to the minister. It relates to the proposals to relocate the Alice Springs Prison. Is the minister able to report to the Assembly on proposals in that regard?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, my department continually plans ahead in order to provide the best possible services. We have looked at likely requirements in correctional services during the next 10 years, including the ability of the building that is now the Alice Springs Prison to be appropriately maintained if statistical data indicates that we will not need another prison for quite some time. I expect a report on this matter in the not-too-distant future.

Mr BELL: Is the minister aware that alternatives to the Alice Springs Prison have supposedly been under active consideration by this government for at least 7 years?

Mr DALE: Quite frankly, I am not concerning myself with the past, but with the future. I have the carriage of this particular study and I can assure the honourable member that it is being done.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I have no doubt that the minister is interested in the future. However, I suggest that there are lessons to be learnt from the past. I trust that the study that he has commissioned will look at the various prison farm proposals that have been touted by his various predecessors from Jim Robertson onwards. I hope that the lessons that have been learnt will not be lost on this latterday Minister for Correctional Services.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I am almost tempted to get into page 2 of my travelogue. A significant reason for my trip was to study facilities in other parts of the world. I am very confident that we have all the advice we need, both from the past and from what is happening in other countries. I can assure the honourable member that the report will be comprehensive and will be in the best interests of the future of correctional facilities in the Northern Territory.

Mr Chairman, if I could respond to the member for Koolpinyah's earlier question, salaried specialists operating in the Darwin and Alice Springs hospitals are given rights to private practice whereby they may earn up to 35% of their departmental salaries. Receipts from private practice are paid into a trust account and distributed to meet administration costs of the trust, fees for use of public facilities and disbursements to doctors. At present, the balance remaining is paid into consolidated revenue.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this morning, the honourable minister indicated that the government had agreed to build a child-care centre at Karama for the princely sum of \$400 000 for 20 child-care places. Was the child-care centre at Karama put out to tender and, if so, how many tenders were received and was the lowest tender taken?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I would like members to cast their minds back to the comment that the member for MacDonnell made in relation to the private hospital in Alice Springs. He asked why I did not take the first offer by a

group who wanted to build that hospital. The difference in the proposition he put forward and the proposition that we have before us now is that the people who came to us in Karama owned the land on which the facility was to be built. On that basis, negotiations took place, including the purchase of the land, and that is how the deal was struck.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, am I correct in my hearing that the government of the Northern Territory has let a contract for \$400 000 for a child-care centre for which no tenders have been called? Is that correct?

Mr DALE: No tenders were called. The negotiations for the construction of the facility were done through a private company. Undoubtedly, it will be letting contracts for the completion of the work.

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, in relation to Karama, there is no other land available.

Mr Smith: Did you ever think of buying the land?

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, there is no other land available to be bought. Child-care centres cannot be put just anywhere, nor can abattoirs, service stations, hotels, shops or any number of businesses. The available land in Karama is held wholly and solely by Joondanna Investments.

Mr Smith: By whom?

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, I believe that was the company, or maybe it was a subsidiary company, with whom the discussions were entered into. There is no land available in Karama unless we remove the paltry land resources that the 2 schools in Karama have. There is no other land available.

Mr Smith: They had you over a barrel and that is why they get \$400 000.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to clarify that point. Is it true that what happened was that the only land available belonged to Joondanna Investments and ...

Mr Dale: No.

Mr EDE: That is what the honourable member for Karama just said.

Mr Dale: The way you are putting it is inaccurate.

Mr EDE: The only land available for a child-care centre belonged to Joondanna Investments and Joondanna Investments said that it would not sell the land. It said: 'You give us \$400 000 so that we can build this child-care centre on it'. Is that correct?

Mr DALE: There was absolutely no land available in Karama for the construction of a child-care centre. We had to find a way, if you like, of creating space. After a great deal of negotiation, we have finally been able to obtain a much-needed facility in the Karama area.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this morning, the minister said a tender had been let for \$400 000.

Mr Dale: I did not say a tender had been let.

Mr SMITH: A contract had been signed with Joondanna Investments for a sum of \$400 000.

Mr Dale: Slightly in excess of that. \$403 000.

Mr SMITH: That is money for jam, isn't it?

Are the terms of the contract with Joondanna Investments such that it will receive the money up front to buy the materials, pay the labour etc rather than going through the normal, staged processes of a normal government contract?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, a sum of money was paid 'up front', as the Leader of the Opposition likes to term it. I would like to consult the contract further before I give any further details. I certainly will be prepared to supply honourable members opposite with all the details that I am able to under the terms of the contract during these sittings.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I did not intend rising but this opens up a whole new field of inquiry. I am very interested in the subject of land tenure. Who owns the land on which the \$400 000 is being spent, the government or Joondanna Investments? If Joondanna Investments owns it, would it be worth while myself or any of my constituents putting in to have the same amount of money spent on our blocks? It is setting a precedent. Who owns the land?

Mr Dale: When?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Now.

Mr Dale: Before it is built, obviously Joondanna does.

Mr Ede: And afterwards.

Mr Dale: We will.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the minister advise us what the Valuer-General's valuation of the land was?

Mr DALE: \$40 000 a block. There are 2 blocks.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, can the honourable minister confirm that the total cost is \$483 000 by the time the 2 blocks of land are paid for?

Mr DALE: No. I ask for a little room on the actual figure. It was in excess of \$400 000, but the figure I am talking about included the price of the land.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, let us get this straight. The situation was that there was no land available in Karama. There were 2 blocks valued at \$40 000 each. The company said that it would not sell those 2 blocks but asked the government for \$400 000 to construct a child-care centre on them. It said: 'We will give it to you on completion but you are not permitted to go to tender. You cannot get somebody else to work at the cheapest construction price'. Thus, it not only receives the \$40 000 per block that the land is worth, it also obtains the profit it can make by using government money up front to build it and the profits it can make in the normal course of construction. Am I correct?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I would like the member for Stuart to tell me the difference between that and what the member for MacDonnell proposed I ought to have done in respect of the private hospital in Alice Springs. Tell me the difference.

Mr Smith: They would be using their own money. That is the difference.

Mr Bell: They would not be using government money.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, could the honourable minister provide this House with the guidelines used to determine the price arrived at for the construction of the child-care centre at Karama? Once again, we have this supposedly private enterprise government denying the free market forces and entering into a cosy little deal with one of its supporters. I know the member for Karama is in this up to his eyeballs and I wish I could get some written evidence on it. I know the minister fought this one very vigorously and opposed it as well as he could until he was swamped by the member for Karama going over his head. Could he tell us the guidelines that were applied so that we have some assurance that the taxpayers of the Northern Territory have not been ripped off to give the mates of the member for Karama and other people in the Country Liberal Party some sustenance?

Mr DALE: The guidelines that are in place for the building of high-quality child-care services for the children of the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: Where are they.

Mr DALE: I will give you a copy of them tomorrow.

Mr PALMER: Mr Chairman, of course I am up to my eyeballs in this. I intend to ensure that proper community services are provided in my electorate and, even if I have to hound and harass ministers, if I have to knock on doors, I will ensure that things happen. My electorate has suffered too long from a lack of any facilities whatsoever. I will make sure that they will be put in place. As it happens, the people involved own the only properly zoned land in the electorate.

Mr Smith: Very convenient, isn't it?

Mr Ede: 20 kids.

Mr Tipiloura: \$400 000 for 20 kids.

Mr PALMER: How much does it cost to educate 1 Aboriginal child per year, Stanley? Behave.

Mr Tipiloura: \$6000.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to return once again to the question of the Sexual Assault Referral Service at the hospital. I have asked a couple of questions about it already. In his previous answer, the minister referred to the after-hours services provided by female doctors. My understanding of modern practice is that a professional team, including counsellors and social workers, are the appropriate providers of service in this regard. The reason that there is not a decent after-hours service available from professional counsellors through the Royal Darwin Hospital is because this government has not provided the resources. Basically, we want to know when the government will establish an after-hours service consisting of such professional counsellors.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, that service would be given due consideration when professional advisers advised me that that in fact was necessary. The honourable member is obviously giving his advice on what he believes is appropriate and, for that matter, casting aspersions on the present services that are provided. I have no information at all to suggest that the services that are being provided at the moment are not absolutely professional and serving the purpose as required.

Mr BELL: Will the minister give an undertaking to report to the Legislative Assembly on the fruits of his research in that regard?

Mr DALE: I do not recall saying that I was doing research in that regard, Mr Chairman. I said that I have received no reports to indicate that the facility that is being provided there is anything other than adequate.

Appropriation for division 70 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 38 and 39:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like the honourable minister to explain why funds for both the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory have been increased overall, given a previous statement that savings would emanate from the merger of the 2 institutions into the university. Secondly, I ask where the expected Commonwealth revenues show up in the budget? They are not apparent in either of these 2 divisions.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member for giving a list of questions which he intends asking. Unfortunately, they seem to be all over the place, as he has already mentioned, and I may have a little difficulty.

I will answer the questions that he has just asked. It must be borne in mind that the merger is taking place and that is causing some concern in relation to the way that these questions should be put. The increased funding for the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory shown in the budget are the sums which the Territory would need to provide for the previously planned growth of the 2 institutions. It was necessary to provide for this in the budget because, at the time that the budget was brought down, negotiations with the Commonwealth were still in progress. At that stage, there was no guarantee that Commonwealth funding would be provided for the Northern Territory University into which it was proposed to merge the 2 institutions. Indeed, the Commonwealth has yet to advise a level of funding it may be willing to supply.

There will be one-off costs involved in 1989 in linking the 2 campuses and in setting up systems to cope with the huge amount of statistical detail that the Commonwealth requires under its national scheme. Because the Territory government has insisted that equity demands that no person should lose his job because of the merger and because, in fairness to students already enrolled there, there will have to be a tapering off of any courses which it is decided to curtail, there will be little in the way of savings in the first year. Savings will accumulate in subsequent years, as courses and administration systems are rationalised and normal attrition in employment takes place. As the government has no way of knowing what Commonwealth funding to expect, there was no possibility of including revenues from this source in the education budget when it was brought down in August. Mr Chairman, it should also be noted that no details were given for any Australian institution in the Commonwealth budget. The schedule in the States Grants Act ...

Mr Ede: There never are.

Mr HARRIS: That is right. The schedule in the States Grant Act goes into the federal parliament in October.

Mr Chairman, we are still negotiating with the Commonwealth in relation to our funding for the merger. We will need assistance, which I hope will come from the opposition, in obtaining what we believe is a rightful amount in the establishment period. It is very important that we do have that money up front, and I hope that I will have the assistance of the opposition in relation to an approach through the federal minister.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, my next question relates to the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education which has had an increase in funding from \$82 000 to \$125 000. That may sound a small increase, but I cannot understand an increase at all given that the council is to cease to exist on 31 December.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, when the budget was prepared, it was for a 12-month period. The last financial year amount was \$112 000 and the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education spent only \$82 000 of that as some courses were not ready for accreditation. This year, as the council was unsure of the merger, it budgeted for an amount of \$125 000. The 50% increase that has been mentioned is 50% on the \$82 000 which was the actual amount that was spent last year. External assessment panels must include 2 or 3 people from interstate, and the honourable member would be aware of that. There are still courses to be accredited this year and some of those courses are in the TAFE sector. If any savings result, that money will be handed back.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am advised the DIT library has received only a marginal increase in funds whereas a consultant has recommended that it requires major upgrading involving expenditure of some \$7m. I ask the honourable minister whether this may be a priority area when funds do become available from the federal government or whether he has some other means to tackle this problem?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the consultant's report was received after the budget had been brought down. The joint Commonwealth Territory Planning Committee has discussed this need in terms of Commonwealth funding. The Commonwealth officers involved were not encouraging. The Commonwealth does not seem willing to provide anything in the way of an establishment grant which has been provided to all previous universities.

Mr Chairman, this is one of the issues we need to take up. We are still negotiating with the Commonwealth on this. We believe that the Commonwealth has a responsibility to assist us to provide facilities during this establishment period. A library is a very important and a very costly facility that has to be provided. The 2 institutions have been funded on the basis of continuing separately. The other problem is where those additional facilities are to be put. Following the merger, however, and provided the Commonwealth allocates sufficient funds, there will a review of the allocation to the library.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, on that point, would the honourable minister undertake to provide me with copies of correspondence between himself and the federal minister, and copies of supporting documentation so that I can get myself totally on top of that problem to be able to make my own submission to the federal government regarding establishment funds for the new university?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will make the correspondence available. I would indicate that, at this stage, most of the negotiation is at officer-to-officer level. I will make any information available to him so that I can obtain his assistance in lobbying the federal minister for funds which should be ours.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, regarding the reduction in capital works funding to the DIT, it is well known that there is a serious problem concerning repairs and maintenance and the need to build upwards. As the minister said, there is a substantial requirement. However, capital works have been reduced. Is this solely a follow-on from federal reductions or is there a component in the Territory's budget which has been reduced?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, initially the honourable member mentioned repairs and maintenance that need to be effected. The allocation for repairs and maintenance has increased from \$546 000 to \$800 000 and is not connected to the capital works funding.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is another matter regarding the University Interim Council on which I would like some advice. This is not among the question the minister has because I have only just received this information. Can the honourable minister confirm that, on 31 August this year, in a meeting of the Northern Territory University Interim Council, the council was advised that DIT senior staff will retain their current salary levels, but their titles may change, and University College senior staff will be transferred at current salary levels and positions, but new contracts will be required? Secondly, can he confirm that, at the meeting, the Interim Council decided to adopt a new structure for the new university?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I cannot confirm that this evening, but I will be quite happy to answer a question tomorrow morning in relation to that.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I will hand a copy of this note to the minister so that he can advise me. He may wish to do that by letter. I would like him to confirm also that, at the meeting on 4 October, the following salary levels and positions were allocated. I am told the position of Registrar, at \$61 000, was allocated to Mr Brian Hughes. The position of Director of External Relations, at \$61 000, was allocated to Mr Keith Solomon. The position of Director of Business Services, at \$61 000, was allocated to Mr Jeff Syme. The position of Director of Personnel Services, at \$51 000, was allocated to Mr John Orr. The position of Director of Media Resources, at \$51 000, was allocated to Mr Friganiotis and the Director of Computers at the Computer Centre was also allocated a salary of \$51 000.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I would like the information that the honourable member has there. I do not know where he obtained that information, but I am happy to address the problem. I will have a look at that document and he can ask me a question tomorrow.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, would the minister provide details on the number of additional staff which could be made available for the University College of the Northern Territory?. Page 139 of Budget Paper No 4 mentions 75 in 1987-88 and 93 in 1988-89. How will that be affected by the development of the university? What faculties will additional staff be located in, at what levels will appointments be made, and when are staff expected to assume their appointments?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I would like to combine my answer to that question with my answer to question 13 which asked me to provide details of the increase in salaries and payments to the UCNT.

Under the agreement between the University of Queensland and the Northern Territory government, the University College of the Northern Territory is to increase its staff by 7 academics and 3 clerical positions in 1989. This is to cope with the introduction of third-year science and the addition of some third-year art subjects. The estimated cost is \$268 000. 5 of the academic positions are in the Faculty of Science and 2 are in the Faculty of Arts. It is expected that 6 of the appointments will be in the lecturer range and 1 as senior lecturer.

I have already indicated that, other than in the Faculty of Law, the number of staff positions to be added to the UCNT campus in 1989 will be 7 academics and 3 clerical staff. The academics include 6 lecturers and 1 senior lecturer. The number of extra appointments to be made in the context of extending the law course is 4 academics and 2 clerical staff. The estimated cost is \$175 000 and the academics will be appointed at the lecturer level. However, if it proved to be impossible to attract persons to one or more positions at that level, an appointment at senior lecturer level would be contemplated.

The nominated date for the taking up of appointments is 2 January 1989, to allow time for the preparation of lectures and practical classes before the teaching year commences. Experience indicates that there may be some delays in taking up appointments. Such delays can be caused by immigration requirements or periods of notice required for the termination of positions occupied in other institutions. People have to give notice in their current jobs and that often takes considerable time.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move that the committee report progress and then seek to immediately return to committee. I move this motion in the knowledge that it probably will not receive support from the government. It is necessary, as the debate this evening and this afternoon has amply demonstrated.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The motion is not debatable and I advise the member for Nhulunbuy that 6 hours have elapsed since the commencement of this debate.

Mr LEO: There is 1 minute left, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! We commenced at 3.33 pm. The motion is not debatable. I will read out the sessional order.

That, notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders, during the present session of the Assembly, in the consideration of an Appropriation Bill, there shall be allowed 6 hours for the consideration of such bill in committee of the whole, at the conclusion of which time the Chairman shall:

- (i) put the question or questions before the Chair;
- (ii) put any government amendments, new clauses and schedules, copies of which have been circulated to honourable members at least 1 hour before the time for the expiration of the debate;



- (iii) if necessary, put the question - that the remainder of the bill be agreed to; and
- (iv) put the question - that the bill be reported with or without amendment, as appropriate.

The question has to be put without amendment or debate.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I was firmly of the impression that I had moved my motion prior to the expiry of the designated time and that my motion was therefore quite valid. If you are going to rule that my motion is invalid, that is fine.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Your motion has no force in the committee stage.

Mr LEO: I cannot move to report progress?

Mr CHAIRMAN: It has no force because the 6 hours has expired.

Mr LEO: But I moved that motion prior to the expiry of the 6 hours, Mr Chairman.

Mr Chairman, I move dissent from your ruling because I was watching the clock extremely closely and I moved my motion prior to the expiry of the 6 hours.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question is that the motion of dissent be agreed to. There can be no debate.

The committee divided:

Ayes 10	Noes 14
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Collins	Mr Dale
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Floreani	Mr Finch
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Firmin
Mr Leo	Mr Harris
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Hatton
Mr Smith	Mr McCarthy
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Manzie
Mr Tuxworth	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I move that the committee adjourn until the ringing of the bells.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I advise the member for MacDonnell that I have no option but to put the remainder of the questions outstanding in relation to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr BELL: I move dissent from your ruling, Mr Chairman. Standing order 220 states that a member can dissent from any ruling of the Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The member for MacDonnell is out of order.

Mr BELL: I am not out of order, Mr Chairman. I have moved dissent from your ruling. The motion has to be put forthwith.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I cannot accept your motion because of the sessional order which I have already read to the committee.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, perhaps if I might speak to ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: You cannot speak to this.

Mr BELL: I believe that this committee of the Assembly needs to be informed about the exact timing of the comments made and the motion moved by the member for Nhulunbuy. The only way that that will be done is if we consult the tapes maintained by Hansard for the purpose of understanding completely the way this particular decision has been arrived at.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is that the appropriations for divisions 38 and 39 be agreed to.

The committee divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 10
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mr Floreani
Mr Firmin	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Harris	Mr Leo
Mr Hatton	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr McCarthy	Mr Smith
Mr Manzie	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Palmer	Mr Tuxworth
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Appropriations for division 38 and 39 agreed to.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! You quoted 15 on one side and 10 on the other side in the division?

Mr CHAIRMAN: At one time the Speaker was on the floor.

The Minister for Education had a query. The question now is that the remainder of the bill be agreed to.

The committee divided:

Ayes 15

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

Noes 10

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

Remainder of bill agreed to.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question now is that the bill be reported without amendment.

The committee divided:

Ayes 15

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

Noes 10

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

Bill reported.

Mr SPEAKER: The questions is that the report be adopted.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton

Noes 10

Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mrs Padgham-Purich

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

Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Report adopted.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and insert in their stead 'further consideration of the bill be postponed until after further being considered by the Assembly in the committee of the whole'.

Mr Speaker, in speaking to the amendment, we have a situation whereby this side of the House - and I include all my colleagues, both those from the official opposition and those who want to keep some distance from us - has not been given the opportunity to give this bill adequate consideration in the committee stage tonight. The fault lies with the government for 2 reasons. One reason is that the government has applied the gag. I challenge the members opposite to tell this Assembly ways in which members of the opposition and members on the crossbenches have wasted time in the 6-hour debate that we have had so far tonight. I challenge members opposite to give any example of where we have wasted time in this debate.

Mr Dale: Oh, ad nauseam.

Mr SMITH: Ad nauseam, he says. When he was responding to questions, did he comment that we were carrying on 'ad nauseam'. No, he did not. The whole process was taken most seriously by both sides of the House. As a consequence, the areas that have been covered have been covered comprehensively. However, we have a situation where 11 divisions have not been considered at all.

The second reason why the government ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order Mr Speaker! Under standing order 200, the only amendment which may be moved to the question that the bill be now read a third time is to omit 'now' and insert 'this day 6 months' which, if carried, shall finally dispose of the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I refer all honourable members to standing order 200. The amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, as worded, is quite clearly out of order.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that the word 'now' be deleted from the motion moved by the Chief Minister and the words 'this day 6 months' be inserted in their stead.

Mr Coulter: Do you know what you have just done? Is that what you want? You are moving to defeat the budget.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will commence my comments by picking up the comment from the Deputy Chief Minister and saying that, under these circumstances, the opposition has no alternative but to oppose the budget. The conduct of this government, increasingly arrogant as it has become, has reached its nadir this evening. Its refusal to admit reasonable committee stage debate on this bill is the nadir of the Country Liberal Party government in the Northern Territory. It was given a message by the electors of Flynn a couple of weeks ago and has learnt nothing from it.

My word, Mr Speaker, we heard all sorts of claptrap and allegations about filibustering during last year's debate on the budget. In today's committee stage debate, the opposition has amply demonstrated that it is a hard-working opposition desperately attempting to keep this government on its toes, and that it is able to do so in a careful fashion that members opposite find intolerable. That is why the 6-hour proposal was rammed through the Standing Orders Committee by the Deputy Chief Minister who brooked no opposition and made all sorts of unsubstantiated allegations about filibustering. All of my colleagues in this Assembly have given a clear indication to the government and to every minister that there are substantial issues that need to be debated.

Mr Speaker, let me refer to the practice in the South Australian parliament. It takes a week for such a bill to pass through the committee stage in that parliament. If we emulated that, people out there might think we were fair dinkum. We only sit for 30 days a year, but we spend money that affects the lives of people. The government talks piously about the effect of public sector investment on the capacity of the construction industry and the importance of nurturing the private sector in the Northern Territory but, when it comes to a bill that deals with the spending of those dollars, the government is prepared to ram it through the Assembly with so little consideration that anybody in the community would have to be convinced that it is not fair dinkum. In South Australia, each minister, with the permanent head of the department responsible in his portfolio area, spends a whole day being questioned about particular aspects of the budget.

I thought that we had reached a fairly mature arrangement in the committee stages of the budget and I would expect the Chief Minister to agree with me. In the 7 years that I have been here, the opposition has put a great deal of effort into framing sensible, coherent questions. We certainly cross swords occasionally but that is what we are here for. There is bound to be an exchange of views. However, there is no doubt that, in this year's debate and in last year's debate, the exchange of information and views has been productive.

To chop this debate off in this way is absolutely intolerable. We proceeded only as far as division 39. We did not complete consideration of all the responsibilities of the Minister for Education. We did not even reach the divisions relating to the portfolio of the Minister of Transport and Works which is allocated more public money than any other portfolio - about \$180m. We did not reach the divisions relating to the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government whose department spends about \$60m. We have not dealt with the \$15m budget of our beloved Minister for Tourism, let alone that of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries.

It is interesting that the 2 neophyte ministers were placed at the bottom of the list. If they stay there, it is likely that they will never have to answer questions on their departmental budgets between now and the next

election, which their party is going to lose. I notice that the Minister for Transport and Works is yawning. He could probably go off to bed now because there is nothing else for him to do. The people of the Northern Territory need to know that the government is not prepared to allow adequate debate on a bill of this nature. I find that absolutely amazing.

As a local member, I will not have the chance to ask questions about significant projects in my electorate such as the Areyonga-Tempe Downs road. I wanted to ask the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission how much revenue is raised from the forfeiture of motor vehicles and where that appears in the budget. I will not have the chance to do that. These issues are crucial to people in my electorate. They are crucial issues of public policy which will not be debated in the context of the budget. That is absolutely outrageous.

The government deserves the absolute condemnation of every Territorian. One would have thought that, after its approval rating of 29% in the Flynn by-election, it would be a little more circumspect about how it uses its numbers in this Assembly. Quite obviously, the government has learnt nothing and many of its members will not be here after the next election. The people of the Northern Territory will not put up with this.

A 6-hour limit for the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill must be opposed by anybody who is prepared to support decent consideration of money bills. I appreciate the support we have received from the independents and the Territory Nationals on this issue. Like us, they believe that we live in a democracy. They believe that free and open debate of crucial bills like this is vital. The numbers may be 15-10 today, but I can assure the government that the story will be different after the next election.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this is a very unfortunate situation. I can appreciate the concerns of the Standing Orders Committee in terms of this stage being dragged out interminably. However, I think that several ministers will be very disappointed that they have not had a chance to explain their budgets and answer questions in relation to them. Mr Speaker, I would like to think that the Standing Orders Committee will reconsider this matter. If it must limit the time for the committee stage, it may be able to apportion a specific amount of time to each minister so they would at least have a chance to answer questions and explain their section of the budget.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this motion. I spoke in May about the problems that would be caused if the government persisted in this course. The government attempted to justify its actions by saying that, last year, I used the committee stage to ask too many questions. Mr Speaker, it is my function to ask questions in the debate on the Appropriation Bill. In tonight's debate, the minister responsible for the operations of the Trade Development Zone refused to answer questions which I put to him. Who was dragging out the time in that instance? Was it the person who refused to answer the question or the person who was asking it? I was asking about the 1988-89 appropriation for the zone and the minister refused to answer.

Mr Speaker, it is impossible for the 6-hour system to work.

Mr Coulter: Why didn't you say that?

Mr EDE: I said that in May. Go back and read it.

An allocation of 15 minutes to each division will not solve the problem because, obviously, some divisions create more controversy and require more questioning than others. Some involve more money than others and some will be more controversial in 1 year than in another.

It might be argued that members of the opposition could divide up the 6 hours among themselves. There are several problems with that. Firstly, we cannot apportion the time for the answers. We cannot decide whether the answers will give us the information that we need so that we do not have to ask supplementary questions. Obviously, if we start to ask supplementary questions, we cannot ask other questions. Then there are the members on the crossbenches. They also may wish to ask questions. We cannot determine the time available to them for their questions, although we certainly recognise their right and obligation to raise them and to take ministers to task if they do not provide adequate answers. It is a mathematical and practical impossibility to impose a 6-hour system and believe that you can undertake any sort of analysis of all aspects of the budget. We have had a look at a very narrow spectrum within my shadow portfolio. The University College and the DIT appropriations have been half considered.

I have questions which I have given to the minister. Another part of the issue is the way in which we have attempted to assist this government to work through this process expeditiously. Where else in Australia does the opposition give copies of its questions to the ministers? Where else is there a system like that? We bend over backwards to try to make them look good. They can obtain the information beforehand and give us comprehensive answers, but they still will not take seriously enough the analysis of the budget and what the committee stage of such bills is about. In places like South Australia, ministers would spend a whole day being grilled about these issues. They wish to allow us about 45 minutes per minister. It is obviously not sufficient.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, let us have a look at a few facts and a few statistics. Let us not worry about South Australia or whether or not questions are circulated to ministers. It adds to the quality of the debate and that is what we are trying to do. In 1987-88, the debate on the Appropriation Bill was considerably prolonged when compared to the time taken in the previous 2 years. In 1985, the total debate in committee of the whole on the Appropriation Bill lasted 4 hours and 10 minutes. In 1986, the time taken was 5 hours and 40 minutes. In 1987, it was 10 hours and 10 minutes. It is interesting to note who was speaking for all that time and what was being said. Some 5 hours 12 minutes of that 10 hours and 10 minutes was taken up by the members who were not ministers. Members know that it was becoming a rort. It was not being used by the opposition for any constructive purpose.

Mr Ede: This is McCarthyism.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, why is it that, when we present the facts to them, all of a sudden we are racist or fascist? They will not accept them. We did not have this debate at the start of the sittings. The sessional order was introduced in May and we have not had any debate on it since then. After the time had elapsed, because they did not pace themselves, because they did not organise themselves, all of a sudden there was widespread protest. It is probably a corrupt Romanian official who led us into this line. That would probably satisfy them.

Mr Speaker, the facts are there. The debate used to take 4 hours. That increased to 5 hours and then to 10 hours and 10 minutes. The Standing Orders Committee had a meeting and determined that the committee stage should be streamlined. It reported to the Assembly that the 6-hour time limit should be given a trial. The opposition accepted that until it came to the end of that time. Members opposite did not pace themselves and did not ask the questions which were pertinent to the 1988-89 Appropriation Bill. They were talking about the report in the Parliamentary Record in 1986 and what the Minister for Health and Community Services did on his recent trip. Because they asked those types of questions, they are now complaining. The facts are there. They should get their act together.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we all know that, when the Deputy Chief Minister is on thin ground, he shouts. He certainly shouted then. Let us introduce a couple of other facts into this argument. There are 104 unanswered questions that we prepared and gave to ministers opposite. There are, I would suspect, 20 to 30 from the Tuxworth clique and perhaps another 10 to 15 from the frontbench of the crossbenches. Without exaggeration, there are some 150 questions that this side of the House has worked on over the last few weeks as part of its contribution to this debate, and we have been cut off in mid-flight.

It is extremely interesting to note the correlation between the additional time taken for these debates and when we started giving questions in advance to ministers at their request. The debate started becoming longer once the people opposite insisted that we submit our questions earlier. There is an obvious and logical reason for that. That has meant that we have sat down earlier and have gone through the documents more thoroughly. We have asked more questions so that we can undertake the whole exercise more thoroughly.

We have been through that thorough exercise. There are, for example, 18 questions on the Department of Education division and 31 questions on the Transport and Works division that will not be answered tonight. That is why, for the first time that I can remember and probably the first time ever, we will oppose the third reading of the Appropriation Bill. In all conscience, we cannot support the motion for the third reading when we have not had the opportunity to ask all the questions that we want to ask and that the ministers opposite have invited us to ask.

Each of us on this side of the House has a letter from most of the ministers opposite. I received 3 or 4 letters inviting me to submit my questions in advance, and I have done that. My colleagues have done that. The 6 of us have given our questions in advance, as requested by the ministers opposite. What happens? We do not have a chance to ask the questions here. All the work has been done. Public servants sat up late last night doing the work. My staff sat up late for 3 or 4 nights putting the questions together. Public servants worked all day today putting these things in place. Senior public servants have been here all day waiting for this part of the debate.

What happens? For some reason that I do not understand, the government says that 6 hours is sufficient. It does not matter that 11 divisions have not been covered. It does not matter that there are 104 questions that have not been answered. It does not matter that there are 40 questions from the crossbenches that have not been answered. Yet, for some magical reason, it is said that 6 hours are enough. It is not good enough. That is why we are not accepting it and that is why we intend to vote against the passage of this bill.



Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, it is with a great deal of regret that I speak to this motion. I have been here for 8 years and I have never opposed a budget and I have never supported the delaying of a budget. However, on this side of the House, we have no choice. I will not speak about what is left to be done in relation to this budget. I ask the Chief Minister to consider the credibility of this House throughout Australia when it is learned that this government does not allow even a rudimentary scrutiny - which is all that can be achieved in this House - of the budget papers. What is the credibility of this government when in excess of 25% of our budget has not undergone even the most rudimentary scrutiny?

Members opposite intend to ask the people if we should become a state. How could anybody possible support a state of the Northern Territory when its annual budget is treated in this manner? I know that the government will oppose this motion. However, I would ask the Chief Minister to withdraw his motion for the third reading, consider what he has done today and resubmit those matters to committee tomorrow so that they can be scrutinised. What is the necessity for the passage of the committee stage within 1 day? Why does it have to be done in 1 day? There can be a suspension of so much of standing orders as would prevent these matters from being resubmitted to committee. It can be done.

Mr Speaker, this bull-at-a-gate attitude of the government's is a real problem. Forget this budget for a minute and think of what this will do to the entire process of self-government and the prospect of any form of statehood in the Territory. They will go to the Premiers Conference and they will be laughed at. They have a budget that is not even scrutinised in parliament. The people down south will be asking what sort of a cowboy operation is being run here. Obviously, that is the impression that will come across. I can just imagine Treasurer Keating laughing while he is cutting their throats. He would enjoy every second of it, and he would have every reason to laugh because the government has been sharpening his knife for him. Mr Speaker, it is lunacy.

I would suggest that, if this government proceeds with the defeat of the member for MacDonnell's amendment to this motion, the Chief Minister should then withdraw his motion for the third reading. We should not proceed with the third reading, and tomorrow we can go back into committee. There is no panic about the passage of the bill. The coffers are not empty. The government can get by until tomorrow afternoon, surely to God, and then we can proceed in some orderly way with the proper scrutiny of this budget.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, this evening the opposition in this House has sunk to a new low. What we are seeing now is a deliberate ploy on the part of members of the opposition to try to lift their sagging image in this House because they have had such a disastrous 2 days. Every stunt that they have tried to pull has failed, and this will fail too.

The dropouts from drama school over there knew full well that the time allowed for the committee stage was 6 hours. Members of the opposition are members of the Standing Orders Committee which debated and introduced into this House earlier this year the recommendation that the 6-hour restriction be applied. I believe that what they have done this evening is unprecedented in this parliament. They have moved to refuse supply, and that is a very serious thing to do.

The member for MacDonnell must take full blame for moving this motion this evening. I can cast my mind back a decade or more ago, to another House of

parliament in another place, where supply was refused. It sent a shudder through the Labor Party that you would never believe. They was rioting and marching in the streets. They vilified the reputations of prominent people in this country. That occurred when somebody in another place at another time moved to defeat supply and it tore those people apart. It is an absolute disgrace. Here, tonight, members opposite are doing the very thing that their colleagues criticised at that time.

Mr Speaker, I think it is an absolute disgrace that they have moved in this direction because they were certainly party to that decision of the Standing Orders Committee. If they did not agree, they have had plenty of opportunity, in the last 6 or 8 months, to bring into this House a motion to amend that sessional order. They have not chosen to do so, but tonight they are grandstanding and making a big play about this issue. It is a nonsense. What it reflects is the fact that they had not organised themselves. What is at stake here is not the 6 hours, but their own egos because they were not prepared to organise their asking of questions to the various ministers. Each wanted to grab as much of the action as he could for himself. As a result they questioned only 4 ministers. The responsibility for what has occurred tonight lies with the members of the opposition and their lack of organisation, not with this side of the House.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to say that I will be supporting the amendment moved by the member for MacDonnell and I would like to say why. I too think it is a pity that we have degenerated to this stage this evening. It is not beyond the wit of man to consider the budget that we have before us in a reasonable time and, in fact, in the hour since the committee stage was completed, we probably would have gone a long way towards considering the remaining divisions.

The reality is that we have a budget of, I think, about \$1100m and, at this stage, \$550m of it, or 47%, has not been considered by the committee of the whole. Setting aside whether we should have got our act together and done it in 6 hours or not, I think it behoves all of us to go back to our electorates and say with a clear mind that the budget came before the parliament and everybody had a chew at it. We will all go home liking it or disliking it, but at least we will all have the view that the budget has been considered seriously, various aspects of it have been tested with the ministers and that it has been passed by the Assembly, as it has been in the past, generally unanimously.

Tonight, we are confronted with the proposition of going back to the electorate and saying that we got halfway through the committee stage, and we have no idea what is in the second half of the budget because we did not have the chance to examine it. That might appeal to some people in the community and others might think it is funny, but the majority of people in the community would find that very difficult to understand and believe. Here is the board of the Northern Territory's corporate operation and, when it came to considering its budget, it had only 6 hours available and therefore it examined the first half and ignored the second half. If anybody in private enterprise did that, he would go to the wall, and it would just be a matter of when.

As the Leader of the Government Business suggested, the 6-hour limit was given a trial and, on its first time out, we found that we got halfway through the budget.

Mr Coulter: And it worked.

Mr TUXWORTH: It worked in the sense that we filled up 6 hours. That is all that worked. We happened to fill up the 6 hours, but we did not happen to consider all the budget. If the 6 hours is so sacrosanct, I ask the Leader of Government Business and former Treasurer which half of the budget we should discuss within the 6 hours in the future. Will we start at the bottom and work our way up or start at the top and work our way down? Or shall we run a raffle before the budget comes on, and pick lucky numbers out of the hat to see which minister comes out in the draw. Budget Lotto!

I think the member for Nhulunbuy hit the nail on the head when he said that the image of this House will come into disrepute pretty quickly. While we might think it is funny, and we might think it is prudent and all sorts of things, when the 6 state parliaments in Australia and the Commonwealth parliament read in the press that, in the Northern Territory, they only scrutinise half the budget and it is just a matter of which half happens to be done in the committee stage, they will take a pretty dim view of which half of the money they want to give us.

Mr Finch: You treat this as seriously as the opposition does.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Minister for Transport and Works can lie back and treat this situation with sublimity because he does not have to rise to defend anything in his budget area now.

The proposition of setting the motion aside and not debating the budget tonight or even of recommitting it to the committee of the whole tomorrow or next week will not cause a lot of alarm. It will not embarrass the government. It will not place the Northern Territory in jeopardy, and it may help this House save some of the image and prestige that it needs in the community.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, let me demonstrate just how reasonable the government is.

Mr Smith: That will not take you long.

Mr PERRON: I start by saying that the time wasted by the opposition in this Assembly, generally, is legend. In many respects, opposition members are not fair dinkum. They had 6 hours today for this session under sessional order, not through the government moving the gag on the opposition but under sessional order, by the rules of debate of this Assembly. Instead of using that time sensibly, in my view, they ranged debate far and wide. They spent considerable time asking questions about the budget brought down 3 years ago that had nothing to do with the budget before us today. They used the opportunity as best they could, with many of the questions merely constituting fishing expeditions. They knew what they were doing. They knew they were wasting time and they had no regard for the sessional order. They could not care less. They did not have it in their minds at any stage. They considered it irrelevant during the course of the debate. It was obvious they would not get through it. For the last 3 hours of the 6, it was obvious they would not get through the debate within the 6 hours. They blundered on, totally oblivious to that fact. They rambled on and did not stick to the subject at all.

Instead of asking quick, sharp questions to obtain quick, sharp answers, they debated matters and made speeches on many of their questions, over and over again. Indeed, they lectured us during the course of their so-called questioning. They had no regard for the sessional order. The honourable

member for Nhulunbuy said that we would be a laughing-stock in other parliaments if they heard what was occurring here. I can assure the member for Nhulunbuy that, if he wants to study some of the goings-on in other parliaments in Australia, this would have to be the parliament that has least used the gag in the whole of Australia, and he should remember that. We are gentlemen on this side of the House in our behaviour in comparison to the way other governments treat their opposition right across the country. We are absolute gentlemen.

Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 198, I move that divisions 38 and 39 relating to the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology, and the remainder of the bill not previously considered in the committee of the whole, be recommitted.

Motion agreed to.

(Mr Perron's motion took precedence over the motion for the third reading of the bill and the amendment moved thereto by Mr Bell which lapsed accordingly.)

In committee:

Appropriations for divisions 38 and 39:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move that the committee report progress and seek leave to sit again on the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to; leave granted.

Report adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, tonight I rise to pay tribute to the Beebe family who have just celebrated 40 years of settlement on Ucharonidge Station and 40 years of active development of the cattle industry in the Northern Territory. I believe that, in this bicentennial year, it is most appropriate that people such as these be acknowledged by Territorians for the invaluable contribution that they have made to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, members of the Beebe family are outstanding pioneers. Mr and Mrs Beebe senior moved to Ucharonidge Station in 1948. Mr Beebe had 80 pounds in his pocket, a brand new truck and 11 children. He commenced to build what is now regarded as one of the biggest family cattle empires in Australia. That was not achieved without a great deal of toil and sacrifice by the family. Last Saturday at the station, over 150 people from all over Australia joined the Beebe family in its celebration of those 40 years. That reflects how highly they are thought of in the community. During the course of the evening, I was recounted a couple of stories told to me by Florrie Sherwin who is, of course, a Beebe. I would like to put those stories on record.

When Mick Beebe was 17, his brother Les became very sick and was in need of hospitalisation. The only vehicle on the property was one of the old Blitzers and it had no gearbox. Mick was the only man on the place at the

time and, together with his 15- and 17-year-old sisters, he put the gearbox back in the truck and drove his brother to the Tennant Creek Hospital. When they reached the creek at the boundary between Helen Springs and Ucharonidge, Mick spent a good deal of time trying to crank-start the truck but it would not respond. In fact, he became so tired by the effort that the girls were beginning to prepare for coping with 2 exhausted boys. The truck finally started and they continued to Tennant Creek, where a Dr Ecclesmith decided that it was necessary to operate. He found that Les' condition was so serious that he had to suspend the operation until Dr John Hawkins came from Alice Springs to assist. It took 11 hours for Dr Hawkins to arrive and, during that time, Les Beebe lay on the operating table under anaesthetic. Les survived that operation, which was pretty remarkable. You do not hear of many people being under anaesthetic for 11 hours and surviving. Regrettably, he died at a later time from a similar illness. The family had to put up with that sort of hardship in those days.

Another story concerns Jeanie Lovegrove, the wife of a very well-respected and famous former departmental head in the Northern Territory government. She had 2 small children and was 7 months pregnant when she became marooned in the same creek, on the Helen Springs Ucharonidge boundary. The alarm went out and eventually she was located. Word was sent to Newcastle Waters that young Jeanie Lovegrove was at the creek and surrounded by water. The only access was from Ucharonidge and old Mr Beebe senior was at Newcastle Waters. He said, 'That's no trouble. My girls will go and get her'. His girls were 15 and 17. A message was sent from Newcastle Waters for the girls to get the horses, mount up and get Jeanie Lovegrove from the creek. The girls rode for a day to get there and Mrs Lovegrove, who was in a fairly traumatised state, was delighted to think that somebody had come to save her and her children. The Beebe girls said that reaching her was the easy part. Jeanie was 7 months pregnant and the return journey was very difficult for her. She had to walk and ride alternately because she was so uncomfortable and, when she passed out not far from the homestead, the girls had to carry her. Of course, Jeanie Lovegrove survived that, and her family also made a great contribution to the Territory.

It is important to record the experiences of our pioneering families as little as 40 years ago, when they had to struggle so hard to survive and prosper in the Northern Territory. There is another story about Florrie Sherwin. When she was 9, she had the job of doing the family washing. The men would lift her up on to the horse, pass up a double sheet and hang it over the neck of the horse. All the family laundry would be put in the double sheet hanging over the neck of the horse. She would ride down to the creek or the bore, do the washing by hand for the whole family and hang it over a fence. When it was dry, it was her duty to bring it all home. It was only a quarter of a mile ride and therefore it wasn't that bad. Again, it gives an indication of the sort of conditions that people lived under at that time.

Mick and Roy Beebe have gone on to develop 4 properties in the Northern Territory and a Brahman herd which is the equal of any in Australia. They have done that in the face of great adversity and through great sacrifice on many occasions by themselves and their families. It would be unfortunate if 40 years of settlement at Ucharonidge went unnoticed by Territorians because the Beebe family's achievement is really remarkable. I have a great deal of pleasure in saying tonight that I am proud to have known the Beebe family and to have been a part of their activity and development over the last 14 years. They are great Territorians as well as great Australians.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about a certain letter that I have received from the Women's Information Centre. Usually, when I receive letters of this sort from women's groups and the Women's Information Centre, I read them and file them but I do not do very much about them. Normally, the requests in the letters are not exactly my cup of tea because I have never been a feminist of their sort. I believe many women who espouse the feminist cause want to have their cake and eat it too. They want more than their 50% of the equality cake. They want the old-fashioned politeness, they want the doors held open, they want the chairs held out, they want the men to shout them - the whole box and dice - but, at the same time, they want more than their fair share of recognition for their capabilities on the basis of the fact that they are women.

I read the letter and I found that it was not unreasonable. In fact, it made a great deal of sense. It was a down-to-earth letter and what it had to say was very close to my own thoughts on the matter. The letter dealt with a situation that has developed in our hotels as a result of their efforts to drum up more business. I believe that the situation requires more active attention than the Minister for Tourism has given it if we are to maintain any semblance of decency in the community. I am not a wowsler by any means but I believe there are certain community standards that we must maintain. I refer to the strip shows that one sees publicly at certain hotels. I will quote from the letter:

We believe that strip shows, bare-breasted and see-through-bloused waitresses degrade women's bodies by exploitation as sexual commodities. We feel that pornography reflects and serves male culture and patriarchy and undermines women's self-esteem in our society. We believe that this type of entertainment undermines family life. We are very concerned about the ramifications of such stimulation on the predominantly male audiences and the consequences to the community are the increase in sex-related crimes. We question the toleration of indecent exposure. We know that women who do not wish to witness such smut are severely restricted in their choice of venues. As a developing tourist town, Darwin can well do without these inappropriate types of public sexual exhibitions.

Mr Speaker, on this matter, I heartily agree with the writer of the letter. I spoke to a senior police officer and he assured me, as does the writer of this letter, that no state in Australia would tolerate this sort of thing in the entertainment industry in their state. The Minister for Tourism said a couple of months ago that he had asked the hotels for a little self-regulation in this matter, but I am wondering what happened as a result of his request. It seems to me that it is a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. If the hotels have regulated themselves and such shows are not as public or as frequent as they were, why did the Women's Information Centre write to me? I gather from the letter that the self-regulation has not been as active as it should have been.

I have no objection whatsoever to a woman earning her money in any way she likes with her body. That is her business entirely. All men and women earn their money by using their bodies in different ways, some use their brains, some use their voices and even politicians use their bodies in certain ways to earn their money. It is a person's private business entirely what he or she does with his or her own body. If women want to engage in strip shows or other forms of earning money which may not be publicly accepted, that is their own business. But there is a time and a place for everything. When these shows are public, they can be offensive to the people who, you could say, are

forced to see them. I do not have any objection to these shows being put on privately because one has a choice whether one sees them or not. Because they are put on in public, they are completely objectionable to normal, decent people.

I have another bone to pick with the Northern Territory government and especially the Northern Territory Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. I certainly will be putting in a formal complaint and I will not be sending a \$20 lodgment fee. I think that is a bit over the odds. A letter from the Women's Information Centre says that the commission 'requires each formal complaint to be accompanied by a \$20 lodgment fee'. It says that it views that as an act of discouragement. I view it as being completely unfair. Why can't you put in a formal complaint without lodging a \$20 fee? I can submit a formal objection to a development application to the Rural Planning Authority and I do not have to lodge a \$20 fee.

I cannot see why the Northern Territory Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission requires a \$20 fee. There is no indication that you can have this refunded. Why should it cost you or me \$20 to object to this - to use an old-fashioned word - smut that has been foisted on us by the entertainment industry? I realise the entertainment industry is going through hard times. Given the various tax disincentives resulting from federal government policies, I realise that its members are not finding their income as easy to earn as they did formerly. They are forced to adopt different ways of attracting customers. However, putting on strip shows such as those that one sees advertised is not the way to go about it.

Turning to another matter, a constituent spoke to me about a job with the Department of Transport and Works that he would like to apply for. We have heard a great deal of talk about builders, contractors and subcontractors being passed over for jobs when the government looks to the south for builders for its projects, as it might do in relation to the State Square development. There is a building being constructed not very far from here on which southern contractors and subcontractors have been more active than the local contractors and subcontractors. This man is well qualified for the job but it appears that his application is being passed over. I believe that, at the moment, the Department of Transport and Works is interviewing applicants in Adelaide for this position of works supervisor.

Previously, this man did contract work for the Department of Transport and Works in Katherine. He did his job well. He went to an employment agency and he was told there was a job with the Department of Transport and Works. He applied for it and was told subsequently that his application would not be considered because he was a local person. The Department of Transport and Works has advertised this job through an employment agency in Adelaide and is interviewing applicants there now. He told me that work supervisors usually have a trade background with about 4 years practical experience. This man also has professional qualifications. He is a construction technician from London and has studied foremanship and concrete construction. He is a member of the Institute of Clerks of Works in Great Britain, has qualifications also from the Department of Mines and Energy in WA, has a shot firer's licence for all groups in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, has been on the construction training committee in the Northern Territory and has worked as a construction safety supervisor. With those qualifications, he has been passed over for no reason at all. There was no hint that he had been unsatisfactory in his previous employment and I have not so far been able to find out why he is having difficulty at the moment.

It seems completely unfair. Employers are looking for competent people in the Northern Territory. Here is a man eminently qualified for this particular job yet it seems as though he will not even get a look in. It appears that he cannot even apply for the job. He came to my office with his wife and they told me they had had enough. If he did not get this job, they would leave the Territory. The government wonders why people are leaving the Territory. This is a glaring example and it is only 1 of a number that I know of. The jobs are here, but it appears that the government is going elsewhere to find people to fill them.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to John Hickman whose memorial service I attended this morning, together with a number of other members. I first met John Hickman when I arrived in Darwin in 1966. In fact, I lived next door to John for 3 or 4 years and, during that period I became, I believe, reasonably close to him. I enjoyed his company and admired his attitudes and his business acumen. I do not want to repeat the remarks His Honour the Administrator made in the very fine eulogy that he gave at the memorial service but I would like to touch on some of the things that I knew about John Hickman and his activities.

John was the founding president of the Apex Clubs in the Northern Territory. He was the first President of the Darwin Apex Club and went on to become the district governor of the region. Soon after arriving in Darwin, I joined the Darwin Apex Club. I was a member of that club for some 11 years and of another Apex Club for 2 years after that. I had a lot to do with John Hickman during that time. He recruited many new members in the Darwin region and was involved in many fine works. In those days, there were very few facilities in Darwin and the hard-working volunteers of the Apex Clubs did much to rectify that situation.

As a Legacy ward myself, and having been involved with Legacy in Western Australia for a number of years, both as a ward and as a Legacy gym instructor, I had a close relationship with John Hickman in the role he held for a number of years as President of Legacy in the Northern Territory. I understand that he was made a life member of Legacy. In the early years, he worked very hard to ensure that the children of war widows and other people cared for by Legacy were looked after. Today His Honour the Administrator alluded to John's many acts of generosity as a man and a businessman during those years of his involvement with Apex and Legacy.

I had a great deal of admiration for John Hickman as a businessman. In all the time I knew him, I never heard a bad word spoken about him or any allusion to improper dealing or sharp practice. That is remarkable, given that he was in business in Darwin for 20-odd years. Very few businessmen could match that achievement, either here or elsewhere in Australia. Not only was John a person who performed very well in business and was well-respected by everybody, he also had vision. He started up several industries in this town whilst simultaneously performing many other duties. He was a government appointee on the Northern Territory Development Corporation. He was a member of the Northern Territory Port Authority, the Chairman of Red Cross for many years and a councillor of St John. He performed the function of Consul for Sweden and was also the Honorary Consul for Finland.

John had a very fruitful life. His Honour alluded to John's fairly distinguished military service in the Second World War, and his continued relationship with the RSL and other organisations of that kind. I join with my colleagues who attended this morning's memorial service in paying tribute to John. I also join with the Administrator in offering my condolences to his widow, Dallas, and his son Alexander.



To turn to another matter, I would like to pay tribute to the members of our staff who are working at the Expo pavilion in Brisbane. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Northern Territory Open Day at Expo, and I certainly urge honourable members who have not yet seen Expo to visit it before the end of October because it is a wonderful exhibition. During the short time that I was able to attend, I had some 4 free hours on the Saturday prior to our official engagements. I tried to see as many of the exhibits as I could in that brief period. I must admit that generally I tried to choose areas where the queues were shortest and, as a result, I did not necessarily see the most popular displays. However, I did manage to see some of the displays which were reputed to be among the top 5 and the official visit on the Sunday took in another 2 of the top 5, namely the Queensland stand and the Australian stand. Overall, I managed to attend 15 or 16 exhibitors' halls and I was impressed by the standard throughout. Some nations and states went to an enormous amount of trouble to display their wares and their benefits.

When I first saw the Northern Territory stand, I thought that, in terms of its immediate visual presentation and size, it paled into insignificance when compared with the others. That was my initial reaction. The rocks that depicted the Devil's Marbles, which surrounded the entrance to our exhibit, were quite startling but the area that we actually had in the hall was extremely small. The point I am trying to make is that it was not the magnitude of the stand that was important. It became evident to me very quickly that the quality of our stand could be judged by the number of people attending it. Most of the other stands relied very heavily on electronic and visual materials which were stunning, startling, attention-grabbing and highly spectacular. Our stand relied heavily on the person-to-person approach.

As was suggested by the Chief Minister this morning in question time, visitation to the Territory stand was enhanced by the use of wildlife exhibits so that people had the opportunity to appreciate some of our native animals. However, what he did not indicate was the way in which the wildlife exhibit was presented. Not only did our staff manage to convey an understanding of the animal or the reptile in question, they moved throughout the crowds and allowed the children and the adults to handle the reptiles and animals. In fact, they released the animals to children and adults in the audience at various intervals and allowed them to walk around with them and show their friends or pass them from hand to hand.

At one of the shows that I saw, it reached the point where the whole of the floor area in front of the stage was completely covered with people sitting down and behind them was a row of people bunched up against our fibreglass rocks and, over the top of the fibreglass rocks, all you could see was a sea of faces as people stood up behind trying to look down to see what was happening. The interest was absolutely incredible. People seemed to come away from the stand with a great impression of the Northern Territory, and I spoke to quite a few afterwards. People wanted to stay even when the wildlife exhibition was over. They wanted to talk to our staff and to other people who had knowledge of the Territory. I felt rather proud to be involved with the Northern Territory when I heard the comments made by people who attended our stand during the day. I was surprised to see some of the people who comprised our staff on the stand because I was not aware that some of them were working for us there. They were people whom I have known in the Territory for some time. They seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves and reflected their enjoyment by the way in which they presented themselves to the people who came to the stand. I believe that that, in itself, had a terrific spin-off because it showed the friendliness and openness of Territorians to people who visited the stand. I am sure that will have a great bearing when people are deciding whether to come to the Territory for a holiday or not.

This morning, the Chief Minister touched on the quality of our presentation in the amphitheatre and concert as the final feature of the Northern Territory Open Day. I would like to echo his comments. The stars of our show, all 5 groups of them, performed extremely well. The show opened with Ted Egan with his usual lagerphone or fosterphone or whatever. Ted opened with a rousing chorus of one of his songs and followed that with a very poignant song about a drover's boy. The crowd must have numbered many hundreds of people. They were packed into the amphitheatre and people could hardly move. Within a matter of minutes, he had them in the palm of his hand and that set the pattern for the whole of the amphitheatre performance.

The Yothu Yndu dancers, who had just returned from Seoul and who were heading off early the following morning to New York to join the Midnight Oil group for a concert tour across America, performed brilliantly. It was the first time that I had ever seen Aboriginal dancers wired for sound. It took some getting used to. It was unobtrusive but, nonetheless, it was there. The Aboriginal singer wore a headpiece with feathers etc and, on one side of it, there was a very unobtrusive little microphone. The didgeridoo player had a remote-control sensed microphone and transmitter attached to the side of his didgeridoo. It was brilliantly done. The didgeridoo player was able to parade around the stage, as was the singer, and there was magnification of sound from both wherever they went on the stage without the need for them to remain close to a microphone. It enabled them to present a very mobile performance as not only the dancers but the singer and the didgeridoo player could move easily. Their performance was absolutely brilliant and they received a standing ovation at the end.

The Chief Minister mentioned a young chap called Chris O'Brien, and I agree with the Chief Minister that Chris O'Brien, whom I knew in Darwin and who has been a friend of our family for a while, has an incredible talent which has never yet been utilised fully. I think the performance in the amphitheatre in Brisbane that night was his first performance outside the Northern Territory. I predict that he will go a long way.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise briefly to make 2 comments. First, I would like to add to the comments by the member for Ludmilla in relation to the staff at the Expo stand. I had the pleasure and privilege to be at Expo for the opening of the Northern Territory stand and at the opening of the Expo. I was there also about a fortnight ago for the launching of the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia which is a very significant publication produced as a bicentennial project within the Northern Territory. I believe that it will add significantly to the historical records of Aboriginal people. Most importantly, however, it represents the last recording of a pharmacopoeia in the world with the first having been the Chinese pharmacopoeia which was recorded some 3000 years ago. I understand that there will be future volumes of the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia and, through the gathering together of this knowledge and the scientific research behind it, there is every possibility that we will discover many more naturally-produced chemicals and treatments for some illnesses and injuries than those that are currently available. My information is that there are some very distinct possibilities of that having occurred already.

That is not the point I wish to speak on nor do I necessarily want to talk about the quality of the stand at Expo. I want to talk about the quality of the Northern Territory staff who have been working at the Expo stand. Some of them will have been there for the entire 6 months. They have taken employment at the stand and genuinely have done the Northern Territory proud. Most of those people are Territorians. They have lived in the Territory, have clearly

demonstrated an enthusiasm, an excitement and a knowledge of the Northern Territory and, in no small way, have been a significant factor in the success of our stand at the Brisbane Expo. However, at the end of this month, a significant number of those people will be out of a job. I ask the government to investigate means of rewarding these Territorians who have done such a sterling job for the Northern Territory and to assist them to find ongoing employment, hopefully in the Northern Territory if they wish it, and I understand that a significant number do wish it.

Perhaps the Minister for Tourism, in particular, may be able to take this matter on board and speak with some of the people who have developed, even in this short period, skills that I am certain can be built on and which could be a significant asset to the Tourist Commission. I would certainly ask that the government help each and every one of these people in any way that it can. That goes for Mr Roger Steele, who is well known to members of this House and who has done an excellent job in managing the stand throughout the 6 months, and right through all of the staff. When I was there a fortnight ago, 1 particular lady had the unenviable responsibility of guiding me around Expo for the course of a day. She told me that she had been working in the Territory as a telephonist with Telecom for some 7 or 8 years. She gave up her job to work at the Expo stand. She accepts that there are no promises, but I think that it would be an excellent gesture on the part of the government if these people were approached and offered every assistance for ongoing employment.

I am just trying to think of the name of a young fellow. The member for Ludmilla could help me, I am sure. He went on the Young Endeavour. He is a young fellow from Katherine, Braedon Earley. He came off the Young Endeavour and joined the staff at the Expo stand. He has been doing a fantastic job there. What is to happen, at the end of this month, to a young Territorian like that? Why should we lose a person like that through lack of forethought? We must give these people an opportunity to ensure that they are not left out in the cold when Expo finishes. I ask all members of government to regard this as a matter of urgency. Whilst our staff are not saying anything there, I know that naturally each and every one of them is wondering what the future holds.

As it turns out, I would like to follow on from another subject raised by the member for Ludmilla. I would like to take the opportunity this evening to speak briefly about a man whom I have regarded, since I met him in 1975, as a close friend. I am speaking, of course, of Mr John Hickman, and not just John, but his wife Dallas, and his son Alexander, who has been a lifelong friend of my second son, Mark. I met John Hickman initially when I joined the Northern Territory Confederation of Industries and John had Dan Thomas working with him in the Northern Research prawning operation in Darwin. John was a pioneer of the joint venture fishing and prawning industry in the Northern Territory. He then went into the Japanese joint venture with Northern Research in addition to his other business in Darwin. That business ran into difficulties with significant assistance from the trade unions with the introduction of awards into the industry at a time when prices were falling because of a glut on the world market. The 2 factors succeeded in destroying a very successful prawn processing business in Darwin, and not only that business but all similar ventures in the Northern Territory.

To the end of his days, John was absolutely committed to the development of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. On a professional basis, I had dealings with him again when I was Minister for Ports and Fisheries. Along with Gus Trippe, he formed a company called Seanorth and set up a joint

venture with Saichon Fisheries in Thailand, the Thai joint venture fishing company which started operations in Darwin in 1985. It is still operating and is seeking to expand further. Like the member for Ludmilla, I will not go into the details of John Hickman's long and very illustrious career or his contributions to Australia, the Northern Territory and the Darwin community. I would, however, like to take some time to express my condolences to Dallas and Alexander. Alexander is 14 years of age. He has been the pride and joy of Dallas and John and I know it is very hard for a young fellow of that age to lose his father. He has many of his father's strong character attributes and I am sure his father would have been very proud of the way he handled the memorial service this morning. I trust that both he and Dallas will continue to regard Darwin as their home. They are currently living in Perth and I am sure that they will continue to return to Darwin and retain their friendships and associations here.

Our personal friendship developed through living in the same suburb. The Hickmans have a home in my electorate of Nightcliff. Their children went to the same school as mine and developed a personal friendship. I have an enormous respect for John Hickman, as do most people who knew him. His death is a sad loss to the Northern Territory. He was a great human being, one whom we will remember with respect and admiration and look up to as a guiding light in how we should run our lives.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT  
Trade Development Zone

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement regarding the Trade Development Zone and the issues that have been raised in this Legislative Assembly and outside it by the Leader of the Opposition and others, but particularly by the Leader of the Opposition. I preface my statement by saying that this whole debate has focused around 2 basic issues. The first is the difference between the ALP and the CLP. We are committed to jobs, jobs, jobs whilst the ALP has done nothing to provide those opportunities to Territorians. The second is that, each time I provide members of the opposition with an answer, they change the question.

The public campaign by the Leader of the Opposition and others has once again damaged the credibility and reputation of the Trade Development Zone, its staff, its tenants and its potential clients and markets. Once again, the forward progress of the zone has faltered and the repair work will be difficult, costly and time-consuming. Let me make it quite clear, however, that the government will undertake that repair work once again, without any loss of commitment to the zone's future.

The hard part of the task will not be performed here. The work to be done here is relatively easy. Out in the marketplace, in the highly-competitive regions of Asia and Europe and even in other parts of Australia, is where we will have to repair the damage caused by yet another thoughtless attack on the Trade Development Zone by the Leader of the Opposition. People out there do not give a fig about who said what to whom, how many press releases were issued and who laid what accusations. All they know is that the zone is once again dogged by controversy. That may lead people to pull back from the commitments they were perhaps about to make. It is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition knows nothing about doing business overseas, particularly in Asia. In fact, that same charge can be levelled against many of the participants in this public debate. That has been the root cause of the current squabble, as I will demonstrate in the course of my contribution to this debate.

Mr Speaker, it is critically necessary that the motivation and the method of operation of the Leader of the Opposition be examined closely. It will become obvious that his actions and his intentions in this matter are less than what might be expected from an elected member of this House. Let us consider the following tale of subterfuge and sabotage.

On Tuesday of last week, a member of his staff rang the Sydney office of Price Waterhouse, the internationally-reputed accounting firm, seeking information and casting doubts on the credibility of an independent consultant the government had engaged to review activities at the zone. The staff member's view, which he put to Price Waterhouse, was that the consultant, Mr Fergus Simpson, was a strange choice and that such a consultancy might be better carried out by Price Waterhouse itself.

Fortunately, the independent consultant, Mr Fergus Simpson, was well-known to Price Waterhouse and well respected by that company. The company immediately contacted Mr Simpson to relate the nature of the inquiry. I can tell honourable members that Mr Simpson is not at all pleased that his credentials have been brought into question in such a manner and that professional damage might conceivably have been done to him.

The same staff member, without specifically identifying his office and the nature of his inquiries, telephoned the TDZ's consultant in Hong Kong, Mr K.K. Yeung, leaving his name for a return call and a message that he had a series of questions. The clear inference in his message was that he was working for a Territory media organisation.

Mr Smith: Rubbish!

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition says that is rubbish. Let him bring his telephone account into this Assembly for us to examine and determine whether or not an international call was made from his office to K.K. Yeung. If he says it is rubbish, let him demonstrate to this House that it did not happen. No, Mr Speaker, there is absolute silence from the Leader of the Opposition because he knew that his office was being used for this purpose. It is a shame and it is an attitude that we will expose once and for all during this debate.

Mr Speaker, Mr Yeung sensed the illegitimacy of the call and did not respond.

The Leader of the Opposition himself visited a former member of the board of the TDZA, Mr Laurie Jones, in Sydney. He also visited many Darwin businessmen seeking to stir up dissatisfaction with the operation of the zone, and we have had many reports on his visits from the businessmen concerned. The purpose of the Leader of the Opposition's discussions was negative in the extreme. His sole aim was to build up a case against the zone. Let me give another demonstration of his aims and motives.

Last month, 2 members of the South Australian parliament sought to visit the Trade Development Zone in connection with matters they were addressing as members of the Public Works Committee. The office of the Leader of the Opposition sought the assistance of my office in organising the visit and a briefing, and I was happy to comply. After the visit, the Leader of the Opposition issued a press release which bumbled on about high-technology parks and connected the 2 South Australians with supposedly formal links between Darwin's TDZ and South Australia's Technology Park. I can reveal that 1 of the South Australian members was horrified that such a press release had been issued and sought to have it recalled before it was printed. That member completely dissociated himself from the Leader of the Opposition's press release. He said that he was embarrassed by its contents and that it did not represent the facts. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition has his facts wrong about the Trade Development Zone will not come as any surprise to honourable members here. I stress to honourable members that both visitors were Labor members of a state House.

Meanwhile, the Leader of the Opposition has been actively encouraging media outlets around the country to publish negative stories about Darwin's Trade Development Zone. Some stories have in fact appeared. They have been republished and read in most of the Asian countries where we are trying to do business and the result of that is more damage to be repaired. We could hardly complain if the stories were justified, but in fact they are not - or, at least, they only rate because of staff and board movements.

Mr Speaker, let me make it clear that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the Trade Development Zone. There has been no impropriety, no waste of public money and no misdirection of government strategy. I certainly agree that there is some perception that the zone is not progressing smoothly. The rumpus that has occurred in recent weeks revolves around the departure of a

staff member, Mr Adam Gordon, and a personal dispute between the board Chairman, Mr Ray McHenry and a former board member, Mr Laurie Jones. I do not wish to specifically address the circumstances of Mr Gordon. In my view, it would not be proper for the minister to involve himself personally in a matter which is rightfully between the chairman and his staff. Mr Gordon attempted to see me personally in relation to this matter and I had to refuse because of that view. I do not think it was wise of him to follow such a course of action. The chairman has kept me informed on the matter, and that is also proper.

However, because Mr Gordon has been brought into this debate, it is necessary to pass a general observation. The chairman sought, with the endorsement of government ministers, to restructure the administrative functions of the zone, and he took certain decisions which he regarded as necessary. Mr Gordon did not agree with those decisions as they related to himself. As a result, a dispute arose and Mr Gordon is no longer on the zone's staff. I understand that he has sought legal advice, and that is his right. When all is said and done, that is all there is to it. Such things happen from time to time in the Northern Territory Public Service and all other public services. The Leader of the Opposition has attempted to link this matter with other aspects of the case he is trying to develop. In truth it is no more than a staff matter which is being handled in the appropriate way. Neither I nor any other minister has any dispute with Mr Gordon or any reason to intervene.

Let us now turn to the matter of Mr Jones. The Leader of the Opposition has portrayed the departure of Mr Jones and others from the board as a signal of widespread discontent and as precipitating a crisis at the zone. I will now relay the facts. In June, the minister at the time endorsed a decision to restructure the Trade Development Zone Authority Board by reducing its membership from 5 to 3. Among the reasons for the decision was that the board would function better with a membership that was entirely local and that, in the past, the structure had been rather unwieldy and somewhat difficult to organise in terms of meetings. Mr Jones was based in Sydney. Mr Tony Richards, although initially an Alice Springs-based businessman, had moved interstate. In fact, during most of 1988, he had been on an extended holiday overseas. Mr Col Fuller was a board member simply because, at the time, he was the Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development. When he moved to the Department of Lands and Housing, it was no longer appropriate for him to remain on the Trade Development Zone Authority Board.

It was decided to retain a board of 3 with Mr McHenry as chairman, Mr Bob Matthewson as deputy chairman and with the well-known and respected Darwin businessman Mr Haig Arthur as the new board member. Suggestions have been made that the new board is entirely compliant, the creature of its chairman. These suggestions are outrageous and totally offensive to board members. I have every confidence in each member and his ability to work for the betterment of the Territory. The restructuring has taken place regardless of any of the later public utterances of Mr Jones.

There is another reason why the services of Mr Jones were no longer required on the board. Quite clearly, the emphasis on the zone's activities has been in Asia and will continue to be. Honourable members will know very well that Asian governments, businesses and citizens are most sensitive to a perceived Australian bias against Asian people. In this context, the current national immigration debate is doing great harm to Australia's trade prospects in Asia. Mr Jones has not helped the Territory in this regard. As a board member, he expressed the strong view that too much emphasis was being placed

on the zone's Asian business activities and that instead the dominant effort should be on securing Australian business participation in the zone.

At times, Mr Jones expressed his views unwisely. I appreciate that he had extensive business dealings in parts of Asia but I have to say that his attitudes, which some might view as paternalistic, have not been highly regarded by members of the Asian business community. I hesitate to be critical, but it cannot be ignored that the perception of Mr Jones in Asia is that he has a strong anti-Asian bias. That is a message I have been given in my visits to the Asian business community and it is a message that government officers have also received. Some other members of the TDZA Board share that concern. Clearly, and particularly in the current climate, that is not a situation that the Territory government can treat lightly. I regret that it has been necessary to raise these matters, but I point out that Mr Jones has played a major role in initiating this debate. I draw back from any accusation. The important point to consider is not whether Mr Jones has such views but whether it is perceived that he has such views. In such cases, perceptions become reality in the minds of people with whom we are doing business.

Before I move on to other matters, let me inform honourable members about another issue which involves Mr Jones. On many occasions, the Leader of the Opposition has berated this government over the business failure of a former zone participant, Hungerford Refrigeration, and its apparent unsuitability for zone occupation. I point out that the champion of Hungerford's entry to the zone was none other than Mr Jones. In fact, he was the board member who took responsibility for introducing Hungerford to the zone. The person who took similar responsibility at staff level was Mr Adam Gordon. While I am mentioning interesting facts, I point out also that Mr Gordon was formerly employed by Mr Jones and, indeed, Mr Gordon recommended the appointment of Mr Jones to the board position. Wheels within wheels, Mr Speaker, and a very different story from the one put together by the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition uses the Hungerford saga to strengthen his case which also depends on Mr Jones and Mr Gordon. He cannot have it both ways.

A final point that should be mentioned is that, at the final meeting of the old board in May this year, all members commended Mr K.K. Yeung on his diligent and efficient performance as head consultant in Asia. Mr Yeung is, of course, the Hong Kong-based consultant at the core of the opposition's breast-beating concern. In essence and by inference, the opposition attempts to portray him as some sort of Chinese mystery figure, hauling in many millions of dollars from the Northern Territory government while he lives the life of an oriental potentate. According to the Biggles-type fantasies of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Yeung is a sort of Fu Manchu, seen only occasionally through a haze of opium at his gangland headquarters in downtown Hong Kong. The reality is that Mr Yeung is a businessman who is well-known and widely-respected in Hong Kong and Asia, with extremely modest offices in one of the world's most expensive cities. There is nothing at all sinister about Mr Yeung or his business and nothing is shrouded in secrecy. If the opposition's paranoid concerns about Mr Yeung are widespread, how is it that other governments in Australia and indeed the world have sought his services so keenly? For example, Mr Yeung has been approached to act on behalf of Queensland and Western Australian government authorities, despite what the member for Stuart said yesterday. His services have also been sought by the governments of Madagascar, Belize, the Chinese province of Shenzhen, the municipality of Beijing and the Consulate General of Malaysia.



Mr Yeung's services are highly recommended by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong Kwun Tong Industry and Commerce Association. In fact, the Chamber of Commerce advises visitors that Mr Yeung is Hong Kong's most reputable and successful candidate in his field of expertise. Even the People's Republic of China is satisfied with the credibility and skills of Mr Yeung. The Chinese government has formed an International Business Consultancy in partnership with Mr Yeung, the Netherlands Midland Bank and Scriven Trading to promote economic cooperation between China and the western world. A charter of the company, called Euro-bitic, is to examine the possibilities of establishing Chinese manufacturing plants in trade development zones and Darwin has been specifically mentioned in the Beijing announcement. Business is a matter of supply and demand and it is obvious that Mr Yeung is much in demand as a consultant. That is a certain measure of his value.

The opposition alleges that vast sums of money have been passed to Mr Yeung for negligible returns. The simplest way to bury those allegations is through an independent audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. Such an audit was completed in June this year by a certified public accountant, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi. I anticipated that the Leader of the Opposition would raise concerns about the audit through some tenuous links between the auditor and Mr Yeung's company even though the audit was conducted by a certified public accountant. Therefore, I commissioned a new audit last month. It was undertaken by Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants of Hong Kong, a firm which has absolutely no connection with any of Mr Yeung's business affairs.

Mr Speaker, I table that audit. The document confirms in almost every detail the findings of the earlier audit. At the bottom line, it shows that the Territory is indeed extracting value from Mr Yeung. It shows that, in fact, Mr Yeung fact made a loss of almost \$40 000 during the 4-month period from May to September this year and a loss of just over \$300 000 in the period from May 1986 to May 1988. In other words, the fees the Territory pays Mr Yeung for himself and his staff do not cover the costs of working for us. Why should he lose money on our behalf, you might ask, Mr Speaker. The Trade Development Zone is just one of Mr Yeung's many clients and I presume that he does not make such losses in his arrangements with them. In fact, he has complained that he has to subsidise his work for the Territory through partnership work with other clients. More importantly, Mr Yeung has a deep commitment to the TDZ and its future. I can confirm that fact, having met Mr Yeung several times and having worked with him on zone matters. No doubt, the Chief Minister will express a similar view.

In any case, we have now entered into new arrangements with Mr Yeung which will ensure him a better return for his efforts on our behalf. Those arrangements will come into force in November, supplanting the current consultancy which expires at that time. I do not intend to go into detail here about those arrangements. They are commercially confidential and their public release would have a strong capacity to undermine the commercial negotiations of the zone and its prospective clients. Let me say this: the new contract has retained certain features of previous contracts in that it provides for a retainer fee and success fees paid on the commencement of new manufacturing enterprises in the zone. Alternatives were considered but we believe this is the most appropriate arrangement as it avoids open-ended time-cost charges whilst continuing to provide an incentive to the consultant. It is the best compromise between full commerciality and a reasonable rate of return. The audit that I have tabled tends to confirm this. I am confident and Cabinet is confident that these arrangements are attractive to the government and the zone in terms of what we get for what we pay.

The opposition and others have scattered like confetti a range of amounts which Mr Yeung is alleged to have received in the past. These figures have been exaggerated wildly, sometimes by a factor of 4. The Leader of the Opposition has claimed at various times that Mr Yeung has received over \$4m.

Mr Smith: That is a lie.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's responds that that is a lie. He cannot help himself. He has tried to say that the opposition never knocked the gas pipeline. If I kept a record of his blunders in a black book, it would be too heavy to carry around.

At other times it has been suggested that Mr Yeung earns millions from the zone every year. Is that a lie also? In fact, the total amount paid to 30 June 1988 to Mr Yeung's company, for himself and all his staff and all his consultancy work in other areas, is just \$1.439m. That figure includes retainers, success fees, group visit expenses, seminars, hospitality, travel and accommodation, entertainment and administrative expenses. Let us hear the Leader of the Opposition say that is too high or that we are not receiving value for money. How much would he pay? Does he just sit back and think of a figure? It will be interesting to listen to his contribution to this debate.

Mr Speaker, the payment to K.K. Yeung covers activities on behalf of the Northern Territory across 6 countries in Asia. I would like to get in touch with some of the South Australian or Victorian colleagues of the Leader of the Opposition and ask them how much they pay and what successes have resulted. The amount is hardly the pot of gold portrayed by the opposition, particularly when the high cost of office space and vehicles is taken into account. An independent audit conducted last month shows, in fact, that the amount represents a loss to Mr Yeung.

The Leader of the Opposition obviously knows nothing about doing business in Asia. I have to say that, in its earliest attempts to forge trade links, the government was in the same category. That is why we engaged 2 consultants of Mr Yeung's capabilities. It was necessary to prevent making fools of ourselves, just as the Leader of the Opposition is making a fool of himself today. He sits in his office in Darwin, secure in his knowledge of the handsome parliamentary pension he will receive in the future, and raises his telescope to view the Asian business scene. It is handy for him to know that he will get \$350 000 in his back pocket when he walks out of here in a little while. The member for Nhulunbuy will get \$200 000. He is happy. He is off to Queensland. He has a job. He does not care about Territorians.

It was necessary to prevent making fools of ourselves, just as the Leader of the Opposition is making a fool of himself today. With his classical white colonial approach, he makes judgments based on his own upbringing and background. He wants to see tangible results of the government's Asian marketing effort on a daily basis. We would like to see that too, but it does not happen like that. The Trade Development Zone is a long-haul job and it cannot be turned into a fully-occupied, successful operation in 1 day or even 1 year. Current estimates are that we will have to be satisfied with gradual and occasional successes for another few years yet.

Some of those successes are just around the corner and more will become known about them in coming months. Regrettably but undoubtedly, there will be occasional failures and we will have to put up with those setbacks. There is no magic wand that can be waved to transform the place into some sort of little Tokyo. It will take long-term government commitment and hard work by

the zone board and staff. I congratulate them for that and I stand behind them. It will also take the use of specialist consultants and lots of patience.

In the face of this scenario, the opposition presses for a multimillion dollar Royal Commission and the member for Barkly calls for a select committee investigation. They do not know - or perhaps they do know - what damage they cause. They are making the long-haul job so much longer and slower. The member for Barkly moans that the only jobs on offer in the zone are those in the public service. Obviously he has not seen the current advertisements seeking applications for 100 jobs to commence shortly at a new venture opening in the zone. The member's public contributions thus far have been woefully inadequate and indicative of the whole current level of public debate on this and other issues. We have to mature, Mr Speaker. We have to lift the quality of debate on this vital issue which is so important to the Northern Territory's growth and development. That will not happen through the efforts of the opposition members or the Tuxworth contingent in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, you will be aware that the independent consultant, Mr Fergus Simpson, is currently reviewing the marketing and promotional activities of the zone. His report is due to be handed to me at the end of this month. However, Mr Simpson has furnished me with a preliminary report and I now table a copy so that honourable members can peruse it. I will quote from page 4 of Mr Simpson's report. Recently, he returned from a trip to Asia to study the zone's activities and I was with him while he was conducting some of those inquiries. Based on interviews with business and consular officials, his preliminary findings are:

It is generally acknowledged that the Northern Territory government, through the authority, has done more than any other Australian state to promote business opportunities in Australia. The authority has established excellent contacts and an understanding of business practices and preferences in the region. The use of consultants is generally acknowledged as being the most cost-effective means of establishing contact and screening prospective investors. The authority's choice of K.K. Yeung as principal consultant is acknowledged as being appropriate and sound. The government and the authority have been well represented in the region by the ministers and officers involved. Incentive packages have to be attractive to gain investment. The incentives offered by the authority have evolved over time. The current advice is that they are now commercial. The effectiveness of the incentive packages will depend on consistent application. The authority has a core group of loyal, committed and competent managers and staff.

Mr Speaker, Mr Simpson continues:

The implementation of the strategy has resulted in businesses being attracted to the zone, of which 2 have failed. Although a review of the businesses which have invested in the zone will be covered in the final report, the following points should be noted. With the exception of Shenzhen in the People's Republic of China, all of the export development zones report slow start-ups and subsequent lulls in growth. In this regard, Darwin would appear to have performed well. The general advice is that it is the quality of investors that is important, not the quantity. There is always the probability of failure. Pressure to get quantity before quality will increase the probability of failure.

The potential investors perceived many advantages in Australia but political stability is not one of them. To South-east Asians, issues which we accept - such as changes in government; changes in ministers; changing laws, particularly relating to tax; carping political opposition and negative media - are all interconnected and symbols of instability compared to their region. The current immigration debate has had a negative effect on perceptions but can generally be explained satisfactorily. Of greater consequence is the perceived difficulty of being assured entry into Australia for key managerial and technical staff.

Mr Speaker, you will note that Mr Simpson's report does not advance the opposition's case in any way. In fact, he confirms what we have often told the Leader of the Opposition - that he himself has had a considerable negative effect on the Trade Development Zone's efforts to succeed.

Mr Speaker, let me summarise. The zone board has been restructured and acrimony between board members has resulted. A member of the zone staff has left the zone. Mr K.K. Yeung's business arrangements with the zone have been audited. The government has entered into new arrangements with Mr Yeung for a continuing consultancy. The government is satisfied with those arrangements and is committed to the future of the zone. An interim report into the zone's activities by the independent consultant confirms the zone's marketing and promotional strategies and its use of Mr K.K. Yeung as principal consultant.

Mr Speaker, that is the substance of the debate. On the opposition side, we have witnessed subterfuge, wild allegations, half truths and innuendo. The Leader of the Opposition has an unhealthy obsession with the Trade Development Zone and, for the sake of the Territory, he should seek remedial therapy. I move that the statement be noted.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we have finally flushed out the Minister for Industries and Development and Deputy Chief Minister. We have finally forced him to make a statement. Unfortunately, however, it addresses none of the questions and allays none of the concerns that have been raised by ex-board members of the zone authority.

Mr Coulter: You should be very careful.

Mr SMITH: I listened to you in silence.

Nor has it allayed concern about issues raised by other people who have an interest in the Trade Development Zone. The minister has merely spouted rhetoric and made 2 amazing admissions, at least on first reading. One is that the true figure for the payments to Mr K.K. Yeung is \$1.439m. The Northern Territory government has been happy to give the impression that the amount was half that. It is a higher figure than even we anticipated. We anticipated a figure of \$1.3m. That is a matter of some concern.

The other significant revelation in the minister's statement is that, before the final report of Fergus Simpson has been delivered, K.K. Yeung has been appointed for another term. Can the minister tell me that that is good business? How on earth can he justify reappointing a prime consultant before the final report of the consultant engaged to assess the marketing of the zone has been received?

The minister cannot even get his facts straight on a minor matter. At page 2, he made reference to a member of my staff contacting Mr K.K. Yeung in

Hong Kong. I do not deny that my staff tried to make contact with Mr Yeung, but it was not in Hong Kong. It was in Sydney. The member of my staff attempted to do the civilised thing by leaving a message at Mr Yeung's hotel asking for a meeting. That was perfectly proper and legitimate.

Mr Coulter: As a member of the media.

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

Mr SMITH: He certainly did not represent himself as a member of the media.

The minister has not addressed the questions which are being asked by everybody who has an interest in the zone. He has not, for example, addressed any of the questions we have raised during the 3 days of these sittings except to continue the furphy that K.K. Yeung has a contract with the Western Australian government. We demolished that notion yesterday but the minister continues to promote it.

I have a list of 39 questions on this particular matter. They need to be answered. Until they are answered, the public of the Northern Territory will not be satisfied with the explanations of the minister opposite.

I ask the minister who located K.K. Yeung's company, in the first instance, and who recommended him to the Trade Development Zone Authority?

Mr Coulter: What is your concern?

Mr SMITH: Who drew up the initial contract with K.K. Yeung and with whose authority?

Mr Hatton: So what?

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This side of the House listened in silence to the statement made by the Minister for Industries and Development. I believe that it would be of some edification to members opposite if they would keep their ears open and their mouths closed. It would also add to the decorum of this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I would ask that the Leader of the Opposition to be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: I will continue with the questions. What were the conditions of this contract and what models were used to frame it? How long was Mr K.K. Yeung contracted to the authority before the board was informed? Did the board express reservations about the contract conditions from the outset? If it did, what were those reservations? What actions did the chairman or the minister take to address those concerns or reservations? What were Mr K.K. Yeung's reimbursed expenses for the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88? We still do not have that breakdown. How were those expenses audited before being paid and by whom were they audited? What were the reimbursed expenses of the following board members: Mr Col Fuller, Mr Laurie Jones, Mr Tony Richards, Mr Bob Matthewson, Mr Ray McHenry? How were those expenses audited and by whom? What amounts were paid to Mr K.K. Yeung for retainers, commissions, letters of intent, travel, seminars, subconsultancies, as commissions in respect of enterprises established in the zone and any other activities? What were those amounts in each of the

financial years 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88? How many of those trips in each year involved a visit to Mr K.K. Yeung? For how many days in each year was Mr McHenry involved in overseas travel? How many trips overseas were undertaken by other members of the board in the same period? How many trips were undertaken by staff members in the same period? On how many trips did a minister accompany or meet with Mr McHenry overseas? Which ministers and when?

When was the first variation of Mr K.K. Yeung's contract approved and by whom was it approved? What subsequent variations including ex gratia payments, impresses and advances on fees and retainers were approved and by whom? What were the amounts involved in each case? What investigations, audits or other inquiries preceded those payments? Were those payments approved by the board before or after the event? Which of those payments were rejected by the board but subsequently approved by a minister? We asked that question yesterday and were met by a brick wall. Which minister was it, Mr Speaker? We all know the answer but it would be nice to have it on the record.

When did Mr Ray McHenry direct his fellow board members not to speak to staff members of the Trade Development Zone Authority and vice versa and why did he do it? Did he consult the minister before issuing this directive and did the minister approve? When did Mr McHenry direct that the authority's fax machine be moved into his office? When did he direct that all staff correspondence be routed past his desk, and what were the reasons for those most unusual decisions? When was the decision taken to terminate the board membership of Mr Col Fuller, Mr Tony Richards and Mr Laurie Jones and did Mr McHenry recommend that their memberships be terminated? Why had their skills become redundant? Does the government intend to review Mr McHenry's contract and when does it expire?

Can the minister advise of the reasons for the Trade Development Zone's non-compliance with the section in its act which specifies that the interval between meetings be not greater than 45 days? Will the minister notify the House of the terms of reference for the commissioning of Mr Fergus Simpson to investigate the operation of the Trade Development Zone and of when they were approved by the board? It is interesting that today, in all the information that was tabled, we still do not have the terms of reference given to Mr Simpson.

In addition to those 39 questions, there are the questions asked already which have not been answered. On Tuesday I asked whether it was this year or last that Mr Col Fuller, the former head of the Department of Industries and Development and a member of the board of the Trade Development Zone Authority, informed the minister of his concerns about payments to Mr K.K. Yeung. I also asked what actions the minister had taken as a result of the concerns raised with him by Mr Fuller. On Wednesday I asked the minister to ask the Chief Minister whether, whilst overseas earlier this year, he personally approved an ex gratia payment to Mr K.K. Yeung, what sum was involved and whether he made this payment against the better judgment of the board of the Trade Development Zone. I asked the minister to undertake to report his answers to the House before the end of question time.

Yesterday we asked what section of the act was used by the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority, Mr Ray McHenry, to prohibit contact between the staff of the authority and its board. We asked the minister whether he recognised that such a prohibition is a clear breach of accepted company codes of conduct and we asked how members of the board could fulfil their

obligations under the act whilst being subject to such a prohibition. We also asked whether anything had been done about that particular direction of the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority. A further question asked yesterday concerned the so-called contract between the Western Australian government and Mr K.K. Yeung, which we now know is an absolute farce.

Mr Coulter: 'Contract' is your word.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we will read the tabled documents with interest although they probably tell even less than a quarter of the story. Until all of our questions are answered, we cannot get to the bottom of the concerns that people have been expressing publicly about the operation of the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Hatton: Enumerate them.

Mr SMITH: Do you expect me to name people in this Assembly so that you can go out and victimise them in their activities, as you do?

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I would ask that the honourable member withdraw the imputation that I would carry out such an action. There is no suggestion at all that I have ever victimised anybody for making any statement to anybody. I ask for that to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. There was an imputation that the member for Nightcliff would act from improper motives. I ask that the reference be withdrawn.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Let me go back to where all this began, 5 or 6 weeks ago, with the sudden and to most people completely unexpected decision to sack Mr Adam Gordon. That is where this current round of conjecture and speculation about the Trade Development Zone started, because the fact of the matter is that, in the community, Mr Adam Gordon has a good reputation. He is well regarded. He was seen as one of the better operators at the Trade Development Zone. When the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority sacks Mr Adam Gordon, without specifying his reasons, except by making some very vague and oblique references to a couple of disagreements that they had had during the previous week, something smells.

Mr Perron: Why should he justify it to you?

Mr SMITH: He does not have to justify it to me. He has an obligation, under the Trade Development Zone Act, to justify it to the board. In fact, it can be argued that he had an obligation to consult his board before taking that step. He did not, Mr Speaker. He did not consult with the board and he did not even consult the board formally before taking the step of sacking Mr Adam Gordon.

As a result of the sacking of Mr Adam Gordon, and the chairman's lack of consultation with the board, Mr Laurie Jones resigned. I can understand that because, as I have said, Adam Gordon, was a highly-regarded operator who had the confidence of people in the Trade Development Zone. Those actions, together with the sacking of Mr Col Fuller, because of his extremely well-known private and semi-public disagreements ...

Mr Manzie: That is an appalling thing to say. Laying emphasis on a public servant and seeking ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, as I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by 'Do-nothing Daryl', the private and semi-public ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I assume that the Leader of the Opposition is speaking of the Minister for Lands and Housing. Standing orders demand that people in this House shall be addressed by their correct title.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will refer to the minister by his correct title.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: I advise the Leader of Government Business that I expect both sides of the House to remain silent whilst I rule on a point of order or on any other issue.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we come now to the strange decision to sack Mr Tony Richards and to use the opportunity to move along Mr Col Fuller at the same time. Everybody knows that there have been serious disagreements between Mr Col Fuller and Mr Ray McHenry on the operation of the zone. Everybody knows that they cannot stand each other and that their disagreements in relation to the zone's operations have been very serious and significant. So what does the government do? It comes down firmly on the side of 1 of those 2 people and gets rid of the other. That may well be very convenient in the short term but there is a very ...

Mr Perron: What would you have done?

Mr SMITH: You are accepting that it is true, are you? Good. You are accepting that there is a long-term price to pay. What I want to ask you is what you did when Col Fuller first came to you and mentioned his concerns. What did you do? That is a more relevant question and one that we have been asking now for 2 or 3 days. If you tell us that, we might get closer to the truth.

The first of several broad areas of concern in terms of the operations of the Trade Development Zone relates to the actions and activities of ministers responsible for the zone's operation, particularly the activities of the Chief Minister, who was the responsible minister during the period we are talking about. Serious allegations have been raised in reports that we have all heard from Mr Laurie Jones and others about the role that the honourable minister played in providing reimbursements to Mr K.K. Yeung. I have mentioned those already and I do not particularly want to do so again now.

The second broad area of concern revolves around the management of the zone itself. Why was it necessary for the employment of Mr Adam Gordon, one of the most successful people there, to be terminated? Why did the composition of the board change conveniently to remove those people who were regarded as troublemakers - the 3 people on the board who disagreed with the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority? The chairman solved his problems with the board, firstly by not allowing it to meet and, secondly, by getting rid of individual members.



The third broad area of concern, and the one that affects the interests of the taxpayer most, is the relationship between the Northern Territory government and the consultant, Mr K.K. Yeung. We finally know how much money has been paid to him by the government. Finding that out has been a long and painful exercise. It has been like drawing teeth. We still do not know the basis on which that money was paid. I certainly have not had time to look at the audited statement. I am not prepared to say that the amount is too great, but it seems to be an enormous sum of money. Certainly, its size is embarrassing to the government, a fact which is demonstrated by the length of time it has taken for us to extract the information.

There is a whole series of questions relating to the effectiveness of Mr K.K. Yeung and how much money he has been paid. Let me refer members to an interesting piece of information. We know now that, in the last financial year, Mr K.K. Yeung received \$572 000 from this government. In the interview between Ray McHenry, Frank Alcorta and Clive Dorman, reported in the Sunday Territorian of 25 September, Mr McHenry said - and I was staggered by it at the time - that Mr K.K. Yeung's efforts started dropping off after November because he felt he was not making enough money out of the Northern Territory government. There was a period - I think McHenry said it lasted for 5 or 6 months - when Mr K.K. Yeung's efforts dropped off considerably. The average taxpayer, the bloke out in the suburbs who is earning \$20 000 a year, will find it very difficult to understand how a consultant who pulls in \$500 000 in 1 year finds in November that he is not getting paid enough and slackens his efforts as a result. I would like somebody to explain that. It is a pertinent issue, one which will excite the imagination of people in the community.

The consultant was paid \$500 000 in 1 financial year and his efforts slackened off after November because he felt that he was not being paid enough. What was the government's response in that situation? Its response was not to assess his effectiveness. Its answer was to run to Mr K.K. Yeung and offer him more money! We have heard statements that Mr K.K. Yeung had money advanced to him for the remainder of that contract period because he had 'cash-flow problems'. That is the sort of thing that interests people out in the street. The minister certainly did not address it in his statement. Why was Mr K.K. Yeung advanced money for the completion of his contract? When was that money advanced, and how much was it? Those are a very relevant and vital questions.

We have heard statements that the Chief Minister flew across to Hong Kong and Beijing and other places where he was duced by Mr K.K. Yeung and, as a result, agreed to an ex gratia payment that the board of the Trade Development Zone Authority had refused to approve on its own initiative. I am not saying that the honourable minister has been guilty of impropriety, but I would like to know the basis on which that ex gratia payment was approved.

The problem is that the government has allowed this matter to go on for so long that more and more questions are being asked in the community. When the minister makes a statement that does not answer the questions, the community's concerns do not disappear. They become stronger. The only way that the government can get to the bottom of the problems in the zone is by answering the questions people are asking. No sensible government would ignore the comments of a respected industry figure like Mr Laurie Jones and attempt to argue that, essentially, he is a crackpot. If he felt it was necessary to resign, I would have thought that such a government would have had a chat to him and tried to get to the bottom of his concerns, so that there could be some lessons learnt. But that would be too easy for this government to

undertake. It is this pig-headed approach, this belief that everything is hunky-dory despite the fact that 2 firms in the zone have failed and despite the fact that there are continuing concerns about the effectiveness of Mr K.K. Yeung, that is the problem with this government. It is not prepared to carry out a full audit of the operations of the zone.

As I understand it, the Chief Minister promised a full audit of the Trade Development Zone at the May meeting of the board this year. In other words, he promised a full inquiry into the broad operations of the zone.

Mr Perron: Who told you that?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, somebody got at him overnight and, the next day, the inquiry was limited to marketing and other associated areas. That inquiry is being carried out by Mr Fergus Simpson. It is also relevant to note here that the government has never made available the terms of reference of Mr Simpson's review. It did not inform the board. Is that the action of a responsible government? Is that the action of a responsible Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority?

Mr Speaker, the problem is that we seem to have a Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority who is behaving like a rogue elephant. He ignores the board, despite the fact that it is supposed to meet every 45 days. It has been ignored, Mr Speaker. It does not meet. It has met twice this year. It may have met a third time within the last couple of weeks. Decisions that it should be involved in are not put to the board. We have a situation where the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone, seemingly with the government's connivance, has taken the position that he is responsible to no one. The government says that he is working effectively and is certainly not responsible to the opposition in this House. He has engineered a very cosy situation for himself in which the board meets rarely and, when it has met, has not been consulted on the major issues. There are major reservations about the performance of the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority.

Mr Speaker, my time has nearly run out. The issues that have been raised in the community concerning the operation of the Trade Development Zone will not go away. They will not be solved by platitudinous ministerial statements which raise more questions than they answer. A prime question is, if the government is running an efficient and effective operation, why has it reappointed its consultant before the inquiry into his operations has been completed? That is a staggering reflection of the problems in the government's management of the Trade Development Zone. Until the government comes clean and answers the 39 questions that I have put to it, there will be continuing concern, continuing uncertainty and continuing unhappiness about the operation of the zone. I invite the honourable minister to take those 39 questions away, to get somebody to work on them over the weekend and to bring back the answers to this Assembly next week.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the level of debate about the Trade Development Zone certainly disappoints me considerably. It is a wonder that the government is able to achieve anything in the Territory when members of the opposition do their best to destroy every initiative. Remember the words that have been expressed and are still being expressed about projects like Yulara, the Sheratons and the pipeline. The opposition seems to do its best to ensure that nothing will work. Running a government here is a little like carrying a monkey on your back.

If the Northern Territory is to develop and increase its population, and I am sure that is what we all desire, we must make it happen. Nobody will beat a path to our door to take advantage of our labour costs, our transport costs or our energy costs. Making it happen will cost a great deal of money and it will take considerable time. It will also take plenty of hard work. Risks have to be taken. It is all very well for the opposition to lie back and throw stones at every initiative but, if we allow ourselves to be halted or even slowed down because members opposite want to put hurdles in the way, we may as well give the game away now. Imagine the Territory today without Yulara, without the pipeline, without the 5-star Sheratons, the casinos, the port development or the tourist promotion which has cost an enormous amount of money over the last 10 years. We would be in a fairly sorry state if those things had not occurred.

Some projects require a very special vision and commitment. The ADMA and the TDZ are 2 that fall into that category. Both are costly and will take years to get on their feet. In political terms, that is very important and that is why it takes commitment. Carrying such projects through several elections can really put a government's weights up and we know that when we set them up. We all knew the TDZ was a bold step, a pioneering venture which had never been attempted in this country before. Even the Leader of the Opposition acknowledges that it is a 5- to 10-year project but he refuses to give it a fair go. He intends to do his best to strangle it in its infancy.

Look at the lessons to be learned from the economic miracle that is Singapore today. It is about a quarter the size of a cattle station in the Northern Territory and has no resources. It does not even have its own water supply but, through marketing, promotion, planning and financial incentives, it has built itself into a very significant player in the world's economy. That economic miracle did not happen in 5 or 10 years; it took 25 years to come about. The Jurong Industrial Estate was 1 of the keys to the Singapore government's platform of industrial development and it got off to a very faltering start in its early years. Despite the fact that many participants in that estate had one-third government equity, something which has not occurred here so far, a number of them went bust. The government did not give up. It pressed on and eventually succeeded, as we in the Territory will also succeed.

The \$29m spent so far on the Trade Development Zone is an investment in the Territory's future. Although it is not often recognised, \$20 or \$22m of that money has been spent on physical assets. The rest of the money has been used to build up promotion and contacts and to bring in zone participants, which are essential stages in the zone's success. There is no short cut to getting the Trade Development Zone on its feet. It will take a lot of money, a lot of work and a lot of persistence. We are demonstrating persistence today. If we wanted to take the easy way out, it would be simple to say that things are getting too hot, the papers are running against us, the opposition will not stop blabbing and we might lose some votes. That would be the easy way. We could become a do-nothing government, the sort of government that the ALP would be if it achieved power. An ALP government would never have brought us Yulara, the 5-star hotels or the gas pipeline. Those projects involved risk and they cost money.

If we clear away the haze, it can be seen that the Trade Development Zone is in fact on target. I have admitted in this House that the government was guilty of enthusiastically releasing details of prospective tenants in the zone in the early days, due to the very high level of encouraging inquiries we received. The original statements, however, indicate that the zone is on

target. We have significant participation in the zone and more businesses are establishing. They will bring in others. The importance of the first major participants in the zone operating successfully, and thereby encouraging others, was highlighted in a statement by Mr Lam, one of the principals of Darwin International Textiles. That company has been working successfully in the zone for a year or 2 now, successfully making knitted garments for the European market. On national television, in an ABC program called 'Made in Australia', an interviewer asked Mr Lam: 'Are there companies overseas watching your progress?' Mr Lam replied: 'Oh sure. As I say, business friends in Hong Kong they actually are watching us now. If we are successful, there is a very good chance that they will also come'.

Whilst that may seem like a fairly simple statement, it is very important to us, given that it comes from Mr Lam. It is very important to us because, although Hong Kong is a very big city, its business community is very close-knit. That community is watching the success of Mr Lam's project in the zone.

I will touch briefly on the role of consultants because opposition members clearly have some misconceptions about Mr K.K Yeung, whose name has been used fairly often in this debate, and payments made by the government. We are not talking about an individual; we are talking about a company. That company has the role of marketing and promoting the TDZ overseas and attracting industries into the zone. Its services include liaison with potential investors and liaison with investors about the preparation of business plans, which is a very important and complicated step. We are talking about assistance with employer nomination applications, temporary residential status applications, and general liaison between the zone and the client. We are not talking about 1 company in Hong Kong. We are talking about companies in Thailand, Singapore and Taiwan. That is where the money is going for overseas consultants. It is not going into the pockets of an individual Hong Kong Chinese person. I think honourable members opposite should keep that in mind.

They might also keep in mind that the cost of operating businesses overseas would really blow their minds if they made some inquiries. Maybe they will do that and enlighten themselves. The cost of offices in places like Hong Kong and Taipei is very high. The cost of vehicles and communications is very high. For example, I am told that, in Singapore, it costs \$A5000 to register a car for a year. That is to register it - not buy it. When you have people working there on your behalf, or even if you take the alternative approach of sending Australian employees up there to act as your agents, you have to furnish them up with these necessities. You cannot have them hoofing around the streets on foot, can you? All the opposition can say is: 'Wow, \$1.4m over a period of years to these consultants is too much to pay. It is too much to pay anybody for anything'. That is the attitude of members opposite. That is their level of comprehension. It demonstrates their naivety. It is too much to pay anybody for anything!

The level of debate on this issue, sadly, has fallen fairly low. The Leader of the Opposition wants to know how many days the chairman travelled overseas and how much it cost. He has that information. What does it mean to him? Will he make a judgment that the chairman has travelled too much, or that he has not travelled enough? What does the Leader of the Opposition make of that information? His questions are designed solely to fish around in the hope that the opposition can use them to gain political points. He wants details of discussions between ministers and their staff and the chairman of the authority and his staff. It is preposterous to demand details of conversations held in the course of an ordinary working relationship between a

minister and departmental or statutory authority staff. It is simply outrageous but it is an indication of the level of debate.

If he wants to be so free with information, let the Leader of the Opposition tell us about his grubby attempts to obtain information by having his staff misrepresent themselves. Of course, we all recall the nice thank-you letter from the Leader of the Opposition to an ex-zone employee. That letter fell off the back of a truck and its contents not only showed that the Leader of the Opposition was thanking the ex-employee for illegal information received but that, if more information was available, the Leader of the Opposition would be glad to have it. He now wants to know the details of when and where ministers travel overseas on TDZ business and whether ministers met the consultant when they were overseas on business. He would probably know the answers to his questions if he read the press releases ministers always put out on their return from overseas, explaining where they went and what they achieved. Instead, he is trying to use his questions to create the impression that something is amiss. If he thinks something is amiss, let him tell us. His tactics are simply part of his plan to denigrate the Trade Development Zone.

The opposition wants a Royal Commission to inquire into the Trade Development Zone. Do members of the opposition think that there would even be a TDZ if a commission was held? It would come to a dead stop and would never start again, not because of what a Royal Commission might find but because the process would destroy the zone totally. Mr Speaker, can you imagine zone participants negotiating with the Trade Development Zone Authority about their 5 or 10 year programs to come into the Territory and start manufacturing enterprises while a Royal Commission is in progress with the possibility that it might recommend that the zone be folded up?

I will comment on the reduction in the size of the board. I believe that the board's size and composition should be appropriate to take the zone into its post-establishment phase. This is now the case and I am sure that the restructured board will work effectively. There is no further need for interstate representation on the board and the nature of the board's agenda from now on will be addressed adequately by its existing 3 members. The Leader of the Opposition can read into that whatever he likes but we have reduced the size of the board. Such decisions will not be shirked.

There is a textile theme emerging in the Trade Development Zone, which is very encouraging. Darwin International Textiles is there making knitwear. A company called Hengyang will be establishing there soon. The factory is nearly completed. It will be making jeans for the United States market. The Australian Textile Industry Union is very excited about the prospect of the zone being big in textiles in the future because it is facing a situation down south where the Australian textile industry is in a very serious decline. There are prospects here - and we are demonstrating this now in the zone - for it to be a significant industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, in my remaining minutes I would like to touch on a couple of instances which make me think that the press role in this debate is nearly as low as that of the opposition. In the 7.30 Report on 19 August 1988, the presenter said: 'Once again, the Territory's troubled Trade Development Zone is back in the headlines. This time it is over changes in the zone's board which were leaked at the weekend and confirmed today. The changes mean that in less than 2 weeks the zone will have lost 2 of the people who have been to date silently critical of its operation.' Mr Speaker, what do the words 'silently critical' mean? I have pondered that at some length and it is clear

that the phrase is journalistic claptrap. It is an example of the licence taken by journalists and news writers in condemning the Trade Development Zone. They think it is a bag of fun.

I think the reporter was Blair Roots. He went on to say, in the same program: 'It was 1984 when the Territory government announced the establishment of the Trade Development Zone but, despite its superficial attractions to anyone setting up a new export industry, it has managed to attract only 7 new businesses'. The phrase 'superficial attractions' caught my attention. There is nothing superficial about the attractions of the Trade Development Zone: financial incentives, tax concessions and rental holidays. The zone is located near an international airport and a port. According to this public relations journalist, however, these are superficial attractions. If that is not a deliberate slur on the zone, I do not know what it is.

The NT News editorial of 19 September said: 'It is not too much to ask that the TDZ settles its problems. About \$31m has already been spent for meagre returns'. Meagre returns? \$22m worth of assets are sitting out there and the rest of the funds have been used to bring participants into the zone and to build up the zone's reputation in Asia, which is commendable and has been commented upon by Australian trade officials overseas. We are leading the states of Australia in promoting ourselves and we are taking advantage of Australia's business migration program.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, on 18 September, the Sunday Territorian carried the headline: 'TDZ Chaos as 3 Resign'. That is a pretty unequivocal statement. The text below that headline said that 'a respected Sydney businessman, Mr Laurie Jones, tendered his resignation to the responsible minister, Mr Barry Coulter, as a protest. It is believed 2 other members have also resigned or are about to do so'. This is an example of extreme use of journalistic licence. The headline says 'Chaos as 3 Resign'. The text of the story says: 'It is believed 2 other members have also resigned or are about to do so'. I understand that, although he was unable to contact Mr Richards, the journalist chose to make up his mind that Mr Richards had decided to resign as well. Of course, the third member of the board was a public servant who was removed from the board because he had changed his position. The only organisation in chaos on that day was the NT News which carried a photo of Bob Tormey next to the story, with the caption 'Adam Gordon'.

On 14 September, on Territory Extra, editorialising on the alleged sacking of Adam Gordon, the reporter John Louizou made a curious statement:

Mr McHenry's sacking of Adam Gordon was hardly a surprise. In the absence of the minister responsible for the TDZ, Barry Coulter, who is in Sydney, Mr McHenry notified officials within the minister's department of his intention to dismiss Mr Gordon last Friday.

The rest of the item sheds no light whatsoever on what conclusion listeners might draw from the curious statement that 'Mr McHenry's sacking of Adam Gordon was hardly a surprise'. Why did the reporter use the words 'In

the absence of the minister responsible for the Trade Zone ... '? Does it imply that Mr McHenry should not make decisions when the minister is out of town or perhaps that the minister should not have been in Sydney at the time? Why was the statement made if listeners could conclude nothing from it? What was the reason for the reference to the minister being out of town if it was not simply mischievous? What it was intended to do was to create in the mind of the listener the impression that something was wrong either with the chairman sacking a member - if indeed that is what he did - or with the minister being out of town. Of course, one should not draw any conclusions about either of those actions on its own.

On 20 September, the NT News made this statement in an article about the TDZ: 'The Trade Development Zone was thrown into doubt earlier this year when the first business set up in it, Hungerford Refrigeration, went into receivership'. The line taken by the journalist, 'The Trade Development Zone was thrown into doubt earlier this year', is absolute nonsense. The only organisation which has charge of the Trade Development Zone is the Northern Territory government. Only the government can maintain, slow down, accelerate or shut down the Trade Development Zone. Why would the journalist draw the conclusion that the zone was in doubt earlier this year when she had no grounds whatsoever for making that statement? Such distortions have become part of the debate on the zone.

It is a very disappointing debate when we consider that we are all here as representatives of the people in the community. We are here to get the Northern Territory moving. We are here to create jobs in the Northern Territory, increase its population and bring benefits to our citizens that they do not have at present. I call upon members of the opposition to lift their game, raise the level of debate, stop waffling about nonsensical questions and consider the future of the zone as a responsible opposition rather than as a bunch of political opportunists.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, finally the government has broken cover on the Trade Development Zone. Out in the open, however, it has exposed itself once more. The Deputy Chief Minister went over the top with his usual barrage of bombast, rhetoric and noise. He was followed meekly by the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I will not be addressing in detail the audit provided by the Deputy Chief Minister. It deserves very close scrutiny which we will be giving it when we obtain some expert advice on it. There are a few questions already which I will be returning to later in my speech. However, at last, we begin to move towards some closer understanding of the Deputy Chief Minister's stubborn refusal this week to answer questions on the Trade Development Zone. It is because, each and every time he makes a statement, he lifts the lid a fraction higher on this can of worms.

In his immediate reply to the statement of the Deputy Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition did not require rhetoric. He did not require empty bluster and bluff. There was no need for the Leader of the Opposition to bellow and strut because, on all occasions, he has taken his right and proper role of asking the questions that the community has a right to ask and we in this House have the obligation to ask. It is significant that not one of his 39 questions was answered by the Deputy Chief Minister, who said that he was coming clean on the issue. One of them was answered by the Chief Minister.

Rather than clearing the air, the statement by the Deputy Chief Minister has given birth to a fresh batch of serious and fundamental questions about the mismanagement of the Trade Development Zone. He had the opportunity today

to lay bare the truth but, instead, he followed a tortuous thread between the files in the forlorn hope of somehow reaching safety. I want to go through some of those points, and I would like the Deputy Chief Minister to sit there quietly and take his notes. This morning's speech has done nothing to dispel any doubts.

The first problem relates to the breach of the Trade Development Zone Act in not calling meetings with the regularity required. We do not know who gave approval for the board not to hold those meetings.

Mr Perron: The minister gave it, obviously. That is what is required under the act.

Mr EDE: We asked the question. We asked specifically when and why the minister gave an exemption from the holding of those meetings, if he did. Neither of the 2 speakers from the government took the opportunity to answer that very basic question which we asked in order to assure ourselves as to whether the Trade Development Zone Act had been breached.

Why do we have a board if the members of that board are not to be consulted? What is the point of having a board if, the moment its members start asking difficult questions or putting points of view which are not the same as the chairman's or the minister's, a decision is taken not to have meetings?

We asked about a possible breach of Treasury regulations through advancing those funds. Nothing was given to us on that. The Deputy Chief Minister did not tell us anything about the advances of funds, why they were made and how much was involved. The Chief Minister was the government's next speaker and he said absolutely nothing on that issue.

Board members were prevented from discharging their responsibilities. They were not able to have regular meetings and follow up issues they had raised in the meetings that were held.

Let us have a look at the statement of the Minister for Industries and Development and Deputy Chief Minister in some detail, page by page. I will start at page 4 because I do not have a great deal of time.

What was the basis for the dispute that is referred to between those 2 senior and respected public servants, Mr Gordon and Mr McHenry? We are told that this was a personal matter, but what attempt did the minister make to mediate? There was a problem at the Trade Development Zone. Millions and millions of dollars of government money had been invested there. The zone had been the subject of public scrutiny because of problems that it had had. There were doubts about its viability, and a situation existed where 2 of the very senior people in it were at each other's throat. One would think that the minister would attempt to mediate, that he would call them both and ask what their problems were and, if necessary, tell them to cut out the personal stuff and get on with the job. It appears, from his statement, that the minister maintained a strange, hands-off approach which allowed the disagreement to fester and grow until an explosion occurred. That is bad management, if not total incompetence.

At page 5, the honourable minister talks about a decision to restructure the board. Who proposed the reduction in numbers from 5 to 3? On what grounds was that decision taken? Why was it thought that that would solve the problem? What was the relationship between the chairman and the minister



which allowed the chairman to eliminate 3 of the members of the board without bringing that matter before the board? Mr Speaker, one would expect that, if the board was to be restructured, the board would be involved in some discussions about that restructuring. How could a board of 5 be unwieldy and difficult to organise? Difficult? Unwieldy? The Chief Minister, who apparently was responsible at the time, has indicated that his abilities are pretty limited if he employs staff who can't organise 5 people. That is pathetic.

Mr McCarthy: The Leader of the Opposition cannot even organise 6.

Mr EDE: I am pretty sure you cannot organise your side.

Mr Speaker, if board meetings were so unwieldy and difficult to organise, how many meetings did Mr Jones, Mr Fuller, and Mr Richards fail to attend? The minister should explain this.

Mr Coulter: Why?

Mr EDE: Because I would like to know, as I am sure other people would like to know, whether there is really a different reason for the reorganisation. Could it have been an attempt to eliminate dissenting voices within the board? The chairman had the minister trotting along behind him but some people were obviously game to stand up and be counted, to put contrary views. It seems that they were crunched, Mr Speaker. If the minister wants to argue that that is not the case and that they were dismissed from the board for not attending, let him give the details. We want to know whether Mr Col Fuller moved of his own volition or was moved by direction of the government or the chairman.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections from the government benches. That includes the member for Karama. The member for Stuart will be heard in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I would like to ask if it is a fact that, of all board members, Mr Jones had by far the most experience in the area of Asian marketing. I believe that, for the bulk of his career, he was involved in Asian marketing for a leading multinational company. If that is true, why should the chairman and the minister want to get rid of the board member with the most experience in the area which represents the greatest opportunity for the Trade Development Zone? How do they justify their claim that there is a perception in Asia that Mr Jones has a strong, anti-Asian bias? I would like to know where the minister or the chairman got that information. On the face of it, it would be logical to surmise that the information probably came from K.K. Yeung and his associates, who stood to lose most through the continuing presence of Mr Jones on the board. Did other members of the board share the view that Mr Jones had an anti-Asian bias? Did Col Fuller agree with that? Did Adam Gordon and Tony Richards agree?

We have been told that Mr Jones recommended Mr Gordon and it has been inferred that this was because of some prior association - 'wheels within wheels. That is a very different story to the one put together by the opposition'. If it is the case that an appointment was made because of some prior association, one could easily ask who recommended Mr McHenry and who his former employer was. Allegations have been made about Mr Jones and Mr Gordon but nothing has been produced to back them up. A slur has been cast.

Mr Speaker, I would like the government to advise the House as to whether it has consulted with the governments of Madagascar and Belize on the performance of Mr K.K. Yeung. At an earlier stage, the government made great play of how the government of Western Australia had informed it about the expert it was relying on, Mr K.K. Yeung. Hansard shows that the minister sought to convey the impression that there was a strong relationship between the Western Australian government and Mr K.K. Yeung. A postage stamp, that is what the relationship was worth. Mr Yeung had written to the Western Australian government asking to be placed on a mailing list, along with 300 others.

The Deputy Chief Minister loves to promote half-truths and to string them together to create a picture. He then tells us that we attack it at our peril. We put the pin into the balloon and it blew up in his face. We know about the relationship between Mr K.K. Yeung and the Western Australian government. In that context, I no longer accept the minister's word in relation to Madagascar and Belize. I would like to know whether the governments of those nations have been consulted about their relationship with Mr K.K. Yeung. Did he possibly drop in on an overnight flight to some other place or did he write a letter to them as well? We are told of a Beijing announcement that has recommended the Trade Development Zone in Darwin. I would be very interested in that. I certainly hope that it is true. Was this the only area or did the announcement in fact recommend every trade development zone around the world?

Mr Hatton: Darwin is on the list.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, if Darwin is on a list with every trade development zone in the world, I do not think that that is a great achievement. Quite obviously, that list can also be accessed for 50¢. It sounds to me as though Mr K.K. Yeung is becoming cheaper by the minute. If he is in such demand by governments of nations like Belize and Madagascar, why does he have cash flow problems?

I would like the minister to explain to us the links between the auditor, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi, and Mr K.K. Yeung. Who asked for that audit and what was the difference between that audit and the second audit? I am only making some preliminary points about the audit because, as I said, we will be checking it out and asking more questions later. I would like to know how the audit of Mr K.K. Yeung's paid hours was conducted. Obviously, unless you get that source material, it is quite easy to multiply a list of hours by \$2000 an hour and come up with the figures shown in that audited report. However, you must establish that the actual hours were worked and that they were worked in our interest.

I would like the minister to explain how the release of the details of Mr K.K. Yeung's open-ended contract undermined relationships between the Trade Development Zone and its clients. In fact, the matters are entirely separate. As a consultant to the Northern Territory government, Mr K.K. Yeung stands at arm's length from those relationships. He has nothing to do with the actual conditions negotiated between the Trade Development Zone and its clients. Nevertheless, we are told we cannot hear about K.K. Yeung because it will affect that relationship. That is patently a load of rubbish and there is no reason whatsoever for us not to be advised about Mr K.K. Yeung's new contract. I would also like to know how that new contract avoids the open-ended time cost charges and still includes the returns to Mr K.K. Yeung.

The next point relates to quality versus quantity. We are told that we need quality investors and that they are far more important than quantity. So far, 2 of our 4 have failed. Where is the quality in that? It would appear to me that this government has exerted the greatest possible pressure to get quantity, although it has hardly succeeded in that, and has not had any quality at all.

The minister talked about a consultant's report stating that potential Asian investors perceive many advantages in Australia but that political stability is not one of them. He lists 5 characteristics which South-east Asians regard as symbols of instability: changes in government; changes in ministers; changing laws, particularly relating to tax; carping political opposition and negative media. The first 3 points have absolutely nothing to do as yet with this side of the Assembly although we are knocking the government off. Every time there is a by-election, the government comes in last. We have had 4 changes of Chief Minister and 4 changes of ministers responsible for the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Smith: Starting with the member for Casuarina.

Mr EDE: The member for Casuarina was one of them. After him came another failure: Mr Hanrahan. He was followed by the present Chief Minister, who should be answering some questions here, and we now have the Deputy Chief Minister. There is far more instability there than we have on this side of the House. How could Asian investors be expected to build confidence when they keep finding that they have to deal with a new minister?

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I want to refer back to one of the essential points in this debate which has not been brought out sufficiently. I refer to the role of the Chief Minister. Prior to becoming Chief Minister, he held the portfolio which has responsibility for the Trade Development Zone. He has used standing orders in this House to hide from answering questions. He had an opportunity, given that he would not answer in question time ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Stuart is accusing the Chief Minister of hiding behind standing orders. The standing orders are produced in this House and passed by members of this Assembly to regulate debate and the business of the Assembly. To imply that to follow the rules as set down in standing orders is to hide behind them is a totally unfounded accusation which is not becoming to the member. I think that he should withdraw those remarks which suggest that following the rules set by this Assembly is an improper practice.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, following that attempt to take up my time, I point out that the Chief Minister can answer questions on any issue, because he has overall responsibility for the government. He could have answered the questions relating to the period when he had responsibility for the Trade Development Zone, if he had any answers to them. Unfortunately, it would appear that he had no answers. He has made no attempt to answer the

questions. He has been showing them to his deputy, who has revealed himself to be both unable and unwilling to answer. Throughout this debate, the Chief Minister has refused to answer questions. He stands accused by everyone of doing nothing when Col Fuller voiced his concerns about Mr K.K. Yeung. What did he do? He did nothing. He was in charge during the period we are reviewing now.

We have heard that it was the Chief Minister who provided an ex gratia payment to Mr K.K. Yeung. We have asked him to provide us with details of that. We have asked him to reveal the whereabouts of the audited accounts relied upon to justify that payment to Mr K.K. Yeung. Are those the audited accounts that we have before us now? Did they give him sufficient evidence to make the decision to provide the ex gratia payment? What was the size of that payment? How much money did the Chief Minister provide to Mr K.K. Yeung, details of which we have not been given?

In the context of this debate, I would have thought that the Chief Minister would have answered fundamental questions like those. I would have expected him to stand up and say: 'This is the auditor's report. I provided these amounts over and above the requirements, and I did it on the basis of this audit report and this advice. I did it following discussions with the board' or 'I had discussions with the board and I decided that my judgment was better than its judgement'. He gave us nothing along those lines. I did not hear the ex gratia payment mentioned at all. It is central to this debate because the making of ex-gratia payments is a power that the government has which is to be exercised with the very greatest of caution. They are amounts which are paid out without any legal requirement, and without the approval of this House. Before any such payment is made, and afterwards, the matter has to be examined very carefully.

We want to know about that ex gratia payment and we will continue to pursue it, because everyone has a right to know why, with no legal obligation whatsoever on the Northern Territory government or on the Trade Development Zone, the Chief Minister decided that he would reach in and pull out the cheque book, write out a cheque and hand it to K.K. Yeung. We want to know about that. A very considerable number of people in the Territory who are looking for money, whether to pay for basic services, to assist them to get off the ground in their own businesses or to save them from going under, want to know why they cannot apply for and receive an ex-gratia payment when they are in difficulties. They want to know why it is that a consultant in Hong Kong can get that sort of money out of the Northern Territory government when they cannot. Those are the sort of questions that the Chief Minister should have answered and has to answer before this debate is over.

In conclusion, I repeat my hope that the Chief Minister will come to the party now, will face up to his responsibilities and stop trying to hide behind the Minister for Industries and Development and Deputy Chief Minister, who has not a hope in the world of answering this question because he is incapable of doing so. He is capable only of bombast and bluster.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I assumed that there would be more speakers from the government side. I do not wish to chop anybody out of the debate.

There is very little I can add to what has been said by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition. However, I wish to make a few comments on the seemingly reasonable remarks made by the Chief Minister. On a number of occasions and over a range of issues the Chief Minister has

said: 'Trust me, trust me, trust me'. Basically, he is saying that the government is doing what is best for the Northern Territory. It is looking for jobs, jobs, jobs. We will get there, he says; all people have to do is have a little faith. I have to tell the Chief Minister that faith and trust cut both ways.

When the Chief Minister shakes off his philosophical belief that to question, doubt or in any way to peruse the operations of government is tantamount to treason, this Northern Territory will move along much further. I can say with dead certainty that the Labor Opposition in this House has never opposed the concept of the Trade Development Zone. The concept is fine. Its management, however, stinks. Its management stinks because secrecy surrounds it. It is all very well for the Chief Minister to urge us to trust him, but it is a 2-way thing. While the TDZ continues to be shrouded in secrecy, we have no option: we are obliged to continue to ask questions. We are obliged to continue to query the involvement of public moneys in the zone.

I appreciate that there is such a thing as commercial confidentiality and I am more than prepared to respect it. But what we are talking about in this debate is not money in the private market, money being contributed by investors. We are talking about taxpayers' dollars. We are talking about the dollars which could be distributed to my constituents, whose circumstances are certainly far removed from the hovels of the delightful electorate of Fannie Bay. Anyone who visits Arnhem Land will see that Fannie Bay is remote from financial reality. We are talking about dollars in which taxpayers have a reasonable interest. I accept the need for development and I accept the concept of the Trade Development Zone but it is beyond the pale to expect me to go home and tell my constituents in remote parts of Arnhem Land that they should pour dollars into an unknown pit.

Mr Dondas: Name one.

Mr LEO: One what?

Mr Dondas: One constituent.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I will not bother even to reply to the meanderings of the member for Casuarina.

The problem is that, whilst the concept of a trade development zone is fine, the expenditure of the amount of money involved is less than justified. We have asked questions that require answers. The Chief Minister will remember the great controversy that surrounded the development of the Sheratons and Yulara and the handover of the casino. The Chief Minister will remember that when the government explained to the opposition and to the public of the Northern Territory how that money had been spent and what it was about, the controversy disappeared. That is precisely what happened.

Mr Perron: You are knocking Yulara. What are you talking about?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I defy the Chief Minister to demonstrate that the opposition has in any way criticised the development of Yulara since it has been given the opportunity to understand the financial implications of that development.

The Chief Minister can try to continue to hide behind this wall of secrecy. That manoeuvre will not succeed. It will fail in the end and the victim will be the Trade Development Zone. That is the unfortunate aspect of

it. A wonderful concept will suffer as a result of the government's intransigence, arrogance and blind stupidity. Perhaps there is something shonky about the TDZ, but I do not think there is. I think that innocent answers can be given to all of the questions that we have asked. However, whilst the government continues to hide behind this wall of secrecy, we have no choice but to continue to ask those questions. If the answers are not innocent, however, we are in very grave difficulty indeed.

Mr Speaker, the government does not hold a grail to rule. It may be elected by constituents but that does not make it unique. All members in this House are elected by constituents. We have the right to ask as many questions as we like to in this House or elsewhere, just as the government has the right to supply nonsensical answers. When this government decides that it is accountable to the people who provide it with dollars to spend, then we will have good government in the Northern Territory. That will not occur while the government continues to consider that the Treasury of the Northern Territory is nothing more than a CLP piggy-bank.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, we know who holds the votes from the Actors Equity Union at the ALP annual conference. He is the greatest actor that I have ever seen perform in this House. He needs to have his blood pressure checked. The way he just carried on was an absolute disgrace. 'Something shonky about the TDZ', he said. I have heard that somewhere before. I heard it about the casino. I heard it about Yulara. I heard it about the Sheratons and now we hear it regurgitated about the TDZ. At least he could be original. It is absolute garbage!

We heard today how, in 1984, the government announced the establishment of the TDZ. Indeed, I was present when the then minister, the member for Casuarina, turned the first sod out at the zone site. It was a great day. A group of 20 or 30 people from South-east Asia were there to witness the event. The decision to establish the zone was not taken lightly. It was taken after a considerable amount of research, not only in Australia but around the world, into the possibility of establishing a trade development zone in the Northern Territory.

At that time, the government identified its goals in terms of developing basic infrastructure for a manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory. We heard recently, in the statement on the government's economic development strategy, how important it will be to develop that manufacturing base, particularly in Darwin. That manufacturing base will create the jobs to replace those that have been lost to the Territory as a result of the downturn in the construction industry. We all know that it is most unlikely that construction in the Northern Territory will ever return to the boom days of a few years ago.

We have depended on that construction industry for a long time but, as we well know, the tide of change is leading us towards the manufacturing industry. We will put a lot of effort into that. The Trade Development Zone was designed to seed that process. It is essential to develop an export-oriented manufacturing base in the Territory. Nobody thought it would be easy. It was never suggested that it would proceed without some difficulty. There would not be a dream run home. Shannon and other zones around the world have had their ups and down and continue to have them. It was all a 5- to 10-year plan. As we have learned, it is more like a 10-year plan. At the end of the day, despite the sabotage by those people opposite, it will be successful.

The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues are on record as having supported the concept of the Trade Development Zone. However, they cannot contain themselves and we heard an example of that from the member for Nhulunbuy. He said that there was 'something shonky' about the Trade Development Zone. These people opposite are political opportunists. They have no interest whatsoever in the welfare of the Northern Territory at large or in developing manufacturing infrastructure in the Northern Territory. That is being sacrificed on the altar of their political ambitions. That ambition is to become the government of the Northern Territory at some stage in the future. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that that is a long way down the line, if it is ever to occur at all. Frankly, I doubt that it ever will.

The record shows that members of the opposition have developed a totally irresponsible approach. They are hell-bent on destroying the TDZ as they were Yulara, the casinos and the Sheratons. That was not because they thought those initiatives were not good ones, but because it suited their political purpose. People need to realise that.

It is an unfortunate fact that the media plays a very mischievous role in this whole scenario. The Chief Minister quoted a number of instances in which the media has spread misinformation. Up to a point, the media and its representatives have a role to play and a story to sell. They need to increase their ratings or circulation. Nevertheless, I believe that they should take stock of their situation from time to time and consider that they are also required to play a responsible role in this community.

Mr Speaker, the ALP loves commissions and inquiries. Look at the number of inquiries and commissions that the federal government has established at enormous cost. The opposition in this House follows that example. Whenever it thinks it has something that will damage the government, it calls for an inquiry. 'TDZ: Smith calls for Royal Commission', said the NT News on 22 September 1988. I quote: 'A Royal Commission should investigate allegations that Hong Kong TDZ consultant K.K. Yeung was granted large ex gratia advanced payments, according to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Terry Smith'. Shame on him! Such a commission would cost \$5m. This is the appropriate place to discuss such matters.

I compliment the minister on his initiative today in bringing on this debate by way of a statement to the House. Members of the opposition benches have had ample opportunity in the last several days to bring on a substantive motion to raise the issues but instead they have chosen to put 39 questions. Perhaps 39 steps might be more appropriate. Where do they lead?

Mr Harris: To the big drop.

Mr SETTER: That is right. They will drop into the abyss where they belong.

I would like to ask a few questions myself. The Leader of the Opposition has unearthed a vast store of knowledge, enough to generate 39 questions in addition to those he has asked during the last few days. Where did all this information come from, Mr Speaker? The Leader of the Opposition did not think up those questions. He just does not have the capacity. I have heard rumours around this community, and they are rife in the media, that the Leader of the Opposition called on Mr Laurie Jones, the former member of the TDZ board, in Sydney and had discussions with him. I do not know whether that is true but I would like the Leader of the Opposition to tell this House if it is true.

I have also heard rumours, again rife in the media, that Mr Jones gave Mr Smith a sheaf of documents relative to the TDZ. I do not know whether that is true. I certainly hope it is not but I would like the Leader of the Opposition to tell me and to tell this House if that is true. If it is not true, he should put it to bed. If it is true, has the Leader of the Opposition used those documents to develop the 39 questions? I honestly hope that is not true because, if it is, it does not reflect very well on Mr Jones. I repeat that I sincerely hope those allegations are untrue.

On Territory Extra on 21 September, Mr Jones was asked how much dissent occurred between members of the board regarding the performance of K.K. Yeung. Mr Jones said:

There was considerable dissent over this period. In earlier times, it was reasonably low-key because we had a contract with him and there was not much that we could do about that. However, when the contract came due for renewal in May, a majority of the board said they did not wish to renew the contract in accordance with a proposal that was placed before us.

Mr Speaker, it really disappoints me to read this sort of comment by a person like Mr Jones because one would assume that, when one is appointed to a board or a committee, the deliberations of that board or committee will remain confidential. I thought that people appointed to such positions were required to have some integrity in relation to matters discussed in confidence and it concerns me greatly that any appointee to a board of a statutory authority of this government could make public statements regarding the discussions and activities of that board. It saddens me greatly to read that transcript and I believe that it does not reflect very well on Mr Jones.

This whole sad scenario is, of course, just another chapter in the disservice that this opposition has repeatedly done to the Northern Territory. The reality is that we all have a responsibility in this House to use our best efforts in developing the Northern Territory in the best interests of its citizens. There is no doubt about that. When members of the opposition continually use this forum to disseminate misinformation and false accusations simply to further their own political ambitions, I feel quite disgusted.

The member for Nhulunbuy said that there is something shonky about the TDZ. Mr Speaker, there is nothing shonky about the TDZ. It is important to understand that business matters relative to the operation of the TDZ and to negotiations between that organisation and business people throughout South-east Asia, must remain confidential. I have been in South-east Asia on a number of occasions and, in my prior role in private enterprise, I negotiated with South-east Asian business people, particularly in Hong Kong. I have arranged the importation of a whole range of products over a number of years from those people. I have a fair idea of how Asian people think, how they do business, and how they react to negative comment of the kind we hear here. We should not think for a moment that the comments made here, or in the Northern Territory media, go unnoticed in South-east Asia. They do not.

In this city we see representatives of AAP and The Australian. We know that the NT News has connections with other Murdoch newspapers. We know that the ABC is a national organisation and that Channel 8 has connections with other television stations in the south. We know that some local stories are broadcast nationally and are picked up internationally. They appear in newspapers in Singapore, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Manila and in other places around the world. In that way, unfortunately, the derogatory comments that are made



by the other side of this House, the accusations, the misinformation, the lies and the innuendo are reported internationally.

One cannot put a value on the destruction which the opposition wreaks upon the development of good business and good government in the Northern Territory. You cannot put a value on that, Mr Speaker, but I can tell you this: business people who are considering investing in the Northern Territory, and who are currently established very successfully in Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila and Jakarta, would reel back in horror when they read those media reports. They would say: 'We are not going down there to invest our money in that furore, no sir. There are plenty of other places around the world that would welcome our money and the establishment of our various businesses'. In fact, those places would probably provide better incentives to attract them than are offered by the Northern Territory. Do the Leader of the Opposition and his comrades consider that? No, Mr Speaker. All that they are interested in is their own short-term political gain. As I said earlier, the Leader of the Opposition should be criticised and condemned for his actions.

I want to finish on this note. I am absolutely disgusted to have to witness in this House once again the sort of conduct, accusations and innuendo that we have seen and heard here today. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to put on the record that I am a supporter of the trade zone concept. I believe that it has as much chance as any other of the visionary developments that have occurred in the Territory of getting up and becoming a driving force in our economy in the years ahead.

I have heard several references made today to how criticism from honourable members in this House is damaging the zone and precluding it from being successful. I have heard that before. I remember how the members of the Flat Earth Society reacted when the pipeline was first mooted, and they were not all on the opposition benches. They were in businesses, banks, engineering companies and unions. They were everywhere. What was necessary was to convince them that the project was a good one and that it would succeed. I think that remains the task for us with the trade zone. At the moment there is fair amount of concern about whether it can succeed. I would say this to my colleagues in this parliament: if this parliament is divided over the trade zone, the zone must fail. It cannot survive. What the trade zone needs is 25 members of this House walking around Australia, the Northern Territory and everywhere else they go saying: 'This is a winner, and if you come here, you will do well'. At this stage, that sort of confidence does not exist.

It is important because investors from Asia want to see bipartisan support simply because they do not understand our political system. They think people that change government every 6, 8, 10 or 14 years are strange. They think people that criticise each other in the press for things they are doing are strange. They are not quite sure that they want to get into bed with people that carry on like that. So it is important that the members of this House show a united front over the issue of the zone. In a moment I will talk about how we might do that.

That is also important from the point of view of Territorians who pay taxes and see their taxes being used to support the zone to develop something that may happen a long time into the future. Mr Speaker, you would appreciate more than anybody that you cannot maintain the confidence of the tax-paying

community for projects like this, the pipeline or any other, if you are continually hopping into the discrepancies that appear.

Over the last few months, the honourable minister has given the Leader of the Opposition a bath from time to time. He nicknamed him 'Terry the Terminator' and abused him for having the audacity to question what was going on in the zone. Mr Speaker, anybody who keeps his ear to the ground knows that what the Leader of the Opposition started to say late in 1986 was on the lips of just about everybody in the Territory business community who was interested in what was going on. They were thinking it and saying it privately; they were not saying it publicly. Today, however, they are saying it publicly. What the government did not understand at the time, and what the minister in particular did not understand, was that, whilst it was unpleasant to listen to what the Leader of the Opposition was saying, he was sounding the early warning whistle. He was treated with derision and contempt. If somebody had stopped to listen to him then, we might not be in the mess that we are in today.

Regrettably, not much has changed. The minister said in his statement that the perception of the zone was as important as the reality. I would say to the honourable minister that we need to deal now with the perception as distinct from the reality - or we can kiss the zone goodbye.

In his statement, the minister made a number of references to Mr Jones and did quite a job on him. Again, he was dealing with perceptions held about Mr Jones. He also referred to the perception the community has of the Trade Development Zone, and he was right about that. The community's perception of the Trade Development Zone is dreadful. Mr Speaker, I say to you that, if you want to go around and listen to them instead of talking at them, the perception the average Territorian has is that the zone cannot succeed. They cannot see how it can succeed and no one has ever painted a picture for them of how it will work. So far, we have been running on confidence and hype and, now that the zone is coming under a little close scrutiny and pressure, support is falling away very quickly.

People in the business community fail to see or understand how the zone can make money. That is because it has not been explained to them that it might do that at some time in the future. However, they are becoming very sceptical about the flow of their funds into a project which they believe will never make money. Also, they see it as a threat to themselves. As a result of the Hungerford dispute, many people in the community now regard the trade zone as a threat to themselves.

Hungerford Refrigeration was set up in the zone with favourable conditions - and I think that is a kind way of putting it. Before the locals knew it, Hungerford was out in the local market competing with them under conditions they could not match. They now see the zone as a home where, potentially, favourable treatment will be handed out to people who will threaten them. They see it also as a place where the government gives opportunity and support to companies from outside the Northern Territory, and outside Australia, to do things that locals might be able to do if they were given a chance. Whether that is true or not, that is the perception. In addition, the business community sees the trade zone as a place where bureaucracy is running wild.

Mr Speaker, if you think business people are not interested in what is happening in the zone, think back to a couple of days ago when 5 of Darwin's business people came into the Assembly. I think it was on Tuesday. They came

because they thought the trade zone would be debated and they wanted to listen to that debate. They were interested to know how the zone was going to work out and how it would be handled. Territorians generally do not understand the zone, and they want to know what is in it for them. That has not been explained to them, although they are regularly told that there will be jobs, jobs, jobs. In their eyes, the zone is never out of trouble and, given that, they cannot see how it will ever become productive and beneficial to the community. The other aspect is that the trade zone is surrounded by an avalanche of press stories. We hear constant comments ...

Mr Coulter: To which you have been a major contributor.

Mr TUXWORTH: Well, Mr Speaker, I will come to that in a moment. The minister has kindly joined us and I welcome him back to the Chamber.

Mr Coulter: Tell us you were wrong.

Mr TUXWORTH: I just hope he can zip the lip long enough to enable him to listen and we will get on with it. Early in 1987, the minister's predecessor announced that there would be 1000 jobs in the trade zone by that Christmas. No worries!

The government's \$30m investment in the zone has not escaped the notice of Territorians because they would like to see it succeed and they follow it closely. They hear about the new companies that are coming into the zone. They hear about the new opportunities. They hear about the trade missions that go overseas. They hear about the visitors that come to Australia on visiting tourist visas to look at the zone and see what opportunities are available for them, and they also hear pretty regularly about jobs. This morning the minister made reference to jobs in the zone. He said that 100 jobs were advertised in the newspaper last week.

Mr Coulter: At the same time your article said that 21 people were employed and that they were all public servants.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the minister chastised me for saying that 21 people were employed in the bureaucracy, when there were only 19. He did not say that the other 2 probably left over the weekend.

Mr Coulter: You said there were only 21 employed in the whole zone.

Mr TUXWORTH: I did not. I said there were 21 government bureaucrats. That shows the extent to which the honourable minister listens. He does not listen and he is not interested in listening.

Mr Speaker, the bottom line is that we have 2 companies, 4 years, \$30m, 19 government jobs and 70 private sector jobs in the zone - and if that is the minister's figure, I will accept it. We have no prospects that he is prepared to announce, and we have empty factories.

On top of all this, in the perception of the community, we have the public recrimination, and I am talking about the Jones recrimination against McHenry, and McHenry against Jones, and the Minister for Industries and Development versus Mr Jones. We have had Hungerford Refrigeration versus the government, the government versus Hungerford, the government versus Smith, and Smith versus the government. We now have Gordon versus the zone. All of these people are slugging it out on television or in the printed media, telling everybody all the things that are wrong with the zone.

The executive officer of the Confederation of Industry has raised serious concerns about the zone and the impact it will have on local business people. We have the Australian Small Business Association expressing concern about the zone in terms of the amount of money it consumes. With all this controversy, how could any member of the public honestly believe that the zone had a prayer? People do not believe it has a prayer.

Mr Coulter: Thanks to the articles that you write.

Mr TUXWORTH: If he would stop to listen, I am telling the minister what everyone in the community is saying.

The minister should know that the zone does not have the support that it will need if it is to succeed. Questions have been asked about the zone, about K.K. Yeung, about Hungerford, about management in the zone and about future prospects for the zone. Sometimes these questions are raised in order to embarrass the government and sometime people ask them genuinely. Mostly, however, people looking for answers are treated with contempt. That just makes them more suspicious, particularly when they are given no answers and are treated rudely and contemptuously.

Mr Speaker, if the zone is to succeed ...

Mr Coulter: You stop writing in the paper. That will help.

Mr TUXWORTH: I will give the minister an undertaking, Mr Speaker. I will stop writing in the paper if he likes to open up the books on the zone. That is about the best deal we are going to get today.

Mr Coulter: That makes a lot of sense. You are putting inaccurate numbers in the paper.

Mr TUXWORTH: The minister is holding internal audits, preparing reports on the management and the future of the zone, putting out statements and debating the zone in this House. If he thinks that he can do that and continue to keep information from the people, the zone is a dead duck. That does not have to be the case. All he has to do is provide the information that people want. It is because information is not being made available that people believe that there is something wrong. It is no good blasting on about confidentiality. It may apply in relation to some questions but not to all.

There is no reason why the minister cannot answer many of the questions that have been put to him. Indeed, this morning he eventually answered 1 of the questions that has been hanging around for a considerable period. Ultimately, he will have to supply the other answers, even if they are pulled out of him like back teeth. If he does not, eventually he will have to explain why things did not go too well at the zone.

Members on this side of the House are not trying to destroy the zone. There are people in this House, and I am one of them, who are expressing the concern which is felt throughout the community. If the minister wishes to disregard that, so be it, but that is the way it is. I would advise the minister to do something constructive and to clear the air by laying out all the information that people want. He should provide the big picture so that everybody can get back into the game and start the big resell.

Mr Coulter: Do you remember what happened when you started talking about the big picture?

Mr TUXWORTH: It may be that the minister is feeling a bit coy about not having a big picture. I have never been coy about my approach. Perhaps he does not have a picture at all and that is why things are in such a mess.

Mr Coulter: Look at the one you are painting with the inaccuracies you are putting in the paper. I do not like the way you paint, even by numbers.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, you can always tell when the minister is in trouble because he sits there and barks and barks.

Mr Coulter: Just tell us that you have got it wrong.

Mr TUXWORTH: He is not going to throw me off my stroke, Mr Speaker, because I have been down this road before. He will have to do 1 of 2 things: either he can open up the books and satisfy the inquiries of a whole range of people or he can shut things down. The zone will not survive if the minister wants to maintain his present course and nobody in this House wants that. It is a good concept and it ought to succeed.

Mr PALMER (Karama): I will be brief, Mr Speaker. Firstly, let me say that one of the great intangibles in economic development is 'the engendering of confidence. People can ask direct questions about accounting procedures and the economics of ventures but confidence is what is needed and that is one of the great problems with the Northern Territory today.

Mr Speaker, an investor from overseas looking to invest in the Northern Territory will look behind the scenes. He will look behind the straight economics of a proposed venture to the underlying political atmosphere. What he will find in the Northern Territory is an opposition in bed with the prostitutes of the Territory Nationals.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that statement.

Mr PALMER: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

What the investor will find is an opposition in bed with a so-called National Party that is prostituting the principles of free enterprise for base political gain. It is a matter of perception, as the member for Barkly points out.

Mr Speaker, let me refer to some of the perceptions which the member for Barkly is trying to promote. I quote from the Sunday Territorian of 2 October: 'The zone's employment statistics show that the 21 public servants just outnumber those on the private enterprise payroll'. It would not have been difficult for the member for Barkly to ring the Trade Development Zone to ask how many private enterprise jobs exist there. Did he bother to do that? Did he bother to check the facts? No, Mr Speaker. He was on about perceptions. The more lies a person tells, the more that person comes to believe them and the more they appear to be credible. In the very same article, the member for Barkly spoke about the establishment of a select parliamentary committee. He said: 'A select parliamentary committee should be established to look at the original concept of the zone and see whether it is relevant to today's environment'. That is an interesting concept, coming from the member for Barkly.

We have a parliamentary committee called the Public Accounts Committee. Last year, that committee brought down a report on the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory government. The cavalier manner in

which the details of that report were dealt with by the member for Barkly was disgraceful to say the least. In 3 successive articles in the Sunday Territorian, he cast doubt upon the facts accepted by this parliament in relation to actual and contingent liabilities. He knowingly and deliberately misled the people of the Northern Territory as to the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory, and he deliberately set about falsifying the details of that report, all for his own base political ends.

In recent years, the opposition in the Northern Territory has seen its role as one of destruction, of supporting the views held by some of its colleagues in the south that the Northern Territory should be depopulated by gunshot or other means. It does nothing to help the Northern Territory in its endeavours to develop and promote economic growth. Not once has a member of the opposition introduced a business person or business persons to the Trade Development Zone, Mr Speaker. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has visited the Trade Development Zone twice. On the first occasion, he skulked behind the door of his car in case he was recognised whilst trying to foment trouble with the employees of Hungerford Refrigeration. The second time he was out there, he was in the company of 2 Labor MLAs from South Australia. To somehow bolster his own flagging political stock, he issued a deliberately misleading press release which quite seriously embarrassed the members of the Public Works Committee from South Australia. As the minister told us, they attempted to have that press release withdrawn before it hit the press.

Not once in his Australia-wide or worldwide travels has the Leader of the Opposition - who extracts more than \$80 000 a year from the taxpayers of the Northern Territory - introduced a prospective investor to the Trade Development Zone Authority. That is an indictment of his commitment to the Northern Territory. He may have problems with the administration of the Trade Development Zone. He may have quibbles over the spending of some of the moneys but that does not abrogate his responsibility to the taxpayers of the Northern Territory to promote the cause of the Northern Territory. The Trade Development Zone is not a CLP project. It will live longer than the CLP. Its benefits will last forever.

Mr Speaker, it is his responsibility, as it is the responsibility of every member of this House, to look beyond his own political ambition, to look beyond what will happen next year or the year after and to look toward the future of the Northern Territory, the future of our children and the future of our children's children. Those points are never considered by this opposition. They are far from the minds of the National Party or the pseudo-National Party because, as a duo over there, Tweedie Dee and Tweedie Dum, are yet to vote ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw that reference and refer to all honourable members by their correct titles.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw my reference to 2 fictitious characters without reservation.

Those pseudos of the National Party, the members for Barkly and Flynn, are yet to establish any conservative credentials. They do not vote for what is good for the Territory. They vote for what is good for them.

Mr Tuxworth: We do. We vote against you.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, the other side of the House has yet to recognise its responsibility to the Northern Territory. I think the smiling member for

MacDonnell has argent-itis. He has suffered poisoning from his silver spoon. He has no commitment to the Northern Territory. He educates his children in the south.

I will conclude by saying that this issue is all about perceptions. It is the lack of perceptivity of the opposition and the members on the 2 benches at the back opposite that is causing trouble for the Trade Development Zone. There is nothing intrinsically or basically wrong with either the concept or the management of the Trade Development Zone. It is scurrilous innuendo, rumour, deliberate gutter-sniping and subterfuge on the part of the members opposite that is the only problem facing the Trade Development Zone today.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the Trade Development Zone has not occupied the minds of the people of Alice Springs a great deal over the years. A few people have been interested, but it certainly has not been a top-priority subject in general conversation around the town. However, over the last few weeks, it has become a matter of concern and people are asking questions about it. They have the pretty clear impression that it seems to be in trouble. That is the perception in the Alice Springs community.

There has been considerable publicity, and it has been 'adverse. People have been leaving the zone and venting their spleen. Whether they are simply vindictive or whether they have something real to bitch about is not clear. People hear things on the radio and read things in the papers. People in Alice Springs do not often have the chance to check these things out. Quite often, the media is only reporting what people say and therefore the full blame cannot be placed on it.

I feel that part of the problem is that there seems to be a reticence on the part of government to give the answers and a lack of candour about laying it all out on the table. There is no better way of destroying any argument that people may put against you than by being as open as possible. If there is no candour in the answers, that will always breed suspicion. In our political society, it is the job of the opposition to pick holes in the government. If the sides were swapped, it would not be much different. If members of the government were in the minority and were frustrated for years, their temptation would be to knock and niggle away. When you do not receive frank answers, you may come to believe that there is something behind the scenes which is not good.

Recently, I was talking to a gentleman who has had considerable experience in Asia. He is actually a New Zealander by birth but he is married to a Thai lady. I was introduced to him by the local barber. I had not met him before but we were introduced and spent some time together. He gave me some information. I am certainly not claiming to be an expert but this fellow seemed to have had a great deal of experience. I am prepared to recount, warts and all, the things that he said, as I recall them. Unfortunately, I did not bring my notes with me.

In relation to the K.K Yeung business, he said that, in his experience, Asian businessmen expect to work very hard to earn a quid. He said that people over there are rather amazed if someone is paid up-front. They expect to be paid on results. That is the way they have always operated and it is rather amazing to them that the Trade Development Zone is paying K.K. Yeung up-front. I will leave that as something for members to consider.

Mr Hatton: Who said that?

Mr COLLINS: I will give the member the name of the gentleman when I have checked that that is okay by him.

Mr Hatton: Another anonymous quotation.

Mr COLLINS: I do not have his phone number to obtain his permission and I think I should pay him that courtesy.

Mr Perron: Do you think we ought to wait on this advice?

Mr Reed: The barber's mate?

Mr COLLINS: Yes, the barber's mate, who just happens to be a very good and strong supporter of the CLP. He is quite a reasonable fellow.

The second thing he mentioned related to the immigration debate. He felt that Asian people have taken that debate in a way which has been very harmful. They have taken umbrage at it. I think that the immigration debate has been quoted out of context in the Australian press. People have given their versions of what has been said. However, the Asian people are not happy about it. It is a cultural difference and, if we are genuine about getting the Territory up and running, we must keep that in mind.

The third thing he said related to media reports. He said that, if there is some bad press here in the Territory, that bad press gets amplified in Asian papers. I mentioned this to the honourable minister, who said that he would give me some examples of this occurring. It is startling to see how Asian newspapers take issues which have been covered in our press and amplify them in a way which makes us look like a mob of ninnies. That is a cultural difference we might not be happy about, but we need to know about it. Our press needs to be mindful of this fact when it reports on events here, events which may be blown out of proportion in the Asian press. Perhaps the minister will obtain some examples. He said that he was expecting to get some from Mr McHenry.

This gentleman related his experience when he had a brief from a group of Asian businessmen who did not want to identify themselves but who were seeking information about investment opportunities in the Territory. The first point he made was that there was no single place where all the relevant information could be obtained. Since then, a book has been made available and I will certainly show it to him and get his comments about its usefulness. At the time, however, he had no option but to write to the relevant government departments giving some details and asking for information. He said: 'I either did not receive a reply or I received a reply which was suspicious and defensive and did not answer the questions which were put'.

I hope that the Chief Minister may take that on board. If he is interested, I can ask the gentleman to provide copies of correspondence. If the gentleman's allegations are true - and I will always concede that there is room for doubt - it is clear that every opportunity is not being taken to provide potential investors with information. Every person who makes inquiries is a potential customer, and even a potential entrant into the Trade Development Zone.

As far as the Trade Development Zone was concerned, this gentleman said that it seemed to be shrouded in secrecy. He was given some rather outdated glossy brochures. Up-to-date information, warts and all, was very hard to get. That is how he put it to me. A couple of days after our meeting, he



dropped some notes in at my office. They talk about business development zones rather than trade development zones but I am more than happy to let the minister have a copy. I will ask the gentleman in question if he is happy to have his name and address made available to members and, if he is, they may wish to talk to him. I appreciated his insights and perceptions and I felt it was worthwhile putting them on the record of the Assembly.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement of the Minister for Industries and Development. In doing so, I would like to address a number of the points that have been made by honourable members during the course of the debate.

Since the Trade Development Zone was established, I have listened to many debates concerning it. I have heard many members say that they support the principle of the zone, and then proceed to knock it relentlessly. Whenever they are challenged on their negative attitude, they continue to argue that they support it in principle. They do not recognise the damage they do through their criticisms.

The member for Barkly is perfectly correct when he says that there is a perception in the community that something is wrong with the zone. We must ask ourselves whether that perception is fair or not, not whether it exists. I doubt whether any member would deny that there is a growing perception in the community that there is something wrong with the Trade Development Zone. If members in this Chamber are to be honest and responsible, they must ask themselves whether that is a fair perception or a beat-up by people who are seeking to make short-term political capital by adopting the cheapest, simplest political trick in the book. No matter what information they are given, they ask another question. They keep asking more and more questions in more and more detail and keep alleging that they are not being given enough information. Those are the tactics adopted by the opposition. It has delved into commercially-sensitive areas and raised doubts about individuals, not by direct accusation but by innuendo and association. It turns any small dispute into a major crisis and it keeps up its attack day in and day out, week in week out.

The community does not have the benefit of detailed information and, in many respects, does not even understand the concept of the zone. The average citizen does not sit around all day thinking about politics and political issues. Generally, he sees the headlines in the paper but often does not even read the articles. I challenge anybody in this House to deny that. It is a fact of life. Citizens like to get on with their lives and if they start seeing negative headlines about anger, confusion and argument they assume that something is wrong. It is no wonder that people say, 'There must be something wrong with that trade zone. Every time you pick up the paper, someone is having a shot at it'. The next thing that happens is that we have a major crisis and an assault on what could be a perfectly well-run organisation.

If members of this House are serious when they say they support the principle of the zone, they have a responsibility to find out the facts which can be reasonably asked for and to get to the nub of the issue. They should ask whether the zone is heading in the direction it was intended to head in, whether it is progressing in line with the general thrust originally proposed, and whether spending is in line with the patterns which should achieve its objectives. It is quite proper to check that and say: 'We are prepared to allocate so much in resources to that program with the objective of building something unique in this country, something that has not been achieved here before, an export-oriented manufacturing industry. Our economic development

strategy and our economic analysis tell us that this is the area of greatest shortfall in our economic infrastructure and this zone is designed to change that'.

Until this week, the member for Flynn was a member of the general public, reading the newspapers, watching television and listening to the stories and the political rhetoric, and probably becoming as confused as every other citizen in the community. I have no doubt that he intends to approach his job honestly. The first thing he should do is pick up this document, which was tabled in this House on 21 August 1984. It is the consultant's report on the Trade Development Zone, which started it all. He should read it. I would ask all honourable members to take time to read this document because this is what it is all about. It sets out the original objective and how we intended to achieve it. At page 68, section 8.5 refers specifically to financial considerations, and I will quote some of it:

It is considered that the initial development costs should be funded by an allocation in the NT government budget. Similarly, salaries and other running costs for the early establishment years should be met by the government. Beyond the initial stage, the government's responsibility should be reduced to that part of operating costs that are associated with the policy and promotional roles.

The report clearly says, not just there but elsewhere, that we should not expect immediate results. It says that we will have to put our money up-front, that we have to invest capital in marketing, promotion and incentives, and build up slowly, as everybody else in the world has had to, to start to achieve our goal. The report says that that means we will have to spend our money up-front and that, if we stick to our task and have the courage of our convictions, certainly carrying out audits and making sure that things are being done properly but, above all exercising perseverance, we will achieve something unique and innovative in this nation.

It is less than 2 years since the doors of the zone were opened and members opposite are trying to tear the thing to pieces. That process has been going on for in excess of 12 months. There was a major controversy in the period leading up to the 1987 election, promoted by the opposition, and it has been going on ever since. I have a book full of controversial headlines and allegations. Not a single allegation has been proved or substantiated by opponents of the zone - and that goes back to 1986. Here they are, a pile of them. That is not counting Hungerford, which I have a separate book for. That is the result of the opposition's efforts.

What has happened in the last couple of days, Mr Speaker? Yesterday and the day before, the opposition used question time to give us a burst on the zone. The early edition of today's NT News shows the sort of damage that can be done. It had a giant headline, which the member for Stuart was kind enough to show me: 'Cover up - Smith slams TDZ'. A later edition of the newspaper is now out carrying the front page headline: '\$1.4 m - That's what the Govt has paid Yeung'. What impression will that create in the minds of the community?

Members were in the House this morning when the information about the payment was released. What will the general public think? I will tell you what they will think: that Mr Yeung is somehow an employee of the Northern Territory government and we have slipped him a cheque for \$1.4m. That will look really good to the constituents the Leader of the Opposition referred to this morning, the people in the northern suburbs who are living on \$20 000 a

year. They will ask: 'What is this government up to?'. The headline does not tell people that an independent consultant selected by the accounting firm Price Waterhouse has prepared a report, as the Deputy Chief Minister said this morning. The consultant, Fergus Simpson, is a reputable man and his report fully supports the direction and actions that we are taking. That was stated in the House this morning, but it does not show in the headlines. There is no mention of the fact that a second line audit report was tabled in the Assembly this morning.

I will tell you what the headline should have said, Mr Speaker. It should have said: 'Mr Yeung gives the Northern Territory government \$309 236.90'. That is how much he has lost in providing services to the Northern Territory. That is his lost leader, if you like, against potential future incentive gains. Instead of that, though, the community is being told that we are feather-bedding somebody, a top consultant with top contacts throughout South-east Asia. He is funding staff. He is funding a line of consultants throughout South-east Asia. He is paying his own employees and his own office and business expenses to do a job for the Northern Territory in a very competitive market. It is a very difficult process.

We do not have the sort of access that centralised governments have when they are competing with us. The Canadians are able to offer complete tax-free status to companies, and they do so. That is the market that we are competing in. We can offer relief from Territory taxes but we cannot offer relief from company taxes. All we can say is that companies in our zone will not have to pay import duties if they follow certain procedures which we will advise them on. That is the market we are moving into, and we are doing a good job.

What do we get for our efforts? The sort of attack that has been launched this week and headlines that will certainly upset people in the northern suburbs. The Leader of the Opposition will feel really good about that, because he has achieved more political controversy through another attack on the government. Whilst the member for Sadadeen might believe that that is the Leader of the Opposition's job, the real test is what good it does for the Territory and the future prosperity of Territorians. I ask, is that the motive of opposition members? I believe it is.

The Leader of the Opposition said 3 issues were questioned. He did not address the fact that they had been dealt with generally. Here we have a consultant's report and an auditor's report, both of which say that Mr Yeung is doing a good job and that we are heading in the right direction. They also say that he has been underpaid in terms of what he has done for us. What happens when we produce that information? We are criticised for spending too much money.

Do we want to build this Northern Territory or do we want to sit back on our hands and do nothing? If we want to take a chance and try to break through, then we will have to take a few risks. They must be calculated risks, not just wild-card runs. We must take the best advice possible about the nature of the risks we face as we seek to achieve things. We have done that. The studies are there. The process is in place. I urge every member to read the material again, read about what we are trying to achieve, and then go out and tell the community what we are trying to achieve. Tell people that it will cost money and effort and we will all need to get in there and have a go.

To members opposite who support the idea of promoting private enterprise development I say, pick up the material and read it. Look at the support that

has been given to the concept and get behind it. Look at the total amount that we are talking about because it really is not big bikkies. The Chief Minister said that the total spending to date, over some 3 years, is approximately \$29m. We have capital assets valued at about \$22m as a result of that expenditure. That leaves \$7m that we have put up in 3 years, for promotion, incentives, assistance, marketing, consultants, and getting out there and letting people know - around Australia, in the Northern Territory, and overseas - that there is a Trade Development Zone in Darwin. We have spent that money actually trying to encourage people to bring their money here for investment.

We have made mistakes, Mr Speaker. I do not have much time for people who are not prepared to admit that they have made mistakes. The biggest mistake we made was in the early stages, when we became aware that there was considerable interest in the zone and thought we could better the consultant's predictions. We had been told not to expect to get anyone in the zone in less than 2 years and not to expect it to look like a big success in less than 10 years. Enthusiastic ministers started announcing expressions of interest and telling people what was happening. I guess that resulted from too much enthusiasm and over-exuberance, and we must admit fault for it.

Mr Perron: Well, I don't apologise.

Mr HATTON: I am not apologising. I am saying it is a fact of life. We did it and people thought it was going to happen, and it didn't happen.

We learnt how hard it is to bring foreign money into this country, when you have to get through the immigration rules and everything else. We know that, from the first contact to bringing it in, you are looking at at least 2 years of hard work. It takes 2 years for an individual business to come through the system. That is the experience. It is what the consultants told us, and we know it is true. It takes that sort of work.

I urge members to have faith, to stay behind the zone and to recognise that the investigations that have been carried out are saying that the direction we are taking is the right one. That is what the consultant is saying in the preliminary report which was tabled this morning. It is the right direction to follow and the right way to go about it. It is the way to avoid making the sort of crazy mistakes that have been made by others before.

We must take heart from the audited reports, which show that our people have been so tight with our principal consultant in South-east Asia that he has lost over \$300 000. However, he has stuck with us. The member for Sadadeen says that Asian businessmen do not expect to be paid up-front. Our consultant will certainly have to be up-front in getting businesses to enter the zone, in order to get on top of the sort of loss that he has incurred to date. He has taken that loss and is still with us, despite all the controversy and arguments and despite the attack, through incessant innuendo, on his own reputation. I stand here and say that I have faith in the ability and integrity of Mr K.K. Yeung. With the contacts that he has, he is the right person to be working for the Northern Territory in that particular part of the world. Let us draw faith from that and get behind the concept. Before members of the opposition open their mouths, I urge them to go back and read about what we are trying to do and look at the time frame we have to work in. They should forget the nonsense. If they have real questions ...

Mr Ede: We have plenty.

Mr HATTON: I said real questions. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's questions this morning and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Does the opposition want to know what colour toothpaste the consultant uses? I will guarantee all honourable members that, if the 39 questions were answered in detail, the opposition would come back with another 50 the next day. That is its game.

Mr Ede: When you began as Chief Minister, you found out that you had to answer them. That is what this mob has to learn.

Mr HATTON: I have never been frightened to answer a question. You know that.

Mr Ede: Right, tell him.

Mr HATTON: I do know that there is a point at which the questions become unreasonable.

I will remind all honourable members, particularly the member for Barkly, that in 1986 he stood up and explained honestly to the community the state of contingent liabilities. It was not a shock-horror situation for the Northern Territory. It has been proven subsequently, after 2 years of argument and controversy and after a Public Accounts Committee inquiry, that we have a low level of contingent liability. It is all well secured and there is nothing improper about any of it. That is what came out of all of that controversy. I remember, however, fighting the 1987 election over contingent liabilities in relation to Yulara, and the Sheratons. Why did that occur? Because the former Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, had been honest in his approach to people.

No member should assume that telling the full story will lead to an honest reaction from the opposition. Members of the opposition are about getting information and twisting it in order to create political controversy aimed at destabilising the Northern Territory. They have only 1 objective: to win government for Labor.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that the statement by the Minister for Industries and Development has been covered by my colleagues quite extensively. However, I would like to pick up on a couple of points.

Yesterday, when speaking on the economic development strategy tabled by the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition said that there was no vision underlying the strategy. When the decision was made some 3 years ago to set up a trade development zone within the Northern Territory, I believed it was a good decision. When the legislation was introduced into the House, it was supported by the Leader of the Opposition.

I suppose in some respects I will probably accept most of the blame for the state of the Trade Development Zone today. I have been described by certain media representatives as having had my own brand of excitement about the prospects for the Trade Development Zone Authority and what it would achieve in terms of developing some manufacturing infrastructure in the Northern Territory. I would remind honourable members that, at the time when we were talking about the establishment of the Trade Development Zone, things were moving reasonably well in other areas of the development of the Northern Territory. I am not pointing the finger at the federal Labor government but, over the last few years, it has taken initiatives which have hurt the Northern Territory in a financial sense. In some ways, the zone was a reaction to that

as the Northern Territory government tried to stimulate other areas of activity that would develop the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition spoke this morning, I heard him in silence and when the member for Stuart spoke I heard him in silence. The trouble with members of the opposition is that they never listen. They blow their own trumpets. They move in and out of this place like a bad smell and come back when they think it is safe. More importantly, they describe the Chairman of the Trade Development Authority as a 'rogue elephant'. That certainly is a detrimental statement about a member of the Northern Territory Public Service.

Mr Smith: He is not.

Mr DONDAS: You are splitting hairs again. He cannot come in here and defend himself and I would challenge the Leader of the Opposition to openly debate the subject of the Trade Development Zone Authority with Mr McHenry and see how he turns out. He will not turn out very well because Mr McHenry has put a very high level of effort and expertise into the development of the Trade Development Zone.

Let us talk about Adam Gordon. It is not normal that we should talk in here about officers of various government departments. I do not believe that I have ever discussed in this House the work, the influence or the potential of a public servant. At the time I was the minister responsible, Mr McHenry put to me a proposition that Mr Adam Gordon become the General Manager of the Trade Development Zone Authority. I queried that particular appointment at the time. If you consult the Parliamentary Record, you will note that we said that, if the TDZ was to work, we would have to get the top people. That is on the record and it can be researched.

Mr Adam Gordon had no previous experience in relation to trade development zones. We had placed advertisements in many of the international papers to see whether we could recruit a top-line operator to conduct the day-to-day affairs of the Trade Development Zone. Unfortunately, we were unable to recruit anybody from overseas. Mr Gordon put his name into the ring and, at that time, I queried his capacity and capability. Mr McHenry told me that he thought that Mr Gordon had the potential to become a good general manager of the zone.

We heard from the Leader of the Opposition that Mr Gordon was sacked. I believe that that is not correct. He was not sacked. He may have been moved sideways. The offer of transfer was there. He did not have to leave the Trade Development Zone Authority. Quite clearly, the Leader of the Opposition has been saying that he was sacked because the place is falling apart. Mr McHenry cannot be here to defend himself. Maybe Mr Gordon was being transferred because he was not top shelf. Maybe he was not capable of running the Trade Development Zone Authority.

Mr Smith: You talk about criticising public servants.

Mr DONDAS: You brought up names in this House, not me.

Let us talk about the figure of \$30m which the Leader of the Opposition throws around. I agree with other members of the House that the headline in tonight's NT News about \$1.4m for K.K. Yeung is disgraceful. The ordinary

person in the street would believe that Mr K.K. Yeung received \$1.4m for a few months work. In reality, as is clear from the minister's statement, which no doubt was distributed to the Press Gallery, the total amount paid to 30 June 1988 to Mr Yeung's company for himself, all his staff and subconsultants in other areas is \$1.439m. It is a disgraceful headline. It is disgraceful reporting because I am quite sure that the minister's statement was circulated.

By way of comparison, imagine what the Northern Territory Tourist Commission offices are costing us throughout the world - in Los Angeles, Singapore, London, Frankfurt and Tokyo. We have offices in Taipei and consultants in Hong Kong and Bangkok. You cannot have offices and officers around the world for nothing. It is a pretty expensive place. You can rent a 3 m<sup>2</sup> office in Hong Kong at today's prices for about \$2000 a month. That is little more than the area I am standing on. Members opposite think everything comes for nothing. Look at the hours that have been put in by the consultant and verified by the auditor. Given the number of hours that Mr Yeung, his organisation and the other consultants have worked since 1985-86 to September of this year, \$1.4m is really cheap.

Let us talk about the \$30m. The Leader of the Opposition has said that the Trade Development Zone has cost us \$30m since it started. The member for Nightcliff picked up the point that we have \$22m worth of assets there, and they are not all buildings. There are roads and services such as sewerage, water and electricity. At some stage in the 1980s or the 1990s, the power, water and sewerage facilities would have had to be upgraded because of what is occurring at East Arm. If it were not for the upgrading of the roads and the expenditure on the infrastructure for the Trade Development Zone, there would be no \$6.2m in the budget this year for the new fishing area at East Arm. If the cement works were to expand, it would need an upgrading in its electrical reticulation. The expenditure of \$22m on those assets has benefited other areas. It has not all gone into the Trade Development Zone.

I would probably agree with some of the other visitors that the dual highway leading to the zone is very fancy. However, if we are to compete with the other trade zones within the immediate vicinity of the Northern Territory, we have to put on a good front. We must have the PR. Potential investors do not want to feel that they would be investing in an industrial area. The survey that we undertook before we finally designed the Trade Development Authority indicated that we needed a nice facility to attract people into the zone.

Let us imagine for a minute that the Trade Development Zone Authority wound down in a couple of years time. Members opposite would be saying that the Northern Territory government had wasted \$22m. What a load of nonsense! The facility and the infrastructure is there and can be used for the next 50 years or the next 100 years in the development of the Northern Territory for any other manufacturing base. We had to give ourselves a chance.

The Leader of the Opposition has said on more than 1 occasion that I was overexcited and overenthusiastic. I do not mind being overexcited and overenthusiastic. We spoke to a number of people who indicated a high level of interest in coming into the zone. It has, however, been a long, slow haul. It would not have been as successful as it has been without people like K.K. Yeung moving around the Far East. People there will not listen to the Leader of the Opposition. They will not listen to the Chief Minister or the Deputy Chief Minister. They like doing business primarily amongst themselves. Any new entities must take a certain time to achieve a level of trust. I

lived in Hong Kong for 7 years and I understand something of the mentality that exists in that Asian region. You need to build up trust. In the last 3 years, the Northern Territory government has built up trust within the Asian region. When our ministers move through the region, people know they are fair dinkum.

The year 1997 will be a very important time in the development of the zone because that is when the treaty between the British and China in relation to Hong Kong expires. During the next 5 years, many people will move out of the area. That has been happening for the last 4 years but the people have been going to Canada, the United States and to Europe. I believe that in 1991 and 1992 we will have a large influx of those people as they move out of Hong Kong. I do not agree with the Deputy Chief Minister that the political stability of the Northern Territory is not important. I believe it is important. It is important to those Hong Kong Chinese who will move out. Many of them remember what happened in 1948, when the communists took over in China. They remember their fathers being shot in Red Square because they had the temerity to own a piece of land. That was only 40 years ago and many Hong Kong Chinese businessmen remember it. That is the reason why there will be such an exodus. The Leader of the Opposition does not know what happened in 1948. He does not care, but there are people in Hong Kong who do care and they are starting to make their move. I believe they will make their move in great numbers by 1991-92 because the lease expires in 1997.

I can see the member for MacDonnell scratching his chin over there. I can give him some books that will tell him what happened. I can tell him that those people will not let lightning strike twice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in terms of our manufacturing base, the production of knitted garments in the zone is succeeding. I have to say that my information is only verbal in case one of the members opposite quotes me, but it indicates that the people manufacturing the knitted garments have orders to fill for the next 2 or 3 years. These garments are not worth \$10 and \$15 each. They sell for between \$250 and \$400. Obviously, those people know what they are doing. They have certainly spent a great deal of money.

Why have we been targeting the Asian region? One of the more important reasons has not been brought out today. The United States and some of the third-world countries have quota systems. Because of Australia's balance of trade situation, we do not have quotas. If an Asian manufacturer is experiencing problems over the expansion of his business, the absence of quotas may make this region attractive. It is evident that quick results will not be the order of the day. However, even when the original legislation was introduced, there were indications that the zone would be a winner because of problems in the Asian region caused by quota systems.

The constant harping of the opposition in relation to the Trade Development Zone Authority and its operations reminds me of its performance 4 or 5 years ago when the Yulara development was first proposed. Members opposite said that it would not work, that it would be a flop and that it was a waste of taxpayers' money. We do not hear that today. It is almost impossible to get a room at Yulara today and the development of further infrastructure is going ahead. If the government of the day had not taken a decision at that time, we would not have attracted the 300 000 or 400 000 tourists who visit that region today.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not realise that so many government members would be so rash as to get up and support the Minister for



Industries and Development. Since we have had to listen to this constant stream of diatribes and all this extraordinary myth-making, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to bring some reason to the debate. Some of these myths need to be debunked at once.

The first myth is that the opposition is opposed to the notion of a trade development zone in the Northern Territory. I believe that any government member will find it impossible to find any instance on record in which a member of the opposition suggested that there were not possibilities in the trade development zone concept. A cavalcade of government speakers have suggested that we do not support the Trade Development Zone. Such a zone is sensible in terms of our underlying philosophy of resource development.

Government speaker after government speaker suggested that the opposition was not interested in economic development. As I have said in this House on numerous occasions, the plain fact of the matter is that we have a balanced attitude towards economic development. We believe that it is incumbent on any government of the Northern Territory, be it of the right or of the left, CLP or Labor, to make the most of what we have and to ensure, within a framework of a just society, that we make the best of our very slim economic resources. Perhaps even government members will now appreciate that the opposition strongly supports the Trade Development Zone and believes that value-added manufacture and increased trade in the region hold possibilities for the future.

Unlike the member for Casuarina, I do not have first-hand experience of life in Hong Kong or the business environment in Hong Kong, but the relationship between Australia and South-east Asia is a subject of great interest to me. I have taken a considerable interest in it in various ways. I am a student of the Indonesian language and I believe that it is one of the sad facets of Australian social and economic life that we are so ignorant of our immediate neighbour, a nation 10 times the size of our own. I have a son who has spent a few years studying Mandarin, and I have a vague idea that at some time in his life he may be involved at some level in this country's relationship with our Asian neighbours. I believe that a central part of that relationship is economic. For that reason, I believe that it is important that this Assembly support the idea of a Trade Development Zone. Members opposite should have no illusion that the only plank of their argument today - that is, that we do not support the Trade Development Zone - is a patent nonsense. The plain fact of the matter is that we have an understanding of the social and economic processes that will make such a zone work.

Another myth that needs to be put to rest is that the opposition has been unreasonably critical of successive CLP governments' financial dealings. I have noticed that the government has avoided very zealously any reference to the outrageous casino transaction, that extraordinary performance in which so many government members were implicated by association, which involved the selling-out of a very successful Australian company for what has proved to be a succession of ownerships. Who can forget the 3-month period when the revenue on turnover tax from the casinos was the princely sum of \$245? In attempting to shore up its fading credibility with respect to the Trade Development Zone, the government has studiously avoided any reference to that outrageous episode.

These blokes have been in government for so long that they do not appreciate, as the people in the community appreciate, the value of an assiduous, intelligent and hardworking opposition. Trying to get information

about the Trade Development Zone has been like drawing teeth. Mr Deputy Speaker, you have heard the Minister for Industries and Development say throughout question time for 3 days now: 'I will not do it', and 'Why don't you bring on a censure motion?' At last, today, he had the intestinal fortitude to make a statement - and what a doozy it was! Everybody who reads this evening's newspaper will be quite satisfied that the application of the opposition in respect of these questions has been well and truly justified. The people out there knew that there were questions to be asked about the Trade Development Zone. Just as the electorate of Flynn said a few weeks ago, they will start to say that the next government of the Northern Territory will come from this side of the House. This CLP government is on the skids and we have never seen a clearer example of that than the minister's dithering.

There is a minor excuse for the Minister for Industries and Development and the Chief Minister, although they have not put it forward with much force. I refer to the fact that there have been so many changes on the government benches. During the last few years, we have had 4 Chief Ministers and 4 ministers responsible for industries and development. It is scarcely any wonder that they are unable to keep track of what is going on. They are so busy stabbing each other in the back in the Cabinet room that they are unable to concentrate on the crucial areas of government administration and statutory obligations with respect to the Trade Development Zone. We have had so few answers. The questions that my colleagues have put forward demand answers. We are starting to get some answers but, by gee, it has been hard work.

The other myth that needs to be put to rest - and I add this parenthetically - is the myth about Yulara. The minister himself and the member for Casuarina mentioned this.

Mr Coulter: Don't tell me you did not knock Yulara.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the honourable minister. The fact of the matter is that he was not a member of this House when the government got itself involved in contingent liabilities.

Mr Coulter: Did you knock or not?

Mr BELL: There are 2 issues. The first is whether contingent liabilities are desirable, and the second is the extent to which a government ought to involve itself in contingent liabilities assuming, as we do, that they are a reasonable financial strategy for any government in the 1980s.

Mr Coulter: Did you or did you not knock Yulara?

Mr BELL: I am coming to that in a moment.

Then there is the issue of the extent to which the government ought publicly to announce its contingent liabilities. This opposition does support a degree of government involvement in contingent liabilities. I would have to be convinced, and I am yet to be convinced, that the involvement of the government in a contingent liability in the Sheraton deal was worth it. I have my reservations about that.

Mr Coulter: Which Sheraton?

Mr BELL: Both of them.

Mr Coulter: We have 3.

Mr Hatton: He did not realise that.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was regarding Yulara as a unit. When I was talking about the Sheratons, I was talking about the 2 further Sheratons that were built, 1 in Alice Springs and 1 in Darwin. I would want to be convinced about that. However, the casino deal was simply outrageous. Any chance that this government had of retaining a shred of a decent reputation for fiscal responsibility was dashed entirely with that deal.

As to whether this government ought to have become involved in contingent liabilities in relation to Yulara, I believe that should have been announced publicly. That is the guts of it; it was not announced. The only way the people of the Northern Territory learnt that they had been put into hock for \$140m was because the opposition brought it to the public's attention. That is a different issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me reiterate the point made by the member for Sadadeen, something which I do not do very often, believe me. He said that the key to issues like this is the willingness to be open about them. Whilst I appreciate that the member for Sadadeen may regard this as the kiss of death, for once I agree with him. The issue was not the building of Yulara or the contingent liabilities, but the secrecy. It was only the opposition which let people know that those deals were going on. This government is very good at making flash announcements about all sorts of other things, but it was only when the opposition started digging that the people of the Northern Territory were apprised of the fact that they had been put into debt for \$140m in 1982 dollars.

Mr Coulter: Where would we be today if we had not?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have spent 5 minutes trying to explain to the minister. When it comes to shooting off his mouth, the mindless energy of the Minister of Mines and Energy never ceases to amaze me, but that is beside the point at the moment.

Mr Coulter: And your answer is?

Mr BELL: Yulara is a good idea. The contingent liabilities for Yulara were a good idea. The lack of openness and the secretiveness associated with those financial deals were wrong. Exactly the same thing is at stake in the case of the Trade Development Zone. If the government is going to get involved in these shady deals, it must expect that, at some time, somebody will lift the top off the can of worms. That has happened today and the people of the Northern Territory will be extremely thankful that they have a shadow treasurer with the capability of the Leader of the Opposition. Make no mistake about that.

Once again, we find that this Assembly, the Northern Territory, people who pay taxes in the Northern Territory and the people who are trying to get some decent public facilities in the Northern Territory have been well served by the opposition. At last, a few facts are starting to emerge about the government's dealings although I suspect that all of them have not yet come to light. The Leader of the Opposition has to be praised for his efforts in that regard, not denigrated in the absurd fashion that we have heard from government speakers.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, if there is one thing that has come out of today's debate - and I am thankful for it - it is a

renewed commitment and determination by myself to ensure that the Trade Development Zone works in spite of the opposition, in spite of the media and in spite of anybody else. I now realise how much commitment and patience must go arm in arm with a major development. All that has happened here today, all the rumours, innuendo, sabotage, phone calls, and cloak and dagger tactics have strengthened my resolve to ensure the success of the Trade Development Zone.

I cannot put out a story to say that it will all be great tomorrow and that people will read in the Sunday Territorian that everything is okay. It will take time. We have not had the official opening of the Trade Development Zone yet. I will invite the Leader of the Opposition, and I will pick him up to ensure that he turns up there. When he stands in front of a couple of hundred workers there and in front of those investors, he can take pride in tonight's headline and in tonight's editorial. That is the sort of result that he desires.

Let us look at tonight's editorial. How accurate is it? The second paragraph begins: 'After providing figures which differed widely from those given by the former minister, Mr Ray Hanrahan ...'. Let us go back to last night's debate. The Leader of the Opposition quoted a question which he asked in this House in November 1986. It appeared on page 1027 of the Parliamentary Record and it asked: 'What amount of money has been set aside in the 1986-87 TDC budget as a retainer for K.K. Yeung Management Consultants?'

Mrs Padgham-Purich: TDZ.

Mr COULTER: Actually, the Parliamentary Record says TDC. The member for Koolpinyah may like to be aware of that. It should have said TDZ.

The question did not ask what was actually paid. It asked what amount had been set aside. Does tonight's editorial worry about that? Not at all. Does it worry about the precise answers I provided to the Leader of the Opposition, in spite of being called a liar in last night's sitting and told that I was deliberately misleading parliament? In today's debate, did the Leader of the Opposition stand up and say he was wrong or apologise? Did the member for Barkly stand up and say he was wrong when he wrote in the Sunday Territorian on 2 October that the zone's employment statistics show that 21 public servants outnumber those on the private enterprise payroll in the zone? No, they did not.

People can have their little victories and their laughter, but this matter is far too important for that. It is jobs and it is the Northern Territory's future that are at stake. Members opposite can take pleasure in tonight's front page and in the editorial which says: 'An internal inquiry, such as is being conducted by the New South Wales consultant, Mr Fergus Simpson, will not do'. Mr Simpson does not come from New South Wales! We have to put up with a standard of reporting which makes mistakes like that. On its front page, the Sunday Territorian used a photograph of poor old Bob Tormey with the caption 'Adam Gordon'. In spite of things like that, the driving force in me is to ensure that the Trade Development Zone achieves success. We cannot tolerate people who cannot get the simple facts straight. People have got it wrong, and most of all, of course, the Leader of the Opposition has got it wrong. We do not need a newspaper that cannot write a simple story, that cannot get the photo of the right person on its front page and that indulges in sensational headlines like 'TDZ in chaos as 3 resign'. The last line of the article under that heading says: 'It is believed that 2 other members have also resigned or are about to do so'. No facts are given, as the Chief Minister has pointed out.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, this matter is far too serious to respond to the interjections of the member for Stuart, who really has contributed nothing to Northern Territory development in the time he has been in parliament, absolutely nothing.

As the member for Casuarina pointed out, the headline on the front page tonight says: '\$1.4m - That's what the Govt has paid Yeung'. It is not true, but it does not matter. There are the subconsultants and so on, and that is how the money was spent. Members of the opposition are trying to create a fantasy of our consultant operating in a haze of smoke in some opium den in China and taking our money. They can rest in their moment of glory because it is the only glory they will get.

The next Territory election is due in March 1991 at the latest. Mark my words, that will provide me with a great opportunity to come back on the opposition and enunciate the difference between the ALP and the CLP. The CLP is about jobs and development and the ALP is about retarding anything that we have ever tried to do on this side of the House. As I pointed out, that goes for gas pipelines, for Yulara, and for any development we have entered into. The opposition members have a role to play, and that is to knock and harp, and the Leader of the Opposition has the most sensitive role of anybody in this parliament ...

Mr Smith: Eh?

Mr COULTER: His role is to keep us in government and I hope that he remains in his job ...

Mr Smith: I haven't been doing a very good job of that lately.

Mr COULTER: Yes he has because, Mr Speaker, in the end he does not represent an alternative government and his fellow members know that. That is why they have tried to knock him off a couple of times already. He is the best thing that we have going for us. Whilst he is anti-development, anti-Coronation Hill, anti-uranium, anti-TDZ, anti-anything, we will be in government forever.

Mr Smith: I am definitely anti-you!

Mr COULTER: He is not an alternative. The people will not wear him.

We were told that all was to be revealed. Members of the opposition had a great amount of information; they were going to create a storm and bare all. I brought this debate on. Members of the opposition lacked the intestinal fortitude to do so. In question time during the last 3 days, they have been given many opportunities to initiate this debate. They have contributed nothing whatsoever to it.

The member for Stuart got great satisfaction. The substance he provided was contained in quotations from my contribution to the debate.

Mr Ede: The contradictions in it.

Mr COULTER: He brought nothing of his own to this debate. Mr Speaker, I say this ...

Mr Smith: Do you reckon you can go the full distance?

Mr COULTER: It is pretty simple. It is a pretty simple exercise.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to forget what you have heard in this Assembly today because the opposition has provided nothing that is worthwhile or of any interest to Territorians. I ask you to project yourself a year ahead, to when the Hengyang Company is out there with its factory completed and 140 employees at work, when the Skycom factory is completed, and when a number of other participants are operating in the zone. That will be a matter of great shame to the opposition, and it is the reason why the CLP will be in government next time and with an increased majority.

Mr Smith: Yes? Do you want to bet?

Mr COULTER: I make 1 proviso in that. It is that the Leader of the Opposition continues to occupy his position. Without him, we could not increase our majority very easily. He makes it so much easier to do that because the people will not wear him.

As I said, unemployed people in the Northern Territory, who are looking for meaningful full-time employment, can take little comfort from people like the member for Nhulunbuy, who has his \$250 000 pension secure in his back pocket, or the Leader of the Opposition, with his \$300 000 pension lined up and ready to go. They can rest secure in the knowledge that, with their pensions, they can go into early retirement. The Leader of the Opposition can head for Victoria to help his brother lose another election or go to Queensland, as the member for Nhulunbuy obviously desires to do, and lie down on a beach somewhere. Our commitment, on the other hand, is here, and it is to Territorians. That commitment has not altered in 14 years: jobs, jobs jobs.

Mr Smith: For the boys, boys, boys!

Mr COULTER: The 100 people who will be employed as a result of the advertisements in the paper would love to hear the Leader of the Opposition saying that. His interjection simply illustrates my point, Mr Speaker. What would we do without him? Seriously, we have to incorporate the ALP to ensure we prop him up and keep him there forever because, as long as he remains anti-development and continues to try to create instability, we are assured of government forever.

In summary, my resolve and my commitment to the Trade Development Zone have been secured here today. I will now go out into Asia and repair the damage that has been done by the opposition's incompetence and lack of understanding. I wish I could have a camera in time. I would make a video of members opposite with the smirks on their faces, and I would show it to my kids with pride. I would tell them: 'If you ever encounter a problem such as an MPI and if members of your opposition have smirks like these on their faces, stay well clear of them'. I know I am pre-empting a matter that is coming up when I say that. I would say, 'Stay well clear of them because they are "yes-butters"; they are not "why-notters"'.

Mr Ede: And you are a 'gunna'!

Mr COULTER: I would tell my kids: 'These people have not contributed anything to the development of the Northern Territory, and they will not contribute anything to the Northern Territory other than securing a CLP government in power, and that is something for which you should be grateful to them'.

Mr Speaker, let me tell members of the opposition something else. The 39 questions that they have put up will not be answered, and they can go on asking forever, ad infinitum, if they want to. We will develop the Trade Development Zone in spite of them. In spite of the editorial in tonight's paper, which did not even do a basic check on where the consultant comes from or what Mr Hanrahan said on 13 November 1986, in spite of the Leader of the Opposition calling me a liar and accusing me of misleading parliament, in spite of the member for Barkly not being able to make a simple telephone call before he goes to press on the number of employees in the Trade Development Zone, in spite of all these things, we will prosper and the Trade Development Zone will grow and provide meaningful, full-time employment for Territorians.

Mr Ede: Not even your own backbench believes you any more, Barry.

Mr Setter: Oh yes we do.

Mr Ede: You would believe anybody.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the opposition's approach really sickens me but, as I said, it also gives me the courage I need to get out there and get on with the job.

Mr Speaker, before today the opposition threatened to reveal all. Today it has not offered 1 scrap of solid evidence that would suggest it has any information that this Assembly should worry about. Not 1 scrap of evidence has been presented during this debate. The opposition is a failure but, as I said, it has a role to play. That is to ensure that we remain in government through its anti-development, knocking attitude and, most of all, through the character of the Leader of the Opposition. May he ever reign in that position to assure us of that opportunity.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE  
BTEC Program

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Leader of the Opposition. The letter is dated 6 October:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning, the following matter: the damage caused to the pastoral industry by the government's handling of the BTEC program.

Yours sincerely  
Terry Smith

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this government will do anything to avoid a debate on BTEC, anything at all. The Deputy Chief Minister told this Assembly several times and with vehemence that he would not initiate a debate on the Trade Development Zone, stating that I would have to do that. Yet, as soon as we proposed BTEC for discussion as a matter of public importance, what happened? We had a 6-hour debate on the Trade Development Zone! Mr Speaker, on behalf of the members opposite, I apologise

to the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. This is his first MPI and it must have been agony for him to wait so long for it to come before the House.

It has become abundantly clear that this government's management of the BTEC program has been a grotesque failure. The government has turned an admirable scheme to eradicate disease into the uncontrolled eradication of an industry. Last year, expert assessment put the number of diseased stock in the Territory's stable herd at 1 in 1000; that is, 0.1%. According to the GRM study into the pastoral industry, the Territory's total cattle herd stood at an estimated 1.7 million head. Now, according to the minister's own figures, in the course of the program to date we have paid out \$25m in direct compensation for destocking. Assuming compensation of about \$50 per head, which I am informed is an average sort of figure, and allowing for the normal proportion of buffalo involved in destocking programs, we have destocked the herd to the tune of more than 350 000 head of cattle, most of them female.

I would have liked to have provided this debate with far more concrete figures about destocking. I would have liked to have given this House details of an exact accounting of the program, but no such accounting exists. The uncontrolled overkill has to be extrapolated from the massive ballpark expenditure figures that have been provided by the minister. Pastoralists have watched helplessly as this program has obliterated their herds and their future. One documented account tells of a herd which contained 8 beasts positively identified as diseased. The entire herd of 3500 was shot out.

We must not get the impression that there is no philosophy behind this astonishing waste. The philosophy is that if there are no animals there is no disease. Nobody seems to notice the flaw in this approach: if we have no animals, we have no industry. This philosophy was brewed in the black depths of the bureaucracy and it has been applied with lunatic efficiency by the departments involved. The pastoralists, the people who had most to gain from the BTEC program, the people who knew best how to make it work effectively, were effectively ignored.

Mr McCarthy: You should go to a meeting of the Cattlemen's Association and find out.

Mr SMITH: Have you finished?

Mr McCarthy: If you went to the right forum to get your information, you might have something to say.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, very occasionally a voice was raised within the bureaucracy against what was happening. One such voice, belonged to a pastoral officer with the Department of Lands and Housing, Mr Ted Easton. I intend to table his report of a routine inspection of the 4300 km<sup>2</sup> property at Nutwood Downs. That property has become quite famous, almost as famous as the property of Mr Turner, who is taking legal action against the government on this very matter. The officer, Mr Ted Easton, notes that the lessees have complied with all their covenants. The opposition has already drawn attention in some forums to the performance of the previous lessees, the infamous Vestseys. What concerns us here, and what is of deep concern to everybody in the pastoral industry, is the threat which BTEC poses to the livelihood of the lessees.



Before quoting Mr Easton's remarks, I want to make it clear that he made them in a departmental report which certainly did not come to us from him. However, it is time for Territorians to make a judgment about his observations and the grave implications they have for the way this government has mismanaged BTEC. Mr Easton said in his report:

This is the first inspection which has been carried out by the department since the new lessees were granted transfer to lease on 13 February 1984. 2 of the lessees, Mr Bob Dunbar and his son Rod, are resident managers of the lease and have devoted the last 12 months to getting the property back into a working order where some form of stock management and control could be carried out. It is obvious that this lease has been badly neglected for the past few years by the previous lessees and that the only work carried out has been mustering for turn-off. It is also obvious by the number of mature ...'

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition said, prior to discussing this document which he said he would table, that there was legal action in train regarding this property. I believe that the content of the report may be sub judice. Mr Speaker, I would ask that you look into that matter and make a ruling. As Pettifer indicates, the procedures of the House must be such that any matter that is under any legal investigation not be discussed in the House. That has been well established as a tradition of the Westminster system and I ask that you rule on the matter.

Mr SMITH: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I find it amazing that the Attorney-General, who is Minister for Lands and Housing, does not even know what legal action is being taken. Legal action is being taken by another person in relation to another property. My comments related to Mr Ted Easton's report on the Nutwood Downs property, and the owners of that property have not taken legal action against anybody.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I will withdraw my objection as the honourable member has now pointed out that the document does not relate to any matter which is subject to legal inquiry. He did give the impression ...

Mr Smith: For goodness sake, sit down and shut up or give me an extension of time! This is outrageous.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General is debating a point of order and ...

Mr Smith: He is not debating it at all.

Mr SPEAKER: He has the call and he will be heard in silence, as you will.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, obviously the Leader of the Opposition has some trouble with self-control.

As I was saying, he inferred that the matter he was referring to was under legal consideration. I did object, but I withdraw that objection now that he has clarified the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In a fixed-time debate, it is very difficult for the opposition to put up with the sort of nonsense you have been encouraging. It would be appreciated if, when there was ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition wants to reflect on the directions or the rulings of the Chair, I suggest that he do so in writing.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I quote again from Mr Easton's report.

It is obvious by the number of mature cleanskin cattle sited in the internal paddock areas that clean musters and branding responsibilities have not been of a very high priority at Nutwood Downs. These mature cleanskin cattle could be as high as 50% and they certainly have not all come from the bush area, even though it is now obvious that fencing had been left to deteriorate to a much greater extent than has been previously recorded. If reference is made to paragraphs 2.0 to 2.4, it becomes apparent that the lessees have had their work cut out just trying to get the place in order, let alone trying to organise and run a stock camp.

The lessees intend to attempt to carry out a full muster of the full property this season in order to get some form of management over the cattle. The existing internal paddocks will be required to complete this task.

Mr Dunbar is anxious to muster the outside bush areas. Meatworks and cull-type cattle will be trucked out. Breeders and bulls of required line and quality will be retained for herd improvement and also to keep stock numbers viable. It is then proposed to erect new paddock fencing in the northern sector of the lease, thus creating clean paddocks for the good stock to feed. (New fencing will be approximately 120 km in length.) Finally, the existing paddocks will be mustered and all cattle tested for disease will turn off into new paddocks.

The report presents a picture of hardworking pastoralists.

It was noted during the inspection that existing paddocks are suffering from stock pressure, particularly the more palatable types of feed varieties and destocking of these areas would greatly assist in the regeneration process. Mr Dunbar has purchased this block with its inherent problems at a time when great pressure has been brought to bear on most northern region properties for total destocking and final shoot-out where a disease problem is still prevalent. This is a totally unsatisfactory solution for lessees of the like of the Dunbars, who have fully committed themselves to the Northern Territory.

In words that have become very well known indeed, Mr Easton says it is a case of 'Welcome to the Territory, now we are going to send you broke'. He goes on to say: 'I am referring to the completely unacceptable proposals which have been put forward by the Department of Primary Production regarding the disease eradication program'. Mr Easton states that the process required by DPP was outlined to him by the lessees in the following terms:

To muster all the internal paddocks is a priority. This is to be carried out 1 paddock at a time with clean stock and, after testing,

they are to be turned into clean paddocks. A 7-day per paddock time span has been allocated to muster, test the stock and shoot out. The mustering of the bush areas is not to occur until the first stage of the program has been carried out.

I would like to point out at this stage that there is no way that scrub bulls and other cleanskin stock will be prevented from getting back into the clean paddocks and contaminating the clean herds. This is where the entire program falls down. It is essential to remove the pressure on the internal fences by destocking the bush areas first, and this has several obvious advantages which will assist both management and disease control which will never work unless they run hand in hand.

Those comments were made in 1985. Because those sensible comments made by the man on the spot, the pastoral inspector, were ignored, the Dunbars - who committed their capital, their intelligence and toil to the Territory's pastoral industry - have been brought to the brink of ruin. Certainly, that is something that no one should want to happen.

I want to pause here to warn the government that it has acquired resourceful opponents in the Dunbars. It is not in their nature to deal with government lightly and it is not their character to walk away from a fight. If the government thinks the trouble it is facing in the courts is serious now, it should prepare itself for the worst which is yet to come, because similar stories are starting to be told all over the Northern Territory.

The destruction unleashed on our pastoralists has struck with even greater ferocity amongst our buffalo herd. There are identified markets in the EEC and in Asia for 4500 t of processed buffalo meat per year. In fact, we have never supplied that market with more than 3000 t. However, at around \$500 a head, that added up to an export industry worth \$15m a year. Include domestic sales and live exports and you have a \$20m industry. Mr Speaker, we had - past tense - a \$20m industry. The indiscriminate, unplanned and mismanaged buffalo destocking, now running at a rate of 30 000 head a year, has brought that industry to its knees. With the compensation cut-off deadline approaching, the push to the final solution is to be accelerated to 120 000 head.

Mr Speaker, to illustrate the sort of insane economics that guide the government's management strategies, I will give you a brief sequence of events. In 1986, Carabao Exports sold about 1500 buffalo to Cuba, and Fidel Castro paid \$1m for the shipment. In 1987, the Conservation Commission shot out something like 1500 buffalo in the Mary River area. It answered the subsequent outcry by claiming that catching the stock and bringing it to market was impracticable. The cost of the shoot-out was approximately \$100 000. The total cost to the Territory in lost sales was \$1.1m. Having shot out that stock in 1987, in 1988 the Conservation Commission invited expressions of interest for catching buffalo in the very same area. That is strange, Mr Speaker. In fact, one can legitimately ask: where is the sanity or the intelligence in that approach?

In the midst of all this destruction, the minister talks about a bright new future for the buffalo industry and its development into a table meat industry. Immediately, he contrives to make an even greater fool of himself. The main value of buffalo meat is that it is a high-yield, low-fat meat. Thus, a sausage maker or food processor obtains a highly-concentrated meat source which improves his returns far beyond those for standard table meats.

The minister's vision for the future of the industry is based on a rationale which contradicts the fundamental economics of the industry. That is brilliant, and entirely consistent with this government's management track record.

It has not been possible for the pastoral industry to contain the damage that this government has done. According to the GRM study, 46.7% of pastoral properties in the Darwin and Gulf areas are now running with negative returns, and not solely as a result of BTEC. Almost one half of the industry is running at a loss. Nor could the damage be confined to the pastoral industry. Mudginberri abattoir, despite the big fuss, is now closed with 60 jobs lost. Point Stuart and Katherine abattoirs are kept going through interstate stock. All that is bad enough, but it gets worse.

Mr Perron: What was that about the abattoirs?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I must admit that that comment could be wrong. I withdraw it.

The minister has said that the total BTEC program to date has cost \$87m. The total compensation component is \$25m. Thus, somehow, \$52m or two-thirds of the total outlay has been absorbed in implementation and administration.

Mr Reed: Would it be assistance to pastoralists?

Mr SMITH: Pastoralists throughout the Territory want to know where that money has gone.

My honourable colleague, the member for Koolpinyah, who has a very personal interest in and a deep knowledge of this particular subject, has said that she would have liked to participate in this debate but, unfortunately, because it is a matter of public importance debate, she cannot. In the short time that I have left, I want to put forward a suggestion that the member for Koolpinyah has made: that we should stop all shooting until we have had an audit of the industry and until we can see - hopefully, in quite a short period - whether it is possible to catch and slaughter all of the stock rather than wastefully and indiscriminately shoot it out, as we are doing at present. I think that that is an eminently sensible suggestion.

Too many people have already been hurt. The pastoralists have been hurt. People who depend for their livelihood on the buffalo-catching industry have been hurt. The whole of the Territory has been hurt because of the way this particular matter has been handled. We have been put on the back foot in terms of the development of a valuable industry. We have lost a potential source of income to the Northern Territory. More particularly, we have disheartened many people who have been working quietly at trying to make a living under difficult circumstances in the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. Because of the way this program has been implemented by the Northern Territory government, their lives here have been made even more difficult. That is why we have raised this issue as a matter of public importance.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, if that was not a remarkable exercise, I do not know what is. The Leader of the Opposition has just presented a marvellous litany of suggestions and innuendo. There was not a fact in his speech. He has promptly left the Chamber. He does not even want to hear the facts. Who was the author of his speech? Clearly, he did not write it, and I will indicate why later. Clearly, one of the Unsworth

refugees wrote the speech, one of the interstate imports who knows little more about the subject than he does.

The honourable member's opening remark was that the government would do anything to avoid a debate on BTEC. A remarkable statement, Mr Speaker. By way of interjection, I asked when the Leader of the Opposition, the opposition spokesman on primary industry, last asked a question in this House in relation to BTEC. There was a stunned silence, Mr Speaker, and I will tell you why. Honourable members will be pleased to hear that the last time the Leader of the Opposition, the opposition spokesman on primary industry, asked a question on BTEC was on Wednesday 26 November 1986 - 2 years ago. If that does not clearly illustrate the spurious nature of this matter of public importance, and the lack of interest which the opposition spokesman on primary industry has in primary industry in the Northern Territory, nothing could.

The last time the Leader of the Opposition made reference to BTEC was after a rather comprehensive statement was delivered by the then minister, the present Chief Minister, on Thursday 26 November 1987. We would all be aware that next month is November and I suppose we can look forward to another annual speech on BTEC from the Leader of the Opposition. Either that or he has been a little early this year. It is interesting to reflect on what the opposition spokesman on primary industry had to say in response to the then minister's comprehensive report on BTEC to the Assembly on 26 November 1987. He did not touch on 1 issue related to the problems that pastoral lessees faced with BTEC.

I do not deny that they have some problems. It is not an easy campaign. Some of them face a very difficult problem. Officers of my department are making every effort to ensure that the difficulties are minimised. In relation to the minister's statement last year, the shadow minister for primary industry touched briefly on costs and on the cooperation between the Commonwealth and Territory governments in undertaking the BTEC program. I would be very interested to hear the comments of the federal Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Kerin, on the comments that our shadow minister has just made. I do not think he would be any more impressed than the pastoralists of the Territory.

The opposition spokesman went on to refer to the greater contribution by cattlemen that is required to meet the cost of BTEC. He then touched on conservation. I do not doubt that conservation is a problem when it comes to large herds of feral animals, particularly buffalo in the Top End. He moved on briefly to the slaughter of animals in the Northern Territory. In his last contribution to debate on the pastoral industry, the opposition spokesman made a remark which I am sure would warm the hearts of pastoralists. He referred to the 'colonial mentality of pastoral owners'. He said: 'They come in here, rip off our natural resources and take their their profits elsewhere'. What a delightful statement from a man who has purported to be supporting the primary industry of the Northern Territory. That remark from his last statement on BTEC shows his lack of real commitment.

The entire diatribe that we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition was devoid of facts. We do not have to look too far to see where his speech writers got their information. Clearly, it came from ABC radio. At 7.25 am on 14 September, there was interview report by Larry Anderson misquoting the former Principal Veterinary Officer's speech to the Buffalo Industry Council. On 19 September, a report by Larry Anderson on ABC Radio stated that: 'Nutwood Downs claims the mishandling of BTEC'. Another report by Larry Anderson on 20 September referred to 100 disaffected members. That

is where the research was done for the Leader of the Opposition's MPI today. It was not based on fact. We did not hear any mention of facts at all.

On the only occasion the Leader of the Opposition has spoken about BTEC in the last 2 years, he has said nothing. He has clearly made no contact with the industry. If he had, he would be very much aware of the fact that 98% of the industry fully supports the government on this program.

Mr Ede: Rubbish.

Mr REED: There are a few outspoken people who are opposed to the program, and they may have good reason to be. The member for Stuart, by way of interjection, is intimating that that is not the case. That clearly indicates his lack of understanding of the matter.

The only indication to government of any problems at Nutwood Downs has been in the press. Mr Dunbar has received assistance under the BTEC program for fencing and like improvements. Nutwood Downs has an approved program. It also has a high incidence of disease. Unfortunately, the approved program - which I think was put in place in June of this year - has not been acted upon to date. The property is not under an order to destock by the end of this year, as reported in the press. Mr Dunbar would be under more pressure from his peers than from the government in terms of the need to conform with the program.

Mr Speaker, BTEC is playing a major role in changing the industry from a simple harvesting operation to one with a sophisticated management approach which equates with the industry in other states. In doing that, it has taken the industry into the 21st century. This is confirmed by statements made by a number of well-known pastoralists and supported by the Cattlemen's Association. The association argues that pastoralists in the midst of the program cannot easily appreciate the advantages that will be available to them at the end of the program.

Mr Speaker, in the budget debate during the last sittings, I outlined the financial allocations to BTEC. There was a total increase this year over last year of some \$6.4m to further escalate the scheme and, principally, to provide increased assistance to the pastoral industry. The compensation scheme for cattle in controlled areas was reviewed recently in such a way as to ensure that the compensation available to pastoralists was equivalent to the replacement value of an equivalent disease-free animal. At the same time, the compensation scheme for bush destocking, which many have argued encourages destocking by shoot-out of bush cattle, has also been reviewed. In fact, that scheme is to be ceased at the end of this year as a general policy. Incentives are in place for pastoralists with approved BTEC programs to encourage live turn-off from the bush areas, either for slaughter at abattoirs or into test and slaughter programs. Nevertheless, it is now paramount that bush destocking be finalised by the end of 1989 in order that successful test and slaughter programs can be conducted on the cattle and buffalo under control. Test and slaughter programs always have a reduced chance of success while a heavy population of bush cattle remains.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition touched on a few other items. One of his wild statements was that the pastoralists have been ignored and not consulted. The Cattlemen's Association, the Buffalo Industry Council and similar groups would be surprised to hear that. It will be news to them. They have a continued, ongoing and very productive input into the program and are totally supportive of it.

Reference was made to the Ted Easton report. The inspection was undertaken in 1985 and the comments in relation to the BTEC program concerned matters in which the officer had no jurisdiction. He did not bother to check any of his facts with anyone - a vet, a stock inspector or anyone in the Department of Primary Industry - to see whether they were verifiable or anywhere near the truth. They were, in fact, his views on comments made by the owner of the lease.

The opposition talked about the Mudginberri abattoir, the Katherine abattoir and stopping all shooting. We have heard it all before and it typified the paranoia that we could expect would be generated in this debate. An outrageous statement was made that the Katherine abattoir was kept going this year by stock from outside the Territory. That is all wrong. The assertion is baseless and clearly indicates the Leader of the Opposition's lack of knowledge of the industry. Perhaps he is receiving incorrect advice from some of the union members who have been mentioned in this House on previous occasions.

Mr Speaker, one of the important subjects that the Leader of the Opposition did not comment on was the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the services it provides. I will take this opportunity to announce that Mr David Rolfe has been appointed as the new Director of the Veterinary Technical Services Branch of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. Until now, Mr Rolfe has been the Director of Animal Health Services in the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. As Director of the Veterinary Technical Services Branch, Mr Rolfe will be responsible for the BTEC program and all other animal health issues. His contract is for 3 years, which will cover what is anticipated will be a very difficult period in respect of the finalisation of the BTEC program. It will not be made any easier by such comments, unfounded as they are, as those made by the Leader of the Opposition here today.

Mr Rolfe comes to us with extensive experience in private veterinary practice and the NSW Department of Agriculture. He has served on a number of industry committees and is very experienced and well-respected. He is welcomed by both the Northern Territory government and members of industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, we heard wild assertions about buffalo, the decline in buffalo numbers and so forth. The claimed lack of breeders may simply have arisen because the marketplace is now recognising their importance. A number of producers have for some time been heavily engaged in acquiring female buffalo for breeding purposes and we have received no complaints from them about the availability of breeders. On the converse side of the coin, some producers have been turning off animals to take advantage of the high prices that prevail. I do not deny them that right; it is their decision. If producers wish to take advantage of high prices, they cannot also retain breeders. That is essentially a decision for each operator.

Mr Speaker, the very important but often maligned export market for buffalo creates a dilemma in that, to maintain that market, we need to allow breeders to be exported. That market has expanded considerably in recent years, to the extent that even a country such as New Zealand, which has been for some years ahead of Australia in the elimination of tuberculosis and brucellosis, is about to import buffalo from the Northern Territory. That in itself says a great deal for the success of the BTEC program in the Northern Territory.

In recent weeks I have had the privilege of visiting some buffalo producers. It is heartening indeed to see the development that they are undertaking and the improved pastures they are creating. The benefits will flow to them and to the Northern Territory. It needs to be recognised that, if the Northern Territory drops out of or even begins to lag too far behind in the implementation of the national BTEC campaign, its markets interstate and overseas will be threatened. The possibility exists even that our inability to complete the program could threaten the entire national industry.

In 1986, the Commonwealth arranged for a nationwide review of the conduct of the program. That review was called the Operational Management Review and was conducted by Arthur Young and Associates. In that review, the Territory was commended on the conduct of its program and on the way it had established its general management. In particular, it was recommended that the states should examine the Territory's management information system. Mr Speaker, that indicates how much the Leader of the Opposition and shadow minister knows about the subject. Heaven help the industry if he ever becomes the minister. The federal minister, Mr Kerin, would hardly be enamoured of the Leader of the Opposition's comments. The Northern Territory BTEC program has been held up as an example for the rest of the country to adopt and implement. That says it all! And it should be noted that there is not 1 industry group, either in the Northern Territory or nationally, that is not strongly supportive of the program. The states and the Commonwealth have already evidenced their strong support for the conduct and finalisation of the campaign in the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition made reference to animals being taken out of the Territory for slaughter, representing a loss to the Territory. I have no argument with him in terms of the view that down-the-line processing of animals would only benefit the Northern Territory. However, I would like to make the point, which he might like to note, that cattle slaughtering in the Northern Territory has been significantly higher this year. In the period January to August 1988, the overall increase was in the order of 28 000 head, a 58% increase over the previous period. This is due largely to the effectiveness of the Katherine and Meneling Meatworks. Under BTEC, compensation was received for 38 000 head slaughtered in the field since 1984. Over the same period, approximately 150 000 head have gone to the meatworks, including 48 000 under BTEC destocking orders. It is interesting to note that there appears to be little difference in the number of buffalo going to abattoirs since the advent of BTEC, regardless of the dramatic comments of the Leader of the Opposition.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the officers of the department. They have to put up with slander from people who do not check the facts and who listen to every bit of squabble on the radio. The stock inspectors, the vets and the officers in the department are doing their job and irresponsible comments from the shadow minister for primary industry do not help them at all. The level of performance of the officers of my department is to be commended. As I said, the Territory program has been recommended as a model for the nation. The officers of my department are to be commended for the effort that they put in, and I totally reject the comments of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the honourable minister says that 98% of cattlemen support BTEC. He must have a very good mob of advisers who take him around with his blinkers on. They must take him specifically to a few pastoralists who are able to back up his department's perception of what is occurring. That is certainly not the case with the pastoralists I talk



to - the average ones who do not have an axe to grind, the people who are suffering so much frustration that you can almost grasp it in your hand. These are people who have worked their guts out to develop their properties and clear their areas and are still being sent to the wall.

The minister says that there are no shonks. There is not a pastoralist in the Territory who will not tell you about a whole series of rorts. Let me repeat some of these stories about rorts so that honourable members can hear them. The minister can tell us whether the events actually happened or whether they have just been dreamed up. Some of them are beauties.

The first one is the sack full of ears. According to this story, cattle are shot on the property rather than being taken to slaughter. The ears are cut off and counted, and compensation is computed. The ears are supposed to be incinerated on the spot but, in some cases, that does not happen. They are bagged and taken to another property so that they can be counted again and so that compensation will occur again. Is that true or false, Mr Speaker? You can hear that story on properties in my electorate and people will tell you that it is true.

The second story is about the breaking-of-the-drought rort. This is where drought-stricken stock which are disease-free are trucked onto dirty land, shot, and compensated for. There is a variation on that one. Stock were taken from south of Alice Springs up to the Gulf country, from a dirty property to clean country, and infected that whole area.

Then there is the boomerang scam. This is where the cattle are marked for destocking and duly logged for compensation. They are trucked to Queensland and marked again. Queensland compensates again at \$250 a head. The cattle are back-loaded to the Northern Territory, a move which is made less expensive by the existence of the Northern Territory freight subsidy. They are put out again in the Territory, marked for destocking and compensated for again. You can talk to truckies about that one, but they will not talk to the government because they are scared. Mr Speaker, if you tell me that these stories are false, I will listen to you but I want to start hearing what your side of the story is. Every pastoralist has his own story about rorts in the industry.

The fourth rort is that cleanskin stock on Conservation Commission land are herded off to lease holdings where the swollen herds are inspected, declared for destocking and compensated for. There are others which are quite innovative.

We need to know whether these rorts are possible. It is not good enough for the minister to dismiss the whole idea with a grin. We want to know whether they have actually occurred.

Mr Reed: You had better ring Mr Kerin.

Mr Perron: You are making the allegations.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am making the allegations here because the people who have told me the stories cannot come into this House and repeat them. They are not members of parliament. I am representing my electorate and the hundreds of pastoralists who tell me these stories. I would not be doing my job unless I repeated them here.

It is my view that it is time we took stock of BTEC. We need to look at why we are involved, what we are trying to do, how we go about it and what

special constraints exist in the Territory. We must realise that we are at the tail end of a massive program to upgrade the status of the Australian herd. That means that very few people outside the Northern Territory care about or want to understand the problems that we have here. That is not new. What is also not new is the fact that the Northern Territory suffers in this program, as in many situations, from remoteness, long and inadequate lines of communication and sparseness of population. In addition, the physical environment, particularly in the Top End, makes fulfilment of the goals of the program particularly difficult.

In 1985, an economist at the New South Wales Institute of Technology, Dr Owen Stanley, warned that the Northern Territory's involvement in BTEC was ill-conceived. He said correctly that the Northern Territory had areas of inaccessible land on which large herds of feral cattle and buffalo grazed, some of which were affected with BTB. He warned that eradication would cause some stations to be abandoned, which has happened, and that, because of the lack of management, these abandoned areas might become major reservoirs of other diseases. For these reasons, as well as the very real concerns outlined by the Leader of the Opposition, the government should review the management of BTEC and review it now. Too many opportunities have been lost and are still being lost because of myopic concentration on wholesale eradication.

I would like to address some of the opportunities being lost to the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition described how the Conservation Commission squandered \$500 000 on a shoot-out in which 1300 animals, valued at \$400 a head, were destroyed. If the commission had waited for the dry season, it could have paid professional shooters about \$100 a head to shoot those animals out. There seems to be little logic in the approach that was taken. If eradication was required for management reasons, surely somebody should have been looking after the taxpayers' dollars.

We need to look also at the tourism aspect of the buffalo industry. Buffalo are 1 of the symbols of the Territory. Even if we have to clear them out of our parks and reserves, I do not see any reason why those in the wild have to be eradicated and their carcasses left to lie rotting when there is unsatisfied overseas demand and workers are losing their jobs.

The government has announced a plan to build up a domestic herd of 30 000 breeders by 1992, at a cost of \$2m, to replace the industry that it has destroyed. My understanding is that 45 000 head of stock need to be slaughtered annually to fill demand and that is why there is a need for the government to take action in respect of building up the number of breeders. It would be useful if the minister would look at an integrated scheme for commercial slaughter to fulfil demand rather than continue the current waste. That waste was attested to by Mr Michael Russo, the General Manager of Glencoe Meats, a Brisbane company. He said that the campaign to wipe out the Territory wild buffalo was a complete waste and somebody should be held liable. He went on to say that the demand for wild buffalo was so great that Australia could not meet it. At the same time, he said that the NT Buffalo Industry Council was trying to sell him 600 kg of domestic beef which restaurants simply would not take. They say it tastes exactly like veal and the diners want the taste of wild buffalo. The government needs to think again. It is talking about eradicating this unique product and replacing it with something that may compete with our beef industry whilst leaving the demand for wild buffalo meat unmet.

There is a great deal of money to be made from people who come up to shoot buffalo. People are prepared to spend amazing sums to spend time in safari

camp. What are we going to do after this? Are we going to take them to a tame old beast at the yards and say: 'Righto, have your shot'? That is another industry that is being killed.

I would like to turn to some of the misconceptions which underlie BTEC and its goals. There appears to be a general misconception that we have to make Australia BTB-free by 1992 to maintain the North American market. In the Senate, the Minister for Resources stated that the United States has never insisted that our herds must be free of brucellosis and tuberculosis and that national BTEC deadlines are set by Australia. That is in direct contradiction to the honourable minister's contention that we are involved in the campaign because our export markets are threatened. That is a load of rubbish which confirms Dr Stanley's view that, if it is convenient for countries to reduce import quotas for Australian beef, no degree of BTB cleanliness in the Australian herd will deter them.

Dr Stanley also said that, in 1982, the Industries Assistance Commission could find no evidence of a relationship between BTB in the Australian herd and access to markets. Two spokesmen from the United States Department of Agriculture, Dr George Winegar and Dr Dale Schwindaman, denied that the presence of BTB in Australian stock would seriously affect Australia's beef export trade to America. They pointed out that United States stock was infected but that it continued the beef trade with Canada, which is BTB-free. At the least, these statements should make the government think twice before it continues in its headlong rush to destroy an industry.

Pastoralists are experiencing incredible hardship because of BTEC. We have talked about people from Nutwood Downs and Jinka, and other stations in my electorate. When the Chief Minister was the minister responsible, I told him about the problems caused by the decision to define disease-free areas with lines across the map instead of the circles that were used before. Pastoralists on one side of the line now have to face substantially increased costs in getting their cattle to market. The prices they receive for their cattle have been reduced significantly because they have to leave them in the yards while they wait for them to be tested, although their properties have been clean for years and years. How can this be justified to the pastoralists who have cleared their properties of brucellosis and tuberculosis?

The problems I have described are just the tip of the iceberg. There appears to be a zeal in the application of the program which, in some instances, looks as if it will wipe out the industry rather than wiping out the diseases. In the debate on the budget, I said that the concentration on BTB is affecting the government's ability to look at the abattoir side of the beef and buffalo industry. Mr Speaker, look at the loss of jobs. In 1982, some 50% of the turn-off of cattle in the Northern Territory was slaughtered locally and we had at least the possibility of building up an industry. Now, in spite of all the support the government has given it, Mudginberri has gone to the wall. Point Stuart is experiencing real problems. In 1987, we slaughtered only 20% of our local turn-off. That is a tragedy. We should have been increasing the percentage in that time but instead it has gone down.

We have not done anything about developing the down-line benefits we could have through hides, leather, canneries, and the blood and bone. We could create jobs in the Territory if we were to harvest the product of this industry, look after it and develop it instead of continually harping on the problems with BTB. I would encourage the minister to start showing a bit of backbone in his arguments with South Australia, the federal government or wherever.

It is time that the government realised that the original goals of the scheme are suspect. The management of the scheme is under suspicion. There is strong evidence that the buffalo industry may be wiped out, and the special environmental conditions in the Territory have not been considered. There are 4 aspects that I believe we should look at.

First, I believe that we should look at extending the period during which the shoot-out takes place. We should drop the shoot-outs from above the Katherine line in the Top End, and only work on getting the area south of the line absolutely clear of BTB, while we conduct a review to see what it will cost to kill that final beast in the Top End. Secondly, we should talk to the federal government about the overall program goals and the type of implementation needed to assure more efficient use of public money. Thirdly, the government should review the management of the scheme to overcome the widespread criticism of waste and the heavy-handed approach that results in the government being dragged into the courts. Lastly, I believe we need to set up a system whereby the only areas from which live cattle are exported either overseas or interstate are those areas towards the south which have been declared free. While we reassess the whole program, cattle in the areas to the north should be moved out only after they have been slaughtered. The presence of disease or otherwise can be detected at the point of slaughter.

The steps I have outlined would give us a chance to determine whether or not it is possible to clean up the whole of the Northern Territory. We know that it is not required by any national imperative. We are not, as the honourable minister seems to think, being held up as an area that is threatening Australia's whole export market. That has been proved to be a palpable load of rubbish. If this minister does not have the guts to get up and say that to other ministers around Australia and to the federal minister, and talk to them about reviewing the program in the Northern Territory and resolving the problems we have with pastoral properties going down the drain, he is not doing his job. He should be called to heel by this House and by the pastoral industry itself.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, members opposite have made an amazing turnaround in terms of their attitude to BTEC. I made a statement on BTEC in November last year and I will read out some comments made by opposition members during the course of the debate which followed. I think they will find them somewhat embarrassing in the context of the new-found attitudes they have expressed today.

Before I do so, I want to say very clearly that everyone involved in BTEC, including all state governments and the federal government, has always known that the scheme would become very expensive and difficult as it moved towards its conclusion. The campaign has cost an enormous sum of money so far. I think the end figure will be about \$900m to eradicate the 2 diseases from Australia altogether. Of course, we are now entering the final stages of the scheme. Over many years, the rest of Australia has been cleared. The program has now reached the northernmost reaches of Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, which pose common difficulties: very inaccessible country, many feral animals and very few fences. In all 3 areas, sadly, it will mean some very extensive shoot-outs.

Some people seem to believe that some sort of pleasure is taken from shooting cattle en masse. I have been closely involved with the government veterinarians who have been responsible for making the decisions to shoot animals and I have found that, without exception, they have been very concerned men with a deep sense of responsibility for the sickening decisions

that they have had to make. They were professional men. They were doctors of veterinary science, a profession that they had entered because they wanted to spend their working lives caring for animals, and they found themselves having to make very difficult decisions. In a sense, I am pleased that vets make those decisions rather than other people. They make the decisions because they see that disease eradication is essential.

Basically, the scheme means that virtually all cattle and buffalo which are not behind wire or which cannot be mustered and caught annually have to be destroyed. If Australia is ever to be free of brucellosis and tuberculosis, cattle which cannot be caught economically must be destroyed. The Leader of the Opposition did himself no credit when he juxtaposed the sale of \$1m worth of buffalo to Cuba with shoot-outs costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. That does not make any sense at all. What does make sense is the straight economics. The buffalo that are shot are those that would cost more to muster than they are worth on the market. If it costs \$450 a head to catch animals, and the market pays \$400 a head, it is not worth catching them and selling them. The Leader of the Opposition's private sector economics have always been pretty poor but he ought to think about those things.

I find it fairly amazing that, after mentioning a number of experts from various places, the member for Stuart states that there is no need for the scheme. He says that it is not necessary and should be stopped because the US government has never stated that Australian beef will not be allowed in if we do not clear up the disease. If that is the case, it amazes me that the federal government, which is usually very tight with money, is prepared to support the scheme to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. The scheme's only real benefit is the eradication of disease. It has no other real pluses. It is not as if it is helping us to build up a massive herd; it is designed simply to eradicate a disease. Disease eradication is the sort of expense a government would like to eliminate, but it is money that is spent because it is absolutely necessary to do so. I am sure that the federal government would not spend money on the scheme if there were an alternative. Governments are very reluctant to spend money on things that do not increase productivity.

The federal government supports the scheme and has supported it for years, and so does the pastoral industry. The pastoral industry, which the scheme hurts most, pays 50% of the \$900m cost of the scheme by means of a levy of \$2 or \$3 which comes from the pockets of cattlemen every time an animal goes through the abattoir. They pay 50% of the cost of the scheme. Obviously, the scheme would collapse totally if they said: 'We do not need to do this; let's shut it down'. Every state government supports the scheme. If they did not, it would not have that national component.

I totally reject the member for Stuart's shallow view that, because there are problems with the scheme in the Northern Territory - and I do not deny that many problems exist both here and in the states - we should simply shut the program down.

The member for MacDonnell spoke in the debate on the statement I made on 26 November 1987, and his comments summed up the attitude of the opposition at that time. Near the end of his speech he said: 'To return to the subject of BTEC, it is an issue on which there is essentially bipartisan support between the government and the opposition'. The BTEC program is essentially the same now as it was then. There have been slight modifications in terms of improved compensation arrangements, but it is essentially the same scheme to which the member for MacDonnell gave full support.

The member for Stuart said at the end of his contribution: 'Mr Speaker, that concludes my comments. I am glad to see that the minister is tackling this major problem and that, hopefully, within a few years we can overcome it'. That sounds like support for the scheme to me, yet 12 months later he describes it as a disaster and a fiasco that should be shut down immediately.

Mr Smith: Well!

Mr PERRON: That is exactly what he was saying. Read Hansard tomorrow and you will find out.

Most enlightening of all is the turnaround in the attitude of the new-found champion of the pastoral industry, the Leader of the Opposition. Let me read a classic example of his previous attitude, as expressed in a question he asked of the then Minister for Primary Production.

'Is he aware that TB-positive cattle have been found on Eva Downs and Anthony Lagoon properties, which have both been classified as clean or free from TB? If he is, what action is being taken by the government to protect neighbouring properties from the spread of TB, and is action against the proprietor of Eva Downs and Anthony Lagoon being considered for allowing his clean properties to become dirty again?'

That was this champion of the cattle industry who wanted to punish and perhaps drag through the courts a cattleman who had the gross misfortune to have a clean property infected by neighbouring cattle or whatever.

Mr Smith: That is not how it happened, and you know that.

Mr PERRON: He asked: '... is action against the proprietor ... being considered for allowing his clean properties to become dirty again?' This man supposedly has sympathy for the pastoral industry. It is just amazing.

In his contribution to the debate on the statement on BTEC I delivered in November 1987, page 2337 of the Parliamentary Record reports the Leader of the Opposition as saying:

Brucellosis and tuberculosis have had an adverse effect on the development of the pastoral industry, particularly in the north of Australia, and have slowed down the penetration which cattle from the north of Australia might otherwise have had into overseas markets. It has certainly been a necessary exercise for both the federal and Northern Territory governments.

The minister commented briefly on a number of initial problems in getting the program under way. It is certainly pleasing to see that they have been ironed out, that there is a significant level of cooperation between the Commonwealth government and the Northern Territory government and that the program has been worked out scientifically and is adjusted from time to time to meet changing circumstances.

At that stage, in expressing concern about the buffalo industry, he was more concerned about the damage that buffalo did to the environment than preserving the buffalo. He said that it was important to get the buffalo problem under control as quickly as possible so that we could give the country a chance to regenerate. He was not concerned about saving the buffalo

industry in that debate. He was uptight about saving national parks and areas which buffalo tend to destroy. In speaking of cattlemen, he said: 'I have often referred to the colonial mentality of pastoral owners. They come in here, rip off our natural resources and take their profits elsewhere'. This is the great champion of the pastoral industry who raised this MPI today.

Mr Smith: You should look at your economic development strategy and see what it says about secondary processing in the pastoral industry.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition quoted from the GRM Pastoral Industry Study. That was interesting because, in his contribution to the debate on that study, the member for Stuart tried to destroy the document totally, saying that it was virtually worthless and a waste of time. Perhaps, as members opposite liaise with each other a little more often, they will find out which documents have their support and which documents do not.

He said that two-thirds of the costs of the BTEC scheme go into administration, which is wrong, and that pastoralists want to know where the money has gone. Mr Speaker, pastoralists know where the money goes. They ought to because they are paying 50% of it. I can assure him that the pastoral industry certainly knows where every cent of BTEC money is spent. If people complain to him that they do not know where the money is going, I suggest that he refer them to the nearest branch of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. They will get all the information they need right there.

The member for Stuart made some pretty fanciful allegations about criminal malpractice being rife throughout the Northern Territory. Why has the opposition not raised a question in this House on BTEC within the last 2 years if the honourable member takes seriously those allegations of corruption and criminal activity? Why would he not raise such matters in this House or, as any responsible citizen would do, report the matters to the police so that they can be investigated. It is extraordinary that a man of his standing in the community, a political representative, would adopt a head-in-the-sand attitude to such allegations if he regarded them at all seriously. He should be ashamed to have admitted in this House that he has information about abuses and has done nothing with it.

Mr Speaker, the opposition has alleged that BTEC will ruin the buffalo industry. That is very wrong. In fact, the BTEC program will save the buffalo industry in the Northern Territory. It will get buffalo behind wire and domesticate them. That will give us clean herds so that the meat from those herds will be acceptable in all markets. It will give us the opportunity to improve blood lines, which is essential. A large number of buffalo are running wild at Bulman. Fortunately, it appears that they will be able to stay wild because no disease has ever been found in that particular pocket of buffalo, which is quite substantial in number, because of its natural isolation. I can certainly assure honourable members that BTEC is doing the buffalo industry a service, not a disservice.

OMBUDSMAN (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 147)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill comprehensively reviews, amends and updates the Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Act. Consequent upon the agreement for cooperation between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory which became effective on 1 July 1984, pursuant to which the Northern Territory Ombudsman represents the Commonwealth Ombudsman in the Northern Territory, and upon administrative arrangements developed between the Commissioner of Police and the Ombudsman, certain procedures lacked a statutory basis. This bill is a response to those developments and also incorporates changes to operational procedures directed towards greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The most significant changes contained in the bill include the definition of the circumstances in which officers of government are held to be acting as officers of government rather than personally or privately, provision for the receipt of oral complaints by the Ombudsman, and for complaints against police to be referred to the commissioner immediately following receipt by the Ombudsman or referred to the Ombudsman immediately following receipt by the commissioner.

The bill provides for confidential communication between the Ombudsman and prisoners held in custody and for preliminary inquiries to be made by the Ombudsman to determine the extent of his jurisdiction or whether or not a formal investigation is necessary. It is accepted convention in most Ombudsman jurisdictions that communications between prisoners held in custody and the Ombudsman are confidential to those parties. It has been the practice to observe this convention in the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory Ombudsman and it is the purpose of clause 6 of the bill to provide statutorily for that convention and to establish procedures to give effect to it. The bill also requires that complainants shall have first endeavoured to resolve their problems with a department, authority or municipality before the Ombudsman will undertake an investigation of the matter. I think all honourable members would see that as a very wise move.

An earlier amendment to the Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Act provided for complaints against police to be received by either the Ombudsman or the commissioner. This presented problems in relation to the secrecy provisions of the Ombudsman Act. This bill overcomes these problems by providing that joint investigations by the Ombudsman and the Commissioner of Police are excluded from the secrecy provisions of the Ombudsman Act in respect of information obtained in the course of, or for the purposes of, an investigation. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 5 October 1988.

In committee:

Appropriation for divisions 38 and 39:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, last night I gave the minister a written question regarding some of the decisions made by the Northern Territory University Interim Council which have significant financial effects. The question referred to the meeting of the Interim Council on 31 August 1988. I asked whether it was true that Professor Caro, our interim Vice-Chancellor, had advised the meeting that DIT senior staff would retain their current salary



levels but that their titles might change, and that University College senior staff would be transferred with their current salary levels and positions but with new contracts required. I also asked the minister to confirm that, at the meeting of the Interim Council on 4 October, the council decided to adopt a new structure for the new university. I then went on to ask him whether he could confirm a series of appointments and salary levels that I was advised were approved at that meeting on 4 October.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am not prepared to confirm or deny that information that the member for Stuart has provided to this Assembly because it has come from confidential staffing papers.

In the interim period, we are looking at the whole staffing structure and trying to bring it into line with a normal university structure. The positions mentioned in the honourable member's question have not been confirmed in some cases and discussion of such matters creates unnecessary concern in the community. I would be happy to provide the honourable member with full details, on a confidential basis, of the deliberations and outcomes of the meeting he referred to. I advise the opposition spokesman on education that the information is sensitive. We are considering structures and we are coming to grips with some very sensitive issues. If the wrong information gets out or the opposition spokesman comments on decisions which have not been confirmed, unnecessary concern can be created. I am happy to provide the member with the details on a confidential basis provided that he is able to give me an assurance that he will take that information in confidence.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is obviously an impossible impost to place upon me. I represent a constituency within my shadow portfolio. I take it that the honourable minister is saying that he cannot or will not confirm any of that information. I cannot see why there is a need for confidentiality in relation to a statement that senior staff will retain their current salary levels or terms and conditions of employment. In fact, it would give them comfort. I hope that the same would be the case in respect of the University College of the Northern Territory.

Be that as it may, a couple of additional questions arose today. The minister may not be able to answer these immediately although he may be able to do so at a later stage during this debate. Firstly, does the Darwin Institute of Technology currently use K.K. Yeung Management Consultants in any capacity in relation to the promotion of the institute or recruitment of staff or students in the Asian region? If so, how much has been paid and how many students have been recruited by him?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, in relation to the question regarding the council meetings, I want to make it clear that it is not my intention to withhold information from the opposition spokesman on education. It is all very well for him to say that he is putting the question in respect of a constituent. The issues are sensitive because the positions have not been confirmed and any public comment by myself could create unnecessary concern in the community.

In response to the question about K.K. Yeung, I will investigate the matter and report to the honourable member in due course.

Mr EDE: How much has been paid by the Darwin Institute of Technology for recruitment of overseas students in the past year, and how many students have been recruited during that period?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will obtain that information and provide it to the honourable member during the course of this committee stage.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister indicated that the University College of the Northern Territory was seeking substantial amounts for capital works for physics facilities. Could he explain why, in that context, there is a reduction in capital works expenditure and could he provide details on exactly where the funds are to be spent and why they will be spent there?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, capital works are provided on the basis of need, not on the basis of a constant level of capital expenditure, which would inevitably be wasteful. The Department of Transport and Works has provided cost estimates of the capital works requested by the University College of the Northern Territory and a budget allocation has been provided to cope with the anticipated cost of refurbishment. \$450 000 is to be spent on refurbishing a currently mothballed building to provide 4 physics laboratories and, in particular, a laboratory for the third year of the physics program. This requires apparatus being available on the bench for long periods of time, thus making a third-year physics laboratory unusable for first and second-year physics practical classes. The building needs to be air-conditioned and will also provide research laboratories for higher-degree students and staff until funds can be found to refurbish a further building for use as an anthropological research centre. Two of the rooms in the building will be used as archaeological research laboratories. It is to be hoped that anthropology can be provided with its own home base before demand for postgraduate places becomes large.

Mr EDE: Can the minister provide details on the allocation of funds for the various faculties of the DIT and indicate what plans exist for recruiting more staff in addition to incorporating salary and administrative increases?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the allocations to the faculties allow for the recruitment of additional staff required for the introduction of approved course stages. In total, the 1988-89 budget allows for 11 additional positions at the institute. Any increases in salary and administrative services will be reviewed as and when they happen, in the normal manner. That is relevant on 1 January 1989.

Mr EDE: Can the minister give me a breakdown of the figures by faculty?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will endeavour to supply the breakdown to the honourable member.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, could the minister provide details on the plans to expand the law course at the university? Can he detail the establishment costs, the number of staff that will be required and how the new law courses are to be phased in?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, in 1989 it is proposed to introduce the full 4-year law course. First-year law subjects were provided in the first year of operation of the University College. The original plans allowed that up to 5 persons who successfully completed the first year could enrol with the University of Queensland to complete the degree. The course was so popular that it became clear that 5 was an inadequate number. In any case, the policy of the Territory government was to provide tertiary education to as many people as possible within the Territory. Consequently, during 1987, Cabinet agreed to provide support for the introduction of the second-year law course in 1988. Honourable members will remember the petitions that were circulated

in relation to that. In 1988, there were 158 enrolments in first-year Law, indicating a heavy demand. We have supported continuing expansion.

The University College of the Northern Territory expects to add 4 academic law staff in 1989. In 1990, when the fourth-year will be introduced, a further 3 law staff will be needed at a cost of about \$110 000. A mothballed building will be refurbished for the use of the Law Faculty at an estimated cost of \$300 000. Other than the need for library facilities, the only other establishment costs are those associated with expenses involved in bringing staff to Darwin, which have been estimated at \$75 000 over 2 years. There will be an estimated increase of about \$47 000 in maintenance costs for consumable items.

Mr Chairman, the most expensive item in the budget of a law school is the library. I am sure honourable members would be aware of that. I touched on that issue during the committee stage last night. An independent consultant has recommended a setting-up grant of some \$2m spread over 7 years. Such an expenditure would undoubtedly provide the Northern Territory University with a Law library of first-rate quality. This would be the long-term aim of the government. However, given the reduction in Commonwealth appropriations to the Territory and the indication from the Commonwealth that it is reluctant to provide funding for the setting-up of the library, a more gradual approach may have to be taken.

I have indicated to the honourable member that I will be looking for his support in relation to the provision of some of these facilities in the Northern Territory. I hope that he will be able to encourage his federal minister to look on us favourably in that regard. The University College of the Northern Territory has recommended a minimum loan to supply basic needs for library grants in the area of law. The amount is \$370 000 in 1989 and \$450 000 in 1990. If the law course attracts students from South-east Asia, as is expected, the University College of the Northern Territory has proposed the use of the fees obtained to provide a better acquisition rate for the law library.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in an adjournment debate during the last sittings, I pointed to the incredible amount of damage which could have been done as a result of the use of the DIT logo on an advertisement for a course which was not available in the Northern Territory. The minister shared my concern. Can he assure the House that our budget assumptions will not be destroyed by failures of that nature in the future?

Mr HARRIS: I am quite happy to address that issue at a later stage if the honourable member wishes. I can assure him that the matter has been taken up and that it will have no impact on this budget.

Divisions 38 and 39 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 35:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the 'Towards the 90s' document that is currently being circulated states that efficiencies resulting from the better use of existing resources will be directed first to schools in isolated communities. I would like the minister to advise how that fits in with the cut in real terms in the allocation for advisory services.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the honourable member is referring to a discussion document which is being circulated in the community for comment. I

do not believe that it is appropriate to refer to that document in such a way because it tends to pre-empt the outcome of that public discussion.

Could I also indicate that the honourable member has again made a mistake. In 1987-88, advisory services were provided at a cost of \$2.493m. This year the amount is \$2.582m, an increase of \$89 000 or 3.57%. As I explained during the course of my speech on the Appropriation Bill, this amount does not take into account any effects of the recent 3% National Wage Case decision. Overall, there has been a generous allocation for the provision of advisory services, which are an essential part of the infrastructure needed for the delivery of top-quality education in our schools.

Mr Chairman, I have made it very clear that there are a number of issues which members opposite did not take into account when arriving at their figures. There has, in fact, been an increase, not a decrease.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I think the minister is saying that he is using a different deflator to the one that is used generally throughout Australia in application to government programs. That is rather surprising. It may be that cost rises which are known at this stage have been provided for elsewhere and will be reallocated to that expenditure head at some stage during the year. Would the minister advise me whether I am correct or not?

Mr HARRIS: I have made it clear that I do not believe there is a decrease. There has been an increase. There are a number of issues in relation to the figures that the honourable member has not taken into consideration. We have allowed for a 6.9% inflationary component. That has been apportioned right across the board. Allowance has also been made for national wage adjustments. There was a 1.69% decline in student numbers in 1987-88 and numbers are projected to decline further. Those matters need to be taken into account in respect of the honourable member's figures. I can assure you, Mr Chairman, that there has been an increase in that area.

Mr EDE: I am quite amazed now. Is the honourable minister saying that the number of students in isolated communities has dropped?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, we are looking at figures for the Northern Territory overall, not necessarily for isolated communities. The member's written question says that: "Towards the 90s" states that the increased services or improvements produced with the better use of existing resources will be directed first to schools in isolated communities'. As I said, 'Towards the 90s' is a discussion document and we cannot pre-empt the outcome of the community's comments. The government has indicated very clearly, not only through words but also through action, that it is prepared to listen to what the community has to say and to make adjustments. We will continue to do that during the course of discussions on the 'Towards the 90s' document.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister has missed my point. That was another area altogether. I take on board his statement that none of the figures here relates in any way to any decisions which may or may not be made as a result of the 'Towards the 90s' document. I will leave that issue and write to the minister later.

I would like the minister to provide details of the increase in money allocated to private schools under the NT Assistance Scheme. What is the sum and what are the names of the schools in respect of capital and recurrent subsidies?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, this scheme covers a variety of strategies for assisting non-government schools in the delivery of high-quality education services, including the provision of subsidies to offset the costs involved. The subsidies include boarding subsidies, capital interest subsidies, recurrent per capita grants and special and assistant teacher subsidies. Many of these are of a one-off nature. For example, there is a grant of \$57 000 to St Joseph's School for a capital subsidy.

It is the government's policy to support independent schools, as I said in my second-reading speech. It is no secret that the schools supported at the present time are Marrara, Palmerston Catholic School, the Alice Springs Catholic High School, St Phillip's, Kormilda, O'Loughlin, St Joseph's in Katherine, as well as the DIGS if it gets off the ground. This government will also support the Catholic Education Office in its development of a resource centre.

Mr Chairman, I often question the opposition in relation to its attitude towards assistance to non-government schools. I really would like to hear the opposition spokesman's views on this. Private schools play a very important part in our education system and we provide assistance to try to increase the percentage of students who go into the private school sector. We provide a 10% interest subsidy and a 50% capital assistance program over a period of 10 years. It is common for governments throughout Australia to assist non-government schools and I ask the honourable member what his position is in that regard.

I am not prepared to provide the individual amounts that are being provided to each of the schools. I have given him the list of the schools to which we provide assistance. He knows the policy of the government and the amounts that we do provide. I point out that, when we talk about the money that is provided by the government, it relates to the amount of loan moneys that those particular schools obtain. That varies from time to time. For example, the initial scope of Marrara school has been reduced considerably and the assistance that government provides is reduced accordingly. I have given the number of schools. The ongoing budget for the scheme this year is \$5.446m. The new and expanded budget for interest and capital subsidies is \$1.825m, spread over the schools and institutions previously mentioned. At this stage, they are notional allocations only because they can be adjusted.

I would like to draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that all this is a direct result of the massive cuts in capital funding for non-government schools which has been made by the federal Labor government since 1984. Five years ago, the costs were wholly met by the Commonwealth government.

I believe that the important information has been provided and I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to tell the honourable member how much those schools have been able to raise.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I find that completely unacceptable. I am able to put a question on notice and obtain the answers in respect of every government school in the Territory. Why should private schools be different? If they wish to raise their own funds and exist off their own bat, that is fair enough. If they receive money from the public purse, we in this Assembly should know how much.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I have given the amount.

Mr Ede: How much each?

Mr HARRIS: He asked the amount of money given in assistance to private schools. We give 10% interest assistance and we give capital assistance of 50% over 10 years. I have given him the names of the schools to which we give assistance and I have given the total amount allocated in the budget.

Mr EDE: The minister does not understand. All I am asking for is an assurance that he will provide the figures to me later and that he will not hide behind some notion of confidentiality.

The minister has asked me about my attitude to public schools and private schools. If he wants me to take up time in this committee stage by telling him, I will do so. My position is that it is a shame that the government of a territory where 85% of students attend government schools is hell-bent on reducing that number to 75%. I would have thought that the government would have had some pride in its system and that it would be trying to increase the number of students in it. I find the government's approach quite disgusting and, if the minister wants to bring on a debate on that subject, I am quite happy to contribute to it.

I would like the honourable minister to explain why funding for the Territory Training Centre has been reduced by 25% and what the government intends to do now that it has reduced opportunities for disadvantaged young Territorians to obtain prevocational training. It cannot say that it is assisting the private sector in this area when it is clear that the vocational preparation program has been maintained only in real terms.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the Territory Training Centre has a budget funding reduction of \$184 000. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Training and the NT Department of Labour and Administrative Services have increased their funding for prevocational courses by \$59 000. The actual overall reduction is a result of the reduction in funding for the craft scheme, which is a work experience scheme, and the cessation of the group 1 apprenticeship scheme, which were both funded by the Commonwealth. NT-funded schemes remain intact.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, my next question relates to the cuts that I see in real terms in preschool and primary education. The area has suffered a substantial cut in real terms, as can be seen when the gross domestic product deflator is applied to the figures from this year and last year. I would like the minister to provide exact details on how much money has been allocated to each of these areas separately and to indicate how he believes the cuts will be accommodated.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I beg to differ. Preschool and primary school funding has increased by 3.8%, excluding the 3% wage case increase. This funding is combined because, for administrative purposes, each preschool forms a part of the primary school to which it is attached. As explained before, there is no cut to budgeted expenditure in real terms, as the honourable member chooses to put it. Funds are allocated on a per capita basis, which is not being reduced, and allocations for services - for example, electricity, ground maintenance and clearing - have been adjusted to reflect actual costs.

I emphasise the point that the staffing and the per capita formulas are the same as for last year and staffing is equal to the best in Australia. The capital formula is still the best in Australia. I explained that very clearly in my speech. Does the honourable member want us to go higher than that? We

are very well off in that area, Mr Chairman. As far as Aboriginal schools are concerned, we still lead Australia. I would like to hear the honourable member's comments in relation to that. We have the best, and that continues to be the case in this budget.

Mr EDE: It seems very strange to me that the minister admits to having the best and tries to set up another system to destroy it.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Haven't you heard of the marginalisation of effort?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the minister explain to me how a simple 3% in staffing can equate to 3% in the total costs of the secondary education system? He may be able to explain to me that, in fact, there are no cuts. I hope that he can do that. I would ask the minister to provide a detailed explanation on the allocation to the senior secondary schools program.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I advise the member that the allocation to the secondary education program overall has been increased. The allocation reflects the needs of schools for 1988-89 and shows an increase where this is warranted. Additional expenditure was incurred in the senior secondary programs during the establishment phase, as would be expected. That expense is not ongoing and hence does not appear in this budget. Again, I refer the honourable member to my speech yesterday, during the course of which I indicated that these allocations do not include amounts to compensate for the 3% National Wage Case but do account for staff reductions resulting from a cyclical decline in student numbers. The honourable member also asked about funds allocated to the joint government ...

Mr EDE: I am coming to that now. My question refers once again to the strategy that was unleashed upon us the other day. It contained a reference to a joint government private-sector task force to review senior secondary education curricula. I want to know what funds are being allocated towards this task force and how it fits in with the move towards national curricula.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the short answer is that no money has been put into this area. No additional funds are required for the work of task forces and again I emphasise that staffing and per capita formulas have been maintained at last year's level, which is still the best in Australia.

Mr EDE: Is the minister telling us that a joint government-private sector task force is to review, report on and recommend changes to the senior secondary education curricula here in the Northern Territory with no resources whatsoever?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I have indicated that the task will be carried out this year and no funds are required to achieve that.

Mr EDE: I shall take that on board when considering the worth of the results of the task force. If they cost nothing, they will probably be worth nothing.

Mr Chairman, I ask the minister how many students of the Katherine Rural College are from the Northern Territory, interstate and overseas?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the honourable member gave me another written question requesting a breakdown of course enrolments at the Katherine Rural College. In the jackaroo course, 28 students are enrolled, 6 from the Northern Territory and 22 from interstate. That is a 13-week course. There are 3 12-month courses. Certificate Year 1 has 13 enrolments, 8 from the Northern Territory, 5 from interstate and 1 from overseas. Certificate Year 2 has 11 enrolments, 6 from the Northern Territory and 5 from interstate. In prevocational courses, there are 19 enrolments, all from the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE: Is that a 1-year course?

Mr HARRIS: Yes. There are 24 enrolments in the Aboriginal stockman course, all from the Northern Territory. That is a 16-week course. There are also 5 Indonesian students enrolled in a 13-week course.

Mr EDE: What is the course?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will obtain that information.

The total enrolment of the college is 101, including 63 students from the Northern Territory, 32 from interstate and 6 from overseas.

There are a number of other short-term courses which involve various sectors of the Northern Territory community. The figures are 8 from Taminmin High School, 13 from St John's, 36 from the Department of Health and Community Services and 50 from the NT Cattlemen's Association.

Mr EDE: Do these come within the 101?

Mr HARRIS: No, these are short-term courses. Most of them vary from 8 hours to 35 hours. If you do not want the detail, I will not give it.

Mr EDE: Give it to me in writing, later.

Mr HARRIS: I am only trying to help him out, Mr Chairman.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am not attempting to aggravate the honourable minister. I am simply trying to get an idea of the number of equivalent full-time student units in that institution. Obviously, the effect of a small number of 8-hour and 30-hour courses on the figure will not be great. I would like him to provide the figures. I am merely trying to assist this House by not taking up more time than is absolutely necessary, given that we have a number of other divisions to get through. I would be grateful to the honourable minister if he would write me a letter on the subject and provide me with the details.

Mr Chairman, I have a final question. There is a new item called Bursaries. Can the minister give me some details in relation to that?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I was quite happy to provide information about the use of the Katherine Rural College by a whole range of organisations. Those programs contain a total of 313 enrolments, 290 from the Northern Territory and 23 from interstate. That represents a very important component of the college's activities. We would certainly like to lift the numbers in the certificate courses and I hope that the member is able to assist by encouraging students to attend the Katherine Rural College. It is a college of excellence. It would be very easy to lower the standard of the Katherine



Rural College to increase the numbers. We do not want to do that. We want the college to provide excellent courses and that is what we are aiming for.

Scholarships and bursaries were previously included as part of the staff development allocation. The item relates to costs associated with the awarding of scholarships to trainee teachers and finance and administration students. Bursaries are awarded to Aboriginal full-time students undertaking the teacher training program at Batchelor College. We are aiming to encourage students with families to undertake teacher training at Batchelor College. Whilst ABSTUDY covers the student, it does not cover spouses and children, which is a disincentive to some potential students. The bursary bridges that gap and encourages Aboriginal students with spouses and children to attend the college without being out of pocket.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I forgot to give the minister notice of this question and if he wishes to answer by way of letter, that will be fine. I would like him to provide me with a comparison of this year's Batchelor College budget with that of last year, with a breakdown of funds provided by the federal and Territory governments and showing details of the expenditure for RATE lecturers, including amounts allocated for travel and other costs as well as salaries.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will endeavour to obtain that information for the honourable member.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, staff training and assessment seems to be a fairly major issue in the 'Towards the 90s' document. The budget allocation, however, is only \$578 000 compared with last year's allocation of \$1.169m. Why is that?

Mr HARRIS: The staff development program has been reduced. This aspect of the budget is now covered by 3 separate items, 1 of which is the new scholarships and bursaries item. The other 2 items are student assistance schemes and, of course, staff training and assessment.

In 1987-88, \$2.44m was allocated for staff training and assessment and student assistance. In 1988-89, a total of \$2.626m, an increase of 7.6%, has been allocated to those areas, under the 3 headings mentioned above. In fact, in 1986-87, the Commonwealth government withdrew its support for professional development programs for which it had previously been largely responsible. This meant that the Territory government had no choice but to fully fund in-service courses for teachers. Not only have we not reduced our commitment, but we are carrying the extra burden created by the Commonwealth's withdrawal and we still have by far the best provision in Australia.

Appropriation for division 35 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 81 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 60:

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, my first 5 questions relate to the Darwin Bus Service and, if it is acceptable to the minister, I will put them together.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is the honourable minister happy to accept the first 5 questions together?

Mr FINCH: Certainly.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, why has the appropriation for the Darwin Bus Service been slashed? How will these funds be saved? What revenue was received by the bus service last year? What revenue is expected to be received by the bus service during 1988-89 and, lastly, have patronage levels recovered since the last fare increase?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member for Arnhem for providing me with forewarning of some of these questions.

With regard to the appropriation for the Darwin Bus Service, the operational expenditure in 1987-88 was a \$450 000 working capital advance and a reduction in capital borrowings of \$227 000. A reduced level of funding of \$161 000 is required for 1988-89 for the capital items replacement program, which takes up the greater part there.

Last year's revenue of \$1.993m was comprised of receipts from fares and miscellaneous sources. It is not just fares alone. This year's figure is \$1.980m. There is a small variation in receipts from fares and miscellaneous. In addition, there is \$100 000 for contract services that were provided to the Department of Education. In this current year, that will be accounted for differently, so the comparative figures for last year and this year are actually \$1.993m and \$2.08m, with the other \$100 000 going directly into consolidated revenue.

In regard to patronage since the last fare increase, there has been a marked increase in recorded passenger loadings in 1988. The available statistics indicate that they are currently at the highest level ever. The increase reflects the numbers of non-paying or subsidised low-fare passengers; that is, schoolchildren and others. Despite the much higher increase in passenger numbers, there is a seemingly very small increase in revenue. Patronage itself has increased.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, my next 2 questions relate to the same subject and I will put them together. Is the study of land-bridging duplicating the work of Railnorth and, secondly, is Railnorth's work funded by the Department of Transport and Works?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister has responsibility for Railnorth. I am in a position to advise the honourable member that the Department of Transport and Works has been involved for a long time with the concept of land-bridging, not just as it pertains to the railway but also to road transportation prior to the railway's construction. There have already been developments. We import timber from Asia through Perkins Shipping and others. Some of that timber is now transported to Sydney at very favourable back-loading rates of about \$40 or \$50 a tonne. We see the land-bridge concept as being strongly linked with the railway. That is why we have not only been doing studies on the potential of land-bridging but also marketing the idea. The only trip I have made overseas since I became minister was to the Philippines and Singapore. We spoke to Philippines shipping companies and companies in Singapore and their interest in the potential for land-bridging through the railway was extremely high. The Philippines people wrote supportive letters to us which we will be using in encouraging the federal government and others to take a positive interest in the project.

Whilst studies on land-bridging have been completed, the work of Railnorth is continuing. As part of its contribution to the Railnorth exercise, the government has given Railnorth all of its information regarding freight projections and land-bridging. I am not sure exactly what has come out of the work by Railnorth, which is working separately.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, what reduction will be made in numbers of staff allocated to the management of the capital works program, given the mass reduction in cash outlays?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, there has been no significant reduction in the level of staff involved with the capital works program. There has been a minimal reduction in the public works sector; I think about 10 positions are involved. There has been an increase in the roads program and there are also additional projects, such as State Square, which do not appear in the budget. There is a potential involvement in works at the airports. Staff numbers have not been affected directly by the capital works program other than the 10 positions I mentioned.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, what functions of the department have been deleted to enable the maximum staffing levels to drop from 1370 in 1987-88 to 1296 in 1988-89?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the Department of Transport and Works has not changed its functions, which relate to roads, public works and transport. What has changed is only the level of work in capital works. Repairs and maintenance and so forth are still being performed as usual.

The department has changed the emphasis of its work so that it is more involved in the maintenance of assets rather than being simply a constructor. Whilst that is a change of emphasis, no function has actually been deleted.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I will put my next series of questions together, as they relate to one another. What are the actual staffing figures for 1987-88 and what is the expected figure for 1988-89? Can the minister advise whether the difference is due to difficulties in attracting key personnel such as engineers, architects, and economists?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the number at 1 July 1987 was 1349 and at 30 June 1988 it was 1239, a reduction of 110. The current number employed is 1235, which represents a further slight reduction. The number of normal staff, as such, is not expected to vary significantly. However, the annual intake of trainees will possibly add another 31 staff to the department's total. We expect that the difference between the 1987 and 1988 figures will be less marked when the number of trainees is taken into account and when people are recruited to fill a number of outstanding vacancies.

We are not having any major difficulty in terms of recruiting people to specialist positions although there is an Australia-wide shortage of engineers and some other professionals and we are affected by that as much as anyone else. We are examining ways of addressing that problem if and when we need to.

Mr Collins: Train them at the new university.

Mr FINCH: As the member for Sadadeen says, one answer is to train our own. We are currently sponsoring 2 trainee engineers interstate and we will continue that program.

Mr LANHUPUY: What is the cost of employing consultants to make up the shortfall in the department caused by the lack of key personnel? Secondly, does the minister intend to take any action to ensure that the department continues to retain the expertise to carry out its functions?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, \$170 000 was expended last year in employing in-house consultants to provide for any shortfall. The commitment to date this year is already \$141 000 and it is expected that that may increase. This is due to problems in recruiting some specialist people to regional offices, as opposed to the principal office. The major difficulties occur in places like Katherine and Tennant Creek and, while those difficulties continue, we will continue to use consultants on an in-house basis.

With regard to retention of expertise, the department has undertaken a very intensive corporate planning process as part of a strategy to ensure that departmental staff can achieve maximum effectiveness and gain a high degree of satisfaction from their work. The restructuring of the department is well under way. All the signs to date indicate that the corporate plan developed from within the department has worked very well. The staff are participating in it very keenly and, as the restructuring puts it in place in a practical way, morale is quite high. We would expect to have no problems from now on.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, what is the government's policy on the split workload between in-house effort and the use of private consultants?

Mr FINCH: The government does not have a policy setting a minimum percentage, although it is reported that approximately 60% of our work is completed by consultants. It has been a matter of matching the contents of the work program with our own in-house capacity and placing that in the context of the government's policy of encouraging private enterprise involvement in both the design and the construction phases.

Mr LANHUPUY: Has the minister made an analysis of the appropriate level of capital works and repairs and maintenance?

Mr FINCH: We have been ensuring principally that the existing very valuable assets of government are maintained. That needs to be an ongoing program. It is a known fact that, if you disregard repairs and maintenance, it catches up with you doubly in the long term. With our budget constraints, we have appropriated the balance of our funds towards increasing our infrastructure through the capital works program.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, in regard to cost recovery for transport services, I have 2 questions. What areas is the minister looking at in terms of recovering costs? What is the timetable for such recovery?

Mr FINCH: Whilst motor vehicle registration is not exactly cost recovery, it is a revenue-raiser. Registration fees are to be maintained at current levels although it is expected that there will be increased revenue from other areas, increasing overall revenue from \$8.8m to \$10.51m. Those areas include: the sales of taxi plates; increasing the number of plates that are required; and increased registrations arising from a number of causes, including the very successful program to encourage people to register locally after coming from interstate. We are looking at a vehicle encumbrance register which will also contribute towards increased MVR revenue.

Mr Bell: Hasn't that been introduced yet?

Mr FINCH: It has been agreed that we will proceed with it. We intend to link with the New South Wales system but that is being held up because the New South Wales government is moving the area into the private sector. However, we expect that our encumbrance system will be in place fairly shortly.

Our only income generation is aviation at Yulara. We expect last year's figure of \$397 000 to increase to \$550 000 this year, due to the increased rates as well as additional income from leasing of accommodation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, what would be the cost of providing a peak hour bus service in Alice Springs based on extending current contracts for school bus runs? How does this cost compare with the subsidy provided to the Darwin Bus Service?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the study that is being undertaken at a cost of \$30 000 will reveal the level of return. Previous studies have indicated that we will probably only get a return of 10% to 15% if we charge an acceptable bus fare. That is the difficulty.

A comparison between the contributions to the school bus system in Alice Springs and the total bus service subsidy in Darwin, particularly now that more and more efficiencies are being found, will show that there is not much difference on a per capita basis. It cannot be argued that Alice Springs is getting nothing and Darwin is getting everything. However, we hope that the \$30 000 study will offer some useful strategies. It may suggest an integrated service involving the school and public systems although there would be difficulties with fare collection and so forth.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, how much money has the NT government set aside for the further study of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway?

Mr FINCH: Once again, Mr Chairman, that is outside my portfolio responsibilities. In terms of the Department of Transport and Works budget, no funds are required although personnel resources are available.

Mr LANHUPUY: What progress has been made on the construction of a new ferry terminal?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, an agreement was signed with the developers earlier this year. The terms of the agreement required the developer to meet some conditions within a 12-month period. Defence land is the main cause of delays to the project although, hopefully, some recent discussions will have resolved the outstanding issues. The developers are looking for equity partners and I understand that they have gone a fair way down the track in that respect. The government's commitment is \$6m towards the terminal facilities for a ferry and charter boat and we are very hopeful that, by March or April next year, the project may be ready to proceed.

Mr LANHUPUY: Will charges for the use of such a ferry be increased in line with the government's policy of raising revenue?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, it is far too early to determine what charges would be levied. Earlier studies indicated that the government would need to subsidise the operating cost of a ferry terminal to some extent but negotiations will be carried out with the marina developers or any outside party who may operate the facility.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, what is the anticipated effect on road funding of the completion of the Australian Bicentennial Roads Program and what strategies does the NT government have to deal with this?

Mr FINCH: The current program will be replaced on 1 January by a new Centennial Road Program. The initial allocations for 1988-89 indicate that

the total level of funding is not being maintained in real terms. It has been reduced marginally in actual dollar terms. It is suggested that the program for future years will be maintained in real terms from now on. The effective overall reduction was, in real terms, almost \$100m out of \$1250m, which is a pretty big slash. However, we have a commitment from the federal government that the allocations will be maintained in real terms from now on.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I apologise to the honourable minister for not giving him prior notice of this question but no doubt he will be able to answer it very adequately. With the planned construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway looking more and more definite every day and with the likelihood that the railway will carry more freight than the roads, does the minister foresee a diminution in budget allocations for road maintenance? At this early stage, does he have any idea where such savings might be reallocated within his portfolio or would they simply pass out of it and into other areas?

Mr FINCH: The Stuart Highway is obviously the principal road we are talking about although we expect that there may be some minor transfer of traffic from the west and east. There will be a reduction in maintenance costs applicable to those roads only. There is still a fairly heavy maintenance requirement for the rest of the Territory's 28 000 km road network. There will be a reduction, although it will not be major. One would assume that the funds would go to the capital works program because we have considerable work to do on the Victoria Highway and other roads off the main highway system.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, has the minister's department made an assessment of the capacity of the local construction industry to absorb the State Square project?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, departmental staff are looking at the specific capacity in detail. No doubt the construction industry is eagerly waiting for the first stage of the project, the Supreme Court building, to come on line. We believe there is capacity in most sectors. Where there is not, it would be healthy for us to attempt to bring back to Darwin some of those people who have left temporarily to go to the Cairns area for specific subcontracting projects, rather than to start importing great masses of people. We believe the size of the project is such that it will just bring things back to a viable minimal level.

Mr LANHUPUY: What percentage of the design input has taken place so far in the Territory?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the project is in 2 stages. The first stage is the Supreme Court building. Because of the pace of the program, there is a need for some of the design work to be done by those involved in the conceptual design. They came from Melbourne and other places. However, local consultants are receiving an extremely large proportion of the work, even in this first phase.

Survey geotechnical work, civil work, hydraulics, fire services, sprinkler engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and security systems engineering will all be handled 100% locally. We hope that about 60% of the architectural work and structural engineering will be done locally. All quantity surveying will be done locally, with only the overall cost management done by the project manager's normal cost controller. Overall, more than 60% of consultancy work will be done by Darwin people in Darwin.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, what steps is the minister taking to package the State Square project to allow local companies to tender for and win subcontracts?

Mr FINCH: There is a project control group which comprises government officers and consultants from the project manager. Its role is to oversee and maximise the local content, commencing with the localisation of the design, and to ensure that materials are available here. That group has the task of determining the size of the packages and their appropriateness to suit local people. The group will be involved in considerable endeavours to ensure that locals get more than a fair go.

Mr LANHUPUY: What percentage of the value of the contract for the TIO building has been let to local companies?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I have no knowledge of that matter. It lies outside my portfolio responsibilities. I would not like to be quoted on this, but I have heard informally that a significant portion, in the order of 70%, is claimed by the builders as local content.

Appropriation for division 60 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 12 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 13:

Mr EDE: What is the total amount of space rented by the Northern Territory?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the total lease space administered by the Properties Branch of the department is around 96 972 m<sup>2</sup>.

Mr EDE: How much space rented by the Northern Territory government is vacant and how much of this vacant space is in the Centrepoint building?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the space currently unoccupied is 1515 m<sup>2</sup>. Of that, 701 m<sup>2</sup> in Minerals House is about to be taken up by the Work Health Authority and 610 m<sup>2</sup> in the AMP Building, which was recently vacated by the Department of Lands and Housing in a move to Sturt House at Casuarina, will be taken up by Treasury. Anybody who has seen how Treasury operates in the AMP Building will recognise that that space is required. There is a further 204 m<sup>2</sup> at Lot 1826 Bishop Street, for which we are seeking a tenant. It will probably not be a government tenant at this stage.

All space leased in the Centrepoint buildings in Darwin and Alice Springs is occupied.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, if the honourable minister agrees, I will read out all the questions relating to Katherine and he can answer them one by one.

Mr McCARTHY: Certainly.

Mr SMITH: What is the cost of rental for the Katherine Government Centre? What has been the cost of moving departments to the centre? What are the running costs? What is happening to the government-owned buildings that are now empty - for example, the Transport and Works building which was recently extended and renovated, the health centre and the office space at the hospital? What money has been spent on renovations and extensions to government-owned or occupied buildings over the last 5 years?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the cost of the rental for the Katherine Government Centre is \$58 344 per calendar month and that is comprised of rates of \$243 per m<sup>2</sup> for ground floor space and \$197 per m<sup>2</sup> for upper floor space. It includes all car parking. Additional rent of \$21 705 per calendar month is paid to cover the cost of fit-out funded by the developer. The cost of moving departments from other buildings to that building is \$13 200, a minimal amount. The running costs are: cleaning - \$3600 per month; security - \$300 per month; and electricity, including air-conditioning - \$5350 per month. Once the departments and furniture were moved in, the air-conditioning was balanced to ensure even temperatures in all areas.

St John Ambulance will continue to occupy the health centre. It was very keen to have that space. The hospital demountable that was vacated was regarded as being not suitable for office accommodation and is to be decommissioned. We may be able to find an alternative use for it even though it is unsuitable for office space. An appropriate use for the area office of Transport and Works in Giles Street is being investigated. There have been bids from the Department of Health and Community Services for use by community and government agencies and from the Northern Territory Conservation Commission to facilitate consolidation of its units. In addition, there has been a bid from the YMCA for the establishment of a hostel and the Katherine Town Council is interested also. As for the Giles and First Street complex, which comprised the old Welfare offices near the post office, the demountable is to be moved to an Aboriginal community provided that there is no other requirement for its use by government. The Welfare building itself is under consideration as an interim courthouse.

My department does not have control of renovations and extensions to government-owned or occupied buildings. The Department of Transport and Works has the major responsibility in that area and it has advised that \$533 007 has been expended on government-owned and occupied buildings in the last 5 years.

Mr SMITH: I thank the honourable minister for the comprehensive nature of those answers. He is to be commended.

How many persons commenced work in apprenticeship positions in the public sector during the year ended 30 June 1988? How many persons commenced in public sector traineeship positions during the year ended 30 June 1988? How many of those trainees entered full-time positions with the Northern Territory Public Service and, if the minister knows, the private sector?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the answer to the first question is 35 and the answer to the second question is 34. The total number of apprentices currently employed in the public sector, as at 31 August 1988, is 158.

How many of these trainees entered full-time positions with the Northern Territory Public Service and the private sector? The answer to that is none. Because the unions delayed their agreement to do traineeships in the public sector until a very late stage, the traineeships are not yet completed in the Northern Territory. They will be completed in the not-too-distant future. On 2 May, 10 trainees completed an APS program. Of those, 9 gained full-time public sector employment and 1 left to join the private sector.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have given the minister a table relating to the number of employees on contract, their salary levels and years of contract.

Mr McCARTHY: I do not have information in relation to years of contract. That is something for departmental heads. I do have access to information



with respect to the employees on contract at various salaries: over \$90 000 - zero; \$80 000 to \$90 000 - zero; \$70 000 to \$80 000 - 1; \$60 000 to \$70 000 - 1; \$50 000 to \$60 000 - 9; \$40 000 to \$50 000 - 10; and under \$40 000 - 211. That is a total of 232 employees who are in contract positions under the Public Service Act.

Mr SMITH: Is the minister able to provide any general breakdown of the terms of employment of the 211? In what areas and or departments are they employed?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I am not able to provide that information. The positions are spread across the public service. Whilst a number of employees within the departments are employed on contract under the Public Service Act, I do not necessarily have access to all of that information. With a number of days work, I could extract the information from personnel systems within the public service. We are attempting to have our own Interpers system in place but, until that is done, I cannot obtain the information easily.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I refer to the Northern Territory Employment Development Strategy and Implementation Plan. I would like the minister to outline progress on it. What was the cost of the development of the plan, when will it be implemented and what funds are being appropriated for each element of it?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the cost of the plan is estimated at \$79 600 and \$80 000 has been allocated towards it in this year's budget. The project is programmed to be undertaken between August 1988 and May 1989. Stage 1 involves analysis of labour market data from available data and this will result in a working paper to be completed in late November or early December this year. That stage is 20% complete at present. Stage 2 involves a review of local, interstate, Commonwealth and international labour market programs and indicators. This will also result in a working paper being completed in late November or early December 1988. That stage is currently 35% complete.

In the first month, there was assistance from the Minister of Labour Advisory Committee, discussion with local agencies, review of labour market programs in the United States and Canada, summary of Aboriginal employment development policies, discussions on bridging-the-gap proposals and a brief summary of Australian programs currently operating. There has been no progress this month on specific program assessments. Progressive outputs are due between January and May 1989. The final document is due at the end of May 1989 with immediate implementation of some recommendations. In addition, it is likely that some implementation of elements of the strategy will occur prior to the release of the final report.

Mr EDE: Will the honourable minister undertake to provide me with a copy of that plan when it is completed at the end of May 1989?

Mr McCARTHY: We certainly will not hide it under a bush, Mr Chairman.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the minister provide details of how \$4.336m is to be allocated across the employment and training program and, in particular, how does the minister plan to re-establish the Aboriginal Development Unit? At what cost and by what time will it be in full operation to ensure that Aboriginal people will continue to develop skills that will better equip them for a place in the work force?

Mr McCARTHY: Let me assure the honourable member that there has been no change to the pace of the delivery of courses and training to Aboriginal people. We will maintain our progress in that respect. The \$4.336m for the Division of Employment and Training is split up as follows: salaries and allowances - \$1.082m; administrative and operational expenses - \$294 000; capital items - \$26 000; and other services - for example, apprenticeship, travel and accommodation - \$1.087m. The group apprenticeship scheme might receive funding through traineeships. That all comes under that \$1.087m.

There is \$880 000 for the school leaver program which we commenced in 1987-88. There is \$80 000 for the NT employment strategy, \$100 000 for the group training companies and \$787 000 for the Aboriginal programs mentioned earlier during the budget debate.

The department has undergone a corporate planning exercise in which the new direction for managing Aboriginal programs has emerged. We are presently developing new job profiles for the positions that have been identified as being required and I will be advertising those in the near future. Any financial costs involved in the exercise will be covered by the existing budget. Programs administered by the Aboriginal Development Branch are being run by staff within the Employment and Training Division and there is certainly no slackening of pace or direction.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, given that the government has no legislative framework for the development of policy in the area of equal employment opportunity, can the minister explain exactly what the increased allocation is for and how it fits into the overall budget direction of the EEO program?

Mr McCARTHY: I am really not quite sure where the honourable member finds this increased allocation for EEO. In fact, this year's allocation is exactly the same as last year's. Budget Paper No 4 shows this year's allocation against last year's expenditure and an increase in allocation cannot be assumed by a quick glance at those figures. It is rather more complex than that.

Mr Chairman, I strongly deny that there is no framework for policy development for equal opportunity. In May this year, I launched the process of equal opportunity management planning in the NT public sector. There are 3 vanguard departments working on those programs: the Department of the Chief Minister, the Department of Education and my own department. Our major initiative this year will be our survey of the public sector to provide a reliable database to use for planning and to measure progress. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all employers to participate in that exercise. Two 'women at work' courses have already been run in this financial year alone, 1 in Alice Springs and 1 in Darwin, with another coming up shortly.

The entire Aboriginal employment and economic development policy and strategy, which resulted in a significant increase in allocation for this year, is quite clearly an EEO function. One cannot simply look at the EEO budget and say that it is not improving. In fact, it is. The \$787 000 for Aboriginal training quite clearly can be added to the EEO budget. Considerable activity is occurring in that area.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am a bit flabbergasted. I thought I was praising the minister for increasing his budget. When I subtracted last year's figure of \$208 000 from the \$256 000 in this year's budget, I thought we had a \$48 000 increase in that allocation. Obviously, the minister works on a

25% GDP deflator for his department. If that is the case, we will have some very substantial cuts right across the board.

Would the honourable minister confirm that my copy of the budget papers is correct and that there has been an increase in that allocation, or have there been gremlins in the printing system?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, if the honourable member reads Hansard tomorrow, he will discover why the figures are different. In fact, the allocation is the same this year as it was last year.

Mr Ede: You leave me totally confused.

Mr McCARTHY: I should have accepted your praise. I was just trying to be honest.

Mr SMITH: We have been praising you for putting more money into EEO. The figure for last year was \$208 000 and the figure for this year is \$256 000. There is a \$48 000 difference, yet you tell us that there is no increase. I know you think we are dumb but we are not that dumb. You should seek some advice on the matter and get back to us rather than holding up the House at this stage.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I will get back to the honourable member.

Mr SMITH: What has been the full government subsidy to Total Management and what level of subsidy will be available in 1988-1989?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, since the formation of the so-called Total Management in 1986-87, \$300 000 was allocated in the first year, \$300 000 in the second year and nil in the third year, which is this year.

Mr SMITH: Why is it necessary to engage a consultant to review training needs in the NTPS 2 years after Total Management took over that responsibility? Did the department put the consultancy out to tender?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the Northern Territory Centre of Management Training, which the honourable member prefers to call Total Management, is primarily concerned with management training, as its name implies. This aspect represents only a portion of the training needs in the Northern Territory Public Service. Many departments and authorities have maintained in-house training functions to meet particular needs identified within those departments.

The Northern Territory Centre of Management Training assumed responsibility for the training role of the former Management Development Centre. The Department of Labour and Administrative Services continues to provide skills training to personnel practitioners in departments and authorities. The consultant was engaged to inquire into human resource development needs within the Northern Territory public sector. Training is only a component of the human resource development function which focuses on ensuring both that the work force, as a whole, has a knowledge of the skills and capabilities required to implement and maintain government programs and that individual employees are able to develop career opportunities within the service. The government was of the view that it was appropriate to take stock in this area in order to provide the basis for an effective human resource development plan that would support the government's goals for the Territory, to which the public service would be required to make a major contribution.

The honourable member asked if the department put the consultancy out to tender. The answer is no. Appendix B, section 20, Treasurer's Directions exempts such consultancies from the need to be advertised.

Mr SMITH: If the consultancy was not put out to tender, how was the consultant chosen?

Mr McCARTHY: The consultant was chosen on her known expertise and her availability and price.

Mr SMITH: How can you know that if you do not tender? How many times has the advisory council of Total Management met?

Members interjecting.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this raises a serious issue. Many of us remember that there was some controversy at the time when Total Management was established.

Mr Coulter: It met for 3 weeks.

Mr SMITH: Spread over 7 months.

An advisory committee for Total Management was established, and I must admit that I am astounded that it has met only once during a 2-year period. I am not sure what control the minister has over the operations of Total Management but I ask him to provide an explanation, if he is able, of why it has met only once and to provide an assurance to this House that he will use his best endeavours to make sure that it meets more regularly.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I have already pointed out that we are not putting any money into the Centre for Management Training this financial year. I have no control whatsoever over the management training section. It is a private body. It received a government subsidy for 2 years but I refuse to pay any further moneys to it. It has had 2 years to establish itself and, if it has not managed to do that at this stage, I am afraid it cannot expect to be competing with other management-training and personnel-training bodies in the private sector.

Mr SMITH: What proportion of the subsidy given to Total Management is being paid to AIM Queensland?

Mr McCARTHY: None. The Northern Territory Centre for Management Training has utilised AIM Queensland on a fee-for-service basis. That is the same practice that was followed with a number of other organisations that have been used in delivering programs.

Mr SMITH: Can the minister confirm that courses which formerly cost the department nothing and were run by the Public Service Commissioner's Office now cost considerable sums of money? The example I have been given is The 'Women in Management' program.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, courses made available to the department through the Management Development Centre of the Public Service Commissioner incurred a cost to the department in the last year of the MDC's operation. Therefore, it is not correct to say that those courses cost departments nothing. Departments were charged for the service.

Mr SMITH: Would it be fair and true to say that similar courses previously run through the Management Development Centre and now run by Total Management are run at a significantly higher cost to departments or individuals?

Mr McCARTHY: It may be. I cannot answer the question because I do not have the figures in front of me. There are a number of training bodies in the private sector, some based in the Northern Territory and others based interstate. All are competing for training consultancies in the Northern Territory and I do not have the individual costs to departments at my fingertips. It is the responsibility of chief executive officers to allow for training within their own departments. I have responsibility only for my own department.

Mr SMITH: Can the minister answer my question concerning equal opportunities?

Mr McCARTHY: The estimate for 1987-88 was \$256 000 but only \$208 000 was spent. That is, the actual figure for 1987-88 was \$208 000. The allocation for this year is \$256 000, which is the same as last year's allocation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I do not know whether Total Management is the appropriate place for the minister to find the answer, but he certainly should go somewhere to find out what the whole process is about. We said that there had been an increase from last year to this year. Obviously, that is the case. The minister says that last year's estimate was \$256 000 and, because only \$208 000 of that was spent, this year's allocation of \$256 000 represents no increase. That is patently ludicrous unless the minister has no intention of spending \$48 000 of the budgeted amount this year, in which case it should be returned to consolidated revenue.

Mr McCARTHY: Last year we had an allocation of \$256 000. We spent only \$208 000 of that. This year's allocation is again \$256 000, which means there is no increase. That is quite clear to me and I am sorry if it is not clear to the member opposite.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, will the minister provide details on how many staff are currently employed in the Office of Local Government, what their role is, how many vacancies exist and what the positions include? In addition, can he explain what the allocation of \$2.087m for administration will be spent on and can he detail the projects which the Office of Local Government will be involved in during the next financial year?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I will have more to say about the role and functions of the Office of Local Government a little later in my response. The office has an authorised MSL of 68, organised on a regional basis throughout the Northern Territory. Currently, 59 people are employed full-time which means there are 9 substantive vacancies. These vacancies range from the E5 and E6 levels to field staff at A6 to A9 levels and they affect all regions of the department in the Territory. I am advised that 1 of those vacancies is to be filled by transfer and 2 by appointment from outside the service. Recently, 4 others have been advertised and there has been a greater number of applications than there was when those positions were advertised previously. The last time those positions were advertised, the response was very poor. This time the response is extremely good. I expect that, in the very near future, the office will be very much closer to full strength.

The \$2.087m referred to by the member for Arafura is for all operations of the Office of Local Government. It is made up of salaries, \$1.14m; administration and operations, \$687 000, including extensive operations undertaken by office staff throughout all regions of the Territory; and capital, including vehicle replacement, \$256 000. I might add that the Office of Local Government distributes 91% of its appropriation to local government communities and organisations throughout the Territory. That is to say, it spends only 9% of its budget on its own operations, which is a very commendable achievement.

Mr Chairman, to explain what projects the Office of Local Government will be employed on during the next financial year would take more time than you might reasonably allow me. Suffice it to say that the Office of Local Government will continue to administer programs to fulfil the government's commitment to strong, independent local government for all Territorians and to maximise community self-management through the local government system.

Mr Chairman, the Office of Local Government has recently undertaken a major review of its role and functions as part of the corporate plan for my department. I am very pleased with the outcome of this corporate plan and I intend to make a statement about it during these sittings or the next.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, can the minister explain how the Office of Local Government is expected to function in the future and what its role will be?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the Office of Local Government was formed in March 1987 - only 18 months ago - in recognition of the government's very strong commitment to local government. Initially, it was part of the Northern Territory Treasury but, since 27 November last year, it has been part of the Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

It is clear to me that local government is an important and essential sphere in the structure of public administration within the Northern Territory. After reviewing the arrangements for providing services to councils and other local government organisations, I have recently taken the initiative of arranging for the Office of Local Government to be administered separately, with the director reporting directly to myself.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, what will its link be with the secretary of the department, and when is it expected that the vacant position will be filled? In addition, can the minister explain in what capacity the former Director of Local Government is to be employed as a consultant, and at what cost?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, as I mentioned in the answer to the last question, the Director of Local Government is now reporting directly to me, and he is exercising delegated powers of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

Mr Chairman, the honourable member has asked for an explanation as to the capacity in which the former Director of the Office of Local Government is now employed in the organisation. Mr Chairman, the person concerned resigned voluntarily from the Northern Territory Public Service with effect from 9 September, for personal reasons. He explained to me at the time of submitting his resignation that he wished to engage in consultancy work within the local government area, and I am pleased to say that the Office of Local Government has employed him in a consultancy, under a contract, for a 9-month

period from 19 September 1988. He is employed within the office at a significantly lower level of remuneration than he received as director. Mr Chairman, I believe that we are very fortunate to have that particular person operating as a consultant for that period of time. We have a number of very important works to undertake and a number of reviews are in progress, for which the former director had responsibility. We would have needed a consultant to carry out those reviews and I believe that this particular person will fulfil the function perfectly.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, given a decimated Office of Local Government where there is no backup for municipal governments, can the minister explain why he has reduced funding to municipal councils by \$1.629m compared to last year?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the Northern Territory government has not reduced its funding to local government by \$1.629m. The Northern Territory subsidy to municipal governments was, from memory, approximately \$957 000 in 1987-88 and the remainder of the funding to local government comes from another source.

Mr Chairman, the reduction in funding to municipal governments from Territory government sources was initiated 3 years ago. It has been brought down from about \$2.5m to zero over a 3-year period. This was foreshadowed to municipal governments over the last couple of years and that subsidy was provided to local government uniquely in the Northern Territory. Subsidies to municipal governments are not available anywhere else in Australia from state sources; they are funded only by their own resources and funding that is provided from the federal government through their various state grants commissions, and the figures are decided on by the Grants Commission.

Mr Chairman, this year I have provided support through a grant to the Tennant Creek Town Council because of its very heavy effort towards raising funds from its own resources, and there is a contribution to the Todd Street Mall in Alice Springs of \$150 000. Some funding therefore continues to be required because of particular needs.

The remaining component in terms of reduced funding to municipal councils results from federal influence on Northern Territory local government matters. The Commonwealth government undertook a review of the equity of the distribution of financial assistance moneys to all councils within the Northern Territory. This government cooperated in the review and subsequently removed the distinction between municipal and other councils - that is, all other local governing bodies including community government and local government under the Associations Act which had existed for temporary administrative convenience prior to this financial year. There is now 1 pool of money for distribution under the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission.

While the municipal councils have had their funding reduced, the smaller and more remote communities of the Northern Territory have received more, on an assessed-needs basis. More details are available in the Report of the Grants Commissioner, which I will be tabling during these sittings.

Mr TIPILOURA: This is my last question, Mr Chairman. Can the minister explain why there has been an increase in funds to other organisations, including the DIT, which is to merge with the University College of the Northern Territory, whilst the Grants Commission is to be reduced in size?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the Office of Local Government does not fund only the municipal centres and other major communities of the Northern Territory; it provides funding assistance to a total of 92 communities and organisations throughout the Territory which are involved in aspects of local government service provision. The increase in funding this year to other organisations is to meet the service needs of those communities and organisations, and includes training, audits and investigations and legislative review and amendment. Very significantly, \$1.5m is provided to remote communities to assist in the purchase of capital assets which will not only enable them to properly provide municipal-type services on their communities, but give them the capacity to engage in works contracts which will enhance their revenue base and provide employment and training opportunities for their residents.

Mr Chairman, I have no idea why the honourable member has referred to funding for the Darwin Institute of Technology. The Office of Local Government does not fund that institution. Obviously, that matter should be taken up with the Minister for Education.

The Office of Local Government does have a full-time student at the DIT undertaking the field officer course as a part of career development within the field staff. It also funds a course in basic office skills for 21 employees on Aboriginal communities, which has been conducted in part on the DIT campus. The purpose of the course is to enhance the community management capacity of the participating councils.

Mr Chairman, the Grants Commission, which is the other organisation identified specifically by the member for Arafura, is to be reduced in size from 7 to 4, if legislation to this effect passes at these sittings. I anticipate that, in a full year, this will provide savings of some \$15 000. In the budget process, the Office of Local Government had to estimate for the full strength of the commission as it was at the time. If the legislation is passed, there will be a saving.

Mr Chairman, I conclude by saying that the Office of Local Government is not a decimated unit, as stated by the honourable member for Arafura. It is a strong, operational unit of government with a stable core of employees committed to the value of community self-management, which the government believes can best be achieved through the local government system. The office is being administered efficiently and effectively under a capable leadership and is fast approaching full staffing.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, would the honourable minister undertake to supply - not now if he does not have the figures, but by way of a note or something during the course of this sitting - details of the amounts of funds and the purposes for which the allocation was made under the 'other organisations' category, to the Darwin Institute of Technology and Bachelor College?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Would the honourable minister give that undertaking?

Mr McCARTHY: I have no problem with that at all, Mr Chairman.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister stated that funding was made available to minor communities, under the other organisations program. Would he be able to advise me, by way of a letter, of the allocations made from that program last year and this year to any of the small communities in my electorate?



Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I assume the member for Stuart is referring to capital grants for equipment. If that is the case, I can certainly provide him with figures distributed within his electorate in the 1987-88 financial year. For the 1988-89 financial year, those decisions have not yet been made.

Appropriation for division 13 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 20:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, where are the 5 additional staff in the international tourism area to be located? Whilst I am here, I might ask the minister to clear up a rumour that has been circulating around the House today. While he is on his feet, can the minister confirm or deny the rumour that a former Speaker of this House, Mr Roger Steele, is to take up a position with the Tourist Commission in New York?

Members interjecting.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr POOLE: Mr Chairman, to my knowledge we have received no application for any positions ...

Mr Smith: That is not the answer to my question. Have you appointed him?

Mr POOLE. I have certainly not appointed anyone, to my knowledge.

I will now answer the question relating to the 5 additional staff. The London office is to receive 1 support staff member. I understand that the position will be in the area of sales and will cover the northern European and Scandinavian part of the market. There will be 1 manager and 1 member of sales support staff at the new New York office, and 1 manager and 1 member of sales support staff for the Vancouver office.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, what analysis has been made of the effectiveness of the international offices? I guess that is an open invitation to the minister to tell us how well the system is working.

Mr POOLE: Mr Chairman, in terms of analysing the effectiveness of the international offices, it must be understood that they are not sales offices. Obviously, in places like the United States you cannot operate a foreign-owned sales company, so we do not sell travel.

The only figures we can use in terms of analysing effectiveness are obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures and international visitor statistics.

The Singapore office was opened in February 1985. In 1984-85, we received 2000 visitors from Singapore and in 1986-87 we received 4000 visitors. The London office was opened in 1985 also. Numbers of visitors from the UK were 14 000 in 1983-84 and 24 000 in 1986-87. The Frankfurt office opened in 1984. In 1983-84, we received 9000 German visitors and in 1986-87 the number was 17 000. The Tokyo office was opened in 1984. In 1983-84, you could count the number of Japanese tourists coming to the Territory on 1 hand although, to be quite honest, we do not have a figure for that year. However, in 1986-87, we received 8000 Japanese visitors. The Los Angeles office was opened in 1984. In 1983-84, we received 22 000 visitors from the United States and that figure had increased to 47 000 by 1986-87. The Auckland

office opened in 1983 and, in 1983-84, the first year of its operation, we received 4000 visitors from New Zealand. In 1986-87 the figure was 9000.

Mr Chairman, the important thing to note is that, in the early days, total visitor numbers were 51 000. By 1986-87, they had grown to 109 000. Unfortunately, I do not have a breakdown for 1987-88 at this stage because the figures are not available. The total, however, is 157 000. That is an annual growth rate of about 33.5% or, if you want to look at it in another way, a growth rate of 300% since the commencement of operations in the international marketplace.

Mr SMITH: The budget papers refer to a figure of \$3.3m in receipts. Can the minister state, in broad terms, where he expects that money to be raised?

Mr POOLE: That figure comprises: commission earned on bureau sales - \$1.328m; sundry income comprising amounts such as interest, assets, sales and other minor receipts etc - \$155 000; the tourism marketing duty - \$1.790m; and the carry over from the 1987-88 tourism marketing duty - \$0.115m. That is a total of \$3.388m.

Mr SMITH: That leads me to a series of questions on what we prefer to call the bed tax. How much did the bed tax raise in 1987-88 and what were the administration and collection costs? What proportion of the funds raised were spent on tourist promotion?

Mr POOLE: Figures from the Commissioner of Taxes indicate that the amount of money raised for the period April to June 1987 was \$109 651. Apparently, some late collections are still being processed and have yet to be added to that amount. According to the Commissioner of Taxes, the cost cannot be identified separately as the levy is treated as a stamp duty and processed in the normal fashion. I am advised that no extra staff have been employed to administer it.

With regard to the proportion of funds actually spent on tourist promotion, the total amount of tourism marketing duty that was received by the Tourist Commission was spent on tourist promotion. The amount received was \$1.885m and was expended as follows: national advertising - \$1.745m; retail campaigns - \$7000; brochure printing and promotions - \$49 000; and international advertising - \$84 000.

Mr SMITH: Where did the \$1.8m come from?

Mr POOLE: That was the tourism marketing duty that was advanced to the Tourist Commission in that financial year. It was taken from the Treasurer's Advance based on the estimate of what would be collected.

Mr SMITH: How much is it anticipated the bed tax will raise in 1988-1989? Is \$1.790m the correct answer?

Mr POOLE: According to the Commissioner of Taxes, originally it was estimated at slightly under \$2m. However, this amount will be slightly different as a result of the exemption granted to caravan parks in relation to the letting of vacant sites to transit caravans etc.

Mr SMITH: There is a discrepancy there. When we talked about the \$3.3m in receipts, I thought you said that the figure of \$1.79m was to come from the tourism marketing duty.

Mr POOLE: Yes. I also said there was a carry over figure of \$115 000.

Mr SMITH: That exacerbates your problem. You are now saying that the figure is slightly less than \$2m. In your previous answer, you said the figure was \$1.79m. Perhaps we can move on while that is sorted out.

What additional dollars will be spent on marketing efforts, and will the minister provide full details of new marketing programs and how the funds in the marketing area will be disbursed?

Mr POOLE: Mr Chairman, new initiatives for the year include: assistance information training, operational support - \$14 000; national tourism for 4 months, which is Expo - \$34 000; the marketing budget - \$89 000; travel consultants reclassification to progress all travel officers through salary ranges in accordance with determination 312 - \$81 000; 2 travel officers grades 1 and 2, which will be floating positions available in diverse locations during peak periods - \$52 000; travel consultants exchange program operational support - \$15 000; additional terminals - \$50 000; computer furniture - \$23 000; telephone call sequences - \$16 000; international tourism marketing budget - \$732 000; 1 additional staff plus support London - \$67 000; new offices and 4 staff for New York and Canada - \$169 000 and \$158 000. That is a total of \$1.5m.

Mr Coulter: In relation to the earlier question, the correct figure is \$1.79m.

Mr SMITH: I am happy to accept that.

Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions concerning the film stock from the shooting of 'The Last I Heard'. Where is the negative of the approximately 70 000 ft of film that was shot?

Mr POOLE: It was actually 100 000 ft. The original 35 mm film is in the custody of the production company for storage in fireproof safes etc. The film is called Willow and Darcey and is in Sydney.

Mr SMITH: Has any print been taken and, if so, where is it kept? I understand that a 1-inch master has been taken. Where is that?

Mr POOLE: There was no print taken off the entire footage, and I am told that is normal practice. Material was used for the production of 'The last I Heard'. Many copies of this material exist in various formats - for example, VHS and 0.75 inch pneumatic. It is pertinent to note that the VHS copy is retailed through the Northern Territory Government Tourist Network. It is also distributed by international offices to interested tour operators and it is used by all sales staff for promotional purposes.

Approximately 43 000 ft of the scenic footage - and this was extracted because of copyright matters - was identified in 1986 as worthy of utilisation for promotional purposes. The original film was not time-coded because the cost of that process would have been about \$26 000. There is 1 set of 3 VHS videos, totalling approximately 8 hours, which is time-coded and is in the possession of the Tourist Commission in Alice Springs. There is a 1-inch master of the video and that is loaned out, as instructed, by the Tourist Commission. They have not all been catalogued. The 1-inch master film has not been catalogued as it is in the possession of the production company.

Mr SMITH: We have a 1-inch master now and you say it is loaned out from time to time. Where is it at present?

Mr POOLE: No. There is a 1-inch master of the video which is kept in the Tourist Commission in Alice Springs. There is a 1-inch master of the film which is kept in a fireproof safe in the production house of Willow and Darcey in Sydney.

Mr SMITH: Money is expended on storing it, correct? Is the minister saying that both the negative and the 1-inch master are stored at Willow and Darcey's?

Mr POOLE: To my knowledge, yes.

Mr SMITH: What does time-coding mean?

Mr POOLE: Time-coding is actually running the film and printing digital numbers on the bottom so that segments of it can be used readily. That does not need to be done on the film because it is already done on the videotape. Doing it on the film itself is very expensive.

Mr SMITH: Did you say that none of it has been catalogued?

Mr POOLE: The video is catalogued. There are 3 sets of VHS videos. This amounts to approximately 8 hours of film. They are time-coded, and they are held at the Tourist Commission in Alice Springs.

Mr SMITH: If a film maker wanted to obtain access to this 100 000 ft of film, how would he go about it? How would he obtain access to the stock? Is it stored in such a way that he can easily find scenes of Kakadu, Uluru, Nhulunbuy or whatever?

Mr POOLE: I believe so, but I would really have to seek advice on that. It is certainly time-coded. The master tape is what would normally be lent. You would not lend out the original or negative.

Mr SMITH: I understand that. But the master tape, the film and the negative are in the same place.

Mr POOLE: I am advised that it has been used too.

Appropriation for division 20 agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I really must apologise to Kelvin Rae. He has spent 3 hours waiting for 1 simple question to be asked. What is the cost of gaming provisions and controls for the Darwin and Alice Springs casinos?

Mr POOLE: The amount for the Darwin casino is \$627 000, comprising salaries, administration and capital items. The amount for the Alice Springs casino, comprising the same items, is \$309 000. It represents 35% of their budgets.

Appropriation for division 27 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 90:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, a sum of \$20.333m has been allocated to other services under the BTEC vote. Could the minister explain how these funds will

be disbursed? Secondly, is the minister claiming that all non-domesticated buffalo will have been killed by the close of 1989?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, in addition to the figure mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, there is a further amount of approximately \$1.7m which will be disbursed this year. This amount is currently in the campaign trust account. The breakdown is as follows: salaries, \$2.35m, a reduction of \$50 000 compared to the previous year due to an anticipated reduction in overtime; and administration and operational expenses, \$5.48m, an increase of \$993 000 over the previous year.

The finalisation of the majority of the bush destocking will account for the bulk of the increase. Current policy is to compensate the pastoralist for his expenses until he decides to cease destocking operations. At this point, my department will become responsible for the costs of completing destocking and the pastoralists will forgo further compensation. Whilst there will be some savings in payments to pastoralists, these will be offset by the cost to the government of removing the residual stock, including helicopter and light plane hire, the cost of ammunition, travel expenses and vehicle costs. The TB testing of cattle going to slaughter in South Australia also contributes to the increase.

The allocation for capital items is \$492 000, an increase on last year's figure. Again, bush destocking is the major contributing factor. Materials to be purchased include radio-equipped vehicles, replacement rifles and laboratory equipment necessary for testing.

The amount for unmusterables is \$3.369m. This is an increase of \$1.169m over last year. The additional effort is to catch up on the testing and destocking activity which was deferred due to the drought in the Alice Springs district, or which had fallen behind target in the Gulf district and the Top End.

The amount for type D and type F loans is \$822 000. The increase of \$322 000 is the result of changes to the assistance measures. Type D loans have been expanded in application and the type F interest subsidy has been introduced. The allocation for the type E restocking subsidy is \$494 000. This represents an increase of \$464 000, which is due to an anticipated greater number of claims being lodged following the lifting of the 200 km limit. \$4.943m has been set aside for compensation. This is an increase of some \$1.36m and can also be attributed to the moves to finalise the bush destocking program.

The holding subsidy is \$3.585m. The subsidy is to meet 75% of additional costs incurred due to BTEC, up to \$10 per head. This year's allocation is an increase of \$1.575m and is based on the latest estimation of cattle to be tested this year.

The Leader of the Opposition asked whether all non-domesticated buffalo will have been killed by the close of 1989. The short answer, Mr Chairman, is no. There is an extensive herd in southern and western Arnhem Land which has been monitored negative and therefore is seen as a source of supply of feral buffalo for future use. In addition, there are small pockets of other feral buffalo herds which have low-prevalence disease status and every effort will be made to preserve these through test and slaughter programs.

Mr SMITH: What was the outcome of the Point Stuart and Wildman River cashew trial and were funds obtained from the Rural Credits Research Council to assist with this research?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, no funding has been obtained from the Rural Credits Research Council. The Australian Special Rural Research Fund is contributing to a research project to run over the next 3 years, at a total cost of about \$150 000 per year. The Territory government and the private sector are contributing to the project and a breakdown of those costs is as follows: \$40 000 from the Northern Territory government, \$40 000 from Nabisco, \$60 000 from the Australian Special Rural Research Council and approximately \$10 000 from smaller, private investors. Trials to date have been very promising and have shown that a number of varieties of cashew nuts can be produced in the Northern Territory environment. 3-year projects will focus on pest control, processing and marketing and thus determine the economic viability of the industry in the Territory.

Mr SMITH: There is an intelligence database on interstate markets for horticultural produce. What has it produced and what intelligence has it given to the department?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, a number of crops have already been reported on in the triennial horticultural market report which is mailed directly to commercial growers and others in allied industries. A consolidated report for the most important and promising crops will be published as a comprehensive technical bulletin by early 1989. Findings that have been disseminated to industry and researchers to date include: market opportunities for sweet potato in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney from August to January; market opportunities for seedless watermelons; the timing for placing rockmelons on the market to avoid low prices; storage facilities required to maximise market prices of butternut pumpkin without reducing quality; and potential markets for low-chill stone fruits.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, in Budget Paper No 5 the Darwin Barramundi Hatchery is listed under Works in Progress, with an allocation of \$350 000. Under the heading of New Works, an item refers to the construction of the East Arm Fishing Industry Facility. Could the minister tell me whether the barramundi hatchery is to be located at East Arm to combine the 2 animal industries? If not, why not?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the hatchery being commissioned at Stokes Hill is a field unit to demonstrate the technology and which can be dismantled at the end of the proposed 2- to 3-year development period. The land and building have been made available for research only, and the equipment is adaptable to other projects. No decision has been taken at this time in relation to future commercial-scale operation. One option is to promote the establishment of a commercial hatchery by a private interest on another site. This may involve licensing of any unique technology developed during the pilot operations. The Stokes Hill site includes existing building and infrastructure. These are not available at East Arm and their provision would involve significantly increased costs. The facility is a pilot unit to demonstrate the technology, and it was not offered to private enterprise.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Page 204 of Budget Paper No 4, under the heading Animal Industry, describes some programs: 'The Animal Health Program aims to monitor the improvement of livestock health and welfare, and animal product hygiene through research, advisory, regulatory and other government support functions'. The first animal products which come to mind are meat, eggs and dairy products. These are the only ones that I can think of, excluding fish. This wording says that the programs will continue with regard to monitoring animal product hygiene through research. That is good and I expect the department to continue that good work. It will continue with advisory work,

which is good, and other government support functions. But that also includes regulatory functions.

Mr Chairman, how does the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries hope to regulate the dairy industry? It is an industry connected with milk and cheese. How does it hope to control, by regulation, the dairy industry when it has just wiped its hands of anything to do with the dairy industry by repealing the Dairy Supervision Act and leaving supervision of it to the Department of Health and Community Services? How can it be included in there, as the minister has done?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, as I recall it, the Stock Diseases Act provides adequate measures for the department to supervise the requirements that the honourable member referred to.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: No, that is animals not animal products.

Mr REED: From the point of view of the product as it applies to dairy products, that is covered by the Food ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, but it is not your Food and Drug Act. It is administered by the Department of Health and Community Services.

Mr REED: What paragraph are you speaking about?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is on page 204, and it says that the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries will continue to research, advise and give support to animal product hygiene. I do not have any argument with that. Those officers are doing a good job and I expect they will continue to do a good job. It is the regulatory function that I am taking issue with because the department only has regulations for the animal products - eggs, and meats. The minister gave up regulatory powers with regard to dairy products when he wiped the Dairy Supervision Act from his books and left it up to the Department of Health and Community Services.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, I will ask the indulgence of the honourable member. I will get some advice for her at a later date.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I wonder if the minister is able to give us some idea of how much money he intends to spend on introducing some varieties of dates and taking them down to Katherine for quarantine purposes? I know he understands that ethylene dibromide killed Mr Tim Micklem's 100-odd plants, worth about \$50 each. The plants were fairly small and the quarantine method not only killed any wogs on them; it killed the plants as well. Even if it is more expensive, will he instruct his department to go for bigger plants which have a greater chance of surviving the treatment?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the department is undertaking some investigations in relation to the chemical treatment. Certainly, the importation of larger plants would significantly reduce the risks.

With regard to research and the quarantine station in Katherine, I cannot advise what the specific amount is at present, but an allocation has certainly been made and I will endeavour to supply the honourable member with the relevant information.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, could I ask the indulgence of the honourable minister again for not giving him prior notification of this, but I think it should provide an interesting answer.

On page 205 of Budget Paper No 4, the second paragraph says: 'The Regional Development Program develops strategies for the economic development of each of the non-metropolitan regions of the Northern Territory as defined by natural resource characteristics'.

Mr Chairman, that looks very good on paper and I really hope something definite comes out of it. Could the minister give some detail as to what is meant by the words 'natural resources'. If it is what I think it is, it is what I have been suggesting for some time instead of the State Square development. I think the time will come when, with increased horticultural production in suitable areas in the Northern Territory, we will have situations of overproduction, or glut situations. In order to prevent horticultural produce going to waste, it would be in everybody's interests if facilities like juicing factories, drying factories etc were built.

Is that sort of development considered under the Regional Development Program? If it is, I am all for it.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the allocation is for the kenaf project. It was recognised that an appropriate time frame would be necessary to achieve worthwhile results.

Mrs Padgham-Purich. Don't stop at kenaf.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, the regional task force has the carriage of the kenaf project. Accordingly, in March 1988, Cabinet approved a program with the objective of developing an attractive proposal for commercial investment in a pulp paper industry in the Northern Territory based on locally-grown kenaf and perhaps other non-woody fibres. The target date was March or April of 1989, and the task force is confident of meeting its objectives. At this stage, it is too early to speak of specific conclusions. The task force is examining applications for a consultancy to help prepare and present its commercial investment proposal to operators, pulp paper mills and commercial investors. Success with that proposal will mean that further investigation into the potential for an industry in the NT will be guided by operators or investors in the pulp paper industry. In the meantime, all work is directed to the preparation of that commercial investment proposal. It involves pulping tests on NT kenaf, the development of a computerised crop-growth model, assessment of farm economics and examination of potential sites for a mill.

The allocation for 1988-89 was \$699 000. With regard to the point raised by the honourable member, it includes investigation into development opportunities for rural centres throughout the Territory.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I have a couple of further questions following from what the honourable minister said ...

Mr Coulter: Give us one on goats.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We are not up to goats yet. Just hold your horses and we will get to them.

Mr Chairman, the honourable minister mentioned other fibres besides kenaf. Is he talking of sisal or something from the hibiscus family, or is that too far off in the future to talk about? The honourable minister mentioned investigation into development opportunities for rural centres, which is in line with my suggestion that we should develop secondary industries which



relate to our primary production. Does the honourable minister have anything definite on the books or is he thinking of something?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, apart from hibiscus, there are a number of other plants which offer possibilities, although at this time we are at a very speculative stage. They include plants that already grow in plague proportions in the Territory, including sisal. A number of woody-fibre plants are under investigation, Mr Chairman, and that will continue as part of the overall program.

With regard to the other part of the question, I think the proposal for development opportunities in rural areas relates to the government's intention to look at development opportunities in more remote parts of the Territory, such as Borroloola, away from what might be called the communication spine, the Stuart Highway. This allocation is to allow for some investigative work to be undertaken in respect of a whole range of opportunities.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, this will be my very last set of questions for the night, unless I am provoked by this answer. What facilities will be constructed at the fishing industry wharf at an estimated cost of \$6.2m, and which market segment will the fishing industry wharf serve?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, I will try not to provoke the honourable member.

The facility at East Arm will consist of a pontoon with provision for berthing for 2 vessels and connected to a rock causeway by a hinged bridge. The causeway will provide access to land-backing which can be utilised as the site for processing facilities. The necessary headworks - that is, water, sewerage, roads, drainage and bridging - are included in the cost, together with internal roads. The purpose of the facility is to provide a site for the off-loading and processing of catches, to resupply vessels for fishing, and to encourage the recognition of Darwin as the home base for the fishing fleet in northern Australian waters.

With regard to market requirements, the facility will be a public facility open to all segments of the commercial fishing industry and the market. It is hoped that the availability of land-backing for processing will attract private investment in support of developing offshore fisheries. I would say at this juncture, Mr Chairman, that a number of verbal expressions of interest have been received already. The design of the facility will be complementary to the subsequent development of a full fishing industry port in the vicinity, which is consistent with the findings of the Norgaard consultants.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the other day the Chief Minister was quoted in the Centralian Advocate as declaring that the Greenhouse Effect would turn central Australia into the grain bowl of Asia, or words to that effect. I ask the minister whether any funds have been allocated towards the realisation of this Utopian vision, given the nature of central Australian soils with their lack of friability and humus. As we all know, any traditional means of broadacre farming in the region would probably lead to the loss of the top foot of soil there when the first major storm came through.

Mr Chairman, obviously some research needs to be carried out on the implications of the Greenhouse Effect for the Northern Territory. I would like the honourable minister to advise whether anything has commenced within his portfolio in that regard or whether it is occurring elsewhere?

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, as the honourable member has indicated, the Chief Minister has established a working group. As far as I am aware, there is no allocation at this time for the purpose the honourable member mentioned.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I refer the honourable minister to a highly-contentious map put out by his department. From memory, it came out with BTEC News. It shows the current line between impending-free and provisionally-free BTEC areas in the Northern Territory. It is generally referred to as the Alice Springs line and, unfortunately, cuts off virtually all of my electorate. After many years of being free of brucellosis, pastoral properties in my electorate are now back to being declared provisionally-free.

At the time the document was prepared, pastoralists from my area were making representations complaining about the change in the method of defining areas in relation to BTEC status. The areas were formerly defined by circles but the new system was based on lines drawn across the map. Advice was provided that it was intended that the Alice Springs line would be shifted north by December of this year to what we might refer to as the Barkly or the Lajamanu line, which runs south of Lajamanu, up around Elliott and back through the centre of the Barkly Tablelands. I would like the honourable minister to advise whether that move, which was mooted at the beginning of this year, will still take place.

Mr REED: Mr Chairman, that is still the intention. If the honourable member so desires, I will endeavour to get further advice in relation to the possible location of the line.

Mr Ede: Could the honourable minister make it written advice because I would like to circulate it to people and let them know what is going on.

Appropriation for division 90 agreed to.

Remainder of bill agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

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

In doing so, I would like to place on record my appreciation of the efforts of Treasury officers who prepared the budget, a very substantial task which they face every year. The refinements over the years in the budget papers are designed to make it easier for honourable members to come to grips with the expenditures of the government. It does take a considerable amount of work. There are always deadlines to meet and the officers are always hard-pressed. The budget process continues throughout the year. In fact, work on reviewing this budget is no doubt under way at the present time, together with preliminary work on preparing the initial stages of next year's budget. I appreciate the efforts of Treasury officers. They are a very good team and I take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation of them.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record the thanks of the opposition to the many public servants and ministerial officers who worked long and hard to provide their ministers with the answers to the 200-odd written questions which we provided. There are some areas where we were not satisfied but that is probably just the nature of the game. However, Mr Speaker, I think that you would agree that the requested information was obtained in most cases. Certainly, some of the information that we sought and

received will increase our understanding of our shadow portfolios and assist us in better servicing the electorates which we represent. Mr Speaker, I give my heartfelt thanks to the officers who have provided so much assistance.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, during the course of the committee stage, I indicated to the member for Stuart that I would obtain some information that he asked for. The questions related to whether or not K.K. Yeung had been used by the Darwin Institute of Technology and whether he had received any payment. He also asked about the cost of overseas marketing and the number of overseas students who were currently enrolled at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The answer to the first question is that K.K. Yeung has been used but has never been paid by the Darwin Institute of Technology. He has worked on an informal basis, setting up meetings, explaining programs that are offered at the institute and providing contacts for the institute. The cost of overseas marketing is 20% of income generated through those students who pay full fees. Therefore, for every \$20 000 spent on marketing programs overseas, we expect a return of \$100 000 for the Darwin Institute of Technology. At present, there are 58 students who pay full fees at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record my thanks to the many people in my department who have been involved in the preparation of the budget papers.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record my thanks to the Chief Minister for having recommitted the bill. Not to have done so would have reflected very badly on every member of this House within our electorates and across the country. I believe it was a very sensible decision and I thank him for it.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think we have come to a satisfactory conclusion to what, last night, was a very difficult problem.

It is interesting to note that the committee stage has taken 9½ hours, which is slightly less than it did last year. We may well have established that the time required for a full discussion of the budget will be around the 9- to 11-hour mark. I understand that the government is prepared to go back to the Standing Orders Committee to develop a process by which we can handle the committee stage without the sort of confrontation that occurred last night. I think we have reached the stage where we need to look at doing it over a period of 2 or 3 days so that we do not exhaust each other. It is a very important activity. Both the government and the opposition have treated the matter seriously. It has always intrigued me that, with 1 or 2 exceptions, the questions and answers are undertaken in quite good humour and with very little controversy. It is a positive exercise, unlike other areas we are involved in.

I add my thanks to the staff of the various departments who have put together the answers to the questions. It is certainly very much appreciated. I also pay recognition to my own staff, who sometimes think that they are 3 or 4 against 15 000. Certainly, sitting periods are always busy times for them. The committee stage of the Appropriation Bill is an especially busy time because, on top of their normal duties, my staff have most of the responsibility for putting the questions together. I would like to place on record the appreciation of myself and my colleagues for the work that they have done.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, we have spent some 9 hours on the committee stage of this budget debate. It is interesting to note that, as I said last evening, 3 years ago the process took about 4 hours. It took about 5 hours in the following year and last year it took 10 hours and 10 minutes. There were 5 hours and 12 minutes of non-ministerial time. I have spoken to an opposition member of the Standing Orders Committee and each of us intends to undertake an analysis of this debate, in terms of what happened and who said what and for how long, and we will present that analysis to our party rooms.

I believe that we could streamline the process considerably by having definite shadow spokesmen on appropriation divisions. The crossbenchers are not a problem, Mr Speaker. Last year, the Leader of the Opposition spoke for some 38 minutes, the member for Stuart for some 23 minutes and the member for MacDonnell for some 25 minutes on a particular division. There was a similar situation last night in relation to the Trade Development Zone appropriation. Time could be saved if a little more discipline was exercised and questions on various divisions were asked by the shadow minister responsible. We would give the crossbenches ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The member for Nightcliff helped the Chief Minister yesterday.

Mr COULTER: That might be true as well.

Mr Speaker, I want to say that there has been a great deal of cooperation from the opposition benches on this matter and I hope that we can address the matter seriously. The facts do not lie. I will be quite happy to circulate the information to the crossbenchers so that we can come up with a formula that is more workable. The biggest problem is presented by the number of people speaking. If we can apply some discipline in that area, we will be able to streamline the process.

I understand that, 4 years ago, the Appropriation Bill would pass through this Assembly without a whimper or a murmur in about 15 minutes or half an hour. That shows how things are changing. We will have to go back to the Standing Orders Committee. We will also have the matter of supplementary questions examined. We will circulate the information to the various party rooms and try to come up with a system that works. If we set a limit of 10 hours, it will take 10 hours. That does not work. We need to find something else.

I would like to record my appreciation of the efforts of all officers involved in the preparation of the budget and the information that they have supplied to us throughout the passage of the Appropriation Bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a man who made a lasting contribution to the Northern Territory, a man who was known and deeply respected by a great many Territorians. His name was John Hickman. John was first introduced to the Northern Territory in 1942 when, as a member of the 2nd/6th Commando Squadron, he was posted to Darwin during World War II. After

a year spent working on the fortification of the Darwin peninsula, he was sent to Papua New Guinea where he gave Australia 2 years of service and saw action in Lae as well as in a number of landing assaults on Japanese strongholds around the New Guinea coast. Although John had rejoined the occupation forces in Rabaul after the Armistice Declaration, he was evacuated to Concord Military Hospital suffering from a combination of wounds and severe malaria. After returning as a civilian to his home state, Western Australia, John became a frequent visitor to the Territory because of his Perth-based business which traded in foodstuffs, clothing, general engineering products and other commodities. In 1958, John took up permanent residence in Darwin and in the years that followed he left his mark on the commercial world, local industry and the wider community.

John's business activities have been too numerous to detail. He continued and developed his involvement in the distribution of wholesale foods and played a part in the opening of Darwin's commercial television station. John Hickman's business acumen is perhaps best illustrated by his involvement in the fishing industry. Having become a major supplier of barramundi in 1960, he purchased a number of vessels to guarantee a reliable supply. In 1969, he was instrumental in the formation of Northern Research Pty Ltd, the first commercial prawning joint venture. Over the years he extended his interests in fisheries and was a key figure in the establishment of the Seanorth joint venture.

It is not surprising that, in recognition of his enterprise, his expertise and his commitment to the Territory, John held many appointments. He was Deputy Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation, President and Chairman of the NT Fishing Industry Council and a member of the NT Port Authority.

John's ability and vigour were by no means confined to the commercial world. He left behind him a distinguished record of service to the community. He was the founding Chairman of Apex in Darwin and, fittingly, he later became Northern Territory Governor of Apex. He was a councillor of the St John Ambulance Service. He was a member of both Legacy and Red Cross and served as chairman of both organisations. Although we might wonder how he found time to take on even more activities, John's standing in the Territory was further recognised with his appointment as the NT Consul for Sweden and Honorary Consul for Finland.

While all this gives a glimpse of John's public record of service, the private record would be even longer. It consists of many acts of charity known only to those involved. John's greatest legacy, however, is the family he left behind him. On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Dallas and Alexander and to those who were lucky enough to be his friends. They are assured that John Hickman will always be dearly remembered by those who knew him, whether it is for his enterprise and determination, his community service, or his advice and help. The courage, integrity and humanity of John Hickman will be sorely missed.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to place on record a number of issues relating to schools in my electorate.

The Ti Tree school celebrated its 10th anniversary in its current building this year. That school has been the source of a substantial amount of bar-room discussion in terms of its real purpose. People often tell me that it was actually built so that the people of Alice Springs could be evacuated to Ti Tree when the bomb went off. I heard that story when I first arrived in

Alice Springs. Even then, I thought the school building at Ti Tree would be rather crowded in such circumstances. Since then, the town has doubled in size and the idea is becoming even more ridiculous.

I am indebted to a former member of this House, Jim Robertson, who advised me that the school was planned originally as a college for Aboriginal teachers. For some reason or other, that idea fell through before construction was completed. It went ahead as a high school for Aboriginal people throughout the central area of the Territory until that idea also fell through and it became the school it is today. There is no doubt that it is easily the best-equipped and best-resourced school in my electorate. I certainly look forward to the day when it will be the standard school in my area. It has quiet air-conditioning units and wash rooms in which cold water actually flows from the taps, and it is a credit to the people who constructed it and to the people who work in it.

At Ali Curung, the situation is nowhere near as good. When 3 teachers left some time ago, there were big problems and 2 of the classes had to be sent home because teachers could not be found. Nobody would accept the terms and conditions offered to go out there in the short term. Eventually, a person who happened to be in Australia on a work visa was sent down there. He turned up at the front door of the department and was shot down to Ali Curung. That is only a short-term solution and we still need to overcome the problem that I keep talking about, that of retaining teaching staff.

The problem does not exist only in rural schools. I believe Kargaru Preschool has 17 students in the morning class and 18 in the afternoon class. It has been without a teacher for several weeks. I am told that a replacement may be available after school starts next term but people whose children attend that school are obviously extremely upset over the lack of a teacher. In the Utopia area, there is a growing need for a school at Antarringinya. At present, there are between 25 and 30 school-age children out there and the teacher from Ampalatwatja travels between Irrultja, Ngwalalanima and Antarringinya. He is constantly shuttling students back and forth. The amount of travelling is very substantial.

I believe that the time has come when we have to look at providing more than 1 or 2 days of schooling each week on outstations. In my electorate, places like those I have mentioned average about 20 students. Even where the communities have decided that they prefer to have teachers based in a central area where they can have some social cohesion of their own and from which they travel out to outstations schools, we should be working on the same staff-student ratios as we work on in towns. If that were the case, 2 schools would have their own teacher based in Ampalatwatja. I am looking forward to seeing a school at Antarringinya, which the minister will have to look at providing very soon.

Nyirripi School is suffering from too much success. The building is no longer adequate for the number of students. In fact, \$50 000 was allocated in the budget to provide further teaching space. The problem is that the lowest quotes were somewhere between \$80 000 and \$90 000 and, in that context, \$50 000 will not provide much assistance at all. I am hoping that the honourable minister will scratch up some money from elsewhere to top up that \$50 000 so that we can solve the current problems. You cannot stop children of 4 or 5 coming along with their elder brothers and sisters. At Nyirripi, very young children crowd together in 1 area with children right up to grade 6, making teaching very difficult.

I have spoken about the problems at Yuendumu where large numbers of people have middle-ear infections and educationally-significant hearing impairment. There is a need to do something about both the hearing impairment and the air-conditioners, which rattle and scream and make an incredible noise. It is extremely difficult for somebody without a hearing impairment to hear what the teacher is saying, let alone for somebody with such an impairment. As I said the other day, for people with a hearing impairment, the background noise is equivalent to that which we would experience whilst trying to hold a conversation whilst a road train is going past. Clearly, that is a major problem.

Previously, the minister asked me to discuss my attitudes towards absenteeism through truancy, and I have been hoping that at some stage there would be a debate on the subject so that we could give it the attention it deserved. At Yuendumu they have identified an incredible correlation between the children with the worst hearing problems and the absenteeism. Clearly, when schoolchildren cannot hear, it is extremely boring for them to sit in a classroom all day. Those children are the ones who have to be chased hardest to get them back to school.

The last school that I want to mention is Willowra, and the story of what has happened there is incredible. I asked the minister to advise me in relation to the matter during the budget session but he has not done so as yet. He made a personal explanation but it did not cover the issues adequately.

The federal government contributed \$320 000 for the construction of a community education centre for post-primary education in the Willowra area. It was completed some months ago now and the community said that it was excellent. In fact, I think the centre will be opened in a matter of weeks. The community has been waiting hopefully for some staff to arrive but has now been told that there is no way in the world that there will be any staff for the program at the centre this year. The empty building will sit there for the rest of this year. Lo and behold, the community has now been advised that there will be no staff next year. When I look through the budget, I note that that is confirmed: there is no money for staffing the Willowra Community Education Centre in 1989.

Mr Tuxworth: We cannot make you happy, can we? You have a school and now you want teachers.

Mr EDE: That is right. It really is a bit too much to expect them both, especially in the same year. If there is a fire and the place gets burned down, or if it is vandalised, teachers will probably be provided then. Then, no doubt, they will be pulled out as a punishment to the community for the vandalism.

Really, it is not good enough. It is not a pretty story to tell. The people at Willowra have complained to the federal member about the situation. The federal government put money into the project, which is a very necessary one. There is no primary education out there. I am supposed to try to explain to my federal colleagues that this is not really a case of the Northern Territory failing to fulfil its end of the bargain. To be perfectly frank, unless the minister is able to explain to me why the centre will not be staffed this year or next year, I will not even try to explain.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the first matter I would like to raise tonight relates to contracts for the supply of fruit and vegetables to the

Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Hospitals. The problem, as put to me by the person who holds the current contracts, which expire at the end of September, is that he has not had the opportunity to tender for the new contracts. He asked catering staff and the man in charge at Alice Springs Hospital when the contracts would be advertised and let, but they were not able to tell him.

He discovered only a couple of days ago that the contracts had been advertised under the logo of the Department of Health and Community Services, and I have a copy of the advertisement in front of me. The logo is certainly not very conspicuous. The word 'contract' is highlighted to some extent but is still fairly well hidden. When I followed the matter up, I was told that the advertisement appeared in the Centralian Advocate of 16 September and 21 September. I studied the library copies for about 10 minutes this morning but I must confess that I could not find the advertisement, although it measures about 3 inches by 2½ inches. I asked my secretary in Alice Springs to hunt for it and she rang back to say that she had found it in the left-hand bottom corner of page 34. I went back to the Centralian Advocate and saw it.

It is not a very effective advertisement, Mr Speaker. I have placed advertisements for electoral purposes, even with my ugly mug on them, knowing that they would appear in the Centralian Advocate on specific days, and have had to go through the paper twice before actually locating the advertisements.

The point that I am trying to make is that this person, who is genuinely interested in tendering so that he has a chance to win the contracts, has been disenfranchised. I have been told by a Mr Peter Reilly of the Department of Health and Community Services, that the matter is out of the department's hands and that I should get in touch with the General Tender Board. I spoke to Mrs Sandy Gemmell in that area and she was very sympathetic and understood the problem. She said that the only course of action open to the gentleman is to write and explain the circumstances which caused him to miss out. In fact, the only realistic chance he has is if the tenders are unsatisfactory and tenders are called again. There is a slight chance that the General Tender Board might have a closer look at it.

My experience of the Centralian Advocate in my 19 years in Alice Springs is that it would be far better if all advertisements for tenders and contracts were placed among the classified advertisements. People read the classified section. If advertisements were placed there, there would be no need for the expensive logos or fancy formats. Advertisements like this must cost quite a lot of money ...

Mr Finch: Display is cheaper than classifieds, isn't it?

Mr COLLINS: I doubt whether it would be in this case and it certainly would not be as effective as using the classifieds. People would get used to looking in a particular part of the classified section, under the heading of 'contracts' and it would be far more effective. Obviously, it is in the interests of every Territorian taxpayer that, when contracts are to be let, as many people as possible have a chance to put in a tender. In that way, the widest range of choice becomes available and the community will get the service at the best possible price.

This person has been disenfranchised. I think it is bad management. Perhaps it could be said that he knew that his contract was due to expire at the end of the month and should have been more vigorous in pursuing the General Tender Board or the Department of Health and Community Services to try and find out what was happening. He is a busy person. He has a very heavy



schedule and I can well understand how he let things slip. Certainly, he was not just hoping that the contract would fall into his lap. He sought information from those whom he thought to be the appropriate people, but he missed out. It seems almost certain that he was disenfranchised.

I am not saying that he would have won the contract, although he had held it for the last 8 or 9 years which would seem to indicate that he would have had a fairly good chance. The Department of Health and Community Services may be paying more than it would have done had he obtained the information in time to put in a tender.

I note also that the advertisement indicates that the old Berrimah-Line syndrome is still present. It states that the contract documents are available from the Contracts Section of the Department of Health and Community Services, Casuarina Plaza, Ground Floor, Casuarina NT. Surely it is only common sense, when contracts apply to a particular region, to ensure that the documentation is available at a central location within that region. If it is not, there is the possibility that people who may have tendered and supplied a better service at a better price will miss out and we will end up paying more.

Mr Speaker, the second matter relates to a request I made of the Attorney-General on Wednesday. I asked him if a 1-way screen could be set up through which victims of crimes could view line-ups of people in an attempt to identify the perpetrators. I made that request as a result of something which has made me pretty angry and has made a considerable number of other people in Alice Springs very angry too. It relates to a rape case which was recently heard in the Alice Springs court.

Normally, one does not know the names of people who are victims of this horrible crime, but in this case the name did get around. I know the young lady. She was at school when I was teaching. I recall being invited to and attending her confirmation at the Anglican Church. She is a very decent young lady. She was living on her own in a flat and the flat was broken into. She was attacked, raped, beaten with a curtain rod and, I believe, the attacker returned and repeated the offence. She was taken to view a line-up of people. As we know, the suspect is planted in the line amongst a number of other people of similar shape, size and build. I believe that she was in a corridor and I have heard from 2 quite separate sources that she was only a couple of feet away from the line-up with policemen beside her. She was taken past these people in a line-up.

Mr Speaker, try to put yourself in the position of that girl. The story goes that she was not the first person who had been treated in this way by the accused but the other girls had been far too frightened even to come forward. She had the personal courage, with the support of her parents, to lay charges against this person. She was brought into this corridor and she was 2 ft away from this person. She just lost her nerve and could not name the person then and there.

The police officer who was with her said that she had correctly identified the person who had been arrested and it certainly caused considerable consternation when the judge, in summing up, said that this was not good enough. That certainly angered people on the prosecution side, which provided one of my sources of information. I explained this to the Attorney-General yesterday and he detailed some of the considerations which apply in the common law. He said that the judge had to say that because apparently, under common law, the victim has actually to touch the suspect in the line-up.

Mr Speaker, I find it incredible that a person who has been treated so brutally is put into such a position by our common law. The Attorney-General said that it was a problem. If the judge had accepted the victim's identification of the suspect, defence counsel could have appealed and apparently had the case thrown out under common law. I find it astounding that a person who has been through such a terrible experience should actually have to touch the suspect in order to effect identification. It is the last thing I would want to do if I were in that young lady's position and I can well understand how she would have lost her nerve.

The Attorney-General says that it is a problem and that there is some talk about making special provision in cases where young children have been molested. It has been suggested that they could be put in a position where they could see the line-up without being seen by the people in it. Perhaps a 1-way screen is the answer. I do not apologise for raising this matter. It angered a great many people in Alice Springs when the judge had to tell the jury virtually to discard that evidence.

In this particular case, a pay packet belonging to the girl was found in the pocket of the suspected assailant. The judge questioned whether that was solid evidence and the jury, having listened to the judge's summing up, produced a verdict of not guilty. The suspect went free and is out there in the community now. I do not have the answers but I really think something needs to be done in terms of handling line-ups differently. If we need to legislate to achieve that, so be it.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, the member for Stuart raised a number of issues relating to schools in his electorate. I would like to make some initial comment on his remarks. I will also be discussing 1 of the issues later during the course of these sittings.

I join the member in wishing Ti Tree school all the best for its anniversary and I note his comments in relation to the original reasons for the establishment of the school. I can remember visiting the Ti Tree school some years ago. I saw a huge incinerator out the back. One almost needed a degree to operate it. I think it cost about \$80 000 and at one stage someone had to be flown up from Sydney to operate it. I have not been back since then and I do not know what has happened to it. It is probably still there and it probably has not been used since. It is a wonderful school and when I was there it was operating extremely well.

The member for Stuart raised the issue of Ali Curung and the problems that are being experienced there, particularly in relation to the loss of 3 teachers. One of our problems with isolated schools is that teachers often leave at very short notice. In the case of 2 of the teachers who left Ali Curung, only a week's notice was given. It is really difficult to replace people at such short notice.

One of the teachers was a fully-qualified, Aboriginal teacher. That person left without any notice and ended up working back in Tennant Creek. We had assumed that a number of problems would be solved if Aboriginal teachers took positions in the communities in which they were raised. Unfortunately, it appears that we need to look at that assumption again because this teacher moved out of the community she originally came from and went to Tennant Creek. We need reasonable notice to replace teachers in those communities. Most teachers are professional in their approach and realise that they have a responsibility to the students in the community. The students relate to their teachers and problems are created when they leave at very short notice.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart spoke also about the situation in the Utopia area. I have been out there recently and I visited Soapy Bore, which I will never forget. The water is on there. I have not brought the photo over this evening to show to the member for Stuart.

Mr Ede: It hasn't got any taps.

Mr HARRIS: Actually, it has. I have a photograph of a student drinking from the trough.

Mr Ede: Yes, there are taps at the trough but there are no outside taps to water the lawn.

Mr HARRIS: I can advise the honourable member that the department continually monitors the needs of outstation communities and, if numbers are increasing, we will look into the situation.

I was interested in his remarks about outstations. Generally, we leave it to the communities themselves to make approaches. We look at whether or not a community is in fact a mobile community or whether it is going to establish permanently, in which case we can look at putting in facilities. We will have a look at the issues raised by the member with a view to trying to cater for the needs and wishes of the people involved.

The honourable member mentioned the extremely high quotes for the work at Nyirripi school. I know about that problem and I will see what we can do in relation to it. He also raised the issue of children with hearing problems at Yuendumu. I have made the comment previously that it is hard enough to educate Aboriginal children, particularly when they have no knowledge of English whatsoever, and it is damn near impossible if they cannot hear. I have acknowledged that, and pointed out that the government has looked at addressing that problem through the Menzies School of Health Research. As the honourable member would know, we have issued students with hearing aids in some schools, so that they can adjust the volume to suit their needs. We will continue to look at the problem.

I was very interested in the member's comments in relation to absenteeism and I am still waiting to hear the big fix. I believe that community attitude is one of the biggest problems. I hope that the honourable member and other members of the opposition will encourage communities to make a commitment to the education of their children. The development of that commitment at places like Imanpa and Belyuen has led to the resolution of problems. Rather than endeavouring to kick us in the teeth, members opposite could spend some time encouraging communities to make that commitment. That would certainly help in solving many problems.

The issue of noise from air-conditioners has to be looked at. I know of some schools in Darwin which have installed sectioned air-conditioning systems to replace the small wall units which tend to rattle and vibrate.

The member for Stuart raised the issue of the \$320 000 that has been spent on the community education centre at Willowra. I indicated in the budget debate that we are putting in some 22 staff to look after and service 8 community education centres in Aboriginal communities. We are keen to pursue that direction and we believe that it will assist many of the Aboriginal communities in meeting their educational needs.

I believe that, in the case of Willowra and other places, the Commonwealth and Territory governments should be working together to ensure not only that a facility is provided but that teachers and housing for teachers are provided. Quite often, the Commonwealth government sets up centres in various places throughout the Territory and says that the Territory government must provide the teachers and so forth. In many cases, we have no chance of providing the funding to service these Commonwealth-built facilities. We realise that. If we worked together, we could build education centres gradually and ensure that in each case funding was available for teaching staff and housing, so that the centres could function properly.

The same thing applies to the seeding of any program. I am trying to look at the issue responsibly. One has only to think of Gapuwiyak and the yellow submarine that has been there for years. A beautiful centre was built, and it has not been used - or it had not been used when I was previously Minister for Education. I have not checked up to see what has happened with it now. Recently, I opened a new school at Gapuwiyak but I have not checked the other facilities. I will address this problem in more detail next week.

I believe that we have to work together. It is no good saying that the federal member has done this or that. The whole issue has to be approached on a government-to-government basis, and we have to be able to come to grips with the problems. If that does not occur, the system will be completely disrupted.

Mr Ede: Didn't you know it was there?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I indicated during the course of my speech on the Appropriation Bill that \$320 000 had been spent by the Commonwealth government to provide the centre at Willowra. I will be looking at that and I will look at the issues that the member raised. If a more detailed response is required, I will give it.

I am happy to examine issues raised by the member for Stuart and to listen to the ways in which he feels he can fix the problems. Far too often, we use our time in this Assembly to kick each other to death. I have often said that I want to know what the solution is. I do not want to hear: 'You fellows should be ashamed of yourselves for not doing this'. Members opposite have to offer an alternative. If I can see the alternative and consider it, perhaps we can look at coming to grips with the particular problem.

Mr Speaker, I have responded but briefly to the honourable member's comments. I will be happy to take up his points again later during the course of these sittings.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to touch on a couple of matters. During the early part of the week, I was accosted by an irate constituent who said: 'You guys are a bunch of so-and-sos. You put the sewerage rates up'. I said that we had made only a small increase in water charges. He said: 'Well, you haven't got my sewerage bill then, because mine went up'. During the course of the sittings, I asked the minister responsible whether the sewerage rates had risen in accordance with the NT Government Gazette that was issued last week. He said that they remain the same and that, overall, there is a minor decrease.

I obtained copies of the relevant gazette from last year and last week's gazette and, for the benefit of the honourable minister, I will read into Hansard what I found. If he can explain it to me in terms of there being no increase, I will be happy to go back to the aggrieved constituent.

In NT Government Gazette No S63 of 18 September 1987, the schedule shows that, where land is occupied primarily as a single residential unit, the cost for a toilet facility is \$50 plus \$18.75 for each fitting in excess of 2. In NT Government Gazette S56 of 30 September 1988, the schedule shows that the charge is \$55 in the case of residential land occupied primarily as a single residential unit. Last year, the schedule showed that, for land on which residential units under the Unit Titles Act are constructed, the charge for a single toilet fitting in each unit is \$33.75. Last week's gazette indicates that the charge, under the same criteria, is \$55. Mr Speaker, maybe there is a slight saving there, but it does not quite jump out from the page at me. If the minister has a few moments to consider the matter and can explain it to me, I will go back and tell the aggrieved constituent that he really did get a saving and that he just does not know how to read the gazette or his bill.

Mr Speaker, the other schedule listed in last week's gazette refers to more than 25 pots and more than 50 pots and what have you. There is a whole new range of schedules which could involve savings for people who have multiple toilets on their premises. However, for the person living in a flat or in his own home, the situation is quite confused.

The next item that I would like to talk about tonight relates to the Imparja signal that is being relayed to most places in the Territory now but is still not being received in communities such as Ti Tree, Elliott, Borroloola, Pine Creek, Mataranka and Pmara Jutunta. I raise this in terms of the question that I put to the Chief Minister earlier this year in his former capacity as minister responsible for communications. He said he would review whether the government could provide assistance to these communities to enable them to get a local receiving station and transmitter so that they could get the signal from Imparja. The minister considered this and ultimately came back and said it was not possible and that government would not be involved. I do not recall whether that was because there was no money or whether it was because the government would set a precedent that was likely to cost a great deal of money in the days ahead.

In any event, Mr Speaker, I believe the situation has now become farcical. We have communities such as Mataranka, Pine Creek, Ti Tree, Borroloola, Elliott and Pmara Jutunta whose combined adult populations would exceed 1000, with probably as many children attending school. They are not receiving the benefit of the Imparja signal and it really is a joke. I do not see the point in the government providing \$2m per year to support the Imparja signal so that it is transmitted to people in remote areas and then saying to those people that it will not help them to provide facilities to receive the signal.

You cannot reasonably say to people in Borroloola, Elliott or Ti Tree that they should raise \$30 000 to put in a receiver and a transmitter for the community. It is not reasonable and is not possible. All they are asking for is the capacity to receive what everybody else in the Northern Territory takes for granted. If you look around, it is clear that the federal government and state governments have spent a lot of money in most centres to enable people to receive radio and television signals. There is a distinct need for the Imparja signal to be received in the communities I have referred to. I would say to the minister that it is time for the government to assist with the provision of a receiving and transmitting facility in each small community so that they can have the benefit of what we take for granted.

The minister could do that in several ways. If he wished the communities to make a contribution themselves, he could offer them a \$1-for-\$1 grant or even a \$2-for-\$1 or \$3-for-\$1 grant. I am talking about amounts of

between \$15 000 and \$30 000, depending on the type of equipment and the size of the community. The minister could consider also the possibility of giving a grant to the community governments involved, through the Office of Local Government, to enable them to put in facilities, or he could allow communities to borrow the money through the Grants Commission and pay it off over time.

If the government persists with the arrant nonsense of providing \$2m to put the signal out and nothing to allow it to be received, it will be regarded in a very poor light. It just does not make sense. We are inclined to treat the people as simpletons, which they certainly are not.

The last matter I would like to raise concerns the town camps meeting that was held in Tennant Creek a week ago. I believe that was a very momentous occasion in the development of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. I was delighted that it took place in Tennant Creek. We are now seeing the formation of a peak council for Aboriginal remote area communities. That is very good because their voice has not been heard until now and it is important that the government starts to hear what they are saying because their message is very simple. The message is: 'We want money and resources to provide basic facilities in the remote areas and, if you do not give us the money to provide them there, we are coming to town'. Once they come to town, money has to be spent to provide the facilities required.

I welcome the formation of the town camps body because I believe it will give the people concerned an opportunity to place before the government some very reasonable options and rational solutions to problems that we are all confronted with. The groups involved are the first to say that they do not want to come to town and that their people prefer to live out in their own areas. All they want is basic facilities, but if they are not provided, there is no way people can be persuaded to stay out of the towns.

About a dozen times in this Assembly, I have raised with the Minister for Education the need for a school out at the China Wall. Last week I spoke with Mr Raymond Mick, who is the chairman of the Aboriginal community out there. He tells me there are 50 children waiting to go to school in the Nicholson River area. Most of them have never been to school. He said the situation is very serious and, if something does not happen soon, they will all come into town because the parents want their kids to go to school. When they come into town, we will be confronted with a sweet little bill for accommodating everybody.

I hope the government responds positively to the establishment of the town camps peak council that was formed last week. Whilst the people involved are currently motivated by frustration and absolutely desperate need, I think the council will become a very important body for government to negotiate with. I will certainly be working closely with it because I think that the more Aboriginals we can keep in their own communities doing their own thing with basic facilities, the less trauma we are likely to have in town where people are forced to come and live in conditions that are not terribly satisfactory.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): This evening, Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about a subject that I am very interested in. Although the government is doing something about it, I believe it could do a bit more.

I will start by saying that I am interested in heritage legislation for man-made buildings but I would not die at the stake for the issue. Man-made buildings do present us with history and we have to consider the past if we are going to go into the future. However, man made those buildings and what

man has made once, man can make again. Heritage legislation is important but, as I said, I would not die at the stake for it.

I am also interested in fauna heritage and I have done my little bit in husbanding certain native fauna, some more protected than others, some from interstate and some local, each species a microcosm of interesting biological detail. I have exchanged the knowledge I have gained from my keeping of these animals with other people and vice versa, so that the sum total of our combined knowledge has been increased. Mr Speaker, we are all interested in preserving our fauna heritage and many of us are doing something about it.

There is also the question of flora heritage. The Northern Territory is home to many rare species of plant and if we do not catalogue all these plants very quickly, many of them will be lost to us for ever. Plants are easier to knock off than animals and, when they are knocked off, they often do not survive and we have lost them for good. Something is being done regarding our flora heritage. There are native plant groups which do much to keep alive the interest of the general public in native plants. Flora are more susceptible than fauna to human depredations. It is much easier, and I have known it to happen, to knock off small orchids and palm seedlings from the bush and take them home or to nurseries. It is more difficult to knock off a Gould's goanna or an Oenpelli python. They can be taken from the bush but, because they are live animals, people are probably more inclined to look after them and, because of that, the species are preserved.

I know that the Conservation Commission is concerned with our flora heritage and is addressing the issue of flora preservation. I know that it has employed consultants and I must congratulate it. However, I believe it can do a rather more. There are too many species of irreplaceable flora in the Northern Territory that will be lost. There is 1 particular palm whose habitat occurs in many places in my electorate. I was told about this originally by an old-timer who lives here. I am talking about the rare palm *Ptychosperma bleeseri*. There are not many of this species left in their old habitat because the people who are interested in palms have knocked them off 1 by 1.

One location for this rare palm, as I was told years ago by the old-timer, is in Black Jungle on Koolpinyah Station in my electorate. Black Jungle, by the way, used to be called Aunty May's Jungle in the time when Mr and Mrs Yates lived there. Mrs May Yates was very interested in anything in the bush. In her day, there were many luxuriant stands of this rare palm, but now there are very few and the remaining stands contain very few specimens. These days, these rare palms are dug up. They are taken home or to a nursery where they interbreed very easily with other species of palm. When that happens, the progeny lose the genetic purity of the original species. This is a very sad situation. If all the varieties of a particular plant interbreed, over a period of time they become roughly the same genetically. If a disease from the wild or an introduced disease from some other place in Australia or overseas gets into this genetically similar material, there is a possibility that the whole species may be wiped out. However, if we keep each species genetically pure, we stand a better chance of preserving it for the future.

Mr Speaker, every day, interesting medicinal and herbal properties of plants are being discovered. These help veterinary science and medical science to the betterment of animals and humans. If we have this massive interbreeding of varieties of plants, we can lose those properties. Some rare plants like *Ptychosperma bleeseri* grow in isolated pockets of land. This isolation has protected them from interbreeding. If, through lack of

knowledge, we allow these plants to be knocked off without proper regard to sensible conservation values, we will have much to answer for in the future.

Whilst congratulating the Conservation Commission on the work it has already done, I would like to see it stepping up its investigations into our flora heritage in order to preserve such species.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.



Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION  
Pioneer Walk-in Theatre

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1642 citizens requesting the Assembly to ensure that the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre not be demolished and that heritage legislation be enacted in the Northern Territory. 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 Speaker and honourable members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, we the undersigned members of the Alice Springs community, believing that heritage legislation should be enacted in the Northern Territory, being concerned at the continual destruction of the heritage of Alice Springs, and being concerned that the Alice Springs Pioneer Walk-in Theatre may be the next building to be demolished, hereby petition the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory to take all steps necessary to ensure that the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre is not demolished and that our requests for heritage legislation are acted upon, and we as in duty bound do ever pray.

STATEMENT  
Letter from Federal Parliament

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Joan Child MP, and the President of the Senate, Hon K. Sibraa, forwarding copies of resolutions of thanks to those who made significant contributions to the new Parliament House, passed by both Houses of the Australian Parliament.

With the concurrence of honourable members, I will have the text of the letter and the resolutions incorporated into Hansard:

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Speaker of the  
House of Representatives

President of the Senate

Hon R. Vale, MLA  
Speaker  
Northern Territory Legislative Assembly  
PO Box 3721  
DARWIN NT 5794

Dear Mr Speaker,

When the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Australian Parliament first met in the new Parliament House at Canberra on 22 August 1988 both Houses agreed to resolutions of thanks to those who made significant contributions to the building.

On behalf of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives we have much pleasure in forwarding the text of these resolutions.

We extend our sincere appreciation for your contribution to Australia's new Parliament House.

Joan Child

Yours sincerely,

Kerry W. Sibraa

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PARLIAMENT OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Inaugural Sittings of  
The Senate  
and  
The House of Representatives  
in the new Parliament House

**RESOLUTIONS**

**OF**

**THANKS**

MONDAY, 22 AUGUST 1988

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

=====

EXTRACT FROM THE  
JOURNALS OF THE SENATE

No 84

Monday 22 August 1988

**NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE - MOTION OF THANKS:** The Leader of the Government in the Senate (Senator Button), by leave, moved - That the following resolutions be agreed to -

- (1) That the Senate expresses its thanks and appreciation to the Parliaments, Governments and peoples of those countries, states and territories and to those organisations which have so graciously presented gifts to Australia's new Parliament House and extends a warm welcome to those Presiding Officers and representatives who are present today.
- (2) That the Senate extends its sincere thanks to the following persons and organisations associated with the planning and construction of the new Parliament House:
  - (a) Mitchell/Giurgola and Thorp Architects who designed it;
  - (b) the Parliament House Construction Authority, Concrete Holland Joint Venture and all contractors and workers who built it;
  - (c) the artists, craftsmen and craftswomen who advised on and assisted in its furnishing and decoration; and
  - (d) the members of the Joint Select Committee on the New and Permanent Parliament House, all past and present members of the Joint Standing Committee on the New Parliament House, officers of the National Capital Development Commission, parliamentary and other staff,

for their endeavours in providing a magnificent permanent building for the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Debate ensued.

Question put and passed.

HARRY EVANS  
Clerk of the Senate

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

=====

EXTRACT FROM THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

No.67

Monday, 22 August 1988

**NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE - PRESENTATION OF GIFTS - RESOLUTION OF THANKS:** Mr Hawke (Prime Minister) moved - That this House expresses its thanks and appreciation to the Parliaments, Governments and peoples of those countries, states and territories and to those organisations which have so graciously presented gifts to Australia's new Parliament House and extends a warm welcome to those Presiding Officers and representatives who are present today.

Debate ensued.

Question - put and passed.

**NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE - PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION - RESOLUTION OF THANKS:** Mr Hawke (Prime Minister) moved - That this House extends its sincere thanks to the following persons and organisations associated with the planning and construction of the new Parliament House:

- (1) Mitchell/Giurgola and Thorp Architects who designed it;
- (2) the Parliament House Construction Authority, Concrete Holland Joint Venture and all contractors and workers who built it;
- (3) the artists, craftsmen and craftswomen who advised on and assisted in its furnishing and decoration; and
- (4) the members of the Joint Select Committee on the New and Permanent Parliament House, all past and present members of the Joint Standing Committee on the New Parliament House, officers of the National Capital Development Commission, parliamentary and other staff,

for their endeavours in providing a magnificent permanent building for the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Debate ensued.

Question - put and passed.

A.R. BROWNING  
Clerk of the House of Representatives

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving that, pursuant to standing order 251, the Minister for Tourism lay on the Table the following papers: (1) all documents relating to Amex card expenditures of the previous Chairman of the Tourist Commission for which reimbursement was given at any stage by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission; (2) all correspondence between the Auditor-General and the Tourist Commission on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditure; (3) all correspondence between the Auditor-General and the responsible minister and the Auditor-General and the Chief Minister on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditures; and (4) all letters, internal memoranda or minutes of the Tourist Commission Board related to the previous chairman's Amex expenditures.

Mr Speaker, I have moved for a suspension of standing orders to enable this matter to be debated today. Allegations against the Minister for Tourism were raised first in the August sittings of this parliament, when it was revealed that up to \$50 000 worth of travel and entertainment expenses had not been properly acquitted for a period of up to 24 months. Since the matter was raised, the minister has had the opportunity, both inside and outside parliament, to properly account for that expenditure. In fact, as I understand it, he actually gave a commitment to someone outside this House that he would provide that information to enable the proper accounting to be done. However, on the fourth day of this current sittings, we still do not have a proper accounting from the minister. Instead, the minister has failed to answer the proper and legitimate questions raised by the opposition in this House.

Motion agreed to.

#### MOTION

#### Tabling of Documents by Minister for Tourism

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 251, the Minister for Tourism lay on the Table the following papers: (1) all documents relating to Amex card expenditures of the previous Chairman of the Tourist Commission for which reimbursement was given at any stage by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission; (2) all correspondence between the Auditor-General and the Tourist Commission on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditure; (3) all correspondence between the Auditor-General and the responsible minister and the Auditor-General and the Chief Minister on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditures; and (4) all letters, internal memoranda or minutes of the Tourist Commission Board related to the previous chairman's Amex expenditures.

Mr Speaker, a cloud of controversy hangs over the head of the Minister for Tourism. It is there largely because of his own actions. He has failed to answer the legitimate questions put to him by this opposition. He has refused to table documents which may have supported his case. He has fuelled the flames of speculation that he has something to hide. He has done that in this sittings, as he did in the last sittings and in the intervening period. The only way that we can get to the bottom of this matter and move beyond the minister's stonewalling tactics and the contradictions in answers supplied by the minister and the previous Chief Minister, is through the tabling of all relevant documents. That is what this motion seeks and that is why it refers specifically to the documents we are interested in and want tabled.

Let me take you back to the beginning of this exercise, Mr Speaker. During the last sittings of the Assembly, the opposition tabled the Auditor-General's expression of his concern at the minister's failure, at the time when he was the Chairman of the Tourist Commission, to adequately carry out simple instructions of his board. Those instructions were actually minuted. During the last sittings, we heard that, at stages in the last 2 years of his chairmanship of the Tourist Commission, the minister had not properly acquitted up to \$50 000 of taxpayers' money, despite being given very strong instructions to do so. We heard that, over a 2-year period, considerable sums of money were not acquitted within the 1-month period required by the Board of the Tourist Commission. We have heard, and the minister has not contradicted it, that in his previous capacity as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, he disobeyed board directives to put his house in order.

We have indicated that the minister disobeyed the Auditor-General's directives to put his house in order and that the matter was not resolved until it was brought to the attention of the member for Nightcliff, the previous Chief Minister. It is very important to note that that did not occur until after the member for Araluen had resigned his post as Chairman of the Tourist Commission. In other words, concerns raised by his own board and the Auditor-General were not addressed until after he resigned his position as Chairman of the Tourist Commission and, in fact, had been a member of parliament for 3 or 4 months. That is one of the prime reasons why we want to see all the documents tabled. We want to see how a so-called responsible head of a statutory authority can continue for 2 years to ignore simple instructions given to him by his board. We want to see how a so-called responsible head of a statutory authority can resign to contest a seat of parliament whilst still ignoring the simple instructions that he was given by his board on these vital matters.

The only excuse we have been given so far, Mr Speaker, is that he was too busy travelling and representing the Northern Territory to undertake these basic checks. We want to see the documents so that we can know where he put forward that excuse so that we can know what sort of reaction that excuse brought from the board and the Auditor-General. No one should be too busy to fill out the forms necessary to acquit expenses, particularly when the money of taxpayers is involved. When the responsible auditing authority, the Auditor-General, points out that taxpayers' money is involved and that there are some obligations to be met, and the person concerned then continues to fail to meet those obligations, the people of the Northern Territory and members of this opposition start to get concerned. That is why the minister's failure to table the necessary documentation forces us to ask for that documentation to be tabled so that we, and the public of the Northern Territory, can get to the bottom of the whole matter.

Mr Speaker, what have we seen in these sittings of the Legislative Assembly? We have seen the honourable minister put up a brick wall on the question of a purchase of pearls. He is not game to come out and deny that the pearls were purchased. He is not game to come out and deny that, in the first instance, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission paid for the pearls and then, at a later date, the honourable minister was forced to pay the money back. No, he puts up a brick wall and will not answer the question, and I invite anyone to check Hansard for last week to get the true story of the honourable minister's actions on that particular matter.

The Minister for Tourism has a cloud hanging over his head and it is there because he has failed to properly account for his actions as Chairman of the

Tourist Commission. Despite the numerous opportunities we have given him, despite the numerous requests he has received from the media, he has failed to lay to rest the matters we raised during the last sittings and the questions we have asked during these sittings of the Legislative Assembly. There is a big, black cloud hanging over his head and it is the sort of big, black cloud that means that we, on this side of the House, receive telephone calls every second day giving us more information, or supposed information, on the activities of the honourable minister.

I had thought that, in his own interests, he would agree with the motion that has been put forward and would table all the necessary papers and documents. If there is nothing to hide, it would be the most effective way to put to rest all the rumours that are circulating - and let me assure the honourable minister that there are heaps of them - about his activities in his former role as Chairman of the Tourist Commission.

Mr Speaker, let me once again read through the list of the documents that we are asking for. First, we want all documents relating to Amex card expenditures of the previous Chairman of the Tourist Commission for which reimbursement was given at any stage by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. That has been worded carefully because we all know that, as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, the honourable minister's practice was to submit his American Express card expenditures and then, at a later date, together with the Tourist Commission, to sort out which were his personal payments and which were legitimate Tourist Commission expenditures. However, in the meantime, on the honourable minister's own word, a situation existed where, in the first instance, the Tourist Commission paid the total amount of the bill for the Amex card expenditure that was submitted by the minister. I still find that staggering. I am astonished that the Chief Minister has not assured this House that that practice is not still followed.

First, we want to know how much money was repaid to the honourable minister by the Tourist Commission which, at a subsequent date, he had to return to the Tourist Commission because it was not his in the first place. For how long did he have what amounted, in effect, to an interest-free loan from the Tourist Commission? How much money did he have and for how long did he have that money? Those are the key questions that we want to see answered by the tabling of those documents.

Secondly, we want the minister to table all correspondence between the Auditor-General and the Tourist Commission on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditures.

Mr Manzie: You have got it.

Mr SMITH: We have got it, have we? Well, I am glad the Attorney-General is convinced we have it, because we are certainly not convinced of that. Isn't it disgusting, in the first instance, that the Auditor-General had to write to the board of a statutory authority and say, 'Hang on, fellows, your chairman is not doing the right thing. It is so serious that we have to write you an official letter about it'? Isn't it worse that, after the Auditor-General had written that letter to the board, as it was proper for him to do in the first instance, he was then forced to write to the minister? But, worst of all, he was then forced to go directly to the Chief Minister to sort this matter out. Those are 3 steps that a very careful Auditor-General would take. We all know that the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory is a very careful and a very competent Auditor-General. First, he wrote to the board. Knowing the way the Auditor-General operates, he may well have

communicated initially with the chairman himself in case the matter had slipped his mind. However, he wrote first to the Board of the Tourist Commission. He then wrote to the minister. Finally, he was forced to contact the Chief Minister in an attempt to have this man opposite sort out his responsibilities and carry out some simple instructions given to him by the Board of the Tourist Commission which, for some reason, he had not been able to carry out for a period of 2 years in respect of a sum of \$50 000.

The only excuse he could give was that he was too busy. Isn't it interesting that that was the excuse he gave at the last sittings when we moved the censure motion. So feeble was his effort that, 6 weeks later, even with all the staff and resources that he has, it was still the only excuse that he had. I want to tell the honourable minister that the excuse of being 'too busy' will not wash. It is not acceptable to this House. It is not acceptable to the people of the Northern Territory for a minister of the Crown to say: 'I was too busy to detail and to properly acquit my expenses'. That is simply not good enough.

What we want to see from the correspondence between the Auditor-General and the Tourist Commission is what steps the Auditor-General was forced to take to obtain a response from the Board of the Tourist Commission and what the board's reaction was.

In relation to the correspondence between the Auditor-General and the responsible minister and the Auditor-General and the Chief Minister on matters related to the previous chairman's Amex card expenditures, the same situation applies. It is a fact that the Auditor-General was forced to write to the responsible minister and was forced to make contact - I am not sure if he wrote, Mr Speaker - with the Chief Minister. Last week, the honourable minister attempted to obfuscate that point. When the minister was asked specifically - caught out in a contradiction - whether he had been talked to by the then Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff, he said: 'No, Mr Speaker, not while I was Chairman of the Tourist Commission'. The question was whether he was spoken to by the then Chief Minister, in connection with these matters. It can be read into the answer he gave last week that, of course, he was. That is a direct contradiction and a direct misleading of the House in respect of an answer that he gave the previous day.

The fourth thing that we seek is all letters and internal memoranda or minutes of the Board of the Tourist Commission relating to his previous Amex card expenditures. Mr Speaker, I have covered adequately the reasons why that information should be supplied.

The Minister for Tourism, through his failure to provide any justification or explanation - other than the fact that he was too busy - and through his failure to provide an accurate reckoning to this House of the amount of money involved and the time during which that money was not properly acquitted, has led us to a situation in which we have no choice but to demand that he table the papers. Some people learn lessons the hard way. There was an easy way for the minister to handle this matter, and that was to come clean and to tell the people of the Northern Territory precisely what the situation was. We have had 6 weeks of the honourable minister putting up brick walls and attempting to obfuscate in his answers to the questions we have asked. The only way that this matter can be resolved is by the Minister for Tourism laying on the Table the documents that we have asked for. If he wishes, he can similarly lay on the Table an explanation of those documents. That is the only way that he will get rid of the cloud hanging over his head because that is the only way that this Assembly can be satisfied about what happened and,



it is the only way that the public of the Northern Territory can be satisfied that, despite the fact that the honourable minister did not carry out the simple instructions he was supposed to follow, nothing improper has occurred. Those are the reasons why we have moved this motion and I invite the government to support it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, once again, we have a situation where not 1 minister and not 1 government backbencher will rise to support the Minister for Tourism. I can only assume that the government intends to support the motion.

Mr Coulter: It is wrong to assume.

Mr EDE: It is wrong to assume?

Mr Bell: If you are not going to speak to it, and you are going to oppose it, then sit there and shut up.

Mr EDE: Oppose it or sit there and shut up. On the government's own head be it, Mr Speaker.

Government members have talked before about opposition members making allegations, in other contexts, when we have brought to this House fundamental issues which came to our attention because people in the electorate asked us to raise them. In this situation, we have the minister's own words. We are quoting back to the minister his own words, spoken in this House, and on the basis of those words we are asking him to provide us with the information which is necessary to clear his name. We are talking about up to \$50 000 that was not acquitted by the chairman. That \$50 000 was not his own personal money. It is not even money raised from shareholders, which would have been bad enough. This was taxpayers' money. It was the money of the taxpayers of the Northern Territory, because we are talking about a statutory authority of this government. It is essential that the ministers opposite and the members opposite realise that they have a responsibility to this House and to the taxpayers of the Northern Territory in the acquittal of those funds and that here and now they take action to ensure that that responsibility is fully complied with.

A situation arose where the board demanded that the then chairman acquit the funds and the responsible minister demanded that he acquit these funds. It reached the situation where the Auditor-General demanded that he acquit the funds.

Mr Perron: You said all this during the last sittings.

Mr EDE: We have a situation where the Chief Minister demanded that the then chairman acquit those funds, taxpayers' money, the money of the people of the Northern Territory - and did he fix it? No, he did not. He resigned. He resigned and he stood for parliament, claiming to the people of Araluen that he was a fit and proper person to represent them in this Assembly.

Mr Hatton: So he was.

Mr EDE: So he was, says the member for Nightcliff.

Mr Speaker, that shows that a very disturbing set of standards applies in the Northern Territory as to who is a fit and proper person to be a member of this Assembly.

Look at Araluen, Mr Speaker, look at the nature of the electorate. It is an electorate that is comprised of public servants, business men and women, ordinary workers. They have to comply with Treasury requirements to acquit cash advances in the departments or businesses they work for. They cannot offer the excuse that they were 'too busy'. The workers in the minister's own department cannot turn to him and say they were 'too busy', that is for sure. But they have the perfect precedent because he said that he was too busy. The bosses of all of his electors require acquittal of money advances made to them, whether they be public servants or in private enterprise. They, in turn, demand that taxpayers' money be properly guarded by us in this House. They demand knowledge of the details of the interest-free loans which the honourable minister opposite was able, by using his position as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, to obtain from this government because, in effect, that is what they were. They were interest-free loans, provided without the authority or consent of the board and without the authority of this government. And they were taken up by him, not as a matter of right, but on the basis of the fact that he took them and refused to acquit them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would advise the honourable member that he should check closely standing order 62 in relation to the comments that he is making about the honourable Minister for Tourism. Whilst this is a substantive motion, it is not a substantive motion against the honourable minister.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, thank you for your words. I note that honourable members opposite did not bring up that point, which in itself says something.

Mr Speaker, it has been proven to this House that those interest-free loans - and there is no other way to describe them - existed. The honourable minister used his own Amex card to run up expenses which were then paid for by the Tourist Commission. On the honourable minister's own admission, the commission paid money which covered his own personal expenses and his own personal purchases while he was overseas and, for the period between the payment of the money to him and the time he paid it back, it represented an interest-free loan. There is no other way that it can be described, Mr Speaker. I have questioned the authority for those interest-free loans. Now, we have demanded details.

We have demanded that these documents be put before this House so that we can examine the nature of those interest-free loans and so that we can examine the nature of the documents, the purposes and the period of time that were involved and assess whether the minister is able in any way to defend himself on the basis that he had the authority of any person to do what he did, that he was not acting in direct contravention of the authorities that were properly placed over him as the chairman.

We have before us a crippled minister. There is no doubt about that. He has no credibility amongst his peers, Mr Speaker. That has been demonstrated in a previous debate and again in this debate. His peers have refused to get to their feet. Each time a question is put on this matter, we see the blank looks opposite. Members begin to fidget and people leave the House. That demonstrates the lack of support that they provide to him because they know that he has an incredible credibility gap as a result of this. Not one of them will stand up and support him. They are shamefaced because they know that the obligation is on him. They know that, as of now, the honourable minister is dead meat - crippled, dead meat.

The honourable minister has 3 options: he can resign, admitting his mistakes; he can come clean, and allow examination of those documents; or he can stand around and smell.

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing order 62 governs the use of offensive or unbecoming words against members of this Assembly. I believe the member for Stuart has been guilty of using such words in the last couple of paragraphs of his debate, and seek that he withdraw them.

Mr LEO: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I would appreciate it if the Chief Minister were a little more specific in his point of order. Quite frankly, I do not recall ...

Mr Dale: 'Crippled, dead meat', for example?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, that is speaking purely in political terms. It described his political liability. I do not think it was a personal reflection upon the minister at all. It was speaking in purely political terms. However, I would appreciate it if the Chief Minister could be a little more specific. I am quite sure all members of this House would support his point of order if he were, but without him being specific, unfortunately I have to oppose that point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: On the basis that there has been an objection lodged against the use of the words 'crippled' and 'dead meat', I would ask the honourable member for Stuart to withdraw those references.

Mr EDE: I withdraw that the minister is crippled or dead meat.

Mr Speaker, I will finish on this. The fact remains that, in political terms, there is a smell about the honourable minister and it is crippling his ability to carry out his functions as a minister. If the honourable minister wishes to allow that situation to remain, be that on his own head and on that of this government. However, for the good of the tourism industry and for the good of the Territory, I would advise government members to require him to take the action which we have demanded and so solve this problem or to take the appropriate action of demanding his resignation.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, it is quite remarkable that we are again debating a matter which was the subject of a censure motion on 25 August this year. It is quite incredible that the opposition has nothing more to say now than it had then, as is shown by the fact that the member for Stuart spoke for only 7 minutes out of a possible 30. It is quite obvious that the opposition is operating on rumour and innuendo and that this motion is no more than a fishing expedition.

In the last few weeks, I have been questioned on a number of occasions about my expenses. I have acknowledged the fact that, on occasions, personal expenses were paid for by the Tourist Commission. I am quite satisfied, as is the Auditor-General, that each and every one of those personal expenses were reimbursed by myself, or charged to me by the Tourist Commission and reimbursed by myself, without exception. I have done nothing wrong. The Auditor-General has looked at the accounts and has cleared them. During the last sittings, mention was made of the Office of the Auditor-General's report. I quote from it: 'My interim report dated 21 May 1986 advised that I would be examining the status of the previous chairman's unacquitted travelling expenses'. He goes on to advise that the matter has been finalised to his satisfaction, that is, to the satisfaction of an Auditor-General whom the Leader of the Opposition has described as 'careful and competent'.

The opposition's problem is that it has nothing to say about positive developments in the portfolio areas for which I have responsibility. Instead,

it continues to make unsubstantiated, personal attacks on myself and what I did for the Northern Territory prior to my entry into this House. I have no intention of tabling any American Express dockets, Mr Speaker. I have no intention of doing that because I had to travel widely for years. The opposition has talked about \$50 000 of unacquitted, outstanding expenses. Members opposite know very well that almost all of that money was spent on hotel accommodation, meals, air fares, taxis ...

Mr Ede: Pearls!

Mr POOLE: Mr Speaker ...

Mr Ede: Just tell us. Is it true or false?

Mr POOLE: It is false. It is false. You come outside and ask me something like that. You would not have the guts to do that because you have no fortitude whatsoever.

Mr Smith: You'll get yours. You'll keep. You are next on the list.

Mr POOLE: Mr Speaker, I have no intention of asking the Tourist Commission to go through 8 years of documentation and to extract hundreds, maybe thousands, of pieces of paper and try to match them all up. I acquitted my expenses regularly throughout my tenure as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, apart from during the final 18 months. Those expenses were presented to the Tourist Commission. They were audited and they were approved. There is nothing on my conscience in relation to anything that I did in my years with the Tourist Commission.

I have already informed the House about the time I spent travelling. During 1980, I travelled for 176 days. In 1981, I travelled for 165 days. In 1982, I travelled for 170 days. In 1983, I travelled for 150 days. In 1984, I travelled for 176 days. In my last year at the Tourist Commission, which was the 1985-86 year, I travelled for 176 days. An incredible amount of paperwork was involved in simply keeping track of one's own movements. I acknowledge, as I acknowledged in the previous debate on this subject, that I was slow to acquit my expenses. I was slow. That is all. I did nothing wrong. I claimed for nothing that I should not have claimed for, and nobody has suggested otherwise. If somebody wants to make those suggestions, I invite him to do so outside this House.

Mr Speaker, there were degrees of confidentiality in relation to the dealings of the Tourist Commission and myself as its chairman. On many occasions, I spoke to wholesalers, entrepreneurs and tour operators, and discussed deals that would bring tourists to the Northern Territory. Other states would love to know who we negotiated with during the early and mid-1980s to increase the value of tourism to the Northern Territory, with the result that visitations increased from about 10 000 in 1980 to 200 000 in 1988. I certainly have no intention of revealing the names of any of my business contacts or the people that I dealt with in those years.

I repeat that the opposition's allegations have no substance whatsoever. I have no intention of baring my soul to the opposition by tabling my American Express dockets and letting its members debate what I do in my private life.

The sole motive for the opposition's attack on me is that it does not know where to go. Members opposite should be asked why they have no positive questions on any of my portfolio areas. They persist with their personal

attack simply because they have no policy. They have never asked a legitimate question about my portfolio responsibilities since I have been a minister. They have contributed nothing on the tourist industry and nothing on the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission for which I have responsibility. Mr Speaker, imagine the thousands of questions they might have asked on behalf of Aborigines in relation to problems with alcohol. I could write a book about the opposition's negative approach. It is simply trying to destroy me by attacking my personal integrity.

Mr Speaker, I reiterate that I have done nothing wrong. My accounts were audited not only by the Auditor-General but by the Internal Audit Bureau. They were approved by the Tourist Commission and I have no problem with whatever anybody has ever said to me, including the Auditor-General. There is no guilt involved and there is nothing in this matter which would interest anybody, except people who might be interested in the gutter tactics of opposition members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the lack of contribution by government members is extraordinary. I trust that, although I am the third opposition speaker on this motion, I will not be the last speaker. The government gave up the opportunity to use a full 30-minute period to rebut the comments made by my colleague the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow minister for tourism.

I will reiterate what this debate is about and what it is not about. It is certainly not about the government's tourism strategy, as the minister sometimes suggests. The opposition is not saying that the tourism development strategies of the CLP government have been misdirected. Nor is the opposition saying that the Minister for Tourism, in his former capacity as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, made no contribution to tourism development strategy in the Northern Territory. The opposition is not involved in muckraking. What the opposition is involved in is the process that we are in this House to carry out: to ensure that public moneys are expended appropriately. The problem is that the CLP has been in government for so long that it has failed to distinguish its obligations to its own political base from its obligations to the people of the Northern Territory as far as accounting for expenditure of public moneys is concerned.

Mr Dale: What is the Auditor-General ... ?

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services, let me say that he does himself no credit nor does he do the Minister for Tourism any service by raising the question of the Auditor-General. That is not the substance of this particular debate. As my colleague pointed out and as the Minister for Tourism pointed out, this is a second censure motion and the substance of this censure motion is different.

Mr Dale: Different from what? Your boss has to correct you.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell said that this was a censure motion. I thought that this was a motion, under standing order 251, for the tabling of certain documents, although one would never know it from the debate from members opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but, in fact, the member for Nightcliff is right. It is not a censure motion.

Mr BELL: I appreciate the capacity for fine, semantic distinction on the part of the member for Nightcliff. If he is unable to perceive that there is

more than an element of censure in the terms of this motion as far as the Minister for Tourism is concerned, obviously he does not appreciate the English language as well as he claims to.

Mr Speaker, these are not allegations; they are substantiated facts. It is simply a fact that the Minister for Tourism, as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, failed seriously to meet the demands of the Auditor-General. Quite appropriately, the opposition has brought that to the attention of this Assembly, as it is our responsibility to do, and I am sure that the people of the Northern Territory appreciate it. Certainly, the electors of Flynn indicated that they appreciated the assiduity with which the opposition pursued these issues.

The question of the documents tabled during the previous sittings in relation to the misdemeanours of the Minister for Tourism in that regard is not the key question involved in this debate. The key question is the undertaking that we are seeking from the Minister for Tourism that he will provide details of these Amex expenses. All sorts of rumours have been circulating about how these Amex cards are used.

Frankly, I do not make a judgment about that. I would prefer to believe the best of the Minister for Tourism. I have known the minister in various capacities over many years. I would like to believe the best about him. However, there is an obligation on me, as there is an obligation on all other members of the opposition, to ensure that the system works, to ensure that the checks and balances operate and to ensure that the information is available to the people of the Northern Territory. We are involved in the process of government and that is something that the CLP government and in this particular case the Minister for Tourism, do not believe.

The minister proudly said that he had no intention of revealing any of the business contacts he made while he was Chairman of the Tourist Commission. If any clearer indication of the lack of public responsibility on the part of ministers of this government were required, it is difficult to imagine what it would be. Can I remind the Minister for Tourism that, in his previous position, he was employed in a statutory authority that was expending public funds. He was not involved in private enterprise. If he had been involved in private enterprise, he would certainly be able to say that he had no intention of revealing business contacts made during that period of his life. He would be obliged to do so only to the extent that that impinged on his current activities as a minister. But that, Mr Speaker, is not the case.

Time after time, we really do have to remind members of this government that the money they expend whilst sitting in the Chan Building does not come out of their own pockets. They are not private funds; they are the funds of the people of the Northern Territory. In exercising stewardship over those funds, ministers are accountable. We are an essential part of that process of accountability in exactly the same way as the people of the media, the fourth estate, are an important part of that process. The people must know government in the Northern Territory is not a private enterprise. It is government with all the thousand years of history that has gone into its form. I have never seen a clearer example of a government plainly failing to understand precisely that.

As my colleague pointed out in his comments, the Minister for Tourism has suggested in some quarters - and this has certainly come back to the opposition - that he is quite happy to table the documents relating to these expenditures. The terms of this motion are designed to enable him to fulfil

an undertaking that he has apparently given elsewhere. I think it is about time that the honourable minister came clean. We do not want this information in order to embarrass the minister personally, but to ensure that the proprieties are adhered to. There are people in the community who want to know the answers precisely, Mr Speaker, and that is precisely why I asked my question in question time this morning. The message that the opposition is getting from the electorate, and presumably the CLP government is getting the message through the ballot box, is that people want to know. They are suspicious, and the only way to allay suspicion is to be open in dealings with the public. That is precisely the good, public purpose that has inspired this motion. It is particularly disappointing that the government is prepared to respond in these terms.

I am advised that there are serious concerns within the Tourist Commission about the former chairman's use of petty cash accounts. I am advised further that there are ministers in this government who are aware of those concerns. That is a further issue that I believe needs to be laid to rest, and it would be easy to do it. I am not in the business of muckraking. I have known the Minister for Tourism, in his capacity as Chairman of the Tourist Commission and as a citizen of Alice Springs, for many years now. It is one of the uglier parts of this game and I have no desire to be involved in damaging unnecessarily the reputation of people.

However, I will not hesitate to raise issues and, hopefully, lay them to rest. I will not neglect to do that just because I happen to know personally the person who is being accused. In a small polity like ours, it is very important that those issues be laid to rest. It is very important that there be open debate, not only for the reputation of the government, which is pretty well-blackened already, but for the reputation of this legislature. That is precisely why this motion has been brought on today. The fact of the matter is that the minister himself or the Chief Minister can lay the allegations contained in this motion to rest today. The Minister for Tourism has suggested that it would be possible to make public the relevant information, but clearly he is refusing to do so. That being the case, he should not accuse the opposition of muckraking simply because questions continue to arise. If he refuses to explain and to attempt to clear his name, he should not blame the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or myself. We are giving him the opportunity to clear his name and he is not prepared to do it.

I might add that exactly the same rules apply as far as the petty cash accounts are concerned. The fact of the matter is that all that is required to lay that matter to rest is a firm denial by the minister, and by the current Chairman of the Tourist Commission, that no such investigation is being carried out. I will then be able to take that information back to the people who have suggested that there are problems in that regard and say 'Right, that is clear. Leave him alone'.

I will finish on this note. The questions have to be asked, unpleasant as they are. The people of the Northern Territory appreciate the fact that the opposition has raised these questions. The taxpayers of the Northern Territory appreciate it. The clearest evidence of that is the 15% swing to the Australian Labor Party in the recent Flynn by-election.

Mr Finch: You dream too much, that is your problem.

Mr BELL: I thought the Minister for Transport and Works was an engineer before he came into this House and was fairly good at numbers. He appears not

to be so good as his reputation would suggest. I will say it slowly for him. The swing to the ALP was 15%, and that is certainly not imaginary.

I conclude by saying that there are questions to be answered. They are not being answered. It is within the government's and the minister's power to do so and it is high time that was done.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, like that of the member for Stuart, my contribution to this debate this afternoon will be fairly short. So far, this debate has been an exact rerun of what honourable members opposite said in the no-confidence motion in this House on 25 August. They have raised nothing new whatsoever. The matter was disposed of then. The member for Stuart spoke for about 7 minutes in this debate and I might have trouble in even reaching 7 minutes. There really is nothing in it whatsoever. It is nothing more than a waste of the time that this Assembly has in which to do its business. I am quite shocked by the lack of regard members of the opposition have for the time of the House.

What I have to say today is fairly much a rerun of what I said in the last debate on this subject because we have heard nothing new from the other side. The Auditor-General is the scrutineer for this parliament, and the matter has been settled to his satisfaction.

The nature of personal expenses of a minister are not the business of this House. It is not the business of this House whether a minister seeks to buy a shirt or a shoe. It is irrelevant. Honourable members opposite are trying to make a great fuss about some jewellery or whatever. It is irrelevant. The nature of personal expenses is completely irrelevant. The opposition is on nothing more than a fishing expedition. Through innuendo and slur, its members are seeking to denigrate the minister. There is no misconception on this side of the House nor, I am sure, on the other, that that is all it is. We heard the pious dribblings from the member for MacDonnell about how 'I know this guy, and I wouldn't do anything to him that would hurt him. I am just doing my duty'. What a load of drivel! In effect, through this motion, the opposition is suggesting that this Assembly has no confidence in the Auditor-General. That is what the motion means, in effect. In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition said he had confidence in the Auditor-General. He said that in this debate today. But he cannot have it both ways. He cannot have the Auditor-General saying, 'I am satisfied that acquittal has been received', and then turn around and say: 'But we don't take any notice of the Auditor-General. We think he is a lovely fellow but, in this instance, we are not prepared to take his word for it'.

To pass this motion would mean that, despite the Auditor-General giving a clean bill of health to the accounts of every government department and statutory authority in the Northern Territory, we could still be obliged to table all the documents of accounts, and all the correspondence that is entered into by any government department or authority, for the scrutiny of the opposition. Never mind what the Auditor-General says; for some reason he has suddenly become irrelevant in this exercise. It will be interesting to hear what the Leader of the Opposition says in response to that because he cannot have it both ways. The member for MacDonnell said that we have a responsibility to ensure that the financial accounting system works, and indeed we have.

As I said in the earlier debate, this case demonstrates that the system does work. There was acknowledgement from this side of the House in the previous debate - there is nothing new in it - that it took some prompting



from the Auditor-General to obtain the acquittals. The end result was that the Auditor-General was prepared to sign off the accounts of the Tourist Commission on the basis that he was satisfied that the minister had acquitted those expenses.

That concludes my contribution to this debate, Mr Speaker. As I said, I did not have very much to say. Nothing whatsoever has been presented that was not raised in the censure motion that was rightly defeated on 25 August. If the Leader of the Opposition has hopes that he will get any more meat out of this fishing expedition - and that is all he is on, nothing else, because there is no substance whatsoever - then he is very wrong because most certainly his motion will be defeated.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister and his ...

Mr Perron: Let's see if you can add something new to it all.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I think the ground has been covered pretty well by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell in terms of the improprieties of what may have occurred. Ministers of the Crown and indeed all members of this House are afforded the great privilege that comes with being a member of this House. However, if the public perceives that that privilege is being abused, it is up to every member of this House to do everything he or she can to dispel any doubt that may exist that that privilege has been abused.

I am sure, Mr Speaker, that you recall that some allegations of impropriety were levelled against a previous Chief Minister, the member for Barkly. At that time, that member took the full relevant documentation immediately to the police station, and it was cleared. Those were the circumstances that surrounded those allegations of impropriety. We now have a minister who is not prepared, in any way, to enhance his own reputation or his own credibility but who, in fact, is threatening the credibility of every member of this House. That is a real problem.

Because of the nature of our work, we are afforded a stature within the community which must be protected. If we do not protect that, we will all be tarred with the same brush. Allegations have been made against the Minister for Tourism in relation to his expenditure of public moneys in his previous occupation. Those allegations have been made. The minister must ...

Mr Perron: By whom?

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I will make them now if you want me to. I do not care who makes them. They are being made.

Mr Setter: Who is the person making the allegations?

Mr LEO: I will make them. I do not care. The fact is that it has been alleged that there has been impropriety in the nature of expenditure of public moneys by the Minister for Tourism. The Auditor-General took a great deal of time to find out how moneys were acquitted. It is not the Auditor-General's function to find out how it was acquitted or whether or not it was legally acquitted.

Mr Hatton: Of course it is.

Mr LEO: It is not. It is the Auditor-General's function to satisfy the requirements of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. That is his function. If, after 6 months, he is satisfied that suitable paperwork has been proffered, then his function has been fulfilled. It is not his task to inquire into, or even to report on, whether or not a minister or departmental secretary has behaved in a less than acceptable manner or, indeed, whether or not he has behaved honourably. We call ourselves honourable people in this House.

The difficulty in this matter is that a member's credibility is being questioned.

Mr Dale: Only by you.

Mr LEO: I will wear that.

Until that member satisfies this House in terms of his acquittal of public moneys, we will all suffer the implications of that issue of credibility. That is a real problem, Mr Speaker, and you cannot divorce yourself from it.

When faced with the same allegations, a previous Chief Minister had no compunction in immediately presenting the documentation referred to in the allegations to the Commissioner of Police and telling him to sort the matter out. That is not happening in this case and that is a real problem.

As the member for Stuart said, this issue will not disappear. He said that the political stench of this controversy will not go away, no matter what the outcome of this afternoon's vote. I suspect that the government intends to support the minister, although its motivation is beyond me. One cannot but fear that there is substance to the allegations when the government continues to support the minister in not tabling all of the relevant documents. That will not stop the political stench. The minister will wear that, as will the government. Unfortunately, this House will also wear it in terms of the poor regard in which politicians are generally held in the community. Our reputation out there is not very flash and this will not enhance it one jot.

It behoves the minister to table all documentation which is in any way associated with his Amex expenditures whilst he was Chairman of the Tourist Commission. It behoves the government to insist that he does so and it behoves every member of this House, for our own sake, to insist that he does so.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): I rise to support the position of the Minister for Tourism and, in doing so, I ask honourable members to cut through some of the hype and emotive pleadings that we have heard in this Chamber today. I ask them to cut through the connotative words that are being floated around by members opposite, the allegations that they are implying, but not making, and to start to deal with the actual facts with which we are confronted.

First, I would like to refer to some of the comments made by the member for MacDonnell. He said that the opposition is not saying that tourist strategies have been misdirected, on the contrary. Nor was he saying that the honourable minister, in his previous capacity as Chairman of the Tourist Commission, did not make a significant contribution. What he said was that the opposition was involved in the process of making sure that public moneys were properly expended. He went on to say that members of the opposition want to ensure that the system works and that the checks and balances in the system work.

Let us look at precisely what has been stated quite openly by the honourable minister, not just during these sittings but in the previous sittings. Yes, it is true that, on some credit card expenditures, the Tourist Commission made initial payment against accounts covering personal expenses. Those moneys were subsequently ...

Mr Leo: Are you telling every single public servant that they do not have to acquit their expenses?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am trying to explain very carefully to the member for Nhulunbuy. If he will close his mouth and open his ears, he will hear what I am saying. I am merely reiterating some of the facts of the matter, rather than the hype.

It is a fact that expenditures made against the minister's personal credit card were a mixture of government and private expenses. The credit card account was paid, in the first instance, by the Tourist Commission. Subsequently, personal expenditures by the then chairman were identified, through an acquittal process, and all personal expenditures that had been made, and paid for by the Tourist Commission, were reimbursed to the Tourist Commission by the then chairman. Those are the facts of the situation.

To put it another way, there is no allegation and no suggestion at all that any expenditure has been incurred by the Tourist Commission on the personal behalf of the Minister for Tourism which he has not reimbursed. There is no allegation of that. The only point being queried, and it is not even in dispute, is that there was a time gap between when the Tourist Commission made the payment and when the acquittals were finally satisfied. That is the only issue that is being beaten up by the opposition. I want to make it very clear what we are talking about. We are not saying that the then chairman improperly spent Tourist Commission money and gained any direct personal advantage by doing so. We are not saying that he has incurred expenses on behalf of himself or his family which he has not paid for. What we are saying, and there has been no dispute about this, is that there was a delay in finalising the acquittals.

It is not even questioned whether the acquittals were properly carried out, because that is a matter of the public record, and it has been the subject of debate during these sittings and the previous sittings of this Assembly, that those matters were finally acquitted to the full satisfaction of the Auditor-General. Contrary to what the member for Nhulunbuy has said in this particular debate, it so happens that, in seeking to police the Financial Administration and Audit Act, it is the responsibility of the Auditor-General to ensure that all moneys are properly expended. That was why, in the process of carrying out the audit to ensure the propriety of expenditure, he was insisting that that acquittal be finalised. It was finalised to his satisfaction in excess of 2 years ago, Mr Speaker - in excess of 2 years ago. It was resolved and settled. If my memory serves me correctly, in the last debate, the minister indicated that, to have the matter resolved, there are probably some business expenses for which he has not been reimbursed. That was because he wanted to have the acquittals tidied up expeditiously in the first half of 1986.

There is no dispute over the fact that all bills have been paid. There is no dispute over the fact that the minister has never received anything improperly to the advantage of himself or his family. It is a question of a process of acquittal. We can debate whether the systems that were in place until June 1986 were appropriate systems or not, whether the government of the

day had properly checked out the systems and procedures and whether they were operating as efficiently as they could have. Those systems were fixed and any potential for circumstances of delayed acquittals etc were resolved at least by June 1986, and they are a matter of ancient history now. There is no suggestion that the minister has gained any personal advantage. Why should we support a motion asking for the tabling of these documents which, in the words of the opposition, will reveal what particular individual, personal effects were purchased? Quite frankly, that is not the business of this House. What is the business of this House, and it is accepted and recognised, is that there had been some personal expenses and that they were reimbursed to the satisfaction of the Auditor-General. That should be the end of the matter.

We can argue about whether the opposition is happy with the amount of time it took to do that. We can debate the reasons why there were delays, and the fact that the then chairman had spent 176 days away from home on his job and that, as a result, he did not get his paperwork done, and we had that debate last time. We could debate that backwards and forwards all day, but it will not resolve anything. That happened in a previous life of the honourable minister, not since he has been an elected member. It happened when he was in a separate, full-time job and before he became elected, and that is a fact.

Mr Speaker, ask yourself what we are debating here. Why do they want these documents? What will they achieve by going back through Tourist Commission records covering 5 or 6 years? It will mean hunting through hundreds or thousands of documents, supporting documents and acquittals, and the Auditor-General's assessments of all of these, bundling them all together, bringing them out here and putting them on the Table of this House to demonstrate what we already know. We know already that, in those accounts, some payments were made initially by the Tourist Commission for personal effects. Subsequently, those were reimbursed by the then chairman, now the Minister for Tourism.

We do not need the documents to demonstrate that; it has been admitted openly. In August, it was admitted openly. This is a beat-up. It is a beat-up because members of the opposition know that, if they keep asking questions and throwing innuendo around, they will send a subliminal message to the community that something smells. That is what this is all about. It is not about truth, justice and honesty or finding out what really happened. We know what really happened. This is all about planting a germ of an idea in the mind of the community, and that is why government members have been saying that the members opposite have been getting down into the gutter. That is why they have been making those accusations about the opposition.

Why do members of the opposition want these documents? I oppose the tabling of these documents. I do not think it will benefit this parliament in any way. It will not resolve the facts of the issue, which have been known now for some time. Do they propose to discuss the colour of the shirts the honourable minister used to buy in 1985? Are they interested in that? Or what size shoes he wears, or whether, when he was away from home, he happened to buy his wife a gift so he might maintain his marriage, and then reimburse the commission for it? Is that the kind of terrible thing that the honourable minister did when he was Chairman of the Tourist Commission, when he was away from home for two-thirds of the nights of the year?

Mr Ede: What?

Mr HATTON: 176 is more than half.

Mr Ede: No, it is not.

Mr HATTON: It is close enough. My maths is not that good at this time of the afternoon, so let us say he spent half the year away from home, and that is an awful lot of time.

I might say that the process I used as a minister and as Chief Minister to acquit expenses on my personal credit cards was to find an expense and to submit an expense application. That was the system that I put into place in June 1986. But, because I was travelling extensively and working pretty hard, on occasions it was up to 6 months before I put a claim in to recover expenses. That happens if you happen to be busy in your job.

Now that was my problem and I am not asking for sympathy. I am simply saying, please recognise that busy people do not necessarily make the paperwork their first priority. The opposition can argue that that is wrong and that it should have been done, and no one can argue against that, but let us have a bit of rationality in this debate and throw this motion out, all of us, recognising that it will give no benefit to this parliament. It is not aimed to obtain information that will assist this parliament because all of the information is before the parliament. It has been stated already that there was personal expenditure, and it has been stated that it has been reimbursed. It has been demonstrated that the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Auditor-General whom this parliament appoints to carry out that very function. Mr Speaker, I urge that this motion be defeated.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that the motion will be defeated. It is interesting to see that the crossbenches have been vacant throughout most of this debate. Those members have no intention of entering into this debate. We must realise why this motion is before the House.

The Leader of the Opposition, desperate for a win in the Flynn by-election, brought up an issue as a result of studying the contents of a brown paper bag that was delivered to the member for MacDonnell which asked him to bring this issue before the parliament. Indeed, the member for Casuarina asked for the envelope to be provided to him so that he could check the postmark to see when it was delivered. It has not been provided, but indications have been given that it was some weeks, indeed months, before the issue was brought before this Assembly.

The Leader of the Opposition decided to whip up a political storm at an opportune time and throw some mud so that some of it would stick prior to the Flynn by-election. The Leader of the Opposition had nothing with which to make himself look good, but he had something he could use to make other people look bad. That is a sad way to operate, Mr Speaker, but we have come to recognise it as a tactic of the Leader of the Opposition. He has nothing to contribute. He is like his colleague the member for Stuart, who could only find enough material to speak for 7 of the 30 minutes available to him as the second speaker in this debate. Even in that time, he provided no evidence to support his claims and contributed absolutely nothing to the debate.

It is the Trade Development Zone revisited. The opposition is on a fishing trip. It has no evidence of impropriety whatsoever and it has nothing of substance to contribute. During the last sittings, when it was electorally expedient, members of the opposition tried to use information - information which had been hidden away for many months in a top drawer somewhere in the member for MacDonnell's electoral office - to crank up a political storm.

Their efforts have failed. They do not have a chance because their allegations have no substance and because the Auditor-General has advised that all expenditures have been acquitted. In desperation, they continue to try to drum up a storm and score some political points. They did not do too well on the Trade Development Zone this morning so they decided to drop the bucket on the Minister for Tourism. Their tactic has not worked. That is not surprising when one considers the quality of their contributions to the debate.

I am not sure how the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee would feel about the efforts of the member for Nhulunbuy today to explain the functions of the Auditor-General. The member for Nhulunbuy is a member of the Public Accounts Committee and he does not know the function of the Auditor-General. For the benefit of all honourable members and to remind the member for Nhulunbuy, let me read it out: 'The Northern Territory Auditor-General is responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the conduct of public sector audit functions. The overall purpose is to ensure that the parliament is provided with the information it requires to oversee the financial operation of government on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory'. That is what the Office of the Auditor-General is all about.

Let me now turn to standing order 251, which has been used by the opposition to justify its call for the tabling of documents, and see how it has been used at other times. It has been used in some very significant instances, including the Watergate case, when President Nixon was asked to provide tapes and other government information.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is being outrageous. He is trying to tell this House that a former President of the United States, which does not operate under the Westminster system, had to comply with the standing orders of this parliament. As a further point of information, the information supplied by Nixon was not to a parliamentary inquiry but to a special inquiry.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: I am not sure why I was even waiting for a decision, Mr Speaker. My source for these comments is 'Australian Senate Practices' and, whilst the United States does not operate under the Westminster system, some of its precedents are relevant in the development of standing orders like ours.

Standing order 358 of the Senate says: 'Accounts and papers may be ordered to be laid upon the table and the Clerk shall communicate to the Senator having the conduct of government business all orders for papers made by the Senate and such papers, when returned, shall be laid on the Table by the Clerk'. Honourable members can see that it is indeed very similar to our standing order 251. Indeed, it is the precedent on which we have based our standing order. Some of those cases go back to 3 July 1924, and the resolution that 'all papers relating to the initiation, conduct and subsequent closing down of the Federal Forest Products Laboratory in Perth, be laid on the table of the library'. On 30 April 1931, there was a resolution that correspondence between 'the government and the Commonwealth Bank regarding the guaranteed price of wheat be laid on the Table'. In September 1968, there was a resolution that 'documents relating to the purchase of F111s be laid on the Table'. In the United States of America, the Supreme Court ordered President Nixon to turn over tapes and other records relating to White House conversations to the District Court for use in the Watergate trials. Those

are the type of examples that are given to us in 'Australian Senate Practice, 5th Edition'.

Mr Speaker, what we have today is a want of confidence motion put to the House.

Mr Smith: It is not a want of confidence.

Mr COULTER: We had a want of confidence motion put to this House when it was electorally expedient for the Leader of the Opposition to do so after having a brown envelope in the top drawer of the member for MacDonnell's desk for some months. We have it today because members opposite are going down the tube in relation to the Trade Development Zone. They thought they had better try another tactic and set out on another fishing expedition. They decided to throw a little more mud at the member for Araluen in the hope that it would stick. It has not - and for a very good reason.

The member for Nhulunbuy does not understand the role of the Auditor-General. Another speaker who came to the aid of the Leader of the Opposition was the member for Stuart, who could only speak for 7 minutes about what he did on his last fishing trip. He did not have anything substantial to offer to this debate and I congratulate him on rising for 7 minutes. It is a credit to him that he was not prepared to remain on his feet any longer than that. I sincerely congratulate him for his attempt to provide meaningful debate in this House.

Mr Bell: That is because you blokes did not get up before him.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell says that it is our fault. The member for Stuart had 30 minutes at his disposal as the second lead speaker and could have provided any information that he wanted to during that time. He did not have anything to contribute and, to his credit, sat down soon after he rose to his feet.

It is quite obvious that the Leader of the Opposition does not have one scrap of information that suggests that the member for Araluen has done anything wrong. He has been backed up by his colleagues and they have not provided any information. I put it to the Leader of the Opposition that he should do exactly what I suggested to him this morning in question time: either he puts up or enough is enough. We can see this issue arising as a censure motion in a few weeks or on the General Business Day in November. Perhaps members of the opposition will continue to come back with this issue, but it will not do them any good unless they can provide to this Assembly some substance that would indicate that there is a question to answer. Whilst we have a letter from the Auditor-General saying that the accounts have been acquitted and that everything is in order, there is no question to be answered. Members opposite do not have a hope of having this side of the Assembly support them on this motion.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you very much for your indulgence. I just want to bring to the attention of the ...

Mr Coulter: Tell us the date on the envelope.

Mr BELL: Since the Deputy Chief Minister has chosen to make a great deal of the fact that I gave an undertaking, which I honoured, during the last sittings in relation to ...

Mr Coulter: Just tell us ...

Mr BELL: Are you all right, Barry? Have another cup of water.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member knows full well that we refer to honourable members in this House by their correct title.

Mr BELL: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chief Minister knows equally well that one does not interject.

During the want-of-confidence debate during the last sittings, I said that I would have the envelope sent up by air, hopefully on that day. I have only 1 electorate secretary and she had a number of other duties. It took some time to locate the particular envelope. I gave that undertaking fully expecting to be able to fulfil it. Since we were not able to locate it immediately, the Deputy Chief Minister interjected, as I recall, that a fax would do. For the reasons that I have already explained, I was unable to comply with that request.

After the debate had been completed, the member for Casuarina said that he was not sure that it really mattered all that much. However, being a man of my word, as I am quite sure the member for Casuarina will be only too happy to verify, I faxed to him a photocopy of the envelope - or perhaps it was sent to him by mail. I am not sure how it was communicated to him but it has been done. If the Deputy Chief Minister feels that elucidation of this extraordinary matter would be enhanced by my providing the envelope itself, I believe that can be arranged.

Mr Coulter: Tell us the date.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, my recollection is that the date on the envelope would have been a month or so before the previous sittings. I fail to understand what can possibly hang on the date on the envelope in view of the astounding contents thereof but, if the Deputy Chief Minister feels that it is somehow material, not only can I provide the envelope, but I will read it for him and tell him when it was actually received in my office.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, following an aside from the member for Nightcliff, I am happy to inform the House that it is his belief that the envelope and its contents came from the former member for Flynn, Ray Hanrahan. Mr Speaker, I certainly have no knowledge of that, but I am quite happy to take that on board and put it to Mr Hanrahan, given that the member for Nightcliff obviously had a very close relationship in the past with the former member for Flynn.

Mr Speaker, thank goodness we on this side of the House do not have to rely on members of the other side of the House for support. For the second time, until the honourable members opposite got themselves organised, the poor old member for Araluen had to battle it out on his own. Who can forget the poor fellow last time, Mr Speaker? No one would get up to defend him. It was the same story this time. Before lunch, not one member opposite rose to defend him. Not one member opposite was prepared or able to rise to defend the Minister for Tourism. It was only after a 2-hour break for lunch that honourable members opposite were able to rise to do something about it.

The Chief Minister made a short and succinct statement. My word, Mr Speaker, wouldn't you like to have him defending you in a crunch? It takes him 2 hours to get up, and then he speaks for 10 minutes. Boy oh boy, what



solid support that is! I am glad he is not on my side. However, he did say one thing that was extremely important and extremely significant, and it is the reason why we are having this debate today. What he said was, and I am not sure this quotation is 100% accurate but it certainly has the gist of it: 'It is what the Auditor-General said that is important'. Mr Speaker, let me take you back to what the Auditor-General said because, if there had not been a letter from the Auditor-General, there would not have been a debate. On 25 August I read into Hansard the Auditor-General's letter dated 7 May 1986. It says, in part:

American Express credit cards: your attention is drawn specifically to the matter of expenses charged by the American Express credit cards and not being properly acquitted by the staff concerned. The audit revealed that the chairman's expenses of \$33 133.86 unacquitted at balance date, which was 30 June 1985, was still not acquitted 6 months later on 30 November 1985.

He went on to say:

This was contrary to the commission's minutes of 21 March 1984, when the commission resolved that the chairman would provide monthly, interim statements to acquit expenses.

At 28 February 1986, 2 years later, unacquitted American Express expenses amounted to \$50 355. He went on to say:

I was informed today by the general manager, Mr David Cox, that the former chairman will provide the necessary information to acquit the outstandings within the next 2 weeks, that is, by 21 May 1986.

To digress for a minute, we know that did not happen either. In the censure debate during the last sittings, we heard that that did not happen. That deadline too was not met.

The final adjustment of these expenses will require a formal approval by the commission.

Now listen to this bit:

Since my previous reports to both the minister and the commissioners have occasioned no apparent corrective action, I must now consider what alternative or additional reports I should make in the event that future audits reveal that corrective action has not been taken.

That is the reason why this debate is taking place today. It is not good enough to have a minister of the Crown who, in a previous occupation as the head of a statutory authority, caused the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory to make those comments and who caused the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory to threaten to name that head of the statutory authority in his next report. That is what this is about. That is why we have made this request for papers to be tabled, so that we can find out what was involved in the exchange of correspondence between the Attorney-General, the minister himself, the Board of ...

Mr Dale: You mean the Auditor-General.

Mr SMITH: The Auditor-General, thank you. Between the board, the minister and the Chief Minister. We want to know what the extent of that

correspondence was, so that we can attempt to work out why that correspondence was necessary. That is the key to this whole debate and the reason why we want those papers tabled. Mr Speaker, why was the correspondence between those parties necessary, when we are talking about a highly-paid head of a statutory authority? We would not have had to ask that question if we had been given a satisfactory answer, but the answer we received was: 'I was too busy'.

Let us look at the implications of that answer, that he was too busy. First of all, the fact that he was too busy meant that, for 24 months, a simple instruction of the Board of the Tourist Commission was not followed by the head of it. It meant that, at any one time, there was up to \$50 000 outstanding in terms of proper acquittals. That is what it meant and, in terms of the Auditor-General, it meant that he was not able to conclude a satisfactory resolution for the financial accounts of the 1984-85 financial year for the Tourist Commission. Way down the track, in May 1986, he was still trying to drag information out of this fellow opposite for the financial year 1984-85. That is why we have this motion before us, Mr Speaker. We want these papers tabled because the members opposite are not giving us the information that we want, and they are not ...

Mr Coulter: Were they acquitted?

Mr SMITH: ... giving us the information that was required. And, yes, it appears that, in the end, it was acquitted, but the point about that is that it was acquitted 18 months to 2 years too late.

We want to know how it can be that a man being paid \$70 000 or \$80 000 a year, the head of a statutory authority, can completely disregard instructions from his own board, can completely disregard the Auditor-General and can cause the Auditor-General to be 15 months to 18 months late in providing an acquittal to the department that he heads up. If that is not sufficient reason to table the documents, I do not know what is. Mr Speaker, and as my colleague says, shame, shame on you, Mr Speaker, that you can sit here and not support this particular motion.

Mr Speaker, as someone in the private sector said to me during the lunch break, and this is getting to the nub of it as far as the people outside are concerned: 'If I did that to my boss, I would be sacked'. In other words, if I did not acquit my expenses, if I did not follow my board's instructions, my boss would sack me. That is how it operates out there in the real world. But what happens in the cosy, country-club atmosphere that the members opposite encourage? In this case, the person does not get sacked; he becomes a member of parliament. He does not get sacked, he gets endorsement from the members of the governing party and they make him a member of parliament! Well, that is one way of burying one's mistakes. Unfortunately, this mistake has come home to haunt them.

The fact that he has become a member of parliament exacerbates the problem, because we know now that these matters were not resolved to the satisfaction of the Auditor-General until after the minister became a member of parliament, and that is indictment enough. I would very much like to see the correspondence of the Auditor-General on that particular matter. We know that the honourable member is now the Minister for Tourism. How can anybody have any respect for him in the Tourist Commission when he has behaved like that and, on the other hand, how can he or his department head - and I feel for his department head - exert influence over the expense accounts of members of the Tourist Commission? They have a ready excuse - and I bet they have

been using it - when they are asked to account for their expenses. They have the perfect excuse: 'Sorry, too busy'.

That is the nub of the problem. We now have a minister who is hampered in the way that he can effectively perform his present job, because of his actions in his previous job, and that fact will not go away. That will always be the problem that the honourable minister will have. He will have that problem because he did not exhibit the standards required of a minister of the Crown either in his present or his past occupation. That is a serious and inhibiting factor. It is an albatross around his neck and it will not go away. It will haunt him for a long, long time.

The minister's attempt to justify his behaviour has enshrined the excuse of 'too busy' throughout the public service. The government's failure to properly discipline the minister means that it might as well write into the Public Service Act a section stating that a satisfactory reason for not following out a lawful direction is that the employee is too busy. That is the implication of the government's attitude to the minister, and it will be a problem not only within the minister's department but in all other departments under the Country Liberal Party government. Why is this happening? It is happening because the government and the Chief Minister are not prepared to tell the member for Araluen what his responsibilities are.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 6

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

Noes 15

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

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER

Ombudsman of the Northern Territory - Tenth Annual Report

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the Tenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I move that the paper be printed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 1988. I move that the paper be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Noting Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, during the last session of this Assembly, amendments were passed to the Financial Administration and Audit Act placing responsibility on the Treasurer to table his financial statements. Previously, those statements were transmitted to the House by the Auditor-General. This amendment was made because the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements provide the necessary report on the Treasurer's stewardship of his portfolio with details of the government's management of the approved budget over the previous 12 months. In this respect, it is similar to the annual report on any other portfolio responsibility, which is tabled by the responsible minister.

The tabling of these statements, together with the Auditor-General's certificate that they are in order, effectively completes the financial reporting cycle in respect to the Consolidated Fund for 1987-88. They contain little that is not already known, since most of the information has already been published in one form or another. The key financial data in statements 1, 2 and 3 was published in summary form in the NT Government Gazette on 14 July which contained the June quarterly statements. Much of the information on indebtedness was published with the 1988-89 budget papers.

Statement 6, dealing with contingent liabilities, is made available once a year; its content this year is not significantly different to that for 1986-87. I should note, Mr Speaker, that there have been some minor amendments to the figures that were published on 14 July, but these do not materially affect the overall results.

The formal tabling of the Treasurer's statements is an important event in its own right because it includes certification from the Auditor-General that the statements are in order and accord with the the books of account. It is the formal and certified summary of government financial transactions which occurred in 1987-88.

Mr Speaker, considerable development has occurred in public sector financial reporting and management procedures in the Northern Territory during the past 2 years. The improvement in financial reporting is apparent in this year's financial statements and in the budget papers tabled earlier this session. What is not so obvious from the statements is the range of financial management improvements, some large and some small, which have been occurring behind the scenes. These have included the enhancement and upgrading of a number of modules in the government accounting system including: cheque controls and reconciliation, accounts payable and central ledger; the automatic production of monthly cash flow reports for all departments and the generation of standard classification reports for the majority of government accounting system users; the abolition of the cash mode of pay and a considerable reduction in the number of cheque payees as direct crediting of deposit accounts has increased; the introduction and acceptance of credit card

payments by the public at a number of government offices; the successful completion of a pilot study into the use of corporate credit cards by the public sector; and the conversion of the Power and Water Authority to the centralised government accounting system. All these improvements contribute to making the public sector more efficient. Further improvements are planned for introduction over the year ahead.

Returning to the financial statements, honourable members will observe that there have been a number of changes in format and presentation, principally to allow for easier comprehension and hence more informed comment on the Territory's financial position. While the nature and coverage of information is much the same as in past years, this year it has been structured more logically, as a series of schedules flowing from the broad summary view progressively to the detailed level.

The statements commence with an overall summary of receipts and expenditure passing through the Consolidated Fund. Receipts are then further disaggregated into the specific receipt items normally reported. The first expenditure schedule summarises expenditure by the responsible department or authority, followed by a detailed reconciliation schedule which shows the procedure followed, because of budgetary developments during the year, to augment or reallocate appropriations made under the Appropriation Act. The expenditure of those final allocations is then listed according to the activities carried out within the responsible department or authority.

I draw to your attention, Mr Speaker, that the statements now follow more closely the presentation adopted for the 1988-89 budget. I foreshadow also that the quarterly gazette statements, the first of which will appear later this month, will adopt the same style. In this way, we will be providing information in a consistent manner aiding, if that is not too forlorn a hope, informed and constructive discussion of the budget and its progress.

Another important feature of the statement is the preface, which describes the accounting standards used in the statements and outlines the scope of each section of the statements. Honourable members will recognise that the reporting improvements that I have described have been made over the last 2 years in a climate of active debate on public sector financial management requirements both within the Territory and elsewhere in Australia. I welcome such debate. It is vitally important, however, that we do not lose sight of the purposes for which this information is needed and that we neither fall behind nor get ahead of those purposes in putting our financial numbers together.

One of the most discussed aspects of this debate is the use of accrual accounting rather than the traditional cash accounting. Without delving into the issue in any great detail, I can say that, while there are some aspects of accrual accounting that do generate useful information complementary to the current methods, there are other aspects which add little, if anything, to the stock of useful and meaningful information on the government sector. The government, by its very nature, is markedly different in its objectives and organisation to commercial undertakings that use full accrual accounting standards.

The extent to which governments should adopt, modify or ignore those private-sector standards is far from settled. The treatment of non-cash items, particularly depreciation, is one of the key issues to be resolved and considerable work is being done in the Northern Territory Treasury on consideration of the options. The Auditor-General will be assisting in that

work and the considered views of the Public Accounts Committee will be influential. Overall, in considering public sector accounting issues, I am confident that the Territory is progressing at a sensible rate. Further changes will be made provided they satisfy the requirement that they contribute to a more meaningful, positive and informed decision-making process and do not simply create change for the sake of change. The benefits of any proposed variation must be clearly demonstrated in a way that leaves no doubt that we will all be better informed as a result of the change. If this requirement is not met, our resources are diverted into data production rather than information gathering, distracting our attention from the real problems that must be addressed. The cost of such a path can be considerable, for little or even negative benefits to Territorians.

The improvements we have already made and the developments now under consideration will enable the Territory to continue to build on the very sound financial management and reporting base already in place. I treat with contempt the allegations made from time to time that that base is not there, that information is being withheld or that financial mismanagement exists. The Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements I tabled today demonstrate quite clearly, when combined with the budget papers already before the Assembly, why I reject those allegations for the simple ignorance or political malice, and sometimes both, that they usually reveal.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTION

#### Select Committee on Constitutional Development

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the time for reporting of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development be extended for a further 12 months.

In March this year, the Assembly agreed to extend by a further 12 months the time by which the Select Committee on Constitutional Development must report to the Assembly - that is, to 28 April 1989. The committee has carried out a vast amount of work to date which includes the preparation of a number of papers which I have tabled in this Assembly. These are a Discussion Paper on a Proposed New State Constitution for the Northern Territory, Information Paper No 1 on Options for a Grant of Statehood, tabled 24 September 1987, and a Discussion Paper on Representation in a Territory Constitutional Convention, tabled on 29 August 1987.

This task was most time-consuming but the papers have met with a reasonable community response. Since the completion of that task, the committee has held public hearings in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin and has taken evidence from a wide cross-section of the community. It will visit Katherine as soon as possible. The committee believes, however, that the constitution under which the new state will operate is of such importance that all citizens of the Northern Territory should have the opportunity to have input into it and to suggest the most appropriate means of having that constitution considered by the community at large. To this end, the committee has prepared a booklet for distribution to all Aboriginal communities and outstations so that those communities and outstations may be aware of the committee's areas of interest prior to the committee visiting them and taking evidence. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of that booklet.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the committee has also prepared a proposed schedule of visits to all major communities and outstations. These visits and the taking of evidence in the communities and outstations will take much time, especially in view of the impending wet season. Under these circumstances, the committee will not be able to complete its task in the time allotted and therefore I seek a further extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

#### MOTION

#### Noting Northern Territory Economic Strategy

Continued from 4 October 1988.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, already and unfortunately in this debate, we have had the Leader of the Opposition launch his paper-boat brain into the deep sea of economic development strategy without first testing whether that boat would in fact float. The Leader of the Opposition roundly criticised the document entitled the 'Territory on the Move' on behalf of himself and, seemingly, on behalf of private enterprise in the Territory. I will put that to rest by quoting a Confederation of Industry press release of 7 October which said, in part:

Overall, the document is a useful, worthwhile tool. Never before, to my recollection, has such a comprehensive document including facts and figures been put together. Furthermore, never before has there been a more factual, clinical analysis of our situation, and the whole exercise is a giant step in the right direction. The challenge is now before the NT private sector. The confederation is keen to see business take up that challenge. It is business' responsibility now to ensure growth and development, and business should accept that responsibility.

That is the opinion of the business community of the Northern Territory in relation to this document.

In addressing future directions of an economy and in the subsequent formulation of any economic policy, it is essential that we ask ourselves the 3 basic questions of economics: what goods we should produce, how they should be produced and for whom they should be produced. The economic development strategy presented by the Chief Minister addresses those questions and provides the answers.

What goods should we produce? In finding an answer to this question, it is firstly necessary to identify our resources, to quantify the value to the economy of current production, and to focus our attention on those areas that are most likely to produce the greatest return in a broad economic sense. Pages 49 through 66 of the strategy document identify the resources and quantify the current levels of production. Figure 4.1, at page 69, graphically illustrates the spectacular growth in mineral production since self-government. It has risen from less than \$200m in 1978 to \$1400m in 1987.

The document canvasses the current state of mineral and energy production on a commodity-by-commodity basis and provides a clear view of the importance of mining to the Territory economy. Figure 4.2, at page 53, provides a snapshot of the value to the Territory of primary production and also provides comparisons of the relevant values of the various components of the rural sector. The sections on beef cattle and buffalo production provide a clear

and concise view of the state of the industry, as do the sections on other animal industries, horticulture, cropping, fishing and forestry. The section on secondary industry rightly points out the imbalance in the size of this sector when compared with its average contribution to the GDP of the states. The sections on tertiary industry and tourism provide clear overviews of the present state of those sectors.

Mr Speaker, armed with the knowledge provided in those sections, we are able to properly address the question of what we should produce. The section headed 'Sectoral Strategies', beginning at page 29, provides the answers. The chapter on minerals and energy clearly identifies the major prospects for development. These include uranium and uranium products, gold, platinum, palladium, silver, lead and zinc as well as the potential that exists for the exploitation of those products. The potential for development of our oil and gas reserves is also identified.

In relation to beef cattle and buffalo production, the strategy identifies 3 major ways in which the industry could further realise its potential. They are: productivity gains as opposed to expansion of the area under grazing, new market opportunities in Japan and other Asian markets and an increase in the level of secondary processing.

The opportunities that exist for expansion in the plant industries, both horticultural and cropping, are identified and the major objectives of government in relation to these industries are also enunciated.

The main objectives in relation to the development of the fishing industry are identified as sound resource management, maximisation of onshore processing activities and the preservation of barramundi stocks to sustain tourism and recreational requirements. The means of achieving those objectives include appropriate joint venture arrangements, continuation of research and management regimes and the encouragement of aquaculture.

The major opportunities in the manufacturing sector are identified in the areas of special operations aimed at export markets, the further processing of our primary resources and the development of industries which can take advantage of our geographic position or other natural advantages.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is an important debate but the government has not even maintained a quorum in the House. I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is now present. The member for Karama.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, the document quite correctly states that, at present, insufficient value is added to primary and mineral products exported from the Territory. It clearly sets out the forms of government support that may be offered in the secondary and tertiary industry sectors. Such support could include the provision of infrastructure, marketing and market research, financial assistance, assistance with the business migration program, educational and training opportunities, the easing of regulatory controls and the general facilitation of investment and development. The document also refers to other strategies which could encourage expansion of the secondary and tertiary sectors, including the containment of business taxes and charges and the possible establishment of both a venture capital company and a technology development corporation.



Mr Speaker, tourism is justifiably targeted as one industry that can sustain high levels of long-term growth. The document highlights opportunities for growth in current markets, development of new markets, extension of the average length of visitor stay and changing patterns of domestic travel, particularly in the self-drive holiday market. Issues of concern affecting the tourist industry range from under-investment to limited levels of Aboriginal involvement, and the environmental fragility of some of our attractions which may force restrictions to be imposed on visitor numbers.

Although not strictly a wealth-generating industry in itself, the transport industry is also discussed. Its importance to the well-being of the economy is recognised. The document says, and I quote: 'It is a major strategic objective of the government to ensure the achievement of a more extensive and efficient transport network than presently exists.'

As I said previously and as I believe I have now demonstrated, the document addresses the most fundamental question of economics, which is: what should we produce? In terms of the macro economy - and I use that term advisedly - there is no single or simple answer. The economy is comprised of a vast range of interacting businesses and industries. What the government has done in this document is to single out those areas in the micro economy which have the potential to best contribute to the expansion and well-being of the macro economy.

The second question of economics is: how should the goods be produced? The 2 basic approaches are by private enterprise or by the state. These approaches are particularly apposite in terms of the history of the Northern Territory and its future directions. For too many years, both before and after self-government, the question of 'what to produce?' was answered by 'government works and services' and the question 'how to produce?' was answered 'through a mixture of state and private enterprise'. The result was a private sector largely dependent upon relatively high levels of government expenditure. Because of the relatively inefficient nature of that expenditure, the private sector was not particularly active in finding new markets.

Contraction in the level of government spending in recent years has forced the reassessment of the answers previously provided to the first 2 questions, and this document is the result of that reassessment. Given that the document identifies what goods we should produce, we need look no further than the Chief Minister's foreword to find the answer to the second question. He says, and I quote: 'The strategy is based on the belief that the Territory's economic development is essentially in the hands of the private sector, with government playing a support role'.

For whom should the goods be produced? This is also the subject of considerable discussion in the document. Again, the question has 2 basic answers, and they are domestic consumption or export. The underlying strength of the world's largest economy, being the United States of America, is its huge domestic market. Our small population, and subsequently limited domestic demand, necessitates that we look elsewhere in response to that question. The problems that we face as a result of the size of our domestic market are succinctly put in the section headed 'Market Size', which begins at page 22 of the document. Those problems are, put briefly, limited domestic competition and non-availability of economies of scale. The strategy states that Territory industries need to increase the effective market size for their products through interstate and, particularly, overseas sales. The strategy addresses itself to the questions arising from that statement and identifies a number of tasks that need to be undertaken if we are to achieve our objective.

The greatest market opportunities are identified as lying in South-east Asia, and the 3 major attributes required to penetrate that market are perceived as commitment and perseverance, continuing financial support, and accurate and reliable market information. Obviously, there are businesses and industries which already have access to overseas or interstate markets. However, generally they are limited to those whose product is not readily available elsewhere, for example, uranium, manganese, the live buffalo and buffalo meat trade or for those with a particular market niche, for example, Aboriginal artifacts or out-of-season fruit and vegetables.

It is not unimportant to expand the opportunities for existing businesses and industries. However, in the pursuit of economic stability, it is critical to find opportunities for new business, industries and products. The key which will open the door of export opportunity is market intelligence. The document recognises the recent revitalisation of Austrade, and commits the Territory to the forging of closer links with that organisation. The document re-emphasises what we have known all along, which is that our economic location is not a major obstacle to our economic development but, rather, a positive advantage. South-east Asia is the fastest-growing economic region in the world and the Territory is ideally placed geographically to play a major role in that growth. Not only do we have that geographic advantage, we also have the raw materials and resources to contribute to the growth of the region. However, to properly participate and take full advantage of the opportunities on offer in South-east Asia we must, as stated in the document, improve our knowledge and awareness of the requirements of the Asian market.

Government-to-government relations will be improved. Private sector contacts will be encouraged and assisted. Educational links will be expanded at the secondary, tertiary and vocational levels. Mr Speaker, all those are necessary to create an awareness in the market of the products available in the Northern Territory, and a confidence in dealing with the Northern Territory and its business community.

The strategy document clearly addresses the 3 basic questions of economics: what to produce; how and by whom. In his address, the Leader of the Opposition displayed an appalling lack of even the most fundamental grasp of economics. He did not even know, Mr Speaker, what questions to ask of an economic strategy, and if this sounds rather like a basic lesson in schoolboy economics, it is. That is exactly what it is, Mr Speaker, basic schoolboy economics of which the purported alternative Chief Minister has not even the slightest inkling.

The answering of the questions alone does not provide for a comprehensive strategy. Government must provide what means it can to support private enterprise in its endeavours to build a strong and prosperous economy. A number of key areas in which government can assist the private sector are identified, and they are listed at page 9 of the strategy.

If we are to compete effectively with other economies on the macro level, simplistic political ideology must go, literally, out the window. There can be no limitation on the type of government support offered, provided that support is offered on a fair and equitable basis. We need to be able to compete with other economies on their terms and not on terms or under constraints that we misguidedly place upon ourselves. If, in order to establish new industry in the Northern Territory, we need to offer direct financial assistance, cheap land packages or reduced charges, if we need to enact special legislation, provide special educational courses or take direct equity, so be it. If the opposition does not like it, so be it. But, through

our economic development strategy, we, as a government, will lead the Territory into a prosperous and stable 21st century.

In closing, as I have said before in other debates, one of the greatest intangibles in promoting the economy is that of confidence. We have that confidence and it is heartening to know that captains of Australian industry share that confidence, and I would quote from but a few. Mr James Balderstone, Chairman of BHP: 'We are only scratching the surface in the Territory. There is much potential to be realised'. Les Hollings, Director, News Limited: 'The determination to succeed after challenge, the stubborn will to triumph over adversity, the place where these characteristics are most on display is the Northern Territory'. Mr Daryl George, Chief Executive Officer of the Confederation of Australian Industry says:

There are huge potential markets for Australian goods and services in South-east Asia. The Northern Territory, especially with its Trade Development Zone, is ideally placed to take maximum advantage of those opportunities. It is the new growth area of Australia.

John Menadue, Chief Executive of Qantas says:

I pay tribute to the Northern Territory's exciting tourism developments and tourist programs which are so important to the Territory and Qantas.

If Territorians can display the same confidence in themselves as others express, this Territory certainly has a bright and assured future, and I trust that we will be able finally to lay to rest the ghost of another great Australian, who unfortunately seems unwittingly to have forged the prevailing view that many Australians have held of the Northern Territory for the past 90 years. I refer to Banjo Paterson, who wrote in the Bulletin of 31 December 1898:

Far in the north of Australia lies a little known land, a vast, half-finished sort of region wherein nature has been apparently practising how to make better places. This is the Northern Territory of South Australia. Britain, it is said, thinks of establishing an imperial naval station at Port Darwin, but let Britain beware. The Northern Territory has broke everybody that ever touched it in any shape or form and it will break Britain if she meddles with it. The decline and fall of the British Empire will date from the day that Britannia starts to monkey with the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, 90 years, on we are giving the lie to Paterson's remarks.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, those last remarks sounded more like Paterson's curse.

Mr Speaker, I am rather disappointed at the way this strategy, as it is being called, has been put through this House. The Chief Minister introduced it and the Leader of the Opposition spoke on it. Then, the other day when we were ready to continue the debate on what we saw as an important, albeit flawed, statement by the Chief Minister, government members were successful in adjourning debate on it. Now, when it has been brought into this House again, the government could not even maintain a quorum during the speech of its first speaker. The government does not have enough interest in this debate to be able to maintain a quorum. It shows the government's real attitude to this economic strategy as against its stated one. It is my information that, in

fact, it has very little to do with the current Chief Minister and is a product of the previous Chief Minister. I await his discussion.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will deal out my bouquets and my brickbats in a moment, and the current Chief Minister and the previous Chief Minister can catch them as they will.

Unfortunately, it is not a strategy but a grab bag of wish lists. It is a concoction of government policies and ideas thrown together in any old form. It is a statement by government that basically says: 'We do not know where we are but we do know we are in trouble. We do not know where we are going or how we are going to get there'. It seems that the idea is that we will have many reports and many new committees and venture capital companies and, as if by magic, these will somehow achieve solutions.

Look at the actual bodies that it talks about creating: the Office of Investment Facilitation; the Northern Territory Trading Company; the Venture Capital Company and the Technology Development Corporation, which will include an Innovation Centre. During the budget debate, I raised each of these proposed bodies with the appropriate minister in an attempt to find out what resources were being allocated. In respect of each of them, I was told that no resources had been allocated. Mr Speaker, we have a strategy but we have no resources.

Mr Coulter: That is not true.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, check the Hansard.

We have the Northern Territory Employment Development Strategy and Implementation Plan. That one stood out because I believe that some work has been done on it. Nothing has been done on the joint government private sector task force to study senior secondary curriculum or the panel which was to review government research programs. Also, there was an Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Policy and Strategy. All of these are simply names conjured up in the minds of bureaucrats and thrown into a document that has glossy paper and pretty pictures, and that is as far as they go.

There are internal contradictions and inconsistencies in the document itself which demonstrate the diversity of authors and the variety of people who have had a hand in it. At page 7, it says: 'A more diversified economy is a stronger, more stable economy'. Who could doubt it? It goes on to talk about widening the Territory's economic base and improving stability in the level of economic activity, expanding the scope of employment, increasing the size and depth of the local market and generating new business opportunities. It is all very good stuff, Mr Speaker. If you then turn to page 23, it says that the achievement of a more diversified economy is a major development issue for the Northern Territory and that the narrow industry base of the Territory economy gives rise to a range of concerns. Then, we have 5 negatives. There is no consistency at all.

Mr Perron: What is the heading of the section? He does not know how to read it.

Mr EDE: I finally worked out how to read it, Mr Speaker. I must admit that it took me a couple of hours because it has been put together incredibly poorly. It is very difficult to work through the document itself.

Mr Dale: It hasn't got pictures for you.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it has plenty of pictures but they do not relate to anything in the store anyway.

It talks about education links with South-east Asia. That is a matter that I am fully in support of. As I said, previously, that will not be helped by false advertising overseas which, hopefully, will now cease. Even though we have the Northern Territory University Bill before the House, absolutely no mention is made of that. Obviously, input by the Department of Education must have occurred early last year - or possibly it was not asked at all. The strategy talks about further development of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the establishment of an International Studies Centre at the DIT etc. It does not relate at all to the current realities in relation to tertiary education in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: It talks about where we are going.

Mr EDE: You first need to know where you are.

Mr Perron: There is a section on that too.

Mr EDE: It refers to the Territory's location and there is an incredible inconsistency. At page 5, it says: 'The Territory's location is no longer a major obstacle to economic development - it is an opportunity. The Territory is the gateway between Asia and Australia ...'. However, if we turn to page 17, under the heading 'Location', it says: 'The Territory is relatively isolated from the main populations of Australia. This imposes its own costs through: high cost of importing goods from southern centres; disadvantages in supplying goods to other markets'.

Mr Perron: Read the rest of it.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am not going to read the whole part. It refers to certain benefits, none of which relate to what was said at page 5. It is not consistent. Obviously, it is a hotchpotch of contributions from various ministers. It has no thrust. There is no way that you can work through it as a cohesive document.

Mr Speaker, it identifies constraints on development. That is something that one would expect to find. One would expect to find also how some indication of how such constraints could be turned into advantages. Let us look at a few. There are insufficient numbers of cattle slaughtered - and the recommendation is a study. We are told that there are gaps in infrastructure and the strategy offers a wish list and some hopes. It says that research effort is required and the answer is a joint government and private review panel. It talks about the need for business migration and it will ask for special assistance. It says there is a low level of capital works but the government will try to increase that in the future. In relation to over-regulation, it will encourage self-regulation. It talks about poor targeting of government research development activities and advice and it will undertake a review. It talks about the small local market but it will not do anything about that. It talks about national policies but it will not do anything about them. It talks about too many imports and it will fund some research. It talks about too much regulation and there is to be a review. It talks about insufficient investment, and there will be a third publication which will assist with a feasibility study.

Mr Speaker, this is not the way. We need to grab the economy by the scruff of the neck and start taking it forward. As a result of the government's strategy paper, the average person in the business community and in the public service will be no more aware of where they will go from here than they were before. They can see the graphs depicting what has been happening, but where do they go from there? There are wish lists, but how will development occur?

Take the example of the abattoirs. In 1982, we were slaughtering some 50% of our cattle and now we are slaughtering some 20% of our cattle. Look at what is occurring in Alice Springs, Mr Speaker. I have spoken about it in this House. I know that Trevor Surplice from the AMIEU has spoken out. I have a copy of a media release from the Trades and Labor Council. We are all urging the government to take an interest in what is happening in Alice Springs and to work to get things going again so that 130 jobs are not simply wiped out. A few years ago, there were 500 jobs. This fell to 250 jobs and now another 130 will go down the drain.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, all the cattle are going interstate and they are being slaughtered down there under the type of systems which the AMIEU has in place in other areas. Everybody there is making a profit under those tally systems, but that is not good enough for the government here. It decided to kill off the industry in case a couple of workers were making a reasonable quid out of it. Talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face, Mr Speaker. That is exactly what this government has been doing over this whole abattoir industry. It has got itself up a blind creek and it does not have the sense to realise it has gone the wrong way, to turn around and come back, and start developing the industry instead of continuously knocking it.

I cannot understand why this government cannot see the major benefits that can be gained from the development of the abattoir industry, together with canneries, hide processing, tanneries and the development of blood and bone fertiliser production. The Attorney-General can dance around and pull funny faces because he has a job that is pretty safe for the next 18 months or so. He does not have to worry about where his next quid will come from. He is not a meatworker, but there are very many good meatworkers who have had to leave the Territory because of the policies of this government as it has knocked off their industry. Mr Speaker, you have only to look at the buffalo industry - and I gave the figures the other day - to see how the government is determined to cut it down.

In the few minutes remaining to me, let me look at some of the issues that should have been examined in the strategy document. One would have expected to see an exhaustive analysis of the Territory economy. One would have expected an analysis of what is generating our wealth and what we can do to improve that. There should have been a thoroughgoing identification of our comparative strengths and weaknesses. That should have been done in absolute terms for the Northern Territory, and then compared to the situation in the Australian states and amongst our Asian neighbours.

The strategy could then have gone on to discuss the key issues for the Northern Territory. This is how it should have been set out. It would have taken people progressively from where we were to where we want to go. We could have looked at which of our traditional and our emerging strengths could be exploited and what critical infrastructure must be supplied. We need to state how we will generate new wealth and which sectors will supply long-term jobs for Territorians.

An economic strategy should contain per annum growth targets, for the economy generally and for specific sectors. What are the growth targets in terms of Territory production? What are the growth targets for capital works outlays? What are the growth targets for public sector outlays? What are the growth targets for employment, both in the private and public sector? What are the targets in terms of public sector debt levels? If those targets were set down, the economic strategy could address the means of achieving them. It could propose a course of action for the Territory to achieve both national and international competitiveness, which is absolutely crucial. It could look at tactics adopted to motivate employees in working towards achieving those goals, and it could consider how our strengths could be exploited and our weaknesses overcome.

Such an economic strategy would then ask whether management in both the public and private sector was being encouraged to make tough decisions. Nobody doubts that we are going through a very awkward time as the essential nature of the economy changes from one that is led by the public sector to one which is led by the private sector. That change will not be achieved through a collection of wish lists, which is all the government's strategy document is. Personnel tactics have to be used. There needs to be an identification of the processes which will move the economy from one phase to the other.

If management is not behind the change and the workers are not behind it, one has to ask how the government will exert the leadership required to ensure that it happens. The problem is that nobody out there believes that this government has the ability or leadership to carry through the process of change. A few years ago, people might have looked at the government's economic strategy and said: 'Okay, it is fundamentally flawed, but they are a mob of goers. They will get out there and do it'. Nobody believes that about the CLP any more. People see that it is tired. Its members are too busy fighting and knifing each other in the back. They are pursuing their individual ends instead of the Territory's ends. That belief has not been changed by the government's document on its economic development strategy.

The document does not convince people that the government will make tough decisions, like divesting itself of unproductive assets, or that it has the skills to manage risk and to plan for survival and growth in difficult economic circumstances. A number of Australian states have faced that challenge and turned their own weaknesses into strengths. Where are this government's strategies to ensure international competitiveness in our areas of comparative advantage, such as those we have repeatedly pointed to in the horticultural industry and the pastoral industry? All the government has done is dish up those areas in a list. It has provided no specific targets and no action plans. That is what is needed if Territorians are to get behind the development strategy. Without that sort of information, what will induce them to invest in the Territory's future? At present, many people are wary of such investment because they do not want to be the odd ones out. They do not believe that this government has the strength to generate the growth in the economy which will give them an adequate return on their investments.

The document is disappointing. The positive aspect is that, in the final section on the Territory economy today, there are some useful graphs and figures which fit in pretty well with the trends we have been pointing to for some time in terms of change in the Territory's population and the parlous situation we are in. If the rest of the document had been up to that standard, particularly in terms of how the public sector can be used as the engine room of change in assisting private enterprise to come to grips with opportunities, it would have had the potential to play a much larger role in

getting the economy moving again. I hope that the government will stop its eternal bickering and backstabbing and get on with promoting the development of the Territory because that is what people are waiting for.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the economic development strategy document that has been tabled. I know that members of this House are frustrated, tired, bored and angry with the continuous carping negativism of the member for Stuart and surely the community must be in a similar frame of mind. I am also sure that the member for Stuart prays desperately that he will be able to convince the Northern Territory community that his rhetoric contains some semblance of fact. Both the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy have gone to extreme lengths in attempting to argue that the economic development strategy will not achieve its objective, that the document is terrible and that it will not be accepted by the community.

This afternoon, the member for Karama read into Hansard a very positive statement issued by the Confederation of Australian Industry, the largest industry representative organisation, and the most broad-ranging industry representative in the Northern Territory, saying exactly the opposite to what both the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy have been spouting. Of course, it is fair to say that opposition members have a vested interest in promoting the notion that this government does not know where it is going. They are desperately keen to convince the community that the document contains no strategy or direction. Their only problem is that they are flying in the face of the widest cross-section of the Northern Territory economic community that has ever been brought together.

Those people have worked together to produce this strategy, and they are not all employers although they do cover a wide spectrum, including: horticulturists, grain producers, cattlemen, miners, members of the banking industry, members of the Small Business Association, the Confederation of Australian Industry and the Master Builders Association, the Northern Territory Trades and Labour Council, the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council. All participated fully in the development of this strategy, and all supported this strategy. Every one of them supports this strategy and, if nothing else, that gives the lie to the propaganda that we have heard in this House this afternoon, and in the Leader of the Opposition's ill-considered, ill-thought-out response immediately the document was tabled.

He was offered the opportunity not to respond immediately, to go away, read and study the document and, having done so, to come back and give a considered response. But that has not happened, because political grandstanding is the name of the game members opposite are playing. They are not interested in the facts or the interests of the people of the Northern Territory.

I will not go into the fine detail of this document that the member for Karama dealt with, but allow me to refer honourable members to the structure of this document. What does this document tell us? In several places, it sets out different aspects. Basically, there are 2 elements: one describes where we are today, what we are faced with today, and the second discusses the issues that we need to address, and how we should go about addressing them for the future.

It is not a blow-by-blow description of how many extra mangoes we will produce each year or how many kilograms of beef will go through the Katherine Abattoir this year, next year and the year after. It is a strategy on a



process and a method of approach, and defines the sort of role that government needs to play to achieve the objectives that have been accepted by that wide cross-section of the Northern Territory community. As the confederation said, this document does not pull any punches. I refer honourable members to the appendix at page 75.

Prior to going into that, I must say that there is always a difficulty with producing these documents, and I am very aware of the debate. There are 78 pages in this document. Those 78 pages contain a mixture of graphs, diagrams, pictures and print. That information could be expanded. In fact, the information brought forward to the committee was far more expansive. However, is it appropriate to produce a document like that produced by the Victorian government, which resembles 3 reports by the Auditor-General piled on top of each other? It is hundreds of pages thick and has been prepared in small print like other government reports and parliamentary papers and is full of detail, facts and masses of statistics which nobody ever reads. Do we do that or do we take another direction, as does New South Wales which produces pretty, glossy documents with no facts at all?

Mr Collins: The former government, I presume.

Mr HATTON: The former government.

Or do you try to get something in between that gives a general direction, a guideline, and that states in summary form what you want to do, how you are going to go about achieving it, and what role government will play in that process, and that honestly defines where we are today? That is a document which investors can use to help them, not to make their final investment decisions, but to see what direction we are going in. They can then come through and get the detail that they desire for their particular purpose. That is what this document does and it does it admirably.

At the back of the document, there is a section on the Territory economy today. It gives sectorial breakdowns of the economy. It does not paint a pretty picture of the economy in many of the broad areas. As the member for Stuart so gleefully pointed out, it shows that there are problems in our population directions, and we are aware of that, the Territory is aware of that. He managed to pick out those little, negative points and hook on to them. Of course, he totally ignored the appendix at the back. I recommend that all honourable members look very carefully at the appendix on pages 75 and 78. It also shows very clearly the real reduction in funding to the Northern Territory, and I refer members to figure 3 at page 76 which shows that, between 1981-82 and 1984-85, the Northern Territory's funding changes were less than those of the states and, from that point forward, the reductions in our funding were dramatically larger than those of the states.

Surely, the opposition is prepared to accept that those facts have created a situation that has made it difficult for the people of the Northern Territory. Don't deny them; recognise them and accept them. We have to deal with that fact. It is a fact that we have to deal with. Recognise something else in this document, Mr Speaker. Recognise the summary headed 'Territory Industry Today', at pages 49 to 63, which goes through industry sector by industry sector. Look at the growth rates in mining and energy production, cattle, primary production, horticulture, even in manufacturing operations, and in tourism in particular, right across the spectrum of all those things we call the propulsive, private enterprise, wealth-creating industries. Every one of those shows strong growth, and that is the force we must draw on to build our future. We must recognise that, had we not had that growth, had we

not been able to maintain that underlying growth, the effects of the dramatic cuts in public-sector spending would have been far, far worse for the people of the Northern Territory.

To an extent, the cuts in public sector spending have been offset by growth in the real economy, by growth in tourism, mining, pastoral and primary industries, secondary industries and fishing. All of that is revealed in this document so we know where we are today, what public sector financing is like now and will be like, what has been going on behind that, and the growth that has been occurring there. From that, people can begin to understand the dynamics of what we are confronted with today: a depressed economy in the general community but with an underlying growth force that, if we foster and promote it, can bring us forward to increase our tax base again and, most importantly, to build jobs and bring diversification to our economy. We all talk about that but none of us ever wants to get down to the hard work of planning how to do it. This document addresses that.

Having identified that situation, the document then moves to an honest consideration of the sort of issues we have to deal with. It deals with location, transport, land - a series of headings - and the good, the bad and the ugly in each of those areas. It discusses the issues involved. For example, under the heading of 'Location' on page 17, it says that:

The Territory is relatively isolated from the main population centres of Australia. This imposes its own costs through: high cost of importing goods from southern centres; disadvantages in supplying goods to other markets.

That reiterates what the member for Stuart said. What he did not say was what it says next:

... but brings certain benefits: out of season supply of horticultural products; tourism in the winter months of the southern states.

Those are advantages of our location. He did not mention that, even though we encouraged him to bring it out. He wanted to point only to the negative side of it, not the positive side.

This document then seeks to apply those issues to a series of sectoral strategies to deal with different elements of the economy. I will not go through them in detail, but I took sectoral strategies on minerals and energy, and marked out specific government initiatives that are covered there. This is only a summary of how we intend to go about building the Territory economy and the sort of role government will play. The essential objectives are set out under the heading 'Strategies for Development' which elaborates on the government's role in seeking to attain those objectives and gives an overview of sectoral strategies.

Members may ask whether there is more to the question of the Territory's development than this document contains, and I refer them to the statement I made to the House, as the then Chief Minister, on Thursday 25 February 1988, which begins on page 2541 of Hansard. In that statement, I set out what we were seeking to achieve with this document. It also refers to the other linked documents, which are publicly available and which give further substance to the government's strategies. I refer honourable members to the statement 'Directions of Government' of January 1987. That remains the statement of the philosophical directions of this government. I refer

honourable members to the business and industry plans brought out prior to the last election. They set the goals and projected the vision. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to take note, they said: 'This is where we want to be by the year 2000'. At the time, he said: 'That is all very well but how are you going to get there?'. Now that we have produced a document which brings together a multitude of studies, he says: 'Okay, that is the how. Where is the vision?'. It is brilliant stuff, Mr Speaker. He wants it both ways.

I refer members to ministerial statements made during 1987. I refer members to the Norgaard Report on the development of the fishing industry, the pastoral industry study, the tourism study called 'Beyond 2000', all of which are source documents for this summarised strategy. They give the detail of the approach in the various sectors. A substantial part of this work has been done. This document summarises what is already in those publicly-available documents and puts it into the framework of a strategy across all sectors of the economy. A vast amount of supporting material is available. The Norgaard Report alone contains 4 volumes and there are many other publicly-available studies, including statements that have been debated in this House in the last 12 months.

What really frightens the opposition is that the strategy is in place and clearly has the support of a broad sector of the community. That frightens the opposition because it gives the lie to its entire political propaganda campaign. It has to find a way to undermine this strategy because, if it fails to do so, its whole house of cards will collapse. In fact, this time that is what will happen because the threads are finally being brought together in a comprehensive statement which can be presented to the community. Let it not be said that there is no direction for the Territory, no strategy or method of approach. It is all there. It has been put together in a document which itself will be reviewed and refined over the next 12 months and beyond as a rolling plan of action.

The document is totally consistent with the budget that was passed through the House last week. The budget allocated the financial resources and organisational resources to implement the directions contained in this strategy. Everything is in place: the philosophy, the budget, the strategy, the backup documents and the business and industry plans. The fact is that members of the opposition have been caught with their pants down trying to knock something that everybody else in the community has been working on all this year. All they can do is their usual trick of playing with words. I will not say anything further about that.

However, I will say that I was absolutely shocked to hear the Leader of the Opposition make reference to the Territory Insurance Office last Tuesday, 4 October, when he said:

Mr Speaker, one of the Labor Party's policies adopted by the CLP was the creation of the Territory Insurance Office. It has become one of the most important investment vehicles in the Northern Territory. Surely the Northern Territory Insurance office must be part of any strategy. What goals does the government have for it? How do those goals fit into the overall economic development strategy? This document does not provide any indication whatsoever about how the semi-government organisation that will provide the major financial input into the Northern Territory economy in the foreseeable future fits into the economic development strategy. That is simply not good enough. With our limited financial resources, we cannot afford to have the TIO sitting out there on its own outside of what is supposed to be a comprehensive economic strategy for the government.

That sounds wonderful. I must say, however, that the funds administered by the TIO are not government funds. They are policyholders' funds. The ALP would play with Territorians' money to implement its socialist ideals rather than allowing those who are responsible to the policyholders to make rational business investments, given that they must be made in the Northern Territory. The opposition wants to control those funds in the interests of controlling the Northern Territory.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the document that has been put before the House. In many ways it is a good document. I am glad that it does not do what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting, which is to detail where every job will be created in the Territory. He seems to want a totally planned economy and I remind him that Mr Gorbachev seems to be smart enough to realise that the planned economies of the communist states seldom succeed. That is because there is no incentive there for workers to work hard. The people in his country are getting sick of having to ride their pushbikes for miles every morning before sunrise to line up for their daily bread and to run the risk of being dobed in to the authorities if they get half a loaf more than they usually get. Planned economies do not work, and I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition might have woken up to that. I suggest that he ask any person, of any political persuasion, who has been a minister for employment, why they always shy away from the question: 'Where are the jobs going to come from?'. They can do no more than look into a crystal ball. I am pleased that the government realises that its main job is to be the facilitator, to put in place the infrastructure and allow the private sector to take advantage of it to help develop this Territory of ours.

I tried to look at the document from the perspective of a business person outside the Territory. From that perspective, it seems to be a pretty honest appraisal. It talks about the advantages of our position in relation to South-east Asia. It talks about disadvantages relative to trading with and supplying people in the southern states of Australia. It also points out some opportunities, which have been mentioned by other members. It is a document that would whet the appetite. That is the way I see it. In some ways, it is at the concept stage, which is supposed to be a very enjoyable stage. It raised my interest.

It would also raise questions, and a person who asks questions is a person who is interested. If he gets the proper answers to those questions, he might go further and actually make a commitment to this Territory of ours. That is where I see a problem with this document, and to me it is a big problem. Where do you go to get the information? Mr Deputy Speaker, in this document I find not 1 address and not 1 phone number. There is not even an indication as to where I can get another copy of the document if I wish to, apart from a library index number.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you might say that a smart person knows how to get information. Sure, a smart person does. He will reach for the phone, especially if he has a few bob and does not care about the phone bill. He can hunt around and start asking questions. But, surely, the purpose of this book is to sell the Territory. To sell it, we need to make it as easy as possible for people to get the answers, or that is what I would have thought. That is my criticism of this document. It does not indicate where information can be obtained easily and readily. I realise that assembling detailed information on various topics, such as solar ponds in Alice Springs, may take considerably greater effort than was put into the production of this document. However, if we are absolutely serious and dead keen to sell the Territory, then that information has to be available.

I take up the point made by the member for Nightcliff who talked about Victoria, which has produced huge volumes of material covering everything but which nobody would read. That would be too costly to have freely available but, to me, the reasonable way to go would be to produce separate papers covering each individual area. If people are interested in solar ponds, growing grapes, growing dates or mining, specific papers can be supplied to them, and these should be readily available. We have to get out and sell the Territory. It will not just sell itself. This document whets the appetite and then drops you cold. It leaves you dead. You might be prepared to make a good number of phone calls but then you may happen to get someone at the end of the line who is not very interested at all.

As honourable members may remember, last week I mentioned the experiences related to me of a gentleman who was trying to obtain some information in the Territory on behalf of a group of Asian businessmen. He could not find anything like this document. This is certainly a good step in the right direction. He tried to get information from government departments, and he received 2 types of response. The first was to be ignored. That is a pretty negative and devastating response and, if I were the Chief Minister or the minister responsible for any department and I knew that was going on, I would do something about it. People do not want to wait 6 months for a response. They want a response within a few days. That is the sort of thing that impresses people. For example, if my interest were raised by this document, and I started to make some inquiries, I would love to get my answers in as short a time as possible. That would impress me greatly and show me that people were on the ball. But, no, after 1 month, he had either been ignored or had received replies which did not answer the questions he had raised but instead asked: 'Who are these people you are inquiring for?'

Mr Deputy Speaker, it would not matter if this bloke was an absolute nutter and did not have any interested contacts. That information should be available to an inquirer, it should be there. We should be as keen as mustard and our departments should be as keen as mustard to get this information out to any inquirer. Inquirers should not be looked on as people who are a pain in the backside. They should be looked on as people who represent an opportunity. The very fact that they are asking questions means that their interest is aroused and, if they get the right answers, the honest answers, they may well be the people that will come here and expand our population and our economy, which is what we want. I think we have the attitude rather wrong.

That does not apply only to the public sector. I have had personal experience with the private sector. I well recall approaching a couple of firms in Alice Springs to get prices and details of a bore pump to equip a bore at Ti Tree. I received no response whatsoever. Naturally, after a time, I obtained quotes from down south and I went down and bought a pump. Maybe people have had it too good for too long, not only in the public sector but in the private sector.

If we are really serious about developing the Territory, everybody has to get in there and get the information together in a palatable, easy form. We have to have ...

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Well, to this document. I think an addendum of some sort should be attached to it. It would have been far better if relevant telephone numbers and addresses had been supplied in each section so that, if a person

becomes interested as a result of what he has read, he can pick up the telephone and contact the numbers shown to obtain further information. Obviously, people in the private sector would have to be in agreement if their phone numbers are to be included. Also, they must be prepared to give out information willingly. The public sector has no excuse whatsoever. Public sector contact information should be there, and it should be clear. Then, if people find their appetites and interest are aroused by this document, they can get more detailed information. If we are serious about getting the Territory on the move, we have to sell to people.

At this stage in the game, some extra work needs to be done, and possibly much harder work than has gone into the preparation of this document. No doubt, a fair effort has been needed to put this before us, but we need to prepare an addendum with relevant phone numbers and contacts and we need to include backup information in an easy and palatable form. It should not all be contained in 1 great, costly book which nobody would read.

An information booklet should be prepared for each particular sector. Perhaps the various departments should have fact sheets containing further information which could be distributed on request. That would help to whet the appetite of interested persons and could give details of useful contacts. The old saying that it is not what you know, but who you know, is true. It is essential to get to the right people, the people who can help and who are paid to help. Information that will enable interested persons to do that should be available. Equally, the people who have the answers really have to take their jobs seriously and welcome every inquiry. They must get information to people just as quickly as they can and never fob anybody off. As I have said, if we are serious, we have to make that extra effort, and it behoves everyone in the private sector and the public sector to put themselves at the disposal of people who make inquiries. We must do that if we wish to develop the Territory.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, as I rise to speak in this debate, my mind goes back to 25 February 1988, when the Hatton government was about to celebrate the anniversary of its election victory. The then Chief Minister, Mr Hatton, rose in the Assembly and announced that his government had decided that:

The time has come to review and update the economic development strategy for the Northern Territory. I am pleased to advise honourable members that work has commenced on this major exercise. Indeed, it is progressing at a rapid rate with the full involvement of key departments and authorities.

The then Minister for Industries and Development, Marshall Perron, and the then Treasurer, Barry Coulter, rose to speak in wholehearted support of Mr Hatton's initiative. The Parliamentary Record shows that Mr Perron launched an attack on the Labor opposition. To refresh everyone's memory, he said: 'The Labor opposition would have us believe that the Territory government has been operating in some sort of economic policy vacuum for the past 10 years'. The then Treasurer, Mr Coulter, told parliament that the CLP government talked to business people all the time and knew the recipe to stimulate economic growth. He said: 'Other strengths are our stable and sophisticated physical and political environment ...', and 'I congratulate the government for its directions and its leadership and I look forward to further developments in the Territory during the next 10 years, based on the direction and guidance given by the CLP government over the past decade'. It was stirring stuff, Mr Speaker.

Just to show how stable our political environment was, members opposite disposed of Mr Hatton, who now sits meekly on the backbench. Since Mr Hatton was cast aside, the voters of the Northern Territory, who elected his government only a year ago, have still not been given any sound reason why. Yet again, it was time to reshuffle the ministerial pack of cards. Presumably to demonstrate once again how stable that political environment really is, when those cards were reshuffled, Mr Coulter emerged ...

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member has referred continually to members on this side of the House by name rather than by their seat.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to refer to all members by their correct titles.

Mr TIPILOURA: Yes, Mr Speaker. I wrote the speech myself the other night.

Mr Speaker, the present Deputy Chief Minister launched the Territory Enterprise Awards in Darwin. It was one of those events that the Chief Minister told the media that he would not participate in. It is important to point out that such events require a prepared speech. In other words, the words were carefully chosen. The Deputy Chief Minister used the opportunity to announce a major shake-up of the Department of Industries and Development. The speech was a major insult to the department with a backhander to the private sector. It was reported on page 3 of the NT News of Tuesday 19 July that the Deputy Chief Minister said, in part: 'I will spell it out quite simply and frankly - there is plenty of room for improvement'. He was speaking about the way the government and the private sector meet and do business. 'The government has never really got its act together in the manner which positively assists and fosters the NT business environment'. He went on to say that, in the past, the focus of industry assistance had been an exciting business, sometimes selective and sometimes carried out on an ad hoc basis. Sometimes the assistance was helpful. Sometimes people were helped who should never have been helped. Sometimes people were helped to compete with others, thereby gaining an unfair advantage and sometimes people were helped just enough to get them into deep water with the result that they ran out of working capital.

Mr Speaker, it is hard to believe that those views were expressed by the same man who expressed great faith in the direction and guidance of his government in this Assembly in March. He did not tell us who should never have been helped, who got the unfair advantage or who was put out of business. That would be telling. He went on to hurl this insult: 'I will be insisting the old days of stiff-necked bureaucracy on the government side dealing with the pick-me-up private sector on the other are over and finished'. He then said: 'The implication of my speech may appear to be a put down of what happened before I came on the scene. I stress that it is not my intention to be critical but, in 1988, we will have time to grow and develop our ideas and experience and it is now time for a change'.

Mr Speaker, it is time for a change of government because the man who had been Minister for Industries and Development until 10 days before the Deputy Chief Minister gave that speech was, of course, the present Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. According to the statement given in this Assembly in February, the Chief Minister and his deputy were assisting the member for Nightcliff to put together an economic development strategy. The member for Nightcliff promised in February to present his development strategy in June,

together with the 1988-89 budget. From what has been said, the member for Fannie Bay should not be Chief Minister.

The question must be asked: whose economic development strategy is this? Is it the member for Nightcliff's or is it the Chief Minister's? How can we trust this government when it is led by a man whose deputy, in his first public speech, denigrated the job the Chief Minister had been doing in the Industries and Development portfolio? I thought the Westminster system of government required ministers of the Crown to accept responsibility for the loss of taxpayers' money. The CLP parliamentary wing obviously operates under different rules. Ministerial incompetence is rewarded by the CLP parliamentary wing with a temporary elevation to the position of Chief Minister. I do not think the voters of the Territory would see that as sound leadership. They cannot have faith in government which changes direction every 5 minutes. It talks about guidance and direction and, in the next breath, about there being plenty of room for improvements. I do not think the voters of the Northern Territory are as dumb as this government thinks they are. They certainly have far longer memories that this government would give them credit for.

I would like to have been able to rise today to welcome the economic development strategy but, for the reasons I have outlined, that is impossible. Like the member for Sadadeen, I have problems in trying to understand the document. As has been said, there is not enough information in the document. I cannot support the economic development strategy. More work needs to be done on it. I do not think it provides enough information, particularly for business people. It needs to be easier for people to read and understand. This government needs to look at its directions and at the leadership that the Territory wants. Let alone succeed for the next 10 years, it will be hard for this government to be re-elected at the next election. It needs to get its act together.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for his advice on political matters. I was pleased to receive his assurance that he had written the speech himself because I would hate to think that he was standing here mouthing words that were written in an office down the road. I am not convinced that that has not happened before.

Mr Speaker, the thing that disappoints me about the honourable member's speech was the fact that he took the opportunity to denigrate members on this side of the House throughout ...

Mr Tipiloura: What is wrong with that?

Mr SETTER: There was almost no comment regarding the contents of this document ...

Mr Tipiloura: Who writes the ministers' speeches?

Mr SETTER: That is what we are debating. We are not debating ...

Mr Tipiloura: Don't tell me the ministers write their own speeches.

Mr SETTER: ... the policies and the characters of the people on this side of the House. I know that it is what your side of the House tries to do time after time in this place.

Mr Tipiloura: If you can't take it, get out.



Mr SETTER: I would like you to know that, at the moment, this is what we are talking about. Your mates were adopting the same sort of approach and they can't take it. We can take it, I assure you.

Mr Tipiloura interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Both members will cease their cross-Chamber interchange. The member for Arafura was heard in relative silence and the member for Jingili will be heard in the same manner.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I thank you for your protection.

The Chief Minister said: 'The 10 years since self-government has been a period of unprecedented growth for the Northern Territory'. Indeed it has been, but now is the time to reassess the situation because the rules of the game have changed over the last few years. The member for Nightcliff referred to the 10% reduction in Commonwealth funding to the Northern Territory in 1985-86, the 8% reduction in 1986-87 and the 9% reduction in 1987-88. The opposition did not rebut those figures because they are fact.

The document spells out the economic development strategy that will take the Northern Territory right through into the 1990s. Perhaps it does not dot the i's and cross the t's and talk about how many mangoes we will produce next season, because that is just not possible. Rather, it gives a broad outline, a concept for future development, and provides the opportunity for the private sector to take the initiative and kick the economy along. Until now, the government has stimulated this economy, but those times have gone. As I just indicated, the massive reduction in Commonwealth funding has removed the fat from the system, and that creates opportunities for the private sector.

Mr Speaker, I hasten to thank the private sector for its input to this document. As the member for Nightcliff indicated earlier, that input has been substantial, together with that of a number of other organisations, including trade unions whom I also thank for their cooperation.

The past 4 years have been difficult for the Northern Territory with a federal Labor government in power. Our funding has been severely reduced. We all know the ploy that is used. Every May, Treasurer Keating, the world's greatest Treasurer, gives his economic statement for the coming year. The reality is that we are the people who bear the brunt of that statement. When his budget comes down in August, he stands up and makes wonderful warm statements. Meanwhile, we have to implement our budget as a result of his May economic statement. We are the ones who get kicked and punched; not him, but the Northern Territory and every state. It is a very cunning strategy and it has worked for the federal government. However, the people of this country and this Territory are not as gullible as the federal government would like to think.

It is this government's objective to attract private investment into the Northern Territory. We want to promote development and we want to create jobs. We are increasing the education level of the Northern Territory's young people and the not-so-young. Once those people are educated, they will seek types of employment commensurate with their training. That is why jobs are the bottom line.

Our goals are very difficult to achieve with an opposition like the one in this House and a Labor government in Canberra. The opposition is always negative, not because it believes its arguments are fair, reasonable and just

but because it always seeks political gain. That is all it cares about and to hell with the welfare of the Northern Territory. If members opposite can gain a few political points by whipping outside and doing a quick grab with the media just before lunch to catch the lunchtime news or the afternoon newspaper, they will do it. We see it over and over again. They sell their souls for a quick grab on the media.

Let us have a look at the opposition's economic strategy. On 18 August 1988, the Leader of the Opposition said that a Territory Labor government would provide a better-managed economy. Speaking in the Assembly, he outlined Labor's plans for economic growth. I can remember when he was going to provide holidays for public servants at the Sheraton as a strategy for assisting economic growth and promoting tourism in the Territory. He went on to say that the economy needed an injection of funds rather than cuts. He said that Labor would work to build our productive assets.

However, on 23 August 1988, the NT News said: 'NT Budget shows the way'. It had confidence in the economic strategy of this government, not in the opposition's economic strategy. A story by Leonie Biddle said: 'The Northern Territory had given the states a lesson in budgeting and financial management, a national economic policy research group said today'. I could go on and give you the details of that story but I will not waste my time pursuing it now.

Let us have a look at another great initiative of this government, the Trade Development Zone. It has been kicked around a bit lately, again for political gain. Members of the opposition and others have carried on in the media, criticising it and trying to tear it down. In that context, I would like to quote from the Cairns Post of Monday 10 October 1988, which refers to the forthcoming introduction of legislation in the Queensland parliament to establish a trade development zone. I quote:

The federal Customs Minister, Mr Barry Jones, has agreed to allow the same bonding duty drawback arrangement that operates for Darwin's trade business zone to apply in north Queensland. When the state Industry, Small Business, Communications and Technology Minister, Mr Rob Borbidge, first announced the enterprise zone some months ago, he said projects seeking specific assistance needed to have initially represented an investment of \$15m. Mr Borbidge said his department was substantially on track with the management plan for the Northern Queensland Enterprise Zone announced earlier this year. The government was aiming to get a number of high value-added export oriented manufacturers into north Queensland to diversify the economy there and be compatible with infrastructure to make the proposed Cape York space port a reality, he said.

While the Labor opposition in the Northern Territory denigrates our Trade Development Zone and tries to tear it down for its own political purposes, the Queensland state government is going full bore to develop its own trade development zone and take those Asian business investors away from the Northern Territory. That is the purpose that the members of the opposition are serving. They say: 'To hell with the welfare of the Northern Territory. We want political gain'. That is what they are all about. They are not interested in developing the economy of the Northern Territory.

I referred earlier to Labor Party economic policies. They are fascinating when you start to look at them. Let us have a look at the editorial of the Weekend Australian of 8-9 October 1988. It is headed 'Another WA Inc. Rip-off' and it refers to the Western Australian state Labor government. I quote:

WA Inc has done it again. In its now customary stealthy way, the Western Australian government has become a substantial shareholder in a petrochemical plant, to the apparent benefit of Messrs Alan Bond, Laurie Connell and Dallas Dempster. The Western Australian government claims that an independent report by First Boston Corp, which predictably has not been released, values the Western Australian government's 43.5% stake in the petrochemical plant at a higher price than it paid. The Dowding government has a great deal of explaining to do. It should begin by releasing the report by First Boston to the taxpayers of the state who, without being consulted, have footed the bill.

The Western Australian government is a Labor government, Mr Speaker. Let us have a look at some of its other activities:

The state Labor government's business ventures have already cost the taxpayers of Western Australia more than \$117m. The major components of the liability are: \$43.6m to bail out the Teachers Credit Society; \$35m, the capital injection from the government to the Rural and Industrial Bank, in the wake of the TCS takeover; \$25.5m in superannuation board share losses between 30 June 1987 and 30 November 1987; \$13.3m to bail out the Swan Building Society ...

On top of that, of course, the Western Australian government had its sticky little fingers in Rothwells Bank at one stage.

That is the sort of economic policy we could expect to see from the economic wimps who sit on the other side of this House. They have no credibility when it comes to matters economic and that is quite obvious. I am sure the community at large recognises that and I am quite sure that the media recognise that and will treat the comments of members of the opposition about this strategy document with the contempt that they deserve.

We heard the member for Stuart doing a job on the cattlemen. I heard him on Territory Extra the other day. He was doing a job on the cattlemen, the backbone of the Northern Territory for the last century. The Territory's answer to Wayne and Shuster over there stood there grandstanding. He was probably saying: 'Friends, comrades, Territorians, lend me your ears, because I can whip them across the border and get a better price for them - bags of them'. I suggest to him that he had better go outside and rinse the blood off his moleskins, because he has plenty of it on them. That is what he should do. Like the Leader of the Opposition, he has no credibility. He had better get off the backs of the cattlemen. If he ever thought he would pick up any support for his side of politics in the Northern Territory from the pastoral industry, he has absolutely blown his chances.

As a result of the economic stringencies that have been imposed upon us in recent times, this government has been obliged to reduce its role in stimulating the economy. As I indicated earlier, we are now calling on the private sector to move in and fill that gap, to take up that role. However, one thing we do recognise and are working towards is education, and we will hear more about this at a later time. This government recognises the need to provide a higher level of education for Territorians, both the young and the more mature. We have seen the development of the Darwin Institute of Technology and its associated colleges and, of course, in more recent times the University College of the Northern Territory. That level of education is absolutely essential to the future economic development of the Northern Territory. Too long we have suffered a brain drain as our young people have

left the Territory and then, at some later time, we have had to import people with the necessary qualifications to fill some specific positions in our public service and to staff private enterprise. Education is this government's aim.

We want to go out there and encourage manufacturing, secondary industry. We want to target export, and when I say export, I mean exporting to other states within the Commonwealth as well as, of course, overseas. Those interstate exports are equally important. We want to create growth and business opportunities to add value to Territory raw materials, instead of just exporting those raw materials. We have heard the Minister for Mines and Energy talking about how we can further develop uranium processing in the Northern Territory, and about our gas resources. Of course, the bottom line is to create employment and, from that employment, growth will come and greater affluence for the people of this Territory.

Mr Speaker, I say to the government that it is very important that we support local business.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Small business.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, large business and small business. We must support local business. I do not hold with contracts going over our borders, interstate, for the sake of a few lousy dollars when the suppliers, the contractors and whoever - the people who employ people in the Northern Territory - have then to run around and put off staff because they have lost a contract they had counted on winning. The Northern Territory government may well have saved itself and its Tender Board a few lousy dollars, as I said before, but the negative effect is much greater than that, and we really need to look at that issue.

I would like to compliment the Chief Minister on the production of this document, but I would also like to compliment the member for Nightcliff because, as Chief Minister, it was his initiative that commenced the work on this document, and full marks to him. It was his initiative and forethought that got it under way.

Debate adjourned.

NATURAL DEATH BILL  
(Serial 113)

Continued from 17 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this Natural Death Bill could have become somewhat controversial but, to give credit where credit is due, that that has not transpired is due to the fact that a great deal of careful work has been done by the government and the opposition to ensure that all relevant parties have been thoroughly canvassed in this dispute - I am sorry, I saw the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council and immediately thought of disputes - I meant to say, canvassed in this particular manner.

I will leave the details of the opposition's position to my respected colleague, the shadow minister, but I do wish to indicate that, certainly in broad terms, the opposition supports the Natural Death Bill. Quite clearly it relates to an area of some sensitivity. There are a number of competing interests that need to be addressed and resolved when talking about the right of someone to sign a letter, at some stage in the future, for a life support

system to be turned off. Certainly, to use a colloquial expression, it is a very hairy area indeed and one that has provoked a large amount of controversy, debate and sometimes dispute, not only in Australia but overseas. To express a personal opinion, I support what is being proposed by the government and I hope that what we see as a result of this debate will be a full enunciation of the issues. I would suspect that it will not be all that long before we come back to this House to debate issues surrounding the legislation that we have before us today.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell) Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise for missing the call on business of the day. I thought the economic strategy was to be debated out.

It is surprising that this bill, which seeks to deal with one of the most complex moral and legal issues of our time, has occasioned so little public debate in the Territory. As the Leader of the Opposition has foreshadowed, we support this bill. I expect that, whilst a variety of issues and examples will be raised, there will be considerable consensus amongst the participants in the debate in this Assembly. Given the depth of the issues involved, that consensus is particularly surprising since the bill deals with no less a topic than euthanasia.

Mr Manzie: Wrong.

Mr BELL: I was afraid, Mr Deputy Speaker, that once I used the word 'euthanasia', I would excite some interjection. I will explain carefully what I mean in that regard because the purpose of the bill is to empower a terminally-ill person to direct that he no longer be kept alive. It allows him to certify a doctor not to maintain particular courses of treatment and, technically, that is known as antidythanasia or, more popularly as passive euthanasia. I appreciate that the emotive connotations of the word 'euthanasia' were not referred to by the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech, but that is the area we are in and that is the reason why the subject is of such deep and moral importance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make comments in 4 areas in respect of this bill. First, I would like to make some general comments about the background to the issue. Secondly, I wish to refer to the interstate and international debate that has arisen in recent years over the issue. Thirdly I want to examine the bill itself and the Attorney-General's second-reading speech. Finally, I want to refer to some other related issues and possible areas for future consideration by the legislature.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset, let me stress that this is not a partisan debate. Obviously there will be terms and issues that I will raise that some people, including the Attorney-General and other speakers, will take me to task over but I think it is worth considering why the issue arises at the moment. Medical science can now prolong life beyond the time that many people believe it to be desirable to do so. I think there is a high degree of community consensus about that. In fact, as an indication of the degree of that community consensus, the Attorney-General referred to representations made by the member for Braitling who was presumably reflecting public views that had been expressed to him.

It is important to stress, by way of background, that as well as there being that community consensus that medical technology is not necessarily being applied to good ends, we are not legislating in a vacuum. In fact, decisions are being made right now, I expect, that are arguably illegal. The

issues that are before us are not just the subject of some abstract debate about what is possible or what may not be possible at some time in the future. They are very much here-and-now issues, and it is worth pointing out a couple of the points in the background.

One of the reasons why there is that community consensus about technology is concern about the quality of life of the patient. People feel that, if a person has to be kept alive with a ventilator or a respirator, the quality of life may not be worth the highly expensive technology. The sheer expense of much of this technology means that, however unpalatable it might be, cost benefit considerations have to be given to it. It is worth looking at some of the work that has been done in this area and some of the cases that have been referred to elsewhere. Possibly the only criticism I have of the government's approach to this issue has been the Attorney-General's failure to refer to any precedents apart from those in South Australia, which was the model legislation for the bill that is before the Assembly.

The most notable Australian precedent is the wide-ranging debate that has been going on in Victoria over the last couple of years. I refer honourable members to the deliberations of the Social Development Committee of the Victorian parliament. After considerable public discussion and after receiving representations from a wide field, the Victorian parliament considered, in various forms, a Medical Treatment Bill. It is unfortunate that reference has not been made to this in the context of this debate. This bill was the result of those deliberations and fortunately - or unfortunately, depending on your point of view - it was rejected by the Liberal Party in the Upper House of the Victorian parliament. I will refer later to some of the issues involved in that legislation vis-a-vis the South Australian.

There has been consideration of these issues in Western Australia where the Law Reform Commission issued a discussion paper on medical treatment for the dying. At this stage, they have not legislated in Western Australia but it is certainly an issue that has been debated publicly there.

Another reference that would be of interest to people is the report of the proceedings of the 24th Australian Legal Convention entitled, 'Winds of Change'. I refer honourable members to 2 particularly interesting articles on this subject. The author of one is Russell Scott, the Deputy Chairman of the Law Reform Commission of New South Wales, a barrister and solicitor, a member of the Medical Research Ethics Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council, Chairman of the AIDS Research Review Committee and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Human Artificial Insemination. His article on biomedicine and law, 'Peace or Law', is of great interest to anybody who wants to look into this particular subject. The other article is by the Director of the Centre for Human Bio-ethics at Monash University, Peter Singer, and Helga Kuhse. It is entitled 'Can the Law Cope with Our Increasing Ability to Preserve Life at any Cost?'. Some of the broader issues are canvassed in a very articulate fashion in each of those articles. That is some of the background in this issue.

I turn now to some of the specific cases which have arisen. My purpose in doing this is to refer to some concrete instances in which the bill before us would or would not apply, in order to give an indication of the breadth of the landscape that the legislation does not cover. The decision in Satz and Perlmutter by the District Court of Appeal of Florida allowed Mr Perlmutter to refuse life support treatment. Mr Perlmutter, 73 years old, was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. There was no cure and he was expected to live for 2 years. The disease had progressed to almost total paralysis.

Speech was an extreme effort and he was totally dependant on a mechanical respirator for breathing. Even with this life support system assistance, the medical prognosis was for death in a short time. However, the patient was in command of his mental faculties and legally competent. He wished to have the life support treatment discontinued. That, however, was not a factor under the Florida Murder Statute, section 782, and his physicians feared criminal prosecution and civil liability.

The state of Florida maintained that the physician had an overriding duty to preserve life and that termination of supportive care was an unlawful killing of a human being. The court took into account relevant points made in a similar case whereby an individual's right to refuse treatment was tempered by the state's public policy interests which were: interest in the preservation of life; the need to protect innocent third parties; a duty to prevent suicide; and a requirement that it help maintain the ethical integrity of medical practice.

The case of Satz and Perlmutter is referred to in the second and final report of the Inquiry into Options for Dying with Dignity, which I referred to earlier. The court's decision stated that there was no doubt that the state did have an interest in preserving life but agreed with the decision in Superintendent of Belchertown State School and Saikewicz that what was of paramount importance was the condition being incurable. In that case, the patient was not of sound mind. He had been committed to an asylum for most of his life, but had contracted cancer and was becoming old. This bill would not apply to cases like that because of the question of sound mind. In the case of Satz and Perlmutter, the court came to the decision that there is a substantial distinction in the state's insistence that human life be saved where the affliction is curable, as opposed to the state interest where, as here, the issue is not whether but when, for how long and at what cost to the individual, life may be briefly extended. The court observed that, in the case before it, the patient's condition was terminal, his situation wretched and the continuation of his life temporary and totally artificial. The court could see no compelling state interest in interfering with the patient's expressed wishes.

I turn to some examples referred to by Sir Gustav Nossal, the Director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, in his paper which is contained in the first report of the Inquiry into Options for Dying with Dignity. The first example would not be covered by this bill. It is the example of the road accident victim who is brain dead for 8 or 10 days and whose family reluctantly agrees to have the life support system switched off and to permit an organ transplant of some sort. Under those circumstances, there is a legal vacuum. This bill does not cover such cases.

Nossal's second example refers to a nursing home for the aged. An old lady of 83 has been admitted because her increasing degree of mental confusion has made it impossible for her to stay in her own home and there is no one willing and able to look after her. Over 3 years, her condition deteriorates. She loses the ability to speak, has to be fed and becomes incontinent. Finally, she can no longer sit in an armchair and is confined permanently to bed. One day she contracts pneumonia. The relatives are contacted and the matron of the nursing home tells them that she and the doctor she uses most frequently have worked out a loose arrangement for cases of this type. With advanced senile dementia, they treat the first 3 infections with antibiotics and after that, mindful of the adage that pneumonia is the older person's friend, they let nature take its course. The matron emphasises that, if the relatives desire, all infections can be treated vigorously. The relatives

agree with the rule of thumb and the patient dies of a urinary tract infection 6 months later. This bill will not cope with circumstances like that although the Victorian bill would have.

I think we should pause here to consider what a ghastly decision that would be for relatives. I have had enough personal experience in that area to know of the ghastly decisions that must be taken.

The third example that Nossal raises is interesting. It involves a 75 year-old woman who has strong views favouring euthanasia and who has made what is referred to as a 'living will', the existence of which is well-known to her husband and relatives. It says that, in the event of her becoming in any way incapacitated, she wants nothing whatever done by way of resuscitation or treatment. This is the sort of circumstance we are envisaging with this bill. In Nossal's example, the woman suffers a severe stroke. She is entirely paralysed down the right side, and cannot speak. The husband is in a frenzy because he respects his wife's views. Nevertheless, the doctor is called. He prescribes pills against high blood pressure and arranges intensive nursing. After a few weeks, it is obvious that the old lady registers everything that is going on. She clearly enjoys the visits of her grandchildren and begins to say a few words. The help of a speech therapist is enlisted but progress is very slow. The physiotherapist is a little more successful. The patient learns to feed herself with her left hand and to walk a few steps with the help of a walking frame. Daily life is very hard despite the old couple's relative affluence, as looking after her at home absorbs much of the family's energy. Improvement continues for 6 months and then slows. After 2 years, the patient has a second stroke and dies. Perhaps this bill would have enabled that lady to have passed away at the time of the first stroke. It is worth thinking about.

Mr Manzie: It doesn't do it. Where?

Mr BELL: We will come back to it.

Mr Manzie: But you can't do it. You just said ...

Mr BELL: If she had elected, under clause 4(1) of this bill, not to be kept alive after the first stroke, the doctor would not have been called. He would not have prescribed the pills and arranged the intensive nursing ...

Mr Manzie: That is not right, Neil, because ...

Mr BELL: All right, I am not going to debate one of those. I have already referred to the Superintendent of Belchertown School and Saikewicz. I do not think that is so important. One other case I will refer to is the Fox case. Can I get an extension of time for this, by the way?

Mr Dale: Yes.

Mr BELL: Will you? A quarter of an hour? Good on you.

The Fox case is interesting. I think honourable members will be interested in this. Brother Joseph Charles Fox, aged 83, underwent surgery for an inguinal hernia on 2 October 1979. During surgery, he suffered a cardiac arrest and consequent brain damage. He remained in a coma from which, according to medical evidence, he would never recover. Father Eichner, the president of the school at which Bro Fox taught, sought an appointment as guardian with authority to direct the termination of Bro Fox's life support



system. The Appellant Division of the New York Supreme Court, the second last appeal level in that state, said that not to exercise its power to decide the issue would be an 'abdication of a fundamental judicial responsibility'. As in the case of Saikewicz, the court recognised the right supported by common law and the United States Constitution of a competent patient to refuse life-saving medical treatment. It also recognised that that right may be overridden by countervailing public or state interests of the kind listed in Saikewicz. If competent patients have that right, then logic, morality and medicine require the same right to be accorded to incompetent patients.

The court held that the medical criteria for the issue of this right were: (a) terminal illness; (b) a vegetative coma that is permanent, chronic and or irreversible; (c) a lack of cognitive brain function; and (d) an extremely remote probability of recovery. Satisfied that these were fulfilled, the court stated that its task was to ascertain and to implement the patient's wishes. This would be simplest if the patient had expressed unequivocally a desire not to have his life prolonged by artificial means beyond a certain point especially if that desire had been expressed at a time when the patient had contemplated the medical catastrophe that had ultimately befallen him. When the patient had not done so, the court, through the process of substituted judgment, must attempt to fulfil the patient's dying wishes. In the court's opinion, the implementation of those wishes must involve the neutral presence of the law because, although the opinions of the medical profession will have priority on the medical aspects, the patient's wishes, any relevant religious views, the views of the family and the concerns of society are also significant considerations. The court's intervention should be the last in a succession of decisions by doctors, hospital ethics committees and families.

In this instance, the court decision was that, because there was clear evidence of Bro Fox's wishes - he had twice expressed a desire not to be maintained if ever in a coma - there was no need to follow the full pre-court succession of decisions. Confident that it was implementing the patient's wishes, the court permitted the guardian to authorise termination of treatment. It is interesting that, again, in that particular case, this bill would not have provided for an election on Fox's part, whereas the Victorian legislation would have done so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I get on to the bill itself, let me quickly refer to the Aboriginal view of these matters, and I think this ought to be put in writing here. The question arises as to whether this legislation would be utilised by terminally-ill Aboriginal people.

For the benefit of members of the Assembly, the view amongst most traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people is that they get sick because something is put inside them by a person hostile to them. There is a phrase for this in Pitjantjatjara that is absolutely untranslatable but has deep meaning in the context of those people's lives: arungkulytpi tjunanyi. There is no such thing as what we refer to as 'natural causes' of sickness or death. Mr Deputy Speaker, you might imagine, as I did at first, that it is the terminally-ill person himself who exercises the decision. It is the decision of that person, himself or herself, to give a direction that extraordinary measures not be taken, and one would have been entitled to think that Aboriginal people would be free to so direct or otherwise. I do not believe that that would happen. This may come as something of a surprise to honourable members but, if an Aboriginal person were to so direct, there would be accusations made against third parties of them willing that person to make such an election. It is for that reason that few traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people will give such directions.

Let us look at the South Australian legislation which, with a few minor grammatical changes, is the bill before us today, and at the Victorian legislation. As I have already said, the legislation before us enables a terminally-ill patient to give a direction that certain extraordinary measures be taken no longer. Let us see how that differs from the Victorian legislation that was rejected last year in the Legislative Council in that state. The key difference between those 2 bills is that the Victorian legislation seeks to deal with ...

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move for a suspension of so much of standing orders as would prevent the honourable member finishing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the House for its indulgence and I will endeavour to cover the issues involved as briefly as possible.

The Victorian legislation seeks to deal with the incompetent patient, which is the Bro Fox example which I referred to before. The South Australian legislation and the bill before us exclude this possibility, and I make no judgment about that. As I have said, this is not a partisan debate, but I have endeavoured with fairly constructive purpose to canvass the breadth of the landscape and not just the purpose of the bill before us. Because of the importance of the issue, I think it is worth doing that.

Under Clause 5 of the Victorian bill, it would have been possible for a medical practitioner and another person to witness a Refusal of Treatment Certificate, subject to certain conditions. I am not necessarily extolling the virtues of that. I think that the law ought to include a framework for a consultative process between medical practitioner and next of kin or whatever. In fact, as I discussed earlier with the Attorney-General, the key difference between the bill before us and the South Australian legislation is that we have tightened it up. Clause 4(2) indicates that the witnesses to a direction have to be 2 persons who have attained the age of 18 years neither of whom is the medical practitioner responsible for the treatment of the person, whereas the South Australian act simply refers to the necessity for the direction to be witnessed by 2 witnesses, and there is no qualification on who they may be. I am not extolling the virtues of the Victorian legislation but I think what is involved in it needs to be considered in the context of this debate.

The second area where the 2 pieces of legislation differ is that the Victorian legislation makes a distinction between medical treatment and palliative care. I think it is a shame that the Attorney-General's second-reading speech did not discuss the implications of the 2 different sets of definitions because the South Australian legislation refers to 'extraordinary measures'. I do not have a view on the relative merits of the 2 sets of definitions. I have some reservations about this phrase 'extraordinary measures' which are defined as 'medical or surgical measures that prolong life or are intended to prolong life by supplanting or maintaining the operation of bodily functions that are temporarily or permanently incapable of independent operation'.

I am not sure that there are not many things that we would not want to consider as 'extraordinary measures' that would fit, definitionally, within that statement. For example, my son had to have a ventilator because he had

serious asthma, particularly when he was very young and living in Melbourne. Living in Alice Springs and particularly living in the bush improved that no end. By the age of 5, that was no longer necessary. I would have thought that his respirator would have qualified as a medical measure that prolonged life by maintaining the operation of a bodily function that was temporarily incapable of independent operation. This kid used to go blue with asthma. In fact, this situation was one of the reasons for the shadow attorney-general in the Legislative Council in Victoria knocking back this bill. He is a diabetic. He said: 'What happens if my wife wants to knock me off, gets together with the medical practitioner and they decide I am in an insulin coma and will not provide it?'. I am not opposed to the bill but I would have some reservations if insulin fits within that definition.

The third and final difference between the South Australian act and the Victorian bill is one where I come down broadly on the side of the South Australian act. This addresses how we ensure that the doctor respects the wish not to apply extraordinary measures. There is a lesser obligation on a doctor to recognise a direction under the South Australian legislation. Section 4(4) refers to a duty for a medical practitioner to act in accordance with the direction. By contrast, the Victorian legislation takes a more heavy-handed approach and provides an offence of medical trespass which provides a sanction against the medical practitioner undertaking or continuing to undertake any medical treatment which the person has refused, being treatment for a condition in relation to which a certificate has been given. The first difference between the 2 is an important one and I think it is desirable that it be drawn to the attention of the Assembly.

It is worth pointing out that the Attorney-General did not refer to some of the complexities that I have attempted to adumbrate this afternoon. He referred to 1 specific case rather than to the broader landscape of which I have endeavoured to provide a sketch map for honourable members. The Attorney-General pointed out that the bill specifically restricts itself to adults so that problems relating to terminally-ill children do not come within its scope. Exactly the same problems occur.

In 1986, in Victoria, Mr Justice Vincent heard an application from the grandparents of a child who had spina bifida, which is a defect of the spinal chord that is likely to cause paralysis of the lower limbs and incontinence of the bladder and bowel. It is a condition which frequently, but not invariably, results in significant mental retardation. The grandparents went to the court and said: 'Mum and the doctors want to put this kid away and we are not happy about it'. That is what happened in a nutshell. Honourable members will be interested in the direction of Mr Justice Vincent. He granted the application from the grandparents to make the infant a ward of the court and ordered the hospital to take - and I quote from his judgment - 'all necessary and reasonable measures, consistent with proper medical practice, to preserve the life of the infant'.

There are a large number of issues that flow from this particular bill. The Attorney-General has sought very much to exclude certain areas of the landscape and spotlight just 1 area. I appreciate his attempts and I know what he is doing. As I have indicated in the comments that I have made, we agree with him.

There are 2 other issues I want to refer to. I said I would refer to some international examples. I refer to the Alkmaar case heard in the High Court of the Netherlands in 1984. The defendant was a doctor who had, by a series of injections, brought about the death of a 95-year-old woman who was suffering from a serious and incurable disease.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hasten to add that, again, this is not the province of the bill but, in order to cover the landscape, it needs to be referred to. The woman was described as being in great distress and unable to eat or drink. She repeatedly begged her doctor to end her life and, when he did so, he was charged with murder. The defendant had discussed the patient's circumstances several times with the patient's son and with another physician. Both approved of the proposal that the defendant should comply with the patient's request. The doctor considered that the patient's suffering was unbearable, and that every single day of life was a heavy burden to her. Therefore, he acted in accordance with her wishes.

When the case came to trial, the doctor argued that he was in an emergency situation with a conflict between the legal duty to obey the criminal law which, in the Netherlands as elsewhere, prohibits active euthanasia, and the duty to relieve the distress of his patient. The Court of Appeals of Amsterdam rejected this argument, but the High Court reversed the conviction. This is very interesting, Mr Deputy Speaker. The High Court held that the lower court should have investigated whether, according to responsible medical opinion, an emergency situation existed as the defendant claimed, and whether the patient might not soon have been able to die with dignity under circumstances worthy of a human being. In fact, there has been a significant shift in the law in that way in the Netherlands.

I contrast that with recent comments by the Attorney-General of New South Wales and a headline from the Daily Telegraph of 23 June this year: 'Mercy Killers Risk Murder Charges'. It is worth pointing out, in the context of this debate, the divergence in that regard between the state of play in the Netherlands and the state of play in New South Wales. For the benefit of honourable members, a series of articles has been garnered by Mrs Lovett, in her capacity as Library Technician in the parliamentary library, and I found all of them of great value.

In closing, I would suggest that there is room for this legislature, not simply to pass this particular bill and forget about it, but to refer this issue, if none other, to the Law Reform Commission. I understand that that has not been done, but since it has been possible in Western Australia and there has been the Victorian experience that I have referred to, I think that a reference to the Law Reform Commission would be appropriate or, if the Assembly feels strongly enough about it, to a select committee of this Assembly to consider the issues involved. I do not have a strong position in that regard but I do think that, in the context of this second-reading debate, it is worth suggesting that we cannot enact this piece of legislation and then put the issue behind us because, as I have indicated, there are a large number of issues involved.

It is clear then, that the opposition supports this particular bill. We have the sorts of reservations I have referred to in relation to precedents elsewhere, and there is a degree of concern on this side of the House that the Attorney-General has sought to spotlight 1 corner of the landscape rather than giving a map of the whole of it. I trust that my comments will be taken by the Attorney-General in the spirit in which they are given, that this Assembly will continue to monitor the national and international debate on this particular issue and that we will consider those issues in an appropriate and wholistic fashion.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I promise to be very brief. It took me some 55 minutes of listening to cases cited ad nauseam by the member for MacDonnell about what has happened overseas and the genesis of this sort of legislation to garner some sort of opinion of what he was on about.

Briefly, I support the bill and I support the right of people to decide what they will do with their lives. I think it is a basic human right that we must have. We must be able to decide what treatment we will undergo in relation to terminal illness. I agree with the member for MacDonnell, when he finally got around to giving us an opinion, that this should not be the end of the debate on matters relating to death with dignity.

There are a couple of points I hope the Attorney-General can pick up and perhaps look at later. Firstly, the bill does not apply to persons under the age of 18 or minors. I believe that there probably is a right somewhere for infants or young children who have undergone some extraordinary surgical measures, lengthy chemotherapy and other such treatments. Cases of this are reported time and time again. Should not a parent or guardian be able to make a decision that enough is enough and allow those people the same right that we are now bestowing upon those over 18 years of age to die with some dignity and in doing so to relieve themselves of the pain and burden?

The bill makes no reference to victims of accidents or sudden-onset diseases such as strokes and heart attacks. I remember the case of one Karen Ann Quinlan, in the United States of America, who collapsed as a result of consuming alcohol and drugs. I think she lingered on for well over 12 years. It was the subject of many court cases where her step-parents wished to have the machinery turned off so that she could die with some dignity. Eventually, she just withered away and died, but not until 12 years had elapsed and, I should imagine, some millions of dollars in medical costs had been paid, all to no avail. All it achieved was to prolong, quite unnecessarily, the heartbreak and suffering that her parents and loved ones felt. There was no hope of remission for the girl and no chance that she would ever come out of the coma.

I do believe that this bill is the start of where we should be going, but I do not believe that it addresses the whole issue of human rights in relation to deciding for yourself or having decided for you what to do with your life. If, as a result of extreme pain and suffering, one wished finally to give it away, I think that should be one's right and that right should not be restricted to those whom we as a parliament decide can make such a decision merely because they have attained the age of 18 or because they are fortunate enough to be able to predict the onset of some disease. We should not restrict that right or limit it to people in those circumstances. With those few words, and with a request that the Attorney-General implement some review and perhaps heighten the level of public debate on the matter, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I must indicate that only 1 constituent has expressed concern to me about the contents of this legislation. This brings me immediately to the fact that the government ministers used previously to advertise in the newspaper from time to time in relation to proposed legislation and legislation before the House. This gave members of the public some idea of the legislation that had been introduced and a very brief resume of what the legislation was about. I have not seen those advertisements in the newspapers for some time and I would like to ask the Chief Minister if he would consider reinstating that practice.

Basically, I believe that we have the right to administer our own bodies as we see fit and to do so to our best advantage, whatever that may be, and that we even have the right to choose finally not to administer to our bodies any more on this earth. We come into this world alone and we leave it alone and each of us is a lone entity and we are responsible for ourselves

throughout our lives. One could say that this is the ultimate selfishness when a decision is made as to whether it is best to put oneself first or others first. I say that it is necessary to make all one's own decisions and think always of the responsibilities of our own decisions and, only in that way, can we think of the reaction these will cause in other people. One must make one's own decisions and live life or not as one thinks fit.

I have always been pretty independent. I had to be when I was very young and the practice has stayed with me. I might say that my constituents generally are an independent group of people too. Many of them stand or fall in their own recognisance, both in their work and their general lives. When you are an independent thinker, making your own decisions, you resent other people assuming the erroneous right of making decisions that affect your life. This happened to me when the CLP failed to give me preselection before the last election. After a little thought, my reaction was to fight the arrogance of that decision taken by other people about me with no reference to my views. This legislation is all about independence of thought and the rights of people to make their own personal decisions about their bodies. The line of thought engendered by this legislation carries over to the right of a woman to be able to make a decision regarding an abortion. We already have legislation making abortion available under certain conditions to a woman if she wishes to avail herself of this service to terminate a pregnancy, and rightly so. It is her body and she should decide what she will do with it.

I support this legislation in that it allows a conscious, terminally-ill person, who has no hope at all of respite or cure, taking a decision not to receive a continuation of treatment in the form of extraordinary measures that have been or may be used for the artificial prolongation of life. Other members have spoken of this before and they have also raised the subject of extraordinary measures being taken to prolong the life of unconscious patients. They have said that these actions could be considered in respect of the termination of the lives of terminally-ill people who have been unconscious for some time and who were unconscious when extraordinary measures were taken to prolong their lives. I believe that is a subject that will have to be addressed in the future. It is not covered by this legislation.

I was particularly interested in the minister's comment in his second-reading speech that, 'If a patient is unconscious or heavily-sedated and therefore unable to exercise his or her right to refuse or consent to treatment, then the treatment at that stage of a terminal illness is entirely at the discretion of the doctor. The patient may not have wanted the treatment given by the doctor but, because of the condition the patient is in, he or she is unable to exercise his or her right to have that treatment withheld'.

A patient may be conscious, terminally-ill and having extraordinary measures taken to prolong his life. He may ask to be allowed to die and then become unconscious. The doctor can decide to hook him up to all the machines again and continue his life artificially even though he will continue to remain unconscious. What arrogance to play around with someone else's life against his wishes and all for some cockeyed view of the value of human life in this case! I know that some doctors have taken into account the wishes of terminally-ill patients and the wishes of caring relatives wanting what the patient wants, and have disconnected the patient. Legally, they should not have done so but, in my view, their actions were morally correct.

This legislation takes care of that situation. If a person takes a conscious decision and asks to have extraordinary measures to continue his

life discontinued and then becomes unconscious, the doctor in charge is obliged to do what the patient wanted when the patient was conscious. Not only does this legislation give terminally-ill people the right of legal decision to end their lives but it also takes away the necessity for close relatives to see the patient continually in pain whilst not being able to do anything about it legally. That circumstance has never been forced on me but I would find it extremely harrowing if I had to watch a close relative who was in pain and I was not able to do anything about it.

There is a growing number of aged people in our society, people who are likely to have extraordinary measures used to prolong their lives artificially. This raises the ugly face of a cost benefit exercise in the eyes of the community, and other honourable members have raised this. Although not of paramount importance compared to a patient's right to die with dignity when and how he wishes, nevertheless it will become of increasing importance in the community. It is my view that a person, whether young or old, has the right to say what happens to his body, and that this decision has to be accepted by relatives and others in attendance. With these remarks, Mr Speaker, I support the legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this bill, my immediate urge is to berate the member for MacDonnell, first of all, for being late into the House to speak to the bill and, secondly, for reading reams and reams of case studies as examples, an action which in my opinion was totally unnecessary because 1 or 2 would have sufficed for his argument. However, I will not berate the member. I will berate the Leader of the Opposition for having the audacity to move an unlimited extension of time for the member of MacDonnell.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member is reflecting on a motion that has been passed by this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member must not reflect on a vote of the House.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I take your advice on that and I am sensitive to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is very touchy this evening. Maybe the moon is in the wrong phase. Nevertheless, he imposed on this House and that is something that I hope does not happen again.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member must in no way reflect on decisions taken by the House.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I will repeat again that this is a very sensitive matter and I can imagine that it could stir up quite a bit of emotion. However, the precedent has been created previously. I am referring to the bill, Mr Speaker.

Mr Smith: Make sure your support system is switched on, will you?

Mr SETTER: The member for MacDonnell's support system was certainly switched on earlier, Mr Speaker.

There is precedent for this particular bill and I refer to the Natural Death Act of 1983 in South Australia. It is not as if we are breaking new ground by proposing this legislation. I do not need to tell members of this

House that the dying process is a very traumatic experience, not only for the person who is going through it but also for his relatives and friends. We all appreciate that the important aspect of this issue is that it is necessary to protect the right of the person involved to die with dignity. That is so important. I believe that this bill protects that.

I would like to quote from the minister's second-reading speech: 'The bill allows people who are about to die to have a say in their dying process'. Until 1983, the dying process, particularly in situations such as this, was totally in the control of the medical profession. Apart from situations such as heart attacks, nobody else had any control over the dying process. The medical profession, as is its right, did its best to maintain life. It did so in good faith, believing that that was in the best interests of the person concerned. In hindsight, it may well be true to say that, in some instances, that was not the case. All it did really was extend the agony. The reality is that, whilst terminally-ill patients wish to cling to life for as long as they possibly can, and that is a very understandable emotion, there comes a time in that process when they want the whole business over and done with as quickly as possible. They want their suffering to cease because there is no way back. At the end of the process, there is only death for them.

This bill allows terminally-ill adults the opportunity to refuse medical treatment if that is their wish. In situations where a person is terminally ill, and all that is ahead of him is a coma ended by death, nobody wants to be subject to being connected to a life support system for an unlimited period of time until the body finally gives up the ghost. Nobody wants that.

However, while people are conscious and alert of mind, this bill will give them the opportunity to indicate their wishes with regard to that dying process and whether they want to remain on a life support system. It will be their decision and nobody else's. I hasten to add that if, as a result of an accident or some other trauma, the person does not have the opportunity to make the decision, the responsibility for maintaining that person's life remains with the doctor. In such a case, the doctor may, at a later stage and after discussion with relatives, decide that nothing further can be achieved by maintaining that person on a life support system. I am aware that, from time to time, decisions are made to disconnect life support systems. In no way, however, does this allow death to be accelerated artificially.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, this is a very emotive matter. I am very pleased that the opposition has supported this bill. Apart from 1 or 2 exceptions, we have heard some very constructive comments on the bill, which I support.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I welcome this bill. It is some considerable time since I was made aware of the South Australian legislation by the Council of the Ageing in Alice Springs. Senior citizens there had obtained a copy of that legislation from that state and discussed it among themselves. I was approached by Mr Joe Arand, the well-known president of the senior citizens group in Alice Springs. He brought me a copy of the South Australian legislation and I presented it to the CLP party room, which indicates how long ago it was. Indeed, if I remember rightly, Jim Robertson was the Minister for Health at the time. It is pleasing to see that the considered wishes of people in the Territory, particularly those who have put it forward, have finally come to fruition in the form of the bill before us.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that you have visited hospitals and seen people in comas on life support systems. One sometimes asks what the point of it all



is. We have emotional ties with our relatives and do not want to see them go but slowly we come to realise that, when they are suffering and their lives hold nothing of hope or promise, they should have the right to die with dignity. The important thing about this bill is that it gives a personal choice. No one will force anybody to make a decision against their will. A person would have to consider very soberly whether he would sign a document of the type referred to in the bill and I doubt that anybody would take it lightly.

I also believe that, in many ways, the signing of such a document is a very unselfish act. I recall Joe Arand saying to me: 'There is really no great point in spending many thousands and possibly even millions of dollars on sophisticated life support systems to keep someone alive who has no chance or hope of recovering, when that same system could be used to keep alive somebody who has a chance of recovery. It is a very unselfish choice and I commend the attitude of those people in Alice Springs.

The member for MacDonnell raised many cases and discussed their legal implications. They were interesting but I felt that his discussion was somewhat repetitious and detracted from the impact of the cases.

As much as I respect my friend the member for Koolpinyah and her independence, I differ from her in relation to the abortion issue. I respect her right to the view that a woman should be totally in control of her own body and be able to decide to have an abortion. If we are honest, we would admit that the Criminal Code allows abortion on demand, but by default, because it gives doctors the right to determine whether the woman's health, mental or physical, is in grave danger. If the doctor so determines, an abortion can proceed. Perhaps we put the doctors on a pedestal by assuming that they are all highly moral people. I dare say the whole range of community attitudes is also found among doctors.

Even if 2 out of 50 doctors rationalise the situation by saying, 'The women are demanding it and it is better that they have it done properly', I would hate to be involved with that. That is a personal view. I am not in a position where I will be seeking an abortion but I certainly would be very unhappy to be involved in a relationship where someone was wanting to terminate a pregnancy. The preservation of the new life involved in such a situation is much more important to achieve than the preservation of a life in which there is no hope and where a person asks for the right to be able to die with dignity rather than living with artificial support. I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members who have contributed to this debate. The Natural Death Bill relates to an issue that has caused some controversy in the past. I believe that if honourable members look at this bill in detail, as most have done, they will see that the problems which have arisen in other jurisdictions have been avoided in this bill. As the member for MacDonnell pointed out, the bill excludes people under the age of 18. It relates only to people in a situation of terminal illness and it relates only to extraordinary measures.

It is important to refer to some of the matters that were brought to the attention of this House by the member for MacDonnell because he has obviously done considerable research into similar legislation in Australia and overseas. It was probably a little unfortunate that, in his enthusiasm to cover the whole spectrum of this area, he tended to leave the Territory bill out of the equation in terms of how it related to incidents which had occurred elsewhere.

He said that this bill related to a form of euthanasia. I did take the trouble to look at the definition of euthanasia contained in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. It is defined as 'the means of procuring a quiet and easy death, the action of inducing a quiet and easy death'. The definition of the word 'procuring' is 'bringing about or inducing', which are initial steps in any undertaking. There has to be an active part played in euthanasia; it is the active process of bringing about death. I stress that this bill in no way relates to any active process to bring about death. This bill relates to people who are terminally ill. The definition of terminal illness in the bill is very clear. It states:

'terminal illness' means such an illness, injury or degeneration of mental or physical faculties -

- (a) that death would, if extraordinary measures were not undertaken, be imminent, and
- (b) from which there is no reasonable prospect of a temporary or a permanent recovery, even if extraordinary measures were undertaken.

It is very important to understand that the bill is not an euthanasia bill and that not even by drawing a longbow can it be said that it is.

The honourable member spoke about some legislation that is operating along these lines in South Australia and Victoria, and legislation in this regard is operating in 38 American states, or legislation of a similar kind. The Victorian act created considerable debate and furore in Victoria. In actual fact, I believe that the bill originally presented to the House was not the one that was finally passed. As the honourable member pointed out, the problem was that the power of attorney could be provided to a third party.

Mr Bell: There isn't one passed.

Mr MANZIE: There isn't one passed - well there, it has not passed.

The problem was that, in the Victorian bill, the power of attorney could be given to a third party, that is, a third party could make decisions regarding the person who was terminally ill. Our bill in no way reflects that, and no inferences can be actually drawn from the debates in the Victorian House because they referred to that particular problem. That was the provision that created the great controversy and led to the bill's failure. Certainly, that segment is not in this particular bill.

The honourable member talked about a matter in Florida - Satz and Perlmutter I think it was - where an application was made to the courts by someone on a respirator to have the machine turned off. That cannot happen here because, in the Territory, we have the ability, while we are conscious, to actively refuse medical treatment.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Now, or when the bill is passed?

Mr MANZIE: Every person, when they are conscious, has the ability to say to a doctor: 'I am sorry, I do not wish to be treated. I wish that machine to be taken away. Unplug me'.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Now, or when this bill is passed?

Mr MANZIE: No. Any person, when he is conscious, has the ability to refuse medical treatment. In fact, in the Territory, if the doctor persists in treating the person against his will, he can leave himself liable for assault. That has always been the fact in the Territory. That particular case in Florida would not apply here, and possibly that is because we are a bit further advanced. This bill actually extends the normal right in the Territory to go past the point of when you are conscious, as long as the situation is one where you are terminally ill - and that means there has to be no reasonable prospect of a temporary or permanent recovery and that, if extraordinary measures were not undertaken, death would take place. The extraordinary measures have to be as defined here, medical, surgical etc.

The honourable member made another point. Clearly, he has a son who suffers from asthma and he made mention of a condition that you yourself would be familiar with, Mr Speaker, a diabetic condition where insulin is required to be given each day. However, whilst treatment for these conditions could possibly be argued to be extraordinary measures in that, by removing those measures death would result, under this legislation they have to be coupled with the fact that the person has a terminal illness, an illness from which there is no reasonable prospect of even a temporary recovery. It has to be a situation in which death would occur if those extraordinary measures were not taken. It has to be coupled with that particular terminal illness. It cannot apply to someone who is a diabetic and needs insulin every day to maintain his health. Obviously, he is not a terminally-ill person in the sense of this legislation. That particular definition has to be read in the context of the clause that relates to the power to make the direction.

The honourable member mentioned a hospital where an elderly woman was treated, where a policy existed that meant that her first 3 infections would be treated and that, due to her condition, further infections would not be treated. That patient died after 6 months from a urinary tract infection after being treated 3 times. Again, if that sort of thing occurs here, people involved leave themselves open to criminal charges. That is the circumstance we have. I think the honourable member mentioned that at present things occur in the Territory which are illegal. Be that as it may, if those particular actions come to the attention of the authorities, the people involved will have to go through the legal process because any action to cause a person's death, whether the action is active or passive, is against the law in the Northern Territory.

The bill itself has been canvassed very widely throughout the Territory with church groups and community groups. Copies have been sent to the medical profession. I have not received any adverse comment from any particular community or religious group or from any individual. I have had a number of telephone contacts from a variety of people throughout the community expressing support for the provisions of this particular bill, and those people who have contacted me have been people who have gone through the rather harrowing experience of having the dying process of a loved one delayed in hospital through the use of machinery.

As I said earlier, the provisions of this bill have been put together in such a way that doctors are protected and children are not involved. It relates to persons who are terminally ill, and the ability of people in that circumstance to elect to die with dignity, without their dying process being prolonged by artificial means. I certainly believe that, as the honourable member for MacDonnell pointed out, this is 1 area that could be debated further in this House because obviously there are things in other jurisdictions which extend the areas that this bill just touches on.

Obviously, there are views that could be expressed regarding what possible steps could be taken in the future regarding the provision of enhanced dignity for people who are dying. It is an area where, as time goes on and the technology of our medical processes becomes greater and greater, more and more people will probably arrive in the situation where their life is artificially prolonged. I certainly commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, it is a semantic argument, but I think I am within the bounds of a third reading and I am not adding any new material, just seeking to fill out the use of terms. The Attorney-General was saying before that this bill has nothing to do with euthanasia. I would like to refer briefly to 1 of the articles on the subject that I referred to before.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member is dealing with a matter that was debated fully during the second-reading debate. I understand that under standing orders he is not entitled to do that during the third reading.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I would advise the honourable member that the most appropriate course of action is to make a personal explanation after the third reading has been taken.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I do not want to become involved in a tendentious debate about what is euthanasia and what is not. I simply refer the Attorney-General to the article and the discussion I referred to in my second-reading speech. There is a distinction between active or passive euthanasia and voluntary euthanasia.

Mr Manzie: That is not the same, Neil. You still have to do something or refuse to do something.

Mr BELL: I think it is important to an understanding of what is involved in the bill that we realise that passive euthanasia involves a ...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! If this is a personal explanation, I would be interested to know the nature of the matter that the member is explaining, as distinct from the semantics of the definition of euthanasia.

Mr SPEAKER: In view of the fact that I offered the member latitude to make a personal explanation, I rule against the member for Nightcliff.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I really do not think that this personal explanation is worth pursuing any further at the moment. I am not going to agree with the Attorney-General and he is not going to agree with me so I think that it is probably better that we leave it that way.

NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY BILL  
(Serial 141)

Continued from 25 August 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the opposition will be supporting this bill. However, we will be going through a fairly lengthy process in the committee stage as we proceed through the bill clause by clause. We intend to raise a number of our concerns at that stage, some of which relate to what we see as major difficulties and some of which are more minor. We are putting together an amendment schedule which will be circulated tomorrow. This afternoon, the honourable minister has circulated 27 amendments which I will disregard in my second-reading speech because obviously it is impossible to take them on board at this late stage.

I intend to give some of the recent history of the development of the university, concentrating on the period during which I have been shadow minister for education. I will point to some of the major problems which are yet to be resolved, discuss the future of the university and then cover in some detail those clauses with which we have some problems. I am doing this in response to an agreement that I had with the minister that we would have initial discussions of a general nature with himself in order to point out some of the clauses with which we had problems before detailing particular clauses in the second-reading debate. This will enable him to go away and seek further advice on those matters and decide whether he may be able to support some of the changes we propose.

We have had the initial meeting with the honourable minister, the interim Vice-Chancellor and the Secretary of the Department of Education. This is part of the continuing process of attempting to achieve legislation which will set up a university which we can all be proud of as Territorians.

I hope honourable members will bear with me as I go over some of the historical background. It is necessary to do this because there has been an unfortunate tendency in this House, when the opposition has put up proposals and structures, for the government to say with the passage of time: 'Those ideas were not yours. You did not say that. You were not in favour of that'. As we discuss the bill before us, we should look at some of the background to it and some of the statements that have been made.

Mr Speaker, I refer back to the 2 March. At that stage, most honourable members had seen the plan that was being circulated by the then minister, Mr Hanrahan. He canvassed 3 options in relation to the development of the new university, and made no secret of the fact that he favoured what was then referred to as option 3. I thought that this was the most generous of the 3 options but it certainly went nowhere as far as we wanted to go. However, it did say that some of the DIT degree courses and some of the higher education diploma courses would be amalgamated into a university, with the balance of the DIT becoming basically an advanced education unit with TAFE status which would be relegated to the control of the Department of Education.

In commenting on the situation at that time, I said:

The federal government has provided this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Australia to reorder and make relevant its higher education system, an opportunity that will set this country on a path that will make it the leading nation in the region in terms of education. It has given the Northern Territory an opportunity to be part of that process.

I then went on to state that:

The establishment of institutions with elements of both TAFE and higher education can only boost enrolments to acceptable levels and provide more effective educational savings at the regional level.

I was referring to the difficulties that the Northern Territory faces in seeking to establish sufficient EFTSUs in our system to ensure that we have a substantial research component in our university, in order to be able to attract and hold academics of a standard which will enable our university to rank at the very highest level. I went on to state that:

This is our opportunity to create such an institution, one that will attract federal funding and support to become part of a unifying system, receiving national accreditation and international recognition.

I then proposed a model, which I described in these terms:

I now wish to put before this House a model which the opposition believes can serve as the basis for the future higher education needs of the Northern Territory. We believe that legislation has to be in place to set up a multilevel, multicampus, multipurpose institution to be known as the University of the Northern Territory. We believe that this institution must incorporate not just the University College of the Northern Territory and the advanced education segments of the Darwin Institute of Technology but the whole area of Technical and Further Education. We are proposing a multicampus facility which would incorporate not just the campuses currently occupied by the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College of the Northern Territory but also the Alice Springs College of TAFE, known as ASCOT. We believe the Katherine Rural College could also be incorporated into the University of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, it is our fundamental belief that the government has gone only part of the way in terms of that model. We are not going to push the issue to the extent of proposing amendments which would attempt to force the government into incorporating the Alice Springs College of TAFE and other institutions of that nature into the university. We know full well that that is the way it will develop. The only reason we are not forcing it at this stage is that we do not want the government to have an excuse for failure. We do not want it to say: 'We took your system'. We are working in cooperation with the government, but we know that the essential objectives that we are trying to achieve will be incorporated, in the future, in the educational institutions of the Northern Territory although that may have to wait until we attain government.

Mr Speaker, I went on to state on 2 March that:

It is essential that the Northern Territory develop an institution which fits our requirements. We need a highly-skilled work force which is able to take advantage of the potential that the Northern Territory has to offer. We reject utterly the narrow, small-minded approach that would gut the Darwin Institute of Technology of its tertiary sector, returning the balance of the college to the control of the Department of Education where it will wither as a poor cousin of the primary and secondary systems.

I went on to say that:

We reject the concepts of universities which were applicable in the 18th and 19th centuries. We reject the notion they are applicable to the Northern Territory and latter days of the 20th century.

Following that debate in March, there was some confusion in relation to what form of education we were talking about. I thought that it was clear enough, but the minister requested copies of my speech so that he could examine our ideas. I will give him some kudos there. With the exception of the areas outside Darwin and the points in relation to research areas, the minister took those on board. We wish to move at an early date to very close ties with institutions such as the Menzies School of Health Research and other bodies carrying out research in the Northern Territory. We want to provide much closer links with those. That is something that we will have to develop in government, I am afraid.

On 2 May, I stated the necessity for us to take a life view of education, to see education, not as something which students go through to complete matriculation or as something that they complete at some particular stage. More and more, education must be seen as a life process. No matter where we make our initial halt in that process, it must be a temporary halt. We may halt while we gain some skills or experience in the work force, but there must always be a simple and easy way that we can move back into the education system for a period, to gain some form of additional qualification, then possibly move into the work force again and move back to further education afterwards. I said that we had to design a system of education which would allow that to occur with a minimum of fuss and without obstacles being put in people's way. I said that on 24 May.

I then stated something that I believe very strongly, that one of the limitations in the past and one of the problems experienced with accreditation in the vast number of institutions and the various courses that exist, is that institutions have often found that, for their own reasons, they did not want to accredit work that had been undertaken in other institutions. I stated that a method of overcoming that problem, and a system which is uniquely suited to us in the Northern Territory, is through a unitary system of post-secondary education. I stated that the opposition proposed, and continues to propose, that the University College and the TAFE sector should be combined in the University of the Northern Territory. Then I again proposed the multicampus institution with regard to Alice Springs which, as I say, has not been taken on.

I did point out the need for protection in the trades area, and I stated that it might be necessary for something in the nature of a school of trades or something similar to be provided for in the present bill because a problem could develop very easily with what may be seen to be the 'glamour' side of the institution. There is a danger that it could strip the trades area, and that would be very much to the detriment of that area. I made 2 final points in that speech on 24 May and I think that these cover the crux of the problem that we have with this bill. I will lay them out now, Mr Speaker. I said:

If we are to attract good people into the university, it must allow the degree of academic freedom which people are accustomed to having elsewhere in Australia. If the new university is seen to be dominated by the government, through the minister's cronies or lackeys, we will simply not attract staff of the quality needed to make the university a success.

I stated that on 24 May, and I have stated it since. It is one of the 2 major problems that we have with this bill. It is the domination of the council of the university by people who are placed there as appointees of the Administrator which, in effect, means the minister. That is the situation with the council of the university and the board of the institute, and the government did not need that. I point out that it is the only place in Australia that I can find where that is acceptable as the norm. Of course, there are places elsewhere where a minister has the ability to appoint 1 or 2 people, but they are generally 1 or 2 people from a group that has been put up by the council or the senate of the institution, not like this where we have 19 people on the council and the minister, in the process where nominations go from the minister to the Administrator-in-Council to the Administrator, has the power to appoint 10 people to a 19-person council.

That is 1 of the essential disagreements that we will have over this bill, and we will raise our concerns during the course of this debate and during the committee stage. The other, as I have pointed out in earlier debates, is the necessity during the negotiations to merge the institutions, to ensure that staff of the University College and DIT are not disadvantaged in any way and that they go into that new university with a sense of security and the belief that there is no way in the world that they will be disadvantaged. Those are the 2 absolutely crucial factors and, unfortunately, those are 2 points on which this bill fails.

Mr Harris: Well, tell me how the bill fails. Come on.

Mr EDE: We are going through them.

Mr Speaker, in order for them to follow me through the bill, it might be worthwhile for honourable members to take out their copies of the legislation which they have in their Chamber documents, because it is necessary to make points clause by clause so that the minister can take them on board and determine which he is able to accept and which he would like to comment on in his response. As I say, some are not matters of contention but simply matters of interest which the minister may like to decide on.

The first relates to interpretation, and I note that there is no interpretation of 'academic'. We discussed this with the interim Vice-Chancellor and the honourable minister. It applies where we talk about academic staff. In the context of a traditional university, the term 'academic staff' may have a particular meaning, but here I would hope the honourable minister will realise that what he is including are all people who will have any teaching, tutoring, lecturing, training role within any course recognised by the university, or the whole of the university, which includes the institute.

I am not going to define 'academic'. I am quite happy with the definition as it stands, without it being classified. I am simply pointing it out to the honourable minister because it will be significant when we get further into the debate and I think that it may become even more significant when we get into the committee stage on this bill.

The nomenclature used by the minister is different to that applied in the older universities. He has used the term 'council' where, in the older universities, 'senate' was used. He has used by-laws and rules in lieu of statutes and by-laws. One might say that they are just names, but the names chosen have surprised some people, who believed that the government would use the nomenclature employed in the older universities, thereby attempting to



assume their mantles of acceptability. I have no problem with the fact that those names have been chosen but I do have major problems with the clause which I wish to speak about next, relating to the composition of the council.

Clause 9 provides for 19 members to be on the council. This is the council as it will continue on in time. Disregard, for the moment, interim councils and councils for the purposes of next year or to continue until 1990 or whatever. We are not talking about a temporary council set up in some gung ho way for the purpose of getting the university up and operational. We are talking about the long-term council, which will be the governing body of this university for the next 20 or 30 years, unless the legislation is amended. We are not talking of a council that bears any relationship whatsoever to those of traditional universities which have enshrined within them the concept of academic independence and academic freedom. It is not there at all, Mr Speaker. You have only to look at the numbers. Of course, being a politician, the minister should be 1 of the first to have a look at the numbers.

A number of the people on that council will be there only because they owe their position to this government. Let us have a look at them. The Secretary of the Department of Education ...

Mr Perron: Do you suggest that he should not be on it?

Mr EDE: Look at the numbers, listen to the numbers, Mr Chief Minister. Look at the numbers.

Mr Perron: Do you think the secretary should be on it?

Mr EDE: We moved on from the Secretary of the Department of Education. First, we are looking at the numbers. We then have 10 persons appointed by the Administrator, and the Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Technical and Further Education, which is a ministerial appointee. Altogether, there are 19 people on the council, of whom 12 are direct appointees of this government. Mr Speaker, how can you accept that as giving a degree of balance, a degree of independence? It is unheard of anywhere in Australia. It is not something that has been taken from Queensland, where the honourable minister said he drew some of his views from. I have gone through the Queensland act and it is not there. It is something which we will have to debate loud and long in the committee stage because we will not resile from the fundamental principle of the independence of universities. We will not have the same old problems that we had with the Darwin Institute of Technology visited upon the University of the Northern Territory.

The government can make up any number of arguments - and I have re-read the debates - about why it was necessary, because of the TAFE component and government funding etc, to have absolute ministerial domination of the DIT. We never agreed with that, on this side of the House, and we still do not. The University of the Northern Territory is an institution that we all want to be proud of. No matter whether we are on that side of the House or this, no matter where we are in the Territory, we want our university to be able to hold its head up as the equal of all of the older universities and we want those fundamental concepts of academic freedom and independence enshrined in this legislation - and they are not.

Mr Perron interjecting.

Mr EDE: Perhaps the Chief Minister, who is interrupting, would like to explain to me how he believes 12 to 7 are the numbers. If those are the numbers, I am amazed that he has arrived in the position that he is in now.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: We will be proposing an amendment to this clause of the bill and I will outline it briefly for the honourable minister. The amendment is that clause 9(1)(e) be changed so that, instead of '10 persons appointed by the Administrator', it states '3 persons appointed by the Administrator; a further 3 members nominated by the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council representing those teaching, industrial and service unions covering staff employed at the university; 1 Aboriginal member of the full-time staff of the university, elected by the academic staff of the university; and 3 members representing employers elected by a council of an equal number of representatives from the Master Builders Association, the Confederation of Industry and the Small Business Association'. That will ensure representation of the institution's staff, of unions and of employers. That will ensure the representation of the elements in society's mix which are not represented adequately in this bill and which, we believe, should be substantially represented on the council.

I know that some people believe that having only 1 Aboriginal person on the council is not substantial, given the percentage of the Northern Territory's population which is Aboriginal. Given the nature of the university in the Northern Territory, we believe that it is important that the council include a representative from the Aboriginal academic staff of the university to provide that balance.

The composition of the council was raised with the minister when we had discussions with him and I am most upset that he has not indicated to me at this stage that he will make an amendment in that regard. If the minister intends to reject our proposals in relation to the composition of the council, I hope that he will recite examples, chapter and verse, of other universities in Australia whose councils or senates have a comparable degree of domination by the government of the day. I can tell the minister that there are universities in Australia today which have representation of the type that we are proposing. Throughout Australia, people are recognising that the employer groups and the union movement have a very substantial benefit to provide to the upper levels of education. I hope that honourable members, if they take their blinkers off ...

Mr Coulter: Oh, well said.

Mr EDE: If the Deputy Chief Minister will get his brain back to ground zero and work out what we are trying to achieve, he will realise the logic of our position.

Mr Coulter. I can see it all now. You are a great educator.

Mr EDE: In relation to clause 9(2)(b), as I pointed out to the minister, I believe that we may be closer to agreement. The paragraph states: 'until the expiry of the terms for which they were respectively appointed as such, but so long only as they are in the employment of the university, the persons who are on 31 December 1988 - (i) Warden of the University College of the Northern Territory; and (ii) the Director of the Darwin Institute of

Technology ... ' are both on the council for that period. We have pointed out to the minister that, in fact, the contract of the Warden of the University College of the Northern Territory is due to terminate in 1990 whereas the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology has an indefinite term.

To allow this clause to remain unchanged would mean that, from the end of 1990 until whatever date, the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology would remain on the council, thereby destroying the balance which the clause was designed to achieve. We will be proposing an amendment in relation to this because we believe that, to ensure that representation from both institutions is balanced during that initial period, both appointments should terminate at the end of 1990.

Mr Speaker, I also ask the minister to comment on this. Clause 9(1)(f) states that the council shall include '1 member of the full-time academic staff of the university elected by that staff'. Under clause 9(1)(g), there is to be '1 member of the full-time staff of the Institute of Technical and Further Education elected by that staff'. In fact, those people who are full-time academic staff of the university include people who are full-time elected members of the Institute of Technical and Further Education. There is the possibility that both those people could come from the Institute of Technical and Further Education. This might create controversy. I would like the minister to indicate his thoughts on that.

There is no postgraduate student representation. I would hope that the minister gave that a degree of thought. More and more postgraduate students will be studying at the university and they may believe that they have a particular view to put and that they can be of real benefit to the university as it develops. Perhaps the minister could advise whether he wishes to take that idea on board at some stage.

Clause 12 is rather strange. It relates to vacation of office and, basically, it lists the sins which would require a member of the council to vacate his office. These include items such as bankruptcy, conviction for an offence, being a voluntary patient under the Mental Health Act etc. The strange point of it is that, exempted from these provisions are the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Chairman of the Academic Board, the Chairman of the Board of the institute and the additional members named in clause 9(2)(a) and (b). The latter are the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland or his nominee, the Warden of the University College and the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The Secretary of the Department of Education, for example, may have to vacate his office by virtue of another act. However, there are persons such as the Vice-Chancellor, the Chairman of the Academic Board and the Chairman of the Board of the institute whose positions are created by this legislation. One would have thought that they would come under this legislation for this purpose. That is not covered elsewhere.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland or his nominees may be covered by legislation in Queensland. However, the acts which created the positions of Warden of the University College and Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology will cease when this legislation comes into force. Thus, they will owe their continuation in those positions to this legislation and therefore I believe that they should come under those provisions relating to vacation of office.

Clause 13 relates to casual vacancies. It states that, where a vacancy occurs in the office of an elected member, '(a) the council shall appoint a person with the same qualification or qualifications for election as the member in whose stead he is appointed to fill the vacancy; and (b) subject to this part, the person so appointed shall hold office as a member of the council for the unexpired period of office of the member in whose stead he is appointed'. Mr Speaker, people will hold those terms of office for periods of 3 years. It seems wrong that, if a member has to vacate his office 6 months into his term, the people whom he represented will find that their interests are represented not by somebody whom they have elected but by somebody appointed by the council. We have already seen how this council is dominated by the government. Even the 7 positions remaining for outsiders could be further weakened as a result of casual vacancies. Surely there should be a requirement that, if a member ceases to hold office more than 6 months before the expiry of that term of office, an election should be held or the process which originally gave the member his position should be gone through to ensure that representation is maintained for the groups which originally elected the member.

Clause 14(5) will be the start of a legal imbroglio which this whole legislation compounds. I am not sure how the minister will get himself out of this one. It states: 'Until the election of the Chancellor at the first meeting of the council after the commencement of this act, the Secretary of the Department of Education shall act as the Chancellor and has and may exercise the powers, and shall perform the functions, of that office'. I raised this with the minister in our discussions and he stated that we did not have to worry about that because he had created an interim council under the provisions of the Education Act. That interim council had met and, therefore, the Secretary of the Department of Education had already completed his term as Chancellor, and a Chancellor had been appointed.

When this legislation comes into place, that interim council is not the interim council for the purposes of this legislation and will not have any functions under it. Thus, we are back to the situation where the Secretary of the Department of Education, for the purposes of this legislation, will once more become the Chancellor of the university.

Mr Harris: It will not happen, Brian, I assure you.

Mr EDE: That is the situation as it stands.

Our next major point relates to clause 15(4), which states that:

The Administrator may confirm or refuse to confirm a person's appointment as Vice-Chancellor, or a term or condition in respect of such appointment, and no such appointment or term or condition in respect thereof shall have effect unless and until confirmed by the Administrator.

That is absolutely unacceptable to this opposition. It is absolutely unacceptable to 99.9% of academics anywhere in Australia and it must be deleted. We will not allow a situation to exist whereby the government of the day has the ability to interfere with the process of election of the Vice-Chancellor. Already, the government is attempting to control the numbers on the council, an attempt which we will oppose. That council will have the power to select and appoint the Vice-Chancellor. The government now wants to take a second bite at the cherry by trying to ensure that it can determine the terms and conditions.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the minister will concede this one. I am taking the honourable minister's word for it - and I believe that he has seen the justice of our position and has realised how incongruous it would be for the Cabinet of the Northern Territory government to effectively decide that its ability to decide on the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of the university and the terms and conditions of that appointment exceeded that of the council of the university.

Mr Harris: Will you be moving an amendment in relation to that?

Mr EDE: I most certainly shall, and I look forward to the honourable minister's support for it.

Mr Harris: As long as we are talking about the same thing.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the next major issue relates to the DIT. I am told that clause 20(4) presently satisfies our concerns in relation to who will be in the Institute of Technical and Further Education and who will be outside it. I have already stated our position that associate diplomas and diplomas should not be the province of the institute but of the other section of the university. My legal advice is that the current bill guarantees that. I put the minister on notice that we will fight to maintain that position. The director of the institute is to be appointed by the council and I hope that there will be some provision ensuring that that can occur only after consultation with the board of the institute.

There is a major problem with clause 22, which refers to the board of the institute. Once again, the government is assigning to itself absolute control of the board. Clause 22 and clause 23(3) combine to achieve this. Clause 22(2) gives the minister the ability to appoint 5 board members. The Secretary of the Department of Education can appoint 1 member, and the director of the institute is to be a member. In addition, there will be 1 member of the full-time staff of the institute, elected by its staff, and 1 student. Where is the balance in that? We will be fighting that. Our amendment will state that 2 members shall be nominated by the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council, 1 shall represent the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, and a further 2 shall be nominated by a council of an equal number of representatives of the Master Builders' Association, the Confederation of Industry and the Small Business Association. We will be pushing that during the committee stage.

We will also be pushing to ensure that the minister allows the board to elect its own chairman. Under the bill as it stands, the minister retains the right to appoint 1 board member as the chairman of the board, thereby assuring himself of another position on the council of the university. That is not too much to ask and I believe that the government must agree to it.

The minister may argue that the government needs to have a powerful say because of the large amount of money it is putting into the TAFE areas. Before he uses that argument once more, I ask him to look at clause 23(3), which says: 'The board shall comply with any directions which the minister may give to it after consultation with the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council established by section 16(1) of the Education Act'. That gives the minister all the power that he needs to ensure that, in the final analysis, he can achieve his will by getting the TAFE Council to agree to it. We are prepared to concede clause 23(3) if the government feels strongly about the need for the minister to exercise that degree of control. However, in the day-to-day operations of the board, surely it would not be unreasonable for

the minister to allow representation of those groups in the community who wish to be involved and who need to have a trades area which will ensure that we are producing highly-skilled, highly-motivated people whose skills and motivation relate directly to the needs of the economy of the Northern Territory.

Clause 24(2) states that 'By-laws shall make provision for the appointment or election of a chairman and deputy chairman of the Academic Board'. The reference to 'appointment' should be dropped. Surely the chairman and deputy chairman of the Academic Board must be elected by members of the board.

For some reason, clause 24(4) states 'The Academic Board shall not offer advice or recommendations, or be required to report, on any matter which is properly a matter for the board of the institute'. Surely an academic board should be utilised to provide services to the board, to advise on academic matters as necessary.

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

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move the suspension of so much of standing orders as would allow the honourable member to finish his speech.

Mr Hatton: No.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I will move on as quickly as I can. I am amazed at the protestations of the member for Nightcliff. I would have thought that, along with everyone else, he would want to ensure that we have a university in the Northern Territory which is of the very highest quality and that, for that reason he would not wish to close off this debate.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the appointed members of the board should have a maximum period of appointment, for example 3 years, which is the same term as the council. I also believe that there should be a maximum period of appointment for appointed board members and that 3 years would be appropriate, as it is the same term as for council members. Under this bill, the minister can appoint people for periods of 10 or 15 years. That is unacceptable. We need new ideas and we need the ability to assess whether people should remain on the board. The minister should move to restrict himself there.

Clause 33 relates to fees and charges and we believe that there should be some restriction in that area to ensure that fees cover those things which are currently in the nature of fees. Obviously there needs to be provision for late fees and fees for overseas students, but the clause should not open the way for the introduction of general fees for students here.

Clause 47 relates to the validity of proceedings. I hope that the minister does not intend to use its provisions to get himself out of problems. Its breadth is incredible. Clause 47(d) states that the proceedings of various bodies shall not be invalidated because of 'the fact that a person purporting to be a member of the council or the board, or of a committee of either, by virtue of an office held by him did not hold that office'. My understanding of that is that it creates an incredible situation in which, if a number of people got together and stated that they were the council or the

board and issued instructions, the fact that they were not appointed or elected would not invalidate the proceedings. This clause has been framed too broadly and I believe the minister will have to look at it with his legal advisers tonight. A legal imbroglio already exists in relation to the interim council and, in trying to get around that, this clause has been drafted much too broadly.

The interim council is both an elected and an appointed group. Under the legislation, people will be elected to the interim council. However, the minister is trying to tell us that he already has an interim council, that he has conducted elections and that the people elected prior to this bill becoming law will comprise the interim council. That is not the case under the legislation as it now stands. One cannot say that a person elected for another purpose becomes a person elected for a new purpose. The minister could appoint people, in which case he will have to change this legislation which states that there will be specific elected positions on the interim council. If the minister is not prepared to make changes, he will have to wind up his interim council and hold new elections, with an additional series of elections for the council which will replace it in 1989. That is a most cumbersome procedure.

The other day, I told the minister how he could have avoided this problem during the last sittings. It is unfortunate because we are working in a very tight time frame, as the minister knows. That situation is not all of the Northern Territory's making, although I do think that some of the work could have been done well before now. We have a difficult timetable because the federal government moves very rapidly during this part of the year. The minister wants to ensure that he has everything in place so that he can get on that speeding train. If he doesn't, and if he finds himself in a mix-up of the type that I pointed out to him some 10 days ago with regard to the make-up of that interim council, it will not exist as from the passing of this legislation. If that is the situation, he will be right off that train and left at the station.

Mr Harris: I am glad you are going to read the amendments tonight, aren't you?

Mr EDE: I will be reading the amendments tonight and I hope that the honourable minister has fixed it because I pointed it out to him and he has had plenty of time in which to fix it.

Mr Speaker, let us go on to schedules 1 and 2. In schedule 1, the validity of proceedings of the interim council contains many of the problems that I have stated before with regard to the validity of proceedings of the actual council.

Schedule 2 brings me to the final point which we will be battling all the way. As I have already stated, we are extremely worried about the position of staff who come across from the old University College or from the DIT and the necessity for them to come together in an institution and work together as 1 new family, as 1 body of academic staff of the university. I know that my time has expired and I am operating on an extension. I do not mean to go hammer and tongs on all the points in relation to this, because we will be bringing them up again in the committee stage. I want to point out to the honourable minister that we have, as a bottom line, the absolute necessity after this legislation is in place for people who have been in the University College to be able to take that period of service with them in order to be able to obtain tenure. We say it is absolutely essential that we have a

tenure board in the new university to which people can apply to get their tenure.

The final point is that, we believe that to hold those staff and get through this initial period, it is absolutely essential that we include in the legislation a provision which will set a minimum in respect of terms and conditions. I am referring to clause 3 of schedule 2. Subclause 3(3) states, in part: '... otherwise upon the same terms and conditions as then obtained, until his or her salary, wages, allowances or other benefits is or are varied or altered ...'. We consider that the following words must be included: 'but, until 1 September 1993, not reduced or lessened'. I think the honourable minister will understand what I am trying to achieve here. We need to put in place a bottom line and to say to all the current staff of both the University College and the DIT that, while the university is being established between now and 1 September 1993, their terms and conditions of employment will not be lessened. They must understand that they can go into the new university and look forward to a period of some 5 years within which the government will not turn around and use its control of the numbers on the council or the board - controls which I have already stated exist in this bill - to change those terms and conditions.

This is fundamental. If honourable members opposite wish to knock off all the rest of our amendments, I say to them: don't knock this one off. Tell those staff that - despite the fact that the government has rejected the opposition's proposal to ensure academic freedom and to ensure that the government does not dominate the council, and that it has not agreed to remove the provisions which allow the government's domination of the board - the government has put in place a provision whereby, at least until 1 September 1993, their terms and conditions of employment will not be lessened. They must be assured that the amount of service they have already accumulated, whether at the institute or the University College, will cumulate towards their 12-month tenure period and that there will be a tenure board to which they can apply to secure tenure.

Those are fundamental staff issues that the government has to take on board tonight and, hopefully, that it will come back and accept tomorrow. If our other amendments are not accepted, it may be possible 18 months down the road for us still to have enough of a university there so that, with a change of government, we can get in and fix up the problems. But, if the minister does not fix up this provision, the staff will feel very vulnerable due to the government control of the council and the board of the institute, and because this amendment was not made to the legislation. That gives me grave fears.

I feel that the honourable minister shares with me the belief that we can have a university of a very high standard in the Northern Territory. I believe he is attempting, in his own way, to come to grips with that. I believe that the discussions that he has had with our federal colleagues, the discussions that he has had with myself and with people at the university, are leading him along that line. He still has a fair way to go. He believes that he has achieved it, but he must not fall down on this. Let us ensure that we look after the good quality staff that we have so that they have the confidence to stay for the next 5 years at least. By that time, the university will have a life of its own and we will be able to sort out any problems that remain outstanding.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, as I rise to speak on this bill I find myself in something of a quandary. I would like to explain that to honourable members. I have a very strong desire to do whatever is necessary



to ensure the establishment of a credible, viable, reputable higher-education institution in the Northern Territory, a university. It is essential that we work towards obtaining proper recognition of the needs of such an institution by the appropriate funding body which is, as it has been for the last decade and a half, the federal government. That will ensure the availability of reasonable resources for such a place of higher learning to be able to carry out its appropriate role for the benefit of the Northern Territory through the provision of higher-education learning opportunities for the young and not-so-young people of the Northern Territory who are seeking to improve themselves intellectually.

Mr Speaker, I have listened somewhat askance at times to the debate and arguments that have occurred about this bill and this process of amalgamation. I now realise how little people such as the member for Stuart understand about what a university is. What is its role? If we listened to the debate that just occurred, we would come to the conclusion that a university is just a step along from going to high school. It is the same process that occurs. You attend infant school, then primary school, then high school, and then you may do a TAFE course. According to the honourable member, you just carry on with the same process. He has no conception about what the role of a university is or the concept of higher learning.

I think it is important that we arrive at a deeper understanding of the role of a university because, unless we do, we could be lulled into a false sense of security by some of the arrant nonsense that is being promoted about these multilevel institutions and all the you-beaut things they can do. We hear these cries for the academic staff to be one happy family with the tutorial, administrative, clerical and trades staff all bunched together, all getting on wonderfully in a brave new world. Of course, we will all walk around telling the world that we really have a credible institution. The danger is that, no matter how much we tell them and beat our breasts, nobody will believe us. If they do not believe us, the university will not have a good reputation and, if it does not have a good reputation, its degrees will be devalued in terms of their benefit to the people who have worked so hard to achieve them. Fact has little to do with that in the end; it is reputation and credibility that count. It is also the ability to attract the standard and quality of academic staff to provide the appropriate level of education and higher learning, not just at a degree level but at the Master's level through to PhD level. We need to attract quality staff to be able to institute high-quality, original research which is a vital function of any university that seeks to build its reputation.

We sit today and we praise the work of the Menzies School of Health Research. Why? Because it has top quality people who are doing top-quality, postgraduate research. Had we not attracted the right staff, we would not have obtained the quality research, and that institution would not have its reputation. The same thing will apply to the Northern Territory University, and we must examine what we are doing in that context not just in terms of what we might think is most appropriate or most cost-efficient in terms of the next budget, but in terms of the university's reputation in 5, 10 or 15 years time. Are people in Sydney, Melbourne, London or New York going to tell people with degrees from the University of the Northern Territory to go away? Or are they going to say: 'Oh, you have a degree from the University of the Northern Territory. Let's talk about your career prospects'. That is what will count, not what we think or this community thinks. We can appoint as many Aboriginal representatives, Trades and Labor Council representatives or peak employer representatives as we like, but it will achieve nothing in terms of that. It is academic excellence, higher learning and original research that will build the reputation of the university and any degree issued by it.

Through the University College of the Northern Territory, we have made an excellent start. We have employed good-quality staff, there is good research under way, and the standards and qualifications are building on the back of the established reputation of the University of Queensland. It is not an end in itself, but it gives us a platform on which to build our reputation. The question we must ask ourselves in this process is: are we potentially undermining that for the future? I will oppose anything which does that.

I have no philosophical objection to people doing TAFE-related courses on the same campus as people who are engaged in higher education or postgraduate research. I have no philosophical objection at all to bringing all degree courses together into a single institution. What I do have a philosophical objection to is giving the same titles to degrees which represent different levels because, in the eyes of the rest of the world, that will drag all degrees down to the level of the one of the lowest standard. We must guard against that, and that is the area in which I have some difficulties with the contents of this bill.

Quite frankly, I was horrified at the thought that everything from an associate diploma up would be called a Northern Territory University degree. I do not believe an associate diploma should be issued by a university. I think it appropriately belongs in a TAFE course. For example, I cannot imagine a university issuing an associate diploma in fashion technology. It just does not fit. Please do not misinterpret me; I have nothing against fashion technology. However, it is simply not a university function. It is the sort of function that should be carried out in a TAFE institution. We should provide those opportunities for people to do that, but in the appropriate forum.

Having an institute within an institute is a complex matter. I have no doubt about my personal preference: I would prefer to see the TAFE institute functions removed organisationally. Even if the same campus, equipment and classrooms are used, I would prefer to see an administrative separation of the 2 organisations. If that cannot happen, let us make sure that we do not devalue the degrees.

I really want an assurance from the minister in respect of different degrees. As I understand it, some will continue to be issued as Queensland University degrees. They will be subject to the existing limitations and qualifications for the degrees issued by the University College of the Northern Territory. The student will have the option of taking such a Queensland University degree as a degree of the University of the Northern Territory.

Mr Harris: Not necessarily.

Mr HATTON: They may have the option to do so.

Mr Harris: It depends on what the board sets up.

Mr HATTON: The Darwin Institute of Technology also issues degrees, and I am not decrying those degrees. However, I believe that the following questions should be asked. Would the prerequisites, course content, level of learning and qualifications of academic staff instructing in those degrees meet the minimum criteria of the Queensland University? If they do not, those degrees should not be issued under the name of the University of the Northern Territory. If they are, they will be the measure for every degree from that university in the future. If we have started to set a standard, we must

maintain that standard. I do not mind if those degrees are issued as Darwin Institute of Technology degrees or CAE degrees or anything else. We should not use the name that we want kept for the best degrees, which must be the degrees of the University of the Northern Territory. That must be the bottom line.

As I stated in my interjection to the member for Stuart, I will fight to have clause 20(4) changed. At present, that clause prevents the institute from handling associate diplomas. I am pleased to note that the minister has provided an amendment which will allow associate diplomas to be encompassed by the institute so that at least that option will be open.

I again urge the minister to think very seriously about whether associate diplomas should be issued at all through the university. I ask him to do so because I am firmly of the view that it relates to the university's reputation. I have another personalised measuring stick. The minister knows what I am about to say and that is why he is chuckling. I have 4 children, 1 of whom is in Year 12 this year. My measuring stick will be very simple. Would I recommend to my children that they undertake a degree course at the University of the Northern Territory? If I cannot recommend that to my children, how can I do otherwise with my constituents?

Mr Harris: I hope you are not questioning the credibility of the University of Queensland.

Mr HATTON: Far from it. I am saying that its standards should be the bottom line for the University of the Northern Territory. If we build from that, we will have a great institution. We can then look to incorporating the Menzies School of Health Research and postgraduate programs which will further enhance the name of the institution and develop an excellent seat of higher learning on the north coast of Australia with a style and flavour that is unique to our tropical environment and which will provide Territorians with opportunities for higher learning. I am not interested in the mushy, middle ground which the member for Stuart is promoting.

I know that there is a need to take great care in the transitional process. There are people attending the DIT who are in the process of doing degrees. They should not have their educational programs interrupted or disrupted by the development of the new university degrees. Neither should interfere with the other. I am not suggesting in any way that the standard of education provided by the DIT is substandard. In my view, the institute is doing an excellent job. There is national accreditation of some of its degree courses and others are in the process of achieving national accreditation. I accept that they are good. I am now talking, however, about something that is regarded differently.

The other issues relate to the bringing together of staff, staff conditions, and who will be allowed to teach what. Nobody is suggesting that the process of creating the new Northern Territory University has the unwitting or fortuitous objective of upgrading the positions of academic staff. Any person who has a job should hold it on his own merit, abilities and qualifications. That is particularly important in terms of who is allowed to teach what in the new institution. The advertisements placed in The Times of London give an indication of the sort of standard we are talking about. They invited applications for various lecturer positions and stated that 'preference will be given to holders of a PhD degree and those whose research interests are relevant to the Northern Territory, South-east Asia or Melanesia. The college encourages interaction with other disciplines.

Tertiary teaching experience would be an advantage.' That is a pretty high level of qualification.

When one looks at the breakdown on the 13 academic staff employed in the science area at the University College of the Northern Territory, one sees that they all have PhDs. I am sure we would find that the same applies in other areas of the University College. I understand that a PhD is regarded as the minimum qualification to lecture in an undergraduate degree at the University College of the Northern Territory. My concern is that, when we bring the salary structures together, we should not inadvertently bring in people who may be excellent lecturers, teachers or tutors, but who do not have a level of qualification which would enable them to get a university lecturer's position elsewhere. That is what I mean by a fortuitous gain.

Mr Speaker, please understand that I am not in any way being critical but, in the science area at the DIT, there are 41 staff. I am not trying to compare pears with apples; that is exactly the point that I am trying to make. I want to ensure that pears do not start doing the apples' jobs.

If we can overcome that problem, it will alleviate some of the concerns of the higher education academic staff who may feel their future career prospects could be damaged. That could lead to a flight of staff from the University College. I am aware that that has been a concern amongst some academic staff. There have been resignations because of that concern and because of a wish to protect reputations or positions for the future. It is important to note there is already a concern. One can call it academic snobbery or whatever one likes. It is a fact of life. If we do not attract the right staff, we will not have the standard of teaching, we will not achieve the reputation, we will not have the original research and we will not achieve our objective. That is what I am talking about.

The salary level of university lecturers is roughly equivalent to Lecturer Grade 1 in the advanced education sector of the DIT. At Lecturer Grade 1 level, there are people at the DIT who have qualifications lower than a first degree even at a pass level. They may well be entitled to the money. They may be doing a fantastic job in TAFE training and education. No one is suggesting that their salaries should be changed or reviewed. It is a question of what they should be allowed to teach. That is the point that really needs to be clarified and that will give the security and the surety of quality for the future of the Northern Territory University.

That is a fundamental point that I wish to stress. Mr Alan Thompson, the President of the Union of Australian College Academics at the DIT, resigned for the following reason, and these are his words:

Lecturers Grade 2, who were not even members of UACA, had a possible reduction in working hours from 16 to 12 and reclassification as Grade 1 lecturers with a sizeable increase in salary which placed them on a par with university teaching staffing. I foresaw the difficulties of staff who were not qualified to teach at degree and postgraduate level and made it clear that these colleagues should be encouraged to register for higher degrees. I do not believe it is in the interest of the NT University that a substantial proportion of staff who lack the minimal qualifications required for university teaching - in some cases not even holding a first degree - should hold senior university posts.

That must be resolved in the interests of the future of the Northern Territory University. I am pleased to note that, at a recent meeting of the Interim Council of the new university on 31 August, Professor Caro advised the Interim Council ...

Mr Ede: How do you get the minutes?

Mr HATTON: I am just lucky. I have a couple of trucks too that drive past.

Professor Caro advised that 'DIT senior staff will retain their current salary levels but their titles may change and UCNT staff will be transferred at their current salary levels and positions but new contracts will be required'. I think that certainly protects the salary positions of the staff of both sides. It maintains permanency of the UCNT staff and provides, if I read it correctly, that the titles and positions of those people will be appropriate. I ask that there be an assurance, to whatever extent possible, that this will be done in such a way that we maintain the minimum qualifications required for any degree awarded as a University of the Northern Territory degree.

That is the point I am trying to make. The name of a Northern Territory University degree must be seen to have at least the status of a Queensland University degree. That will apply also to higher degrees. We must protect that position for the future. I urge the minister to ensure that those staffing matters are properly resolved to that end.

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with a couple of the other comments of the member for Stuart. He is claiming original thought again for this multilevel institute which we talked about earlier. He said that he proposed in February and March of this year the great idea of this multilevel, combined institute. He was going to include Katherine Rural College, the Sadadeen College of TAFE ...

Mr Ede: You don't even know the names.

Mr HATTON: The Alice Springs College of TAFE. Are you happy? I would advise him that it happens to be the idea of a fellow called Mr Hugh Hudson who was the Chairman of the Tertiary Education Council and promoted the idea for many years.

Mr Bell: He was severely lambasted by you mob at one stage.

Mr HATTON: I might say, Mr Speaker, that I have not exactly given roaring praise to the concept tonight, if the honourable member had been in the House to listen.

That was picked up, of course, by Minister Dawkins who published it in a Green Paper in December last year. Surprise, surprise, it was proposed as an original thought in February and March of this year by the opposition spokesman on education in the Northern Territory.

On the issue of academic freedom, it is obvious that the member for Stuart comes from the Labor Party because all he can think about is numbers, number crunching and counting. I guess he will break them down to about half a dozen factions. Already he is trying to create factional groupings within the university council rather than looking at the academic qualifications of the people who may be appointed to the council. He is interested in TLC

representatives even though the academic staff do not want the TLC there. That is irrelevant. He happens to want his political masters in there as distinct from whom the academics want there. He wants the peak employers there. That may well be appropriate. I note that the legislation in relation to the ministerial appointments refers to commercial, trade and industrial interests being represented on the council ...

Mr Ede: On the board.

Mr HATTON: The first thing to be thought about in relation to any appointment to a university council is that the person is capable of doing the job and of thinking about the proper role of an academic higher education institution, not the fact that he happens to be black, not the fact that he happens to be a flunky of the Trades and Labor Council and not the fact that he happens to be on a particular employer organisation. It is not a criterion for appointment to a council.

Academic freedom comes through this legislation, through the absence of ministerial control over direction. It comes from the powers and functions of the authority and the fixed-term appointments of the members of the council. Academic freedom comes from the council's ability to choose staff and to determine what courses will be approved or not approved and which courses will be taught. If the honourable member intends to support academic freedom, I hope he will talk with his federal minister, Dawkins, and the Tertiary Education Council about the very restrictive funding systems the federal government is using as its centralist means of controlling tertiary and higher education in this country.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think I should start by congratulating the member for Nightcliff on his speech, or certain parts of it. In it all, there is a kernel of truth, and that kernel of truth is quite clearly that the proposed University of the Northern Territory has to be one that proposes and establishes a system of academic excellence. Obviously, that is something that we support on this side of the House.

However, it is unfortunate to say the least that, in proposing that argument - which no one on this side of the House would have any problem in supporting - that he has had to do damage to the honourable minister and to the position of his own government, and has also had to seriously undermine both the efforts and the morale of the people at the Darwin Institute of Technology. If ever there has been a debate that needs to be handled carefully, it is this one. To give credit to the minister and to my colleague, the shadow minister, in their public utterances and their utterances in this House, both have been very careful to handle the matter sensitively and to talk sensitively about the competing interests. There is no doubt that there are competing interests between the University College staff members and the staff members of the Darwin Institute of Technology.

Then along comes old bull-at-a-gate, the member for Nightcliff, who is prepared, in order to defend and advance the admirable point that academic excellence should be the main priority within this university, to trample all over the sensitivities of the people concerned, particularly those at the Darwin Institute of Technology. I hope that his contribution tonight will not undermine the solid and very substantial work that the honourable minister has put in, and the solid and equally substantial work that my colleague, the shadow minister, has put in. As I have said, we have here the last opportunity to get it right. In the past, we have had a number of opportunities to get it right, and we have failed. Let us not say that we

have failed to get it right simply because of problems in the Northern Territory. I am happy to admit that there have been problems at the Commonwealth level as well, which has made it difficult if not impossible to get it right. In the context of our final opportunity to get it right, we are not helped by contributions like that of the member for Nightcliff who, as I said, seems intent on proving his point by diminishing the efforts of people at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

Mr Speaker, we have this last opportunity to get it right and that means taking the thing very thoroughly and very slowly to ensure that we do get it right. As the member for Stuart has said, we have a number of serious reservations about this particular bill. We have arrived at those serious reservations through widespread consultation with all the interested groups. I must pay tribute to the member for Stuart because he has spent countless hours talking to all the groups who have wanted to talk to us and, in some cases I suspect, some of the groups which did not want to talk to us about this particular matter. I have admired the patience that he has shown in this exercise in trying to come to grips with and find a way through the often violently conflicting interests. We have come up with what we think is the way to reconcile these conflicting interests. It is not the way that the government will choose to follow and, in the end, because we operate under a democratic system, that is its right. It will wear the consequences of the decisions that it takes as we in opposition wear the consequences of the decisions that we take.

The point I want to make is that we have been able to arrive at our position through widespread consultation and without trampling on and downgrading the efforts of - and let's be frank about it - the largest section of the people involved in this proposed merger. Again, I say that it is most unfortunate that the member for Nightcliff chose to adopt that approach to this particular piece of legislation, when the point that he made was very valid indeed and should be at the forefront of everybody's thinking in this particular exercise.

The other aspect that was particularly ironic about the member for Nightcliff's pursuit of academic excellence was his neglect of the complementary concept of academic freedom. He was very silent on 2 of the major concerns that we have about this bill. He did address one in passing, and that was the question of academic freedom in the sense that the council of the university should be seen to be independent of government, and should be seen to exercise its powers independently.

He made an outrageous statement that the so-called 'flunkies' of the Trades and Labor Council and obviously, if he is being fair and consistent, the so-called 'flunkies' of the business community were not capable of providing people who could make an outstanding contribution to the development of the university. That is an assertion that we on this side of the House reject utterly. Both within the union movement and within the business community, there are a large number of very capable people who would make an extremely valuable contribution to the development of the University of the Northern Territory. The fact that the government is not going to tap into that support will be to the detriment of the future development of the Northern Territory.

We are not talking about the capabilities of people because we take as given that we will only have capable people on the council of the university. We are talking about giving the university sufficient status in the community by ensuring that a wide range of capable people are appointed and or elected

to the council of the university. To be frank, we cannot guarantee that if we allow the government of the day, whether it is Labor, the Country Liberal Party or, heaven forbid, the Nationals, to appoint the majority of people to the council of the university. That cannot be done because of the predilection of the particular government in power at the time. There is a much better chance to get a wide range of capable people if we go to the main community groups and say that we want their input, we want their capable people to make sure that this university council represents the people of the Northern Territory in the best possible manner.

I think the government is failing itself and failing the people of the Territory by not taking on board the amendments proposed by my colleague. For the life of me, I cannot think why government members will not do it. Why does the government want that control? What does it think the raging Bolsheviks from the Trades and Labor Council or the business community are going to do with the university if, by some chance, the minister changes his mind and puts them on the council? They have a commitment in their work places, whether they are in the business community or the trade union movement, to academic excellence. They have a commitment to work excellence and they have a commitment to productivity. They have a commitment to all those positive things that everybody thinks are important to the university, and everybody thinks should comprise the guiding star of the university. All that the government is doing is cutting those people off, and encouraging them to say that the university is not part of them. It is something out there, something remote.

Mr Harris: I am not cutting them off, Terry. Come on, mate.

Mr SMITH: Well, you tell me, in your summing up on this, that you are not cutting those people off, and you go out and talk to people in the business community and come back and assure me that they are not thinking that they are being cut off.

The best way, Mr Speaker, to make this university a goer, the best way to provide academic excellence at this university, is to make the university part of the community. The government cannot make it part of the community if it is going to save for itself the right to put in place all the major decision-makers at the university. And that brings me to the second point, when we talk about academic freedom. How can academic freedom exist when the government reserves for itself the right to refuse the council's nomination for the position of Vice-Chancellor? I know the answer to that is that Queensland does it, but we all know that Queensland is just starting to come into the 20th century. We all know that nowhere else in Australia does the government of the day have a right of veto over the choice of university Vice-Chancellor. Nowhere else in Australia does the government of the day have the opportunity to veto the council's nomination.

Mr Perron: Are you making the point that the University of Queensland is not credible? Is that the point you are making?

Mr SMITH: Have you finished?

Mr Perron: No, I am listening.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

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



Mr SMITH: Have you finished now?

Nowhere else in Australia does the government of the day reserve for itself the right to interfere politically in the appointment of a university Vice-Chancellor. That appointment is an essential element of academic freedom. When a government reserves for itself the right to interfere politically in the operations of a university, it is sending a very clear signal to people at the university that it will interfere right through the system. That is the clear message this government is giving. That is why we fought so strenuously last time to remove that clause and that is why we will do so again. I have never heard an adequate justification for it and I challenge the minister to justify it in his second-reading speech.

Mr Speaker, we have a unique opportunity in the Northern Territory to get it right. We have a unique opportunity to put in place a university that will do us proud. Because of our circumstances, it has to be a university within a multi-level setting. I see that as an advantage, not a disadvantage. It creates problems, some of which have been outlined by the member for Nightcliff and some of which have been outlined by the member for Stuart. It also brings amazing opportunities which more traditional universities do not have.

Let us not forget that the aim of tertiary education in the Northern Territory is to provide the maximum number of opportunities for our kids. Of course, that has to be done whilst maintaining the highest level of academic standards. That is the challenge and that is the opportunity that we have and, unfortunately, we have not been helped by the outburst of the member for Nightcliff tonight. Let us forget that aberration and get on with the job. We have to realise that tonight's debate and the debate we will have tomorrow will lay the foundation for the University of the Northern Territory. Whether we are politicians, academics at the DIT or the University College, present students, potential students, or members of the general public, let us remember that what we are talking about is providing tertiary-level opportunities for our kids in the Northern Territory. Nothing can be more important than that, and we must all work to ensure that the young people of the Northern Territory will benefit in the long term.

Debate adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in tonight's adjournment debate I would like to draw the attention of the Minister for Lands and Housing to certain deficiencies in the Planning Act.

More than any other legislation, the Planning Act and its regulations has caused a festering sore of discontent in the rural area. It has shown itself to have the ability to spread its virus-like tentacles into all our lives and to go well past ordinary planning considerations to intrude upon our basic freedoms. The Planning Act has created more antagonism to this government than any other act. It has created as much fear in the rural area as did the prospect that we would not get our flat rate and it has created as much concern as the subject of licensing and metering of bores.

Other people have spoken publicly about the administration of the Planning Act and I would like to add my concerns to this. I have related these to the current minister and to the 2 previous ministers. The act is not being administered as was intended. It has been this government's practice over the years to review legislation from time to time and to make certain that legislation fulfils the purposes for which it was originally enacted. It is time that the Minister for Lands and Housing began an investigation into the operation of the Planning Act or, if one has already commenced, it is time to expedite it.

In my time as the representative of people in the rural area, I have dealt with the operation of the Planning Act and the Planning Authority in the rural area in respect of decisions, appeals, development applications and the whole box and dice. I do know something about the act and its operations, and I know how they could be improved. I believe that, in the operations of the Planning Authority in the rural area, there is a definite bias against the local members on the authority which operates in favour of the core members, and an us-against-them mentality now exists in terms of local people versus the core members. I believe that the appeal provisions have to be looked at. Local people are not getting a fair go in any considerations of the Planning Authority in the rural area.

Section 4 of the Planning Act refers to nominations for local members. In considering names put forward for the filling of vacancies, the minister has to be provided with a total number of names which exceeds the number of vacancies by 1. I draw honourable members' attention to the fact that, when the Planning Authority meets in relation to rural planning matters, it is supposed to consist of 4 local members and 3 core members. At present, there are 3 local members but, for some months, the minister has not appointed a fourth local member. In effect, in respect of rural planning matters, the Planning Authority is operating with 3 local members and 3 core members.

The operations of the Planning Authority have to be secret - and that is another matter of contention - but one is able to make what I shall call an educated guess and work out what has happened when particular decisions are made. At present, with the authority comprising 3 local members and 3 core members, decisions always seem to go against the local members. I can back up my claim with information about particular cases in relation to development applications going before the Planning Authority. It is extremely remiss of the minister to have left the vacancy in respect of rural planning matters unfilled for so long. The Litchfield Shire Council has put forward the names of 3 gentlemen, each of whom is very suitable and any one of whom would do the job very well. To my knowledge, the minister has not appointed the fourth member.

Section 16 of the act relates to a temporary vacancy. From what I can gather, it seems to be the practice that, if a core member is not able to be present, the minister or the chairman can take action. I believe that, on one occasion when a particular member was unable to be present for a meeting in Darwin, a telephone call was made and, when that person was at the other end of the line, it was considered that the member was present at the meeting. One might say that that is okay because the 3 members were there. The unfairness of the whole situation is that the same would not apply for the local members.

Of the local members on the Planning Authority when it sits to consider rural planning matters, 1 is a public servant and 2 are small businessmen. There comes a time - and 1 instance has already occurred - when one or another

is unable to be present because of the pressure of business. But, we do not hear of the minister appointing someone else in their absence. Oh no, that would make it fairer for the local people and we cannot have that. It appears that the core members, including the chairman, must have the final say. It would be very easy for the minister to have a list of names from which he can call on somebody to stand in as a proxy for the local person who is unable to attend on any particular occasion. The honourable minister has 3 names put forward by the Litchfield Shire Council for 1 position. Surely it is not outside the bounds of possibility that the Planning Act could be amended so that 1 of those other 2 persons could be called on to fill in for 1 of the 4 local members if he is unable to attend. In that way, greater fairness would be extended to us.

I come now to the section relating to confidentiality:

A member of the authority or a committee of the authority or an employee shall not disclose any information obtained in the course of his duties as such a member or employee unless that disclosure is made in the course of his duty as such a member or employee.

The interpretation that has been put on that confidentiality provision of the act is that nothing can be spoken about outside to anybody. Of course, one can always make educated guesses, and I usually do. I think this provision is being taken too far. Section 22 states that a disclosure can be made in the course of the duty of the member of the authority. I see it as the duty of a member who is representing the people in the rural area to report back to the shire that recommended his appointment or to the public in general, the relevant contents of the authority meeting. We all have to make decisions and we all have to stand by our decisions. What is wrong with a member of the Planning Authority being party to a decision and then explaining to somebody why he made that decision? Isn't government supposed to be open? With the Planning Authority, it definitely is not open.

Section 23 relates to direct interests: 'If a member has a direct or indirect interest in any matter ... he shall make that known to the authority'. He usually does not sit on the case. It is pretty easy to find out what constitutes a direct interest. However, there was a recent controversial zoning proposal in Darwin and 2 members on the Planning Authority could have been said to have had an indirect interest in it. I do not know who decides whether a person has a direct or indirect interest. Is it the person himself? Is it somebody else who knows something about his business? Is it the minister, if he has his ear to the ground? Who is it? In this particular case, I have been told that 2 core members of the Planning Authority could be said to have had an indirect interest in the matter. Again, I am making an educated guess but I do not believe that they stood aside from consideration of that matter. If I had a development application or a zoning proposal before the Planning Authority, I would look very closely at the interests of the people who would consider my case.

The quorum for the Planning Authority is 7 members: 4 local members and 3 core members. The chairman has a deliberative vote and a casting vote. When there are 3 local members and 3 core members and the voting is equal - and, again I am making an educated guess - the chairman usually sides with the other core members. That is grossly unfair to the local people whose interests are supposed to be represented. An amendment should be considered to the effect that, where the voting is equal, the particular matter should be referred for consideration by the authority at a later date.

I can tell you of a celebrated case in the rural area, Mr Speaker. There were 243 letters of support for a particular development application. This showed an overwhelming support by the local people for the development application. As I understand it - and this is not an educated guess because it is pretty easy to see who walks in the door and who walks out - at that meeting there were 3 local members and 3 core members, and the application was rejected. The only conclusion to be drawn from that is that the chairman sided with the core members. I know that the local members would have supported this particular project. It is just not good enough that a popular development proposal should be rejected in this way.

Section 39 of the Planning Act relates to the preparation and exhibition of draft planning instruments. In my first days of becoming acquainted with the Planning Act, for the life of me I could not understand the word 'instrument' in relation to a plan. I do not know whether it is designed to bamboozle us but it certainly does bamboozle people who are not up with the jargon relating to planning matters. It would be much simpler if the term 'draft plan' were used. It would be quite obvious to ordinary people as well as the planners themselves.

Mr Speaker, I have spoken on this matter before and I will be speaking on it again if the necessity arises. I have written to the minister about it before and I will be writing again. This Planning Act is disadvantaging my constituents in the rural area. Through no fault of their own and with the best will in the world, the local members on the authority are unable to represent the views of the local people. I have already presented a petition on this matter to the Assembly. The Planning Act needs to be revised so that its provisions do not intrude so much into our ordinary lives.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, silversulphadiazine is a drug which is used in the treatment of burns and ulcers. I am told that it first came on the scene about 25 years ago and was hailed as a wonder drug. For reasons which I am not clear about, it is applied externally rather than taken internally. There was a school of thought that said people might develop a resistance to this particular drug or compound and it might lose its beneficial effects and, therefore, it ought to be restricted in its usage. Apparently across the country, it was restricted to burns units or, here in the Territory, to hospitals.

As time went by, this concern that silversulphadiazine might lose its effectiveness was shown to be ill-founded. I was contacted by a well-respected and good personal friend, a doctor in Alice Springs who has spent considerable time practising in the bush in particular, and who has now taken up private practice. He rang to inform me that, to his knowledge, in most of the states of Australia, for some time silversulphadiazine had been made legal again. If I have it right, and it is some time since our conversation took place, it could virtually be bought in a chemist's shop for personal use, but in the Territory it was still on the poisons list. He said that he had had a note from the person in charge of the poisons list reminding medicos that it was on that list and should not be used willy-nilly.

Mr Speaker, you would be aware that, particularly in the winter, the Aboriginal population uses wood fires and quite a number of accidents occur from time to time, with children or adults even getting burns from the fires. Of course, there are plenty of ways that any member of the population can receive burns. The point the good doctor was making was that, if silversulphadiazine is applied promptly, it has a twofold effect: it seems to preclude secondary infections, and it promotes the growth of skin so that

healing occurs quickly. It saves a great deal of suffering on both those accounts. If a burn is not treated with silversulphadiazine, infection seems to follow in the majority of cases. That means expensive evacuations from wherever these people might be, by aircraft or St John Ambulance, which costs the taxpayers plenty, and it means hospitalisation, which again is a costly exercise. Of course, it causes disruption to the families who want to come in with their family members and so forth.

The request of the doctor was that I raise the matter with the Minister for Health and Community Services and ask him to act quickly for 2 reasons: to reduce suffering, which I think any humane person regards as being of paramount importance, but also because there is a grand opportunity to reduce the cost of health care to people in the Territory. I wrote to the honourable minister and I rang his office. Of course, the minister was away at the time but I spoke with his ministerial staff and passed the doctor's message on. In my letter, I said that this seemed a pretty important issue. If we are lagging behind the findings of the rest of Australia, we are permitting suffering which need not occur, and costing the taxpayers of the Territory and Australia money which need not be spent. In these 2 very good causes, I asked that the minister investigate the matter.

Mr Speaker, I have only the word of the doctor on the matter, so I asked the minister to investigate the situation, as quickly as possible and to take whatever action he thought fit, reasonable and sensible. I let him know that he would have my support for any retrospective legislation about any action that he might take on the matter. I felt strongly about it, and I wrote to all honourable members. I do appreciate the fact that the majority did reply and showed their concern. However, this morning I was a little nonplussed when I asked the minister what had happened to date - and it has been 6 weeks at least since I wrote - and he replied that it was being investigated and that he did not have any real problems about what I was on about.

Mr Speaker, I think that that is really not quite good enough. Indeed, let's not pussyfoot around: it is not good enough. I am sure that it would only take 6 phone calls to the appropriate people in the Departments of Health of the states of Australia to determine what the status of silversulphadiazine is in those states and to check out the story that I have passed on. If the doctor's information is correct, some sensible action should be taken. It would be appropriate to inform the pharmacies and to let all the Aboriginal health workers and the sisters and doctors out bush know that this material is available for their use to relieve suffering and, as a secondary but not unimportant consideration, to save the taxpayers' dollar.

I would ask that the Minister for Health put a rocket under his department. It really should not take more than half a day, even with plenty of cups of coffee in between, to check out the story. Once the situation is clarified, a decision can be taken on whether or not some action should be taken. I assure the minister of my support if a bill is required to legalise this substance, as may well be the case. I would like to think that other honourable members will see the wisdom of it and, if in the next few days the minister can sort this matter out and make a decision that the substance should be made available, I hope that every member in this House will back retrospective legislation to cover the situation. Normally, I am not a person who supports retrospective legislation, but this has so much good common sense. If the minister finds that the facts are correct as they were told to me, then I ask and urge him to get on his department's back, sort the matter out and make a decision quickly. I would urge all honourable members to give him the assurance that, whatever action he may take, we will be prepared to support it in the future.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a couple of matters. The first relates to the catching and disposal of large crocodiles in my electorate. In answer to a Dorothy Dixier this morning, the honourable minister went to some lengths to try and suggest that I did not know what was going on in my electorate and that, if I really knew what was happening, I would not make the sort of statements that I make about crocodiles.

I would like to put on record that my stance on crocodiles has not changed since they started eating up Territorians at the rate they do. As far as the constituents in my electorate are concerned, all they seek in living in their remote community of Borroloola is the same sort of security and safety for their families and their children that every other Territorian regards as the norm and a right. The minister displays breathtaking arrogance when he sits in his air-conditioned home in the northern suburbs of Darwin and tells people out in Borroloola that they have to get used to living with crocodiles because that is the way it is in remote areas - you take your chances with them.

I have some news for the minister and it is all bad. People out there will have the same sort of security that other Territorians have. If they do not get it with the assistance of the government, they will achieve it in the traditional bush way. I do not particularly support that way of doing things but that is how the law of the jungle operates.

Mr Manzie: Are you saying that Borroloola is a jungle?

Mr TUXWORTH: If the minister was able to get out into the countryside and see what is going on, he would know that Borroloola is not a jungle. It is a very sedate community that has normal expectations. Its residents are very fine people and the minister's implication that they live in a jungle is regrettable.

I want to raise another matter and this is for the benefit of the Minister for Health and Community Services. From time to time, honourable members talk about difficulties in procuring medical services, psychiatric services, physiotherapy services and so forth. I want to refer particularly to problems being experienced by the people of Tennant Creek in procuring orthodontic services for their children or themselves and I would ask the minister to review the present system so that citizens who are living in my community do not have to put up with the sort of nonsense I am about to describe.

If you want to make an arrangement for an orthodontic appointment in Tennant Creek, this is the first step. You telephone the dental clinic on 622 438. The answer phone tells you that there will be a dentist in attendance from 20 October and to ring 523 533 to make an appointment. The second step is to ring 523 533, which is the Community Health Centre in Alice Springs. After being switched through to the dental section, one is told to phone 524 766 for orthodontic treatment. That is the third step. Having dialled that number, one is told that, for information relating to orthodontic treatment in Tennant Creek, one can speak to Dr Nugent or to 'Denise the Nurse'. The fourth step is 'Denise the Nurse' saying that Dr Nugent will be in Tennant Creek from 22 October and will take appointments when he is there. She does not know when he will be back in Tennant Creek after that or how often he will be visiting.

Dr Nugent and Dr Barker service Alice Springs and Tennant Creek from Adelaide, on a 6-weekly set schedule. Denise is only able to make appointments from Alice Springs, when she is there for 2 or 3 weeks with Dr Barker. In between times, the number to phone for an appointment is

Adelaide (08) 223 1149. This has to take the cake in terms of a procedure which treats people like garbage.

Mr Ede: Is this what you do when you have toothache?

Mr TUXWORTH: No, it is for an orthodontic treatment.

Mr Speaker, I would be the first to accept that the provision of orthodontic services is becoming very difficult because orthodontists have so much work in places which they find more attractive to live in than the Northern Territory. They find it very hard to come here and satisfy our needs. I can accept that, when they come here on a rotational basis every 6 weeks or so, it is pretty difficult for them to make appointments. However, it is absurd that a service provided by the Department of Health has degenerated to a point where a citizen in Tennant Creek, Elliott, Borroloola, Yuendumu or Papunya has to make his way to a telephone and make a couple of trunk line calls to Alice Springs only to be told that his last resort is to ring a phone number in Adelaide to make an orthodontic appointment. That is absolutely nonsensical. I am not even sure that the minister is aware that the service has degenerated to this point, but I do ask him to investigate the situation and ensure that something is done to enable the Department of Health within the Northern Territory to take bookings for people who want orthodontic treatment.

Mr Speaker, in the few moments remaining to me I will raise 1 other matter for the benefit of the Minister for Lands and Housing. I want to ask him some questions in the hope that he will be able to answer them before the end of these sittings. We have all heard that a number of foreclosures are occurring at present, as people find themselves unable to honour their commitments in relation to housing loans. I ask the minister to advise me how many parties involved in home purchase arrangements with the Housing Commission have been foreclosed on by the Housing Commission because they have been unable to meet their commitments. If the minister could provide that information from 1 January this year, that would be helpful. Of the mortgages foreclosed, how many of the properties have been auctioned and how many are still in the possession of the Housing Commission? How many of those houses are still being rented out by the Housing Commission? Can the minister tell me whether the Housing Commission imposes an interest penalty on people who fail or are unable to meet their obligations under home purchase agreements with the Housing Commission? Finally, what is the nature of any penalty, and how is it imposed? Is it an automatic imposition or is it something that is imposed at the discretion of Housing Commission officers or the minister himself?

Mr Speaker, the last thing that I would like to do tonight is to pay a tribute to the teachers and pupils at the Kargaru School in Tennant Creek, who very recently put on a passing parade in period costume of the last 200 years of Australia's history. These children range in age from about 4 through to 12 and it was one of those nights where all the children participated to some degree. An extraordinary amount of effort went into the preparation of the show, and the 400 or 500 parents who turned out to sit on the lawns and watch the passing parade could only be impressed with the efforts of the teachers and the performance of the children. I had the pleasure of attending as an interested friend of the school. My children went there and I think it is an excellent school. I still take an interest in it and I believe that performances of that nature should not go unnoticed and unrewarded in terms of comment. It is rare these days to see so much effort put into such a function.

It never ceases to amaze me how children of primary school age today are able to stand up with all the confidence in the world and speak their lines or play their parts as though they had been doing it forever. I know that when I went to school, children were not encouraged to do that sort of thing except on Christmas breakup night. The number of children who are able to do it today is really a credit to the system. Those children had the confidence to stand up and present themselves to a large group in a way that was a credit to themselves, their families and their school.

If any honourable member is ever in Tennant Creek and has an opportunity to visit Kargaru School, I recommend that he do so. It is a relatively remote school which has not let the barriers of isolation and remoteness stop it from doing things. I think honourable members would find it a very satisfying experience to visit that school and I know they would be more than welcome.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, during the adjournment debate last Tuesday, I raised the question of the tender for the radiological equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. They may also recall, and I am quite sure that the Minister for Health and Community Services and the member for Nightcliff will recall, that I raised the matter again during third-reading debate on the Appropriation Bill.

Honourable members will recall that I tabled 3 documents, 1 of them being an application from the Minister for Health and Community Services to the Treasurer to waive a tender requirement for \$1.4m-worth of radiology equipment on the basis that there were only 2 companies in Australia which were capable of supplying what was required. The 2 companies I referred to were Medical Applications, which is based in Adelaide, and Toshiba Australia which is also based in Adelaide. At that stage, I made the point that, regardless of whether or not they were the only 2 companies, the tender should still have been advertised in order to ensure that people saw that it was open.

Maybe the member for Nightcliff would like to interject again because he strongly supported the minister's assertion that there were only 2 companies available, and that is the point of my comments.

Mr Hatton: Get your facts right.

Mr BELL: I pick up the interjection from the member for Nightcliff and I quote from his comments of last week. I described the minister's actions as outrageous and the more I find out about them the more outrageous they become. I said that I believed quite a few firms would be rather surprised to learn that the only 2 starters for this particular contract were Toshiba Australia Pty Ltd and Medical Applications Pty Ltd. At that stage, the member for Nightcliff interjected and said: 'Name 1'.

Mr Hatton: That is right.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the member for Nightcliff, I will not name only 1: I will name 4. There is Medicon, there is a large American firm called General Electrical Medical, there is the British firm GEC, and there is also the Australian firm Hanimex Medical. My information is that all of those companies would be able to provide tenders for this equipment. Bear in mind, Mr Speaker, that this is \$1.4m of taxpayers' money which is to be spent as expeditiously as possible. The tender process is there to ensure that we obtain the best value for money.



Not only have I put up - and I trust that, in response, the member for Nightcliff will shut up - but I would like to have some answers from the Minister for Health and Community Services. I remind him of his comments. In his customary, extraordinarily aggressive and overbearing fashion, he said that 'a certificate of exemption was sought on the grounds that only 2 companies could supply all of the x-ray equipment contained in the package to the specifications established'. He went on to say, and I quote from my recollections of his comment, that 'the decision was not taken lightly'. In his usual oafish fashion, he also attempted to taunt me by saying: 'Perhaps when he wakes from his sleep, the honourable member would like to give the names of a couple of other companies which can compete with the 2 we are talking about'. I can even give him contacts. Medicon can be contacted in Brisbane on (07) 8463933; Hanimex Medical can be contacted in Adelaide on (08) 3631363; GE Medical can be contacted on (08) 3189131; and GEC Brisbane can be contacted on (07) 2523801.

Instead of making these extraordinary allegations, it is about time the minister let us know precisely why only 2 firms were able to tender for this valuable contract. I am particularly interested in his recent overseas trip and his recent trip to Asia. I wonder whether he had any meetings with either of the 2 companies that he so strongly prefers in relation to this particular contract.

The honourable member should be in no doubt about this. I have a copy of a letter from the Regional Manager, Australia New Zealand, of GE Medical Systems which he sent today to the Minister for Health and Community Services. For the delectation of honourable members, I will read it:

This letter is to express concern regarding General Electric Medical USA not being given an invitation to tender for the radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. To give you some background on GE Medical, we are the world's largest supplier of diagnostic imaging radiology equipment. We have a complete line of x-ray vascular, computerised tomography, nuclear medicine and ultrasound equipment. Magnetic resonants are also available in 2 field sizes.

GE can meet or exceed any specifications in all of the above product lines.

In the Australia/New Zealand region, we have a total of 105 people totally dedicated to sales, service and installation of diagnostic imaging equipment. We have 70 trained engineers to service the equipment and \$10m in spare parts located throughout the region. Our equipment is installed and working well in 90% of the Australian teaching hospitals, and I will gladly provide a list with references if you desire to see one. With annual sales of \$40m and employment of 105 people in the region, 95 in Australia, I hope we can impress you with our long-term commitment to the diagnostic imaging business and Australia.

Yours sincerely,  
David L. Sullivan,  
Region Manager,  
Australia/New Zealand Region,  
GE Medical Systems.

So, I have named one. What is the minister going to do about it? The Minister for Health and Community Services has 2 questions to answer. Are there any kickbacks involved in the attempt to restrict it to 2 tenderers?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Never!

Mr BELL: That would be shocking to suggest, would it not?

Secondly, in the face of that sort of evidence, will the honourable minister re-open the tenders?

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a letter from General Electric Medical Systems.

Leave granted.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, last Friday, I received an Order of Australia Medal. I would like to put on public record that I believe this medal really belongs to many very generous people in Alice Springs. It was also presented, I believe, because of my involvement and other people's involvement in the settlement of refugees in Alice Springs. If I may, I will explain to members how the system worked.

The system was called the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme and through it we settled well over 100 Vietnamese people in Alice Springs. The system started in May 1979 when Hon Michael MacKellar formed the Migrant Settlement Council, of which I was a member. Dr Ken Moo was our chairman, and he has since passed away. Other people on the committee were Dan Conway, a noted central Australian, and Les Liveris who was the Regional Director with the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

The first people arrived in May 1980, and were accommodated in the houses of Alice Springs people, namely the Kilgariffs, the Watts, the Govers and the Millers. In some instances, the people lived in spare rooms within the households of Australian people. After that, we were fortunate enough to obtain the Santa Teresa townhouse in Alice Springs which comprised some 5 or 6 independent units, which were used and are still being used today. The scheme continues today. We have brought in Vietnamese people. A Romanian family came and 5 Chilean families. The scheme is now under the guidance of Pat and Helena Monaghan in Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, I would like to put on record the contribution made by the following families: Jim and Marian Brown, Rene and Jeanine Burger, Bill and Anne Clifton, Bruce and Joyce Clifford, Meg and Keith Dawkins, Carol Donne, John and Pat Govers, Michael and Loretta Graham, Bern and Aileen Kilgariff, Pat and Wally Litvinsky, John and Anne McNamara, Damian and Anne Miller, Pat and Helena Monaghan, Terry and Dell Murphy, Chris Nolan, Pat and Barry Slattery, Bob and Eve Watt, Peter and Ursula Waugh and Bill and Diane Wilson. In addition, the Catholic Church fully supported the program and does so still today. Many public servants are involved, in particular 2 teachers, Mary Flint and Tony Kelly. There are many other public servants whom I will not name. One thing that I learned from the scheme, after much soul searching, was that what we have to offer people from overseas is freedom.

In conclusion, amongst people of all nationalities there are good and bad, and I think it is unfair to highlight any one particular ethnic group as having certain problems in the way that the Vietnamese in Australia are being highlighted at the moment.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that, on the next day of sitting, I shall move that this Assembly censure the Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister for Industries and Development because he has been guilty of a grave contempt of the Assembly in that he deliberately misled this Assembly by informing it that the document he tabled on Thursday 6 October 1988 was a full audit of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' financial dealings with the Trade Development Zone, knowing that it was simply a statement of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' retainer from the Trade Development Zone.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, there is no more serious a motion that can be brought before this Assembly than a censure motion. We will be accepting the motion pursuant to standing order 95 and I ask that all questions this day be put on notice.

MOTION

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister for Industries and Development because he has been guilty of a grave contempt of the Assembly in that he deliberately misled this Assembly by informing it that the document he tabled on Thursday 6 October 1988 was a full audit of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' financial dealings with the Trade Development Zone, knowing that it was simply a statement of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' retainer from the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Speaker, somebody is telling lies, somebody is hell-bent on making sure that this parliament and this Territory is conned. I do not know who made up the lie and I do not know who devised the con but it is a fact that we have been lied to and deliberately and systematically conned. On Thursday of last week, the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Industries and Development, the subject of this censure motion, stood before this House and gave to the people of the Territory his explanation of payments to Mr K.K. Yeung. The minister led this House to believe that there was nothing to be questioned in the deal that had been done with Mr K.K. Yeung. He led this House to believe that an audit of Mr K.K. Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory government had been conducted and that the audit covered the full amount of payments to Mr K.K. Yeung and his company, a sum of \$1.439m, over the full period of K.K. Yeung's dealings with the Northern Territory. The minister led this House to believe that he had personally commissioned an audit. He then led this House to believe that the document that he tabled was the result of that audit. The minister's statement is not an explanation of the payments made to Mr K.K. Yeung and the auditor's report is not an audit. Therefore, somebody is telling lies and those lies are being told to this parliament.

Mr Speaker, it may be necessary for those who are ignorant of the consequences of this act to understand its gravity. The misleading of parliament is, without any doubt whatsoever, the most destructive and the most fundamentally corruptive act that can be committed against it. We are not talking about an abuse of privilege. We are not talking about contravention of standing orders. We are talking about the basis of trust on which this institution depends. Anyone who consciously and knowingly undermines that trust, undermines this parliament. What confidence can people have in their

parliament if such a betrayal of trust is allowed to pass without censure and without sanction? What is the point of question time? What is the point of debate and what is the point of parliament itself if it is to be a clearing house for lies? The only defence available to the parliament is enshrined in the principle of ministerial responsibility. If a minister misleads this House, he must resign forthwith. If a minister deliberately, knowingly and consciously misleads this House, he must be dismissed. Last week, the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Industries and Development deliberately, consciously and knowingly misled this House in no small way. He misled this House to the tune of \$1m.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the unrevised Hansard record for last Thursday, 6 October. The Hansard shows that, after question time, the Deputy Chief Minister rose to make a statement. For 2 days previously, of course, he had been pressed time and time again to provide some information regarding the Trade Development Zone and its relationship with Mr K.K. Yeung. He had refused to do that. Then, on Thursday, he unburdened himself of his statement, and I must say that the Hansard record and the statement he released to all members and the press agree in all material respects. The important thing about the statement is that it was not made on the run. It was not made off the top of his head under the pressure of debate or under the pressure of questioning. It was a prepared speech. It was a cold, deliberate, prepared speech which deliberately set out to mislead this House, and it did. The minister will agree that the purpose of his statement was to lay to rest widespread public concern about the management of the zone in general and the relationship with Mr K.K. Yeung and his company in particular.

Mr Speaker, I will not pollute this place with the slanders that the minister levelled against Mr Laurie Jones and Mr Adam Gordon. Those are men whose reputations stand above his limited reach. I will concentrate on the document which was the cornerstone of his case. It was a document which he commissioned and for which, therefore, he must bear full responsibility. The first mention of this document occurs on page 8 of the prepared statement. I quote:

The opposition has alleged vast sums of money have been passed to Mr Yeung for negligible return. The simplest way to bury these allegations is through an independent audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory.

Note the words 'business dealings with the Northern Territory'.

Such an audit was completed in June this year by a certified public accountant, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi. I have anticipated that the Leader of the Opposition would raise concerns about that audit through some tenuous links between the auditor and Mr Yeung's company even though the audit was conducted by a certified public accountant. Therefore, I commissioned last month a new audit, and it was undertaken by Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants of Hong Kong, and with absolutely no connection with any of Mr Yeung's business affairs.

The minister states, in that quotation, without equivocation, that he is responsible for the audit into Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory, not some of them - not selected ones, but his entire business dealings with the Northern Territory. In the next breath, he adds: 'I take this opportunity to table that audit'. So that there can be no doubt about it, he says on page 10 of his statement:

In fact, the total amount paid to 30 June 1988 to Mr Yeung's company, for himself and all his staff and for some subconsultants in other areas, is just \$1.439m. That figure includes retainers, success fees, group visit expenses, seminars, hospitality, travel and accommodation, entertainment and administrative expenses, and it is a payment that covers activities on behalf of the Northern Territory across 6 countries in Asia.

He went on:

Hardly the pot of gold portrayed by the opposition, particularly when the high cost of office space and vehicles is taken into account.

And then he said:

And as the independent audit conducted last month shows, in fact, it represents a loss to Mr Yeung.

Again, a reference to an independent audit.

Can there be any doubt now, in anybody's mind, that that document was intended by the minister to be a total vindication of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory? To put any doubts to rest, if there were any doubters left, at page 13, the Deputy Chief Minister summarised his argument by saying, and I quote: 'Mr K.K. Yeung's business arrangements with the zone have been audited'. When he had completed that statement, he tabled the document which supposedly contains the audit.

Mr Speaker, it is essential that we understand that the minister knew from the outset what that document would contain. He commissioned it. He tabled it, as I have said, in a cold, calculating manner. He was not under any pressure when he tabled it. He was not responding to a question. He tabled it with an accompanying statement of its importance. Let us not underestimate its importance; it was the cornerstone of his attempt to justify the payments made to Mr K.K. Yeung. There is no way that he could not have known what it contained. There is no way that he could not have known what it covered. Nevertheless, he chose to lie to us about it, Mr Speaker. He chose to bluff and, when the bluff failed later, he tried to dissemble. He tried to do that yesterday, and I will come to that. It is essential that we all understand that the minister consciously and deliberately tabled it as an audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Territory. It was not part of his business dealings. 'His business dealings' were the key words used. If anybody in this place has any doubt about that, I recommend an immediate reading of the minister's statement.

Mr Speaker, as everybody knows, I referred this document for informal assessment by 2 leading Darwin auditors, to ensure that I was on the right track. That is because, Mr Speaker, when one reads the document and reads the statement, one wonders if one might be wrong. One wonders how anybody could be so stupid as to go ahead and do what the minister has done. I want to stress that, at no stage, did either of these Darwin auditors cast any doubt on the competence, the integrity or the professional ability of the person in Hong Kong who prepared this report. They concluded that he had simply complied with the instructions of his commission. That commission, of course, was supplied by the Deputy Chief Minister.

The 2 auditors confirmed that the total sum of payments to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants covered in the statement amounted to \$403 525, and that

is contained on pages 2 and 3. The statement of account for the monthly retainer fee for the period 13 May 1986 to 12 May 1988 and the statement of account for the monthly retainer fee for the period 13 May 1988 to 13 September 1988 is all that this document covers. It is a statement of account for the retainer fees during that period of time. As I said, \$403 525 has been accounted for, in some sense, in that statement. Therefore, \$1 350 475 is not accounted for in the statement, despite the fact that, on 2 or 3 occasions, the minister stated definitively that this audit covers the financial dealings of Mr K.K. Yeung and the Northern Territory government. \$1m is not accounted for.

When you examine the document closely, the only fees covered are retainer fees. Fees for such items as group visit expenses, success fees, seminars, hospitality, travel and accommodation, entertainment and administration expenses are not covered in the statement, despite the fact that this document was put up to us in the guise of being an audited account of the financial dealings of Mr K.K. Yeung with the Trade Development Zone Authority. We know that those business dealings total \$1.43m. This audit covers only \$400 000. Where is the additional \$1m? Why did the minister seek to deceive this House?

The 2 Darwin auditors went on to make an even more basic point: that the document tabled is not an audit. There are accepted auditing standards worldwide and they apply in the British colony of Hong Kong. This document, for example, does not make any reference to a check of source material. It does not refer to any investigation of the accuracy of the hours claimed by K.K. Yeung Management Consultants. It does not clearly identify the financial information that was audited. A proper audit, on the other hand, would have tested, among other things, the internal controls within Mr K.K. Yeung's office to assure the auditor that hours allocated to TDZ consultancy were in fact spent on that activity and obtained evidence so as to be assured of the completeness, accuracy and validity of the data, the hours and the hourly rates. In fact, the statement on the covering page carefully states that the opinion is based on the information supplied by Mr K.K. Yeung and has not been checked. It does that by saying that the basis of calculations contained in this statement is the information set out in Appendix 2, which is the information supplied by Mr K.K. Yeung.

The so-called losses are the same. No evidence has been provided to suggest that losses have actually been incurred. Yet the minister asserts that fees paid by the Territory do not cover the cost of work done. Details of expenditure by K.K. Yeung Management Consultants have not been provided to allow even a base calculation that a loss may have occurred. In short, this was not an audit of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' business dealings with the Northern Territory, as it was supposed to be. It is not an audit of even part of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' dealings with the Northern Territory because the document is not an audit at all. This document, which is supposedly a comprehensive audit of the business dealings of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants with the Trade Development Zone Authority, does not even cover the first 12 months of those dealings, and possibly a longer period. That is how complete and accurate it is. The minister, however, wanted members of parliament and people outside this parliament to believe that the so-called audit covered the whole of the period and that it was a comprehensive document.

Not only does it not account for \$1m, not only does it not cover 1985-86, but it is not even an audit. It is abundantly clear that what the Deputy Chief Minister led this House to believe was an audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Territory is no such thing. This fact was confirmed on

Monday by his own spokesman. I quote from page 2 of the NT News, and this is cute: 'It only appears that \$1m is missing because the audit does not take all money into account'. This is the audit that is supposedly telling us all about K.K. Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory, according to pages 8, 10 and 13 of the statement supplied to us. Mr Speaker, that is disgraceful. The lie had been out in the sun for only a few days and it was already starting to stink.

The minister's spokesman sounded the retreat on Monday and, by the time the parliament sat yesterday, the minister was stumbling to the rear in one of the most pathetic pieces of generalship we have seen. He said: 'I offer the following explanation regarding the audit'. It was no longer the audit he described in his grand and blustering statement of the week before. He continued: 'The audit only examines retainers and supervisor's fees. It does not include fees and expenses incurred under the first agreement nor does it include retainer fees for subconsultants. Nor does it include expenses for all consultants under subsequent agreements'. The Deputy Chief Minister's words indicate that it was not an audit of Mr K.K. Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. It was not half an audit. It was not even a small piece of an audit. It was no sort of audit at all.

While I am talking about the minister's contribution to the debate yesterday, I will refer to his response to one of our questions. The question was: 'Did the board express reservation about the contract conditions from the outset?' His answer was: 'No board member expressed any reservation about the original contract conditions or the subsequent contract'. Mr Speaker, that is a lie too. I want to table a piece of correspondence that will nail that lie right down. This is a letter from Mr Laurie Jones to Ms Anne Kemp, Development Executive of the Trade Development Zone Authority, dated 7 April 1986. I will not read it in full but I am happy to table it. It states:

Thank you for your letter of 2 April 1986 dealing with matters relating to the K.K. Yeung consultancy agreement. Firstly, my reaction to K.K. Yeung's responses, as outlined in your letter, are unfavourable. I consider the variations sought by him to be unacceptable and should be refused. Secondly, I wish to express some views on the draft agreement as proposed by the TDZ letter of 10 March 1986.

He goes on to make 4 points:

Although I consider that the agreement overly favours the agent, I have been prepared to compromise in forward discussions. However, I wish to once again reiterate that I am fundamentally opposed to the payment of commissions in advance as set out in paragraph 4 ...

Mr Speaker, he said that he was fundamentally opposed to the payment of commissions in advance as set out in paragraph 4. That is extremely significant because, yesterday, we heard that the government - the Cabinet in fact - has authorised the payment of \$120 000 in advance of the actual firms setting up in the Trade Development Zone itself. The letter goes on to make 4 points expressing his reservations in April 1986 about the proposed renewal of the K.K. Yeung contract. That puts the lie to the answer we received yesterday that no board member expressed any reservation about the original contract conditions or the subsequent contract.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the letter.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, if I could just make a short explanation. On the back page, one piece has been blacked out. The reason is that it named a venture that was seeking to do business with the Trade Development Zone and I did not think it was appropriate that that should remain.

Mr Speaker, this man opposite, having failed to deceive the parliament and his electorate, now accuses those who saw through his deception of failure to understand. We do understand and we understand all too well. We understand that what he has done to this place and what, clearly, he believes he has freedom to do in this place. We understand that his appalling and pathetic retreat of yesterday was not brought on by conscience, nor by any need to see the truth exposed; it was simply that he was caught out and was squirming in an attempt to fix it. Nobody who was in this House last Thursday, nobody who reads the minister's statement, nobody who now reads the Hansard record of the proceedings can be in any doubt about the minister's intention. His intention was to persuade this House that an audit had been conducted and that the audit accounted for the government's dealings with Mr K.K. Yeung. Nobody can now be in any doubt that it was the minister himself who commissioned the document. Nobody can be in any doubt that the minister knowingly, consciously and deliberately misled this House. The lying has to stop somewhere. The continual and constant deception of the people of the Territory has to stop somewhere. If we are to stop it, let us do so right here and now. This minister deserves more than our censure; he has earned our contempt. May he now, for the good of the government and for the health of this parliament, resign.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that' and inserting in their stead: 'this Assembly:

- (1) deplores the action of the Leader of the Opposition in wasting the time of this Assembly by moving a censure motion relating to a document tabled on Tuesday 6 October 1988 relating to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants, when the Leader of the Opposition was fully aware that the Minister for Industries and Development had ensured that the Assembly was under no misapprehension as to the status and content of the document by giving a full detailed description of the document and its status at question time yesterday, 11 October 1988;
- (2) notes and commends the continuing efforts of the board, management and staff of the Trade Development Zone Authority to establish an important manufacturing centre in Darwin which will create employment and business opportunities for Territorians; and
- (3) the Leader of the Opposition be condemned for his continuing actions which have the effect of undermining those valuable efforts.

There are 2 matters of substance in the Leader of the Opposition's speech and let me just put them to rest very quickly. The letter that has been tabled predated the board meeting. The letter, dated 7 April 1986, was a comment on the draft board paper. At the meeting held on 17 April 1986 and 18 April 1986, all members endorsed the new agreement. Let us put that one straight to bed. End of story on the letter and the correspondence that has been tabled.



It is a matter of public record that, yesterday, in question time, I could not have given a more detailed explanation of the audit. The truth is that the Leader of the Opposition and his staff worked very hard over the weekend to put together a case for a censure motion. We have been building up to it with inane questions over a period of almost 1½ weeks. They put together a censure motion but he did not get the opportunity to use it yesterday. He has brought it on now because he has to obtain some credibility with his staff after they gave up their weekend to try to prop him up. He has laid it before us now.

For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I will read part of what I said yesterday. In answer to the very first question yesterday, I said: 'I sought the second audit to allay any concerns that might be raised about the veracity of the first audit. It does not pretend to be an audit of the Trade Development Zone payments to Asian consultants'.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has no argument. That is the end of the story. Both of his allegations are put to rest. It is as simple as that. There is no need to go into any more detail than that. However, let us continue this saga and see if we can put to bed, once and for all, the attempts of the Leader of the Opposition to undermine the Trade Development Zone. Isn't it ironic that he blackens out the name of a company? The Leader of the Opposition would have done more than anyone to harm business confidence, and not only in the Trade Development Zone, by his clandestine attempts at Doctor Who tactics and telephone calls. Yesterday, Mr Speaker, his staff were ringing up the CES about how many applicants we received for Hengyang Darwin Pty Ltd in the Trade Development Zone. He also wanted to know the cost of the letter drop as well and what it cost the CES to advertise those positions.

There are 100 positions vacant there and we have already received 240 applications. Where else in the Northern Territory, in these hard economic times, are such opportunities being offered as in the Trade Development Zone? Let him tell those 240 applicants for the 100 positions that the Trade Development Zone stinks, as he expressed it. Let him tell the people of the Northern Territory that the Trade Development Zone is not a fit and proper place in which to seek employment. Yesterday, his staff was getting together the information so that they could can another company in the Trade Development Zone. He piously sits in this Assembly and says that he is concerned about business confidence and the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I indicated to the House yesterday in my exhaustive response to the opposition's 39 questions, that enough is enough. This censure motion is patent and arrant nonsense and I find it difficult to believe that the Leader of the Opposition continues to waste the valuable time of this House in his negative pursuit of Trade Development Zone Authority matters. During the course of this current sittings, we have seen the Leader of the Opposition consistently fail to understand the information which I have provided to him. His questions have invariably been flawed. I would not get away with any con job on this side of the House in relation to \$1m. My colleagues know me only too well. It was the Leader of the Opposition who went to the media and suggested that it was a total audit. I gave him the figure after I had to instruct him on how to structure a question. I gave the facts only too easily in terms of the total amounts paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants.

The Leader of the Opposition continues to demonstrate an inability to add up, to subtract and to distinguish between data relating to different financial years. Honourable members will recall how, during my time as

Treasurer, he had trouble differentiating between a quarterly statement and an annual statement. As the Chief Minister pointed out to me earlier, the Leader of the Opposition once misled the House to the tune of \$250m. I agree that we are talking about principles rather than amounts but the Chief Minister will have more to say about that in a few moments.

The Leader of the Opposition's reference last week to 1986 debates showed clearly that he is unable to understand the difference between forward estimates and actual expenditures. He quoted Ray Hanrahan in 1986, and I think he referred to page 1027 of Hansard. The Hansard shows that Mr Hanrahan, the then minister, referred to how much had been allocated, not how much had been spent. However, in order to give his argument substance, the Leader of the Opposition treated that as a reference to actual expenditure. Members on this side of the House are used to his getting things wrong. He has proved himself totally inept in even basic accounting practices and investigative procedures. It is most difficult to see how the provision of even more information will assist him in his case. In fact, I am positive that it will serve only to confuse him further. Notwithstanding this, and primarily for the benefits of members of this House who can digest information other than by chewing the covers off books, I will respond to several of the points which have been raised against me this morning.

The Leader of the Opposition continues to harp on the alleged inadequacies of the auditor's report which I tabled in this Assembly last Thursday. He continues with his preposterous suggestions that \$1m is missing. I refer the Leader of the Opposition and other members to my response in question time yesterday, 11 October 1988, in which my explanation puts this matter to rest. I reiterate that the audit examines only retainers and supervisory fees received by K.K. Yeung Management Consultants Ltd for the period 13 May 1986 to 13 September 1988. My qualifying statements yesterday and in the House last week showed clearly the purpose and extent of that audit and showed clearly that it was never intended to be and never purported to be an audit of every component of our dealings with consultants to the Trade Development Zone. The \$1m has never been missing and only a most naive interpretation of the data would come to that conclusion.

The Leader of the Opposition, in an interview on Territory Extra, referred to an amount of \$45 000. In respect of that amount, I shall quote an extract from the minutes of the TDZA Board meeting of June 1986 which states:

Members considered the supplementary paper to this item relating to expenses incurred by K.K. Yeung which were not adequately provided for in the first consultancy agreement. Members noted that this was a one-off situation, not arising again except at the request of the Trade Development Authority and approved the additional payment of \$45 000 to K.K. Yeung on this basis, subject to the reference to the minister for notation.

This was, therefore, an additional payment as partial compensation of demonstrated losses for services rendered within the terms of the original contract and approved by the board.

The Leader of the Opposition made considerable play of the \$120 000 which was paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants as an advance against which success fees due to him would be offset. It has been demonstrated, over the 3 years of the original contract, that success fees, which were an integral part of his contract, had not been realised with the regularity that may have been envisaged. Coupled with this, the audit of time costs charged to

K.K. Yeung and his staff showed a considerable loss in terms of his overall contracts. The \$120 000 is not an additional payment. It must be fully acquitted. It is likely that there will be a substantial draw down on the advance before the end of this financial year.

I need to remind honourable members once again of the position taken by the board of the authority at its April 1986 meeting. In referring to the K.K. Yeung consultancy agreement, the board's minutes record the following:

Considerable discussions ensued on this paper and particularly the need to ensure the ongoing attraction of investment to the zone from the South-east Asian region. Members agreed that, in order to ensure the above objective and to adequately remunerate the consultant, the agreement should be placed on a fully commercial footing. In the assessment of the contract to date, that objective has not been satisfied. This demonstrates the necessary and reasonable increase in monthly retainers.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned moneys allegedly paid up-front to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants and retrospectively approved by the board. This simply did not occur. There were no retrospective board approvals in so far as the advance of \$120 000 is concerned. I quote from the minutes of the board meeting on 12 and 13 May 1988:

In discussion of the consultancy, the deputy chairman, Mr Bob Matthewson said: 'The consultant could not be expected to sustain the losses which were evidenced. The consultant was running a business, and it was clear that the terms of the consultancy placed him, K.K. Yeung, at a severe financial disadvantage. The position had been exacerbated by the slow realisation of success fees. Mr Matthewson said the board had a moral obligation to remedy the situation.

The board minutes go on to say:

At the suggestion of member Fuller, members agreed that negotiations be undertaken, by the minister and the chairman during their forthcoming visit to Hong Kong, for some additional payment. The board then went on to commend K.K. Yeung on his diligent and efficient performance as head consultant in Asia and recorded a similar endorsement to the other consultants who worked with him.

What is demonstrated in this whole exercise is the willingness of the consultants to respond to the increase in activity generated by the Trade Development Zone Authority and its officials. It is clear that, when the original contract was signed, neither party knew just what to expect during the second contract period. The concerted effort in Asia, particularly in Hong Kong, began to show through. This has been confirmed subsequently in the preliminary report by Mr Fergus Simpson, which I tabled. The assessment in that report showed that the NT had done more to promote Australia throughout Asia than any state. It would be of no surprise to any commercial person to suggest that there should be a commensurate rise in the level of payments for the consultancy because of the additional time expended.

The Leader of the Opposition stressed that the fee has risen fivefold since the first contract of May 1985. I say that the rise is necessary to compensate a very active consultant group for its efforts in so many different ways. This could go on for ever without substantially advancing the debate.

I have tried to be patient and reasonable with the Leader of the Opposition but we are really descending into pedantics. This debate merely extends an issue which has already been extended to an unreasonable degree by the opposition. I challenged the opposition throughout last week and again yesterday to make any allegations of impropriety about the activities of the Trade Development Zone. No such allegations have been forthcoming and that is because the opposition is unable to make any allegations.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We are debating a censure motion against the Deputy Chief Minister which is based on a very specific matter. However, the Deputy Chief Minister is ranging far and wide and discussing anything that takes his fancy.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister is responding to your motion and speaking to his amendment.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, when we talk about recognition of this parliament and its standards, it would not hurt the Leader of the Opposition to read standing orders and be more familiar with the proceedings at any given time in this Assembly. That may help the Assembly to run more smoothly.

The Leader of the Opposition's tactic has been to ask a series of questions and then to claim that the government has been covering up. I am the one who has taken the debate to the opposition on this particular issue. As the responsible minister, I have asked the opposition to put up or shut up. I have challenged the opposition to bring on a full-scale debate by way of a substantive motion. Now the opposition has produced a censure motion against me. This is a very sorry saga and it will go down on record together with the opposition's negative role in relation to the pipeline, Yulara and all the other positive initiatives of this government.

Mr Speaker, yesterday I answered all the questions that had been asked. The opposition has now picked over the bones of its strategy and come up with this piece of nonsense. It is not about impropriety. It is not really even about the activities of the Trade Development Zone. It is more a matter of pedantics. After all the grim promises of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Barkly about how the government would be brought to its knees at these sittings in relation to its management of the Trade Development Zone, this is what we are left with. It has boiled down to a censure motion against the responsible minister. It has become a schoolyard slanging match - yes you did, no you did not. We are simply debating points of detail. We are not looking at the broad activities of the zone, the role of Asian consultants to the zone or the government's efforts to develop the zone. The substance of this motion is pretty thin and an admission that the opposition has very little left to offer on this issue. Let us all be honest about it, Mr Speaker. We have been waiting for a week and a half for the opposition to come forward with any matter of substance to back up its claims of skulduggery or wrongdoing in the zone. It has demonstrably failed to do that. This motion is no more than a shallow attempt at a face-saving exercise for the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, I understand that the Leader of the Opposition gave up most of his weekend to put together a censure motion based on the presumption that the so-called 39 questions would not be answered. All that work apparently went up in smoke when I answered his questions yesterday. I appreciate that he does not want to waste his efforts and thus we have today this different censure motion which can still pick up much of the weekend's work. I really do understand that he has to try to do something to keep faith with all the

promises that he has made but really, Mr Speaker, is this what it has boiled down to? Is he saying that the amount of \$1.4m is too much or not enough? Of the overseas trips, is he saying that they were not enough or that they were too much? What are the accusations? What is the impropriety? Nothing.

In terms of the \$1.4m, this may help to bring it into reality. The Attorney-General made a few calculations for me yesterday - at breakfast actually - in terms of what the Trade Development Zone means to the Territory with the inclusion of the Hengyang positions and how that compares to the \$1.4m that we have spent, and this is what he came up with. I am quite happy to table this document, Mr Speaker, but I must admit that it has been over the breakfast table and there are bits of cornflakes and a few other things on it. The Attorney-General has calculated, on the basis of the 73 jobs already in the zone and paying an average of some \$350 a week, that if Hengyang employed another 112 people at \$350 a week, the total would be 185 jobs at \$350 a week. That in turn amounts to \$64 750 per week in wages, which is \$3.367m per year in terms of wealth provided to people who might not have a job if it were not for the Trade Development Zone. That is the kind of logic we have to get back to: providing meaningful, full-time employment for Territorians so that people have a future in this place. That is the type of calculation that means a great deal to me and I am sure that it means a great deal to the Attorney-General and to his constituents in the northern suburbs.

The Attorney-General did not bother to ring the CES, as the Leader of the Opposition's office did, asking how many jobs had been advertised, how many applications had been received and how much it cost to advertise the positions. It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition did not come forward because he would have had to say that it has been a resounding success, and that 240 people have applied for positions in the zone.

Mr Speaker, I will not take up the full time that I have allocated to me. I would like simply to summarise as follows. I think we have put to rest, without too much trouble, the so-called letter that the Leader of the Opposition has tabled. The letter is dated 7 April 1986 and it is a comment on a draft board paper at the meeting held between 17 April and 18 April 1986. All board members endorsed the new agreement. I do not know how I have misled the House and I emphasise to honourable members just how baseless is the allegation that I did so.

During question time yesterday, I made a full disclosure of what the audit was. What I said about the audit is already a matter of public record. The Leader of the Opposition rose today to move a motion of censure to condemn me for misleading the House. It is already a matter of public record. That is the second issue put to bed. Mr Speaker, what are we left with? As I said, nothing. The Leader of the Opposition has tried, for a week and a half, to come up with an issue about the Trade Development Zone. He has been supported by a media campaign that he has developed, and I will not talk too much about that. But really, at the end of that week and a half, what are we left with? Absolutely nothing. Last week, I was accused of being a liar and of misleading the House over the figures. Do you remember that, Mr Speaker? I was accused of deliberately misleading the House. I did not hear him mention that today because he went away and thought about what I had said. He was wrong, as he is wrong today. The amendment to the motion should be supported by every member. I will be interested to see how the crossbenchers vote on this motion.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr Godfrey Alan Letts from Donald, Victoria, who is presently visiting the Northern Territory. Dr Letts is a former member of the Legislative Council and a member of the First Legislative Assembly. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to him a very warm welcome to the Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is very disturbing and disappointing to see the Deputy Chief Minister, by the use of what is no more than a cheap parliamentary tactic, attempt to wriggle out of the position that he has got himself in. He cannot get out of it that way. He tried to worm out of it yesterday and he is trying again today. Let us have a look at what he said in question time yesterday. He was still referring to it as 'an audit'. Correct, Mr Speaker? We have laid that to rest. Yesterday, he was still attempting to avoid the question of misleading parliament because he realised, from what was in the press over the weekend, that that would be raised. Let us have a look at what he actually said, and what the actual problem is.

Look at page 8 of his circulated statement. He has been saying that it was not really an audit, that he did not really mean that it was a full audit and that that was merely our interpretation of what he said. Mr Speaker, I will put to you and other members what the honourable minister said so that you can decide whether this sounds as though the honourable minister is stating that he has a full audit or that he has something else. He said:

The simplest way to bury those allegations is through an independent audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. Such an audit was completed in June this year by a certified public accountant, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi.

He further said that he had commissioned a new audit last month which was undertaken by Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants of Hong Kong with absolutely no connection with Mr K.K. Yeung. Those were 2 references to audits and full audits.

Having said that it was a full audit, the minister went on to say, on page 10 of his statement: 'And as the independent audit conducted last month shows, in fact it represents a loss to Mr Yeung'. On page 13, he summarises in order to make it quite clear what he is actually saying to this House and what he was relying on for the whole basis of the statement he made last Thursday. In nailing down his argument, he stated: 'Mr K.K. Yeung's business arrangements with the zone have been audited'.

Mr Speaker, last Thursday, the minister stated 3 times that it was a full audit, an independent audit. It was an audit which would lay to rest the whole problem that we had regarding Mr K.K. Yeung. That was the statement he made last Thursday. He did not get around that problem even yesterday. He was still referring to it as 'an audit' yesterday. Today, he is trying to tell us that it was not an audit at all.

There was a way out for him yesterday. He did not have to use the tactic of trying to muddy the waters. There was one way out of it yesterday which probably would have satisfied this side of the House. He could have stood up yesterday at the beginning of question time and stated, by means of a personal

explanation, that he had misled this House, which he clearly had, and apologised to us for that act. When a minister gets himself into the situation where he has misled the House, it is imperative that he take the first opportunity available to him to explain the background to the House and to make that apology to this House.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr EDE: There is no doubt about the misleading. The misleading is agreed. The Minister for Transport and Works should clear his ears out.

The only point that remains is the seriousness of the misleading of the House. He is now saying that it was never intended to be a full audit. He has admitted the misleading. He stated 3 times last week that it was an audit, that it was an independent audit, that it was a full audit. He stated yesterday that it was an audit. It is only now that he states that it was not ever meant to be a full audit and that it was merely meant to be some sort of a statement or other. He can go into whatever contortions he likes. He can duck and he can weave but this will follow him forever unless he accepts this censure. The fundamental and basic fact remains that he has misled the House. He spoke for some 20 minutes in this debate about what are fundamental irrelevancies. They have nothing to do with this the subject of this debate. He has talked about Mr K.K. Yeung. The motion is not about Mr K.K. Yeung.

Mr Coulter: Have a look at the amendment.

Mr EDE: The amendment does not even talk about Mr K.K. Yeung's interest; it talks about the board, the management and the staff of the Trade Development Zone. Even the fees paid to K.K. Yeung Management Consultants are irrelevant in the context of this debate. What is relevant is that the Deputy Chief Minister deliberately misled this House. He is trying to say that the motion is pedantic. Is it pedantic to lie to this House? How can the minister use such words? How can he say: 'I misled the House deliberately and lied to it but that is just pedantic'. That is the only response he has given. Lying to this House is not a matter of pedantics. It is absolutely shameful that the minister who is guilty of this impropriety has not stood up and made a fulsome apology.

It may be said that the people of the Northern Territory do not expect a great deal from their politicians. It has been stated that Territorians are overgoverned and that the electorates are too small. The incumbency factor has been talked about, a factor which allows people who would not be re-elected on any rational criteria, actually to be re-elected. Territorians do not seem to expect a great deal but they certainly do not like ministers who play fast and loose with \$1m and push dodgy documents around this House. They do not like being conned and they do not like half-smart bully boys who try to con them. That is what has been happening here in the last few days.

The minister's arrogance is fairly well-documented although it is very difficult to see what he has to be arrogant about, at least in terms of ability. Many people have been waiting for him to hit the wall. Many people have suffered at the hands of this bully boy. His high-handed, arrogant attitude indicated that he was riding for a fall and now the arrogance is falling away and we are left with a pathetic bully who uses the shove and the lie and, finally, the whining excuse. The enfant terrible, the great white hope of the CLP, has been revealed to have feet of clay. He has shown himself to be damaged goods, full of fundamental flaws. Those flaws are no more clearly illustrated than by the fact that, when he is cornered, he will not face up to the truth.

For 2 days of question time last week, we asked the minister questions. He refused to answer. Further on, in the budget debate, we continually asked him one question. He got himself absolutely confused. He sat there like a stunned mullet and then attempted to recover again, deliberately misleading the House. We did not take the matter up at that point because we were hoping that he would get his act together and use the ability which all members have, to apologise to this House. What did he come up with? On the third day of sitting, he came up with a document which was written for him. He did not deliver his remarks off the cuff. They were written down and prepared for him as a statement of the actual position. He said that he would offer a complete rebuttal of all the charges laid in respect of the government's relationship with K.K. Yeung. This rebuttal, we were told, was to be based on an audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Territory. That audit would show that there was nothing to be answered and that there was nothing untoward whatsoever in the relationship. That was what was supposed to happen on the Thursday of last week.

During the course of the minister's comments, in typical bully-boy fashion, he stuck the boot into Laurie Jones and he stuck it into Adam Gordon. That created quite an impression out there in the street. People thought he was a real hero for doing that, didn't they? I am sure that they like to see government ministers using their positions of power to put the boot into decent people. Those remarks of the minister were consistent with the whole tone of his comments: pure shonk. Whether there is something shonky going on in relation to the Trade Development Zone will have to be determined by an inquiry, but the minister's shonky comments were perfectly consistent with his entire approach to this matter. He is not such a dunce that he is ignorant of what an audit is. He is not such a reckless cretin as to present that document to us without knowing what was in it or, more importantly, what was not in it. After all, he has occupied the position of Treasurer and one would presume that that gave him enough experience to know what an audit is. He was, after all, the only recipient of an audit on which the Auditor-General had to put notes. He may be a bully but he is not a dunce.

Mr Coulter: That is true.

Mr EDE: He certainly is not a reckless cretin. He knew what he was doing. He was deliberately attempting to deceive this House and the electorate into thinking that all was well. His purpose was quite deliberate, and absolutely certain and that is why he must resign. There is nothing more serious than an attempt by a minister to mislead the parliament.

Mr Speaker, I am afraid that the seriousness of his situation appears for the moment to have escaped the Deputy Chief Minister. He does not seem to be able to grasp the gravity of the charge and the natural consequences that must flow from it. Apparently, he believes that he can bluster and use the tactics that he did this morning and that that is all he needs to do to rebuff this charge. From this, we must conclude that he does not understand that to mislead this House is the most serious offence that can be committed.

Let me assure him that, unless he makes a full and satisfactory rebuttal of the charges laid against him, he must resign. That is a practice that is upheld in this and in every other parliament of the Westminster parliamentary system. This parliament has a painful duty: it has to discipline one of its own. Every parent knows the pain when, in spite of natural love and affection, one must look to a child's future, looking beyond the present and, for the benefit of the child, society and the future, one must discipline one's own. In this House, we are now in a situation where we must discipline



one of our own. We must look to the future of the institution of parliament as it works in the Northern Territory. We must look at our credibility among the parliamentary states because we will be going to them in our drive towards statehood. We will be asking them to accept that we have the maturity and the knowledge of how the system operates that enables us to look beyond current political imperatives to the future and to uphold the system that we all hold dear. We need to demonstrate that, and we have an obligation to demonstrate that today.

It can be argued that it will be for the good of the member for Palmerston and that he requires that discipline to make him realise that the way that he has been carrying on, the tactics that he has adopted and the way that he has played fast and loose with the truth is not acceptable. He stands accused of deliberately, knowingly and consciously misleading this House in that he presented to this parliament a document which he claimed to be an audit of Mr K.K. Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. He did so in order to support his case that there was nothing in those business dealings to give rise to any concern among the people of the Northern Territory, and that was the purpose of it. The build-up over the previous 2 days and the whole content of the statement was such as to bring this House and the people of the Northern Territory to believe that everything was all right. He relied absolutely on the fullness, the completeness and the independence of the audit. He tabled that document as proof conclusive that those business dealings had been vetted and cleared. He did that in the full knowledge that the document was not an audit, in the full knowledge that it did not cover the business dealings of Mr Yeung and the government, and in the full knowledge that it offered no evidence to lessen the concerns of the people of the Northern Territory. For that, the minister must be censured. I ask honourable members to realise that they have a weighty duty in this task. They must pass judgment on the honourable minister. If they do not do so, we ourselves will stand reprimanded by the Northern Territory and adjudged by the Northern Territory population as having failed, when the going got tough, to do our duty.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, we have faced situations like this many times in the House. The motion today is no different to many, particularly in relation to the Trade Development Zone, and it is designed solely to try to score a headline for the opposition. That is all it is designed to do, and it may even succeed. It is a shame that the opposition is prepared to use the conventions of the House and standing orders to move motions such as this at will, and opposition members have demonstrated clearly that they are prepared to do that. A motion about misleading the House, coming from a party that once tabled forged documents in this parliament, is a farce. That was a classic case of trying to mislead the House.

Mr Leo: What forged documents?

Mr PERRON: I do not think that the member for Nhulunbuy was about at the time. But, if he cares to refer to Hansard, he will find that a fairly embarrassing situation arose for the Labor Party a few years ago. If the members at that time had had any honour, in that situation they would have resigned from membership of the Assembly.

The Leader of the Opposition himself misled ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Except by way of substantive motion the Chief Minister is not able to cast reflections on the honour and integrity of members of this parliament. He has just done so and I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Does the Chief Minister wish to speak to the point of order?

Mr PERRON: No, Mr Speaker. I leave you to decide that matter because I had ceased dealing with it anyway.

Mr Ede: You got your big lie out there. It is okay.

Mr Manzie: Come on, the Privileges Committee made a point on it. Go and read the newspaper headlines of the day.

Mr PERRON: Just refer back to Hansard. You were not around in those days.

Mr Coulter: And you will not be round for much longer either.

Mr Manzie: Ask Jon Isaacs why he left.

Mr Smith: You can have a go at me, but not at them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Chief Minister is referring to past and former members.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, to pursue that particular matter ...

Mr Perron: Read the amendment to the motion, will you?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the comment made ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member raising another point of order?

Mr SMITH: Yes I am. I am raising the continuation of this point of order. The comment made by the Chief Minister ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition is reflecting on a decision of the Chair.

Mr SPEAKER: I advise the Leader of the Opposition that I have ruled on the point of order. Unless he has another point of order over and above that one, he may not reflect on that point of order.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the amendment to the motion before the House before he leaps to his feet too many more times with points of order that will not stand up. The Leader of the Opposition himself has demonstrated in this House that he can get figures wrong. The one I am referring to in particular is the \$250m mistake that he made in relation to the alleged public debt of the Northern Territory. It was not a matter to be taken lightly either. He advised Territorians that they had a per capita debt of \$17 000. That was pretty serious because the public does expect members of parliament to be reasonably accurate in their statements. I am sure that the honourable member knew all the time that the calculations that he had made were drawing a long bow, to say the least. He was aware, I am sure, that the actual per capita debt in the Territory was about \$7000 and, indeed, was even less than Tasmania's.

Despite the fact that the Leader of the Opposition rose in this Assembly and embarrassingly confessed that he had made a mistake of \$251m, it did not stop him continuing to use the per capita figure of \$14 000 which he has done

publicly and persistently since. Certainly, in the Flynn by-election, the opposition exploited it as best it could. Very sadly, he has misrepresented the situation to many Territorians. I guess we will just have to keep up a campaign to try to educate them a little better.

The Deputy Chief Minister is being accused of deliberately, consistently and knowingly misleading the House in relation to a sum of \$1m. It is interesting that the figure that the Leader of the Opposition used in his speech was \$1.439m. That is the amount paid to consultants, which he alleges the Deputy Chief Minister misled the House about. The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition got that figure from the very same statement that he claims contained misleading sections. I think that is a very valid point that honourable members should bear in mind. It is alleged that the Deputy Chief was trying to mislead us to the tune of \$1m yet the very figure that is being used came from the same statement.

To allay the fears or the confusion that is quite often in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition on TDZ matters, in an answer to the very first question in the Assembly this week, the minister gave an explanation of that situation. That should have cleared up the matter in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition completely. The member for Stuart said that, if the minister felt he had confused anybody, he should have taken the first opportunity to ensure that the situation was made clear. The statement was made last Thursday in the Assembly, the last sitting day of last week, and the explanation was given in answer to the first question on Tuesday. That does not seem to be letting grass grow under one's feet in any way at all. I dispute that the Deputy Chief Minister did not take an opportunity to clear the air when he perceived that there was confusion in the mind of the opposition. Clearly, he did.

Mr Speaker, it seems that there are no bounds to what the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to do to try to dredge up or invent information alleging impropriety at the Trade Development Zone. He has sought actively to obtain information from people. He even went to such lengths as having his staff ring people and misrepresent who they were in order to obtain information. That has to be regarded by most people as a pretty low tactic. He has had people on a telephone fishing expedition at least for the whole of this year. We have heard that calls have been made to all sorts of people - not only in the Territory, but outside the Territory - trying to fish for information and criticism of the Trade Development Zone Authority. Goodness knows what some of these telephone fishing expeditions have cost the taxpayer. They have also tracked down ex-staff members and ex-board members of the Trade Development Zone. If, after all that, they can only come up with a censure motion such as this one, I am sure that they must have had many knock-backs in trying to obtain information that would be in any way derogatory.

The campaign that the Leader of the Opposition has run over the last couple of years has certainly had a damaging effect on the zone. It is terribly disappointing to be trying to build and diversify the economy of the Northern Territory with monkeys on one's back such as this side of the House seems to have had so persistently. As an opposition, members opposite are in the convenient situation where they can profess support for the trade zone and then proceed to try to destroy it. They have persistently done that. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the greatest victory that the Leader of the Opposition thinks he could have would be the Trade Development Zone being shot down or a royal commission established to inquire into it. He would claim that as a massive victory. His aim is to demonstrate to his supporters that he is actually trying to earn the money that the taxpayers pay him.

I think that is a shame because an enormous effort has been put into the zone by members of the board, past and present, by the staff of the zone authority, by many people outside the authority and by many people in government. Our consultants and subconsultants overseas have made an enormous effort to build the image of the TDZ from absolutely zero to a situation where we now are recognised in important circles in a number of countries in Asia. We are recognised as having a trade zone that offers attractive incentives for people. It has not been an easy task. In the first round of meetings in Asia, virtually all we could tell people was that we were from Australia and explain where the Northern Territory and Darwin were and that there was a very exciting opportunity in the Trade Development Zone. Those first trips to Asia were an eye-opener. Of course, Asians have many things in life to worry about apart from us. Their ignorance in relation to Australia's geography, population and so forth was very large.

We have put in an enormous amount of ground work in building an image that is now well-known in circles which are important to us. That has been achieved by spending a great deal of money and putting in an enormous amount of hard work. The opposition, it seems, is prepared to cast that aside. Members opposite finally asked a question to which an answer was given, that being that the amount was \$1.439m. They had asked hundreds of questions prior to that but they had not asked the one that they actually wanted answered. Yet they accused us of not giving them information. If I recall rightly, the first time that that figure was asked for, it was given. Now that they have it, they are not quite sure what it means although they think it has to be bad.

\$1.439m would certainly sound like a lot of money to ordinary people, our constituents who do not deal in millions of dollars in their entire lives. However, for governments and people in big business, large figures are not particularly amazing. Now that the opposition has this figure, it is not quite sure whether to represent it as being too much to pay because it is not sure what it all means. Indeed, members opposite might want to accuse us of not spending enough.

There could well be a suggestion that the Territory has not been spending enough on promotion of the Trade Development Zone. We could always have done more. We could have taken out more advertisements, made more videos or held more seminars. Members who are familiar with budget allocations to the Trade Development Zone will know that promotional efforts are expensive. Each year, the government contributes what we believe to be an appropriate amount to support the zone's promotional efforts. It would have been nice to have been able to do more in that regard and I guess we would have seen more progress had we done so. A balance has to be achieved in a budgetary sense. The zone is not the only initiative of government. There are many others and they all require money.

We do not expect any help from the opposition which sees its role as trying to get in the way. We might expect it to understand, however, that some of its actions in attempting to discredit the zone have been enormously damaging in terms of undoing the results achieved through much hard work and the expenditure of many dollars over the years. Members opposite should visit Asia more often. We know that it would take wild horses to get the Leader of the Opposition to buy a plane ticket and go overseas. I think he has done it once in his career in this Assembly. He recently went overseas on a fact-finding trip in relation to uranium, and I am sure that he learned a great deal. I applaud him on that initiative. I would like to see him go on a few more trips, particularly into Asia, and get a feel for the place. He

should visit the Austrade people in Asian countries, talk to chambers of commerce, visit to the various trade zones that we are competing with and get a feel for the region. He should do that before he tells us that we are doing it all wrong. He would learn an enormous amount. We would not criticise him for spending money on the air fares or hotels or buying a few lunches for people in order to carry on conversations. He would receive no criticism from us for that and he does not need to worry about being chastised in his own electorate for having the audacity, as Leader of the Opposition, to spend some taxpayers' money on educating himself. Goodness knows, he really needs that education.

Mr Speaker, we will press on with the zone, despite the opposition's efforts to place every possible hurdle in our way. Our charter, as a government, is to get on with building the Northern Territory. These days, it is all part of the game to have to tolerate the wasting of this Assembly's time with motions which the Leader of the Opposition moves merely to get his name in the paper. In closing, I simply say to him that he should not knock the Trade Development Zone too hard. He might be out there one day, looking for a job.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, everybody should be absolutely clear in relation to what this debate is about. It is about whether or not the Deputy Chief Minister lied to this House. It is not a debate about the Trade Development Zone. It is not a debate about what questions may or may not have been asked about the Trade Development Zone. It is not a debate dealing with what amounts may or may not have been spent on the zone. It is a debate on a motion which asserts that the Deputy Chief Minister lied to his House. So that everybody will be absolutely clear about the statement that led to this motion, I will read the second paragraph of page 6 of Thursday's Hansard, where the Deputy Chief Minister said:

The opposition alleges that vast sums of money have been passed to Mr Yeung for negligible return. The simplest way to bury those allegations is through an independent audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. Such an audit was completed in June this year by a certified public accountant, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi.

I have anticipated that the Leader of the Opposition would raise concern about the audit through some tenuous links between the auditor and Mr Yeung's company even though the audit was conducted by a certified public accountant. Therefore, I commissioned a new audit last month. It was undertaken by Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants of Hong Kong, and with absolutely no connection with any of Mr Yeung's business affairs.

The Deputy Chief Minister then tabled that audit.

I am sure that every member in this House can recall a certain minister of the previous Hawke government, a Mr John Brown, who was sacked from his ministry because he had misled federal parliament in relation to some contractual arrangements connected with the Brisbane Expo. He was sacked because he had lied to the House, despite indications that he may have been misled by his own public servants. That is the guts of why he was sacked. A very worthwhile constraint which is placed on every minister is that he must tell the truth in the House.

In this case, there has never been any question about whether or not the minister lied. I doubt that it was even his fault. Perhaps his script writer should also be sacked. I accept that. However, the fact is that he got up in this House and told a lie. Parliaments demand that ministers tell the truth and dictate that ministers will be sacked if they tell lies because that is the whole basis of our parliamentary system. If ministers can tell lies in this House about matters within their portfolios, the whole basis of our parliamentary system collapses. There is, for example, no point to question time. How can any member of this House have any confidence in answers given to questions by any minister if the House is prepared to accept that a minister can lie and get away with it?

The premise on which this institution rests is that ministers will answer questions truthfully. It is blatantly clear to even the most blind observer that the minister lied. Whether it was his fault or the fault of one of his pen-pushers, I do not know. That is irrelevant. In John Brown's case, it was proven to be irrelevant. John Brown was sacked, not because it was not an honest mistake nor because he was misled by his own staff, all of which he was amply able to demonstrate, but because he told a lie in parliament. As a minister, you cannot do that and, if you do that, you have to resign. Those are the facts of life.

The amendment that has been introduced by the Leader of the House does not deal with the blatant, prepared lie that was told. No part of the amendment or of the speech given by the Chief Minister or his deputy dealt with that lie at all. They dealt with matters surrounding the development and the questions that the opposition has put about the TDZ. Neither of them addressed the lie, and that is what this motion is about.

Unless the Deputy Chief Minister resigns or unless his Chief Minister sacks him, this House can have no confidence in any response that any minister gives to any question asked in this House. That is the bottom line, Mr Speaker. The people opposite have a responsibility to this House, to their constituents, to their party and to themselves to ensure that that minister does not occupy that pew at the end of this debate. If they do not do that, they are saying that this House is a lie, that the entire proceedings in here are a lie. They will be saying to the public of the Northern Territory and to the CLP that government members are a lie. It will say to Australia that we condone lying in this House. If the government does that, then there is absolutely no point in this House existing. It would demonstrate that self-government is an absolute farce, a joke. There is no point in this parliament even existing. There is ample precedent for this minister's resignation.

If this minister still occupies that bench at the end of this debate, this House is a lie, because the government of the Northern Territory and members of this Assembly will accept lying. I want to hear somebody on those benches address that lie because neither of the 2 speakers so far has addressed it. They have spoken on peripheral matters dealing with the TDZ, justifying their own portfolios and their own existence. That is fine. But they have not addressed the substance of this motion and, if that is not done before the close of this debate, and if that minister occupies that chair at the end of this debate then, Mr Speaker, you can be assured that almost every tenet on which parliament is built has been fractured. It cannot be sustained. Throughout Australia and throughout the Northern Territory, we will be known as a parliament which will accept ministers telling us lies. That is how we will be known.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in the debate today because there are still some important aspects of it that need to be clarified and, while the focus so far has been on whether the honourable minister told a lie and whether it is continuing to be perpetrated, there are still some important issues that we need to look at closely. In his comments, as I understood him, the Deputy Chief Minister said that all members of the board had endorsed the agreement to renew K.K. Yeung's entitlements and his contract. There is a problem with that because, very clearly, anybody who saw or heard Laurie Jones on television and radio could be left in no doubt at all that Mr Jones was not a party to that agreement. He made it publicly obvious. How the minutes of the meeting could record that all board members agreed with the new arrangements for K.K. Yeung presents a question that is yet to be answered.

The minister went on to refer to the fact that K.K. Yeung had been placed at a severe financial disadvantage. I think that, if that is the case, everybody would want to see that addressed because we cannot expect people who are working for us to be working at a loss or at a severe financial disadvantage. It would be very difficult to get anybody in the community to believe for 1 minute that we have an Asian representative for the Northern Territory, working in Asia, who is losing \$309 000 every 2 years or so, and that that is a matter of no concern and the man can bear it. I would say that that is the greatest load of hogwash that I have ever heard.

The next point the minister raised was that the government has paid \$1.4m to K.K. Yeung and he passed over that by saying: 'Is it too much or is it not enough?' I think those are very relevant points which need to be addressed. I do not think this is the place to address them and that is why I have advocated for some time that we really need to open up the books and files on the zone or prepare ourselves for another course of action.

This morning, the Leader of the Opposition placed great weight on the audit. I think we need to get it clear in our minds which audit we are talking about. Is the letter or the receipt from Louis W.O. Leung and Co an audit or is it just a report of some review of calculations that has been made? Mr Speaker, I would say to you that, if you and I were to ask for an audit to be done, we would be asking for a review of the total expenditure that we had made as a government to Mr K.K. Yeung for services carried out on behalf of the Northern Territory. That audit or review, whatever you want to call it, would not simply relate to how many hours were worked and whether the hourly rate was charged correctly. We would have a responsibility for expenses such as office space, air fares, the cost of setting up seminars, promotions and meetings, advertising, correspondence, couriers running messages around the city, and all the rest of it. They would all be legitimate expenses that the Northern Territory would be expected to pay for in running such a consultancy.

I think it is fair to say that none of those other issues and costs have been addressed or referred to in any way at all. What we have is not an audit. It is not a financial report on the expenditure of the Territory's moneys. It is a spot check on 1 aspect of the Territory's expenditure, and that is the number of hours that have been charged to the Territory, and whether the hourly rate was a true and proper rate to be charged. I would like to read Mr Leung's report into Hansard because I think he is very careful with his words. He does not use the word 'audit' at all. He talks about a 'review of calculations' that were provided to him. Mr Leung or his representative says:

We have reviewed the basis of calculations and calculations for the statements of account of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants for the period 13 May 1986 to 12 May 1988, and from 13 May 1988 to 13 September 1988.

Now here is the crunch:

In our opinion, so far as the basis of calculations and calculations are concerned, the statements have been properly compiled in accordance with the basis of calculations set out in Appendix 2.

If you turn to Appendix 2, it tells you that Mr Leung gets \$HK2000 an hour, that somebody else receives \$HK800 and that the basket boy receives \$HK400. Mr Speaker, that is not an audit. That is a review of calculations provided to Mr Louis Leung and Co, who had no way of knowing whether the hours were ever worked or whether we received anything for the time. There is no mention whatsoever of all the other costs and expenses that might be incurred to the Northern Territory for the operation of such a consultancy.

Mr Speaker, members opposite are most aggrieved that anybody should even ask questions. I can tell them that, while we ask these questions out of interest, there are 2000 people in small business out there who are just beside themselves with the titbits they have received about what is happening in the TDZ and what they know for themselves. They want to know the answers, and they do not think it unreasonable that questions be asked.

Mr Speaker, I would like to come back to the partial review of the hours of work charged for. There is an absolute necessity for somebody to sit down and say to Mr K.K. Yeung: 'You have been given \$325 000 for work done. I do not think it is unreasonable that we check to see how many of the hours were actually put in'. If you and I were in business, Mr Speaker, we would not fork out that amount for hours worked on the basis that somebody might have actually worked them. We would be interested in knowing when they were worked, and what was gained from them.

That aside, the most alarming aspect of the Louis Leung report is the inference that Mr Yeung has worked more hours than he has been paid for by the Northern Territory and that in fact he has lost \$309 000, not in actual cash, but in time, for the period of his consultancy so far. The consultancy has been reviewed to take account of that. Nobody will believe that an industrious, eloquent, intelligent Chinese businessman is working for the Northern Territory for nothing and losing \$309 000 every 18 months. That is why people want to know the answers to the questions that have been asked. Nobody believes such a proposition. It is nonsense. How can we promote the credibility of the zone when that sort of notion is being published widely by the government, which wants people to believe that this guy is such a good catch that he is working for us even whilst losing \$309 000 every 18 months or so? The matter needs to be addressed and it needs to be handled very sensitively to put it in perspective. If the supposed problem was solved by increasing the amounts paid to Mr K.K. Yeung in terms of reward for hourly rates, and if the government still does not intend to address the other costs that were being incurred, the zone will not go anywhere.

Mr Speaker, everybody in this House wants to see the zone succeed.

Mr Perron: That is debatable.



Mr TUXWORTH: The Chief Minister says that that is debatable. That might be his view but I have no doubt that everybody here wants to see it succeed. We all have a different perception of how that ought to be done and what is possible but everybody wants to see it succeed. It cannot succeed, however, when the parliament is not fully behind it and when the taxpayers of the Northern Territory regard it simply as a king-sized roort, as they do. If members opposite listen to the business people and talk to people generally, they must get that message. We are talking about the perception. Business people perceive the zone as a total loss to the Territory and a threat to them. They do not even see why we should bother continuing with it and pouring valuable taxpayers' dollars into the zone itself.

When the honourable minister spoke the other day, there is absolutely no doubt that, by implication, he misled the House. Then yesterday, and I will read this into the Hansard, the honourable minister said:

Perhaps it would be helpful to the Leader of the Opposition to provide some background on the audit report. The first audit was conducted in May this year by direction of the TDZ Authority to confirm claims by Mr K.K. Yeung Management Consultants of time cost losses. The audit was sought to examine time costs and to determine if a loss had in fact been incurred. It was not intended to examine all consultancy payments. The second audit, the one that I tabled here last week, was commissioned by me on the same basis. Principally, it was to provide an independent authority to check claims made in the first audit, which was done by a certified public accountant who would be claimed to have links with K.K. Yeung Management Consultants.

The first audit was really to check whether, in fact, Mr Yeung had worked for the Northern Territory without being paid, and whether the time that he was charging to us was paid for correctly. That report by Louis Leung seems to suggest that he was paid correctly and there was considerable time that he put in that he should have been paid for and he was not. The second report, which the honourable minister has suggested that he authorised, was commissioned by him on the same basis. He said that that was principally to provide an independent authority and to check claims made in the first audit which was done by a certified public accountant who could be claimed to have links with K.K. Yeung.

Mr Speaker, that is all too curious. We have a spot check conducted on the hours worked by the K.K. Yeung consultancy and then we authorise the firm of Louis W.O. Leung and Co to do an audit of that. I say 'audit' in inverted commas, and then we have a further audit done because it could be construed that Mr Leung had connections with K.K. Yeung. If honourable members opposite do not find anything curious about that, I can tell them that people in the business community would find it absolutely strange that such a situation should exist. To get to the point where it is necessary to have a review of the first auditor's report because it is not certain that he was squeaky clean, and then only to review the things that he actually did for the audit in the first place without spreading the net is very strange. I ask honourable members, if there was absolutely no problem, why was it necessary to have a second audit done at all? If it was decided to have a second audit, why not audit everything we have spent with K.K. Yeung for that period?

Without any doubt, the honourable minister misled the House the other day and he tried to correct that in the answers he gave yesterday in question time. He revised an answer to pick up the second audit and included that as a

part of it. Mr Speaker, there is no way that you can hold the Louis Leung report up as an audit of the \$1.4m that has been spent on behalf of the Northern Territory taxpayer. That is absolute nonsense. On the one hand, the minister is saying that we have spent \$1.4m. Here is a report to say that we have accounted for \$325 000 of it, and we are getting a second report to say that that \$325 000 is okay and you can bag your head for the other \$1m because it is none of your business. You know, Mr Speaker, the honourable members might not think it is any of our business, but the community is certainly interested in knowing how that money was spent.

Mr Coulter: You will be called as a star witness.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the minister, in one of his throwaway interjections, suggests that I could be called as a star witness. I am not interested in being a star witness, but I am interested in being able to walk around the community and say: 'The trade zone is going like a ripper. Everything about it, including Mr Yeung, is the best thing that could happen to the Northern Territory'. Mr Speaker, one cannot honestly say that. It is impossible for anybody to walk out of here and say: 'Here is the report on the \$1.4m that the Northern Territory has spent with Mr K.K. Yeung promoting the TDZ in Asia and you ought to be happy with that'. Any sane person, Mr Speaker, would look at you with crossed eyes and write you off.

I say to the government that there is no doubt that the honourable minister misled the House. There is no doubt that there is \$1m of taxpayers' funds that could be still accounted for in one form or other. The questions will not go away. Honourable members might think it is a joke. The minister said the other day: 'This is all they have to bark about. We are home. We have it in the bag. There are no worries'. It is not in the bag and people will not forget about it. People want to know what is going on and they will find out one way or another.

Mr Speaker, I say to the honourable members what I said the other day. I repeat it for the Deputy Chief Minister who suggested this morning that I was responsible for saying that the government would be brought to its knees. I did not say that at all. I said that the government could do something, but it would probably do nothing. As it turned out, that is exactly what it has done. If it does nothing, Mr Speaker, it will feel the cool winds of change. If the honourable minister wants to read the article, he can go for his life.

Mr Speaker, I say to you that there is still a need for the other funds that have been expended on behalf of the Northern Territory government to be accounted for, and that need will not go away. I say to the honourable member that, whether he likes it or not, he has misled the House. The form of words that he used in question time yesterday to rectify that might have done it in a technical sense but it still does not alter the intent.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, once again, we have an example of the opposition moving a censure motion against a member of the government on the basis of no evidence at all and with nothing better in mind than to destroy confidence in the Northern Territory economy. I have said before in this House that the word 'reason' has 2 meanings: one is logic and the other is motive. Behind the Leader of the Opposition's motion, there is absolutely no logic whatsoever. That leaves us with one interpretation and that is motive, and we should ask ourselves what that motive is. That motive is nothing more than to destroy investor confidence in the Northern Territory with the political aim of perhaps slowing down the Northern Territory's economic growth and destroying the future of the Territory so that members of the opposition

can turn to the people and blame this government, blame the CLP, for the slowness of economic growth in the Territory. Their motive for doing that would be to gain power.

If one studies what one calls achievement and motivation, the attainment of power is seen, in the eyes of those who know something about it, as no achievement at all. What this government is trying to do is to create jobs for the people of the Northern Territory and achieve a future for the kids of the Northern Territory. This government is trying to achieve things. The opposition is trying to gain power by whatever means it can. I have said before that opposition members are doing that with the full concurrence, the full connivance and the conspiratorial acquiescence of the so-called Nationals.

Let us look at this censure motion. The Leader of the Opposition, referring to the minister, said:

... because he has been guilty of a grave contempt of the Assembly in that he deliberately misled this Assembly by informing it that the document he tabled on Thursday 6 October 1988 was a full audit of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' financial dealings with the Trade Development Zone, knowing that it was simply a statement of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' retainer from the Trade Development Zone.

Although this will probably be extremely boring to the staff of Hansard, I believe it is worth once again quoting the minister's words of Thursday 6 October 1988 which appears on page 6 of the daily Hansard:

The opposition alleges that vast sums of money have been passed to Mr Yeung for negligible return. The simplest way to bury those allegations is through an independent audit of Mr Yeung's business dealings with the Northern Territory. Such an audit was completed in June this year by a certified public accountant, Mr Albert Mak Wah Chi.

I have anticipated that the Leader of the Opposition would raise concern about the audit through some tenuous links between the auditor of Mr Yeung's company even though the audit was conducted by a certified public accountant. Therefore, I commissioned a new audit last month. It was undertaken by Mr Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants of Hong Kong, and with absolutely no connection with any of Mr Yeung's business affairs.

Mr Speaker, that appraisal of the situation is considerably at odds with the allegations which the Leader of the Opposition makes in his motion. He claims that the Deputy Chief Minister referred to a full audit of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' financial dealings. I want to lay to rest, once and for all, any idea which the opposition might have that it was not an audit. Simply speaking, the definition of an 'audit' in the Oxford English Dictionary is 'an examination of accounts'. He did exactly that. He examined the accounts.

I have before me a debit note from Louis W.O. Leung and Co, certified public accountants, Hong Kong. The debit note is addressed to the Trade Development Zone Authority, PMB 88, Winnellie. It is worded: 'To our professional services rendered in respect of auditing the statement of account of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants Limited'. They do not claim that it is a

full audit of everything that Mr K.K. Yeung and Co have done. The minister has never claimed that it was a full audit ...

Mr Bell: He has so!

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I will respond to that interjection. Old wax-in-his-ears over there refuses to listen, and I defy him to quote anywhere in Hansard where the minister has said that is a full audit.

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

Mr PALMER: I withdraw any reference to the unhygienic habits ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw unreservedly.

Mr PALMER: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I will refer once again to the Leader of the Opposition's motion and, for the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, I will elucidate what the minister said: 'The opposition alleges that vast sums of money have been passed to Mr K.K. Yeung for negligible returns. The simplest way to bury those allegations is through an independent audit'. Nowhere in debate in this Assembly has the Deputy Chief Minister said that this was a full audit. In fact, the audit function for the Trade Development Zone is undertaken by none other than the Auditor-General for the Northern Territory, Mr Elliott Isaacson. For the second time this week, the opposition is impugning the propriety of the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory. It did so earlier in relation to the Minister for Tourism and it is doing so again in relation to the Trade Development Zone. If members opposite are not satisfied with the performance of the Auditor-General, if they believe that somehow the Auditor-General is misleading this parliament and is not presenting this parliament with the facts, if they believe that the Auditor-General is not doing his job, let them move a substantive motion to that effect.

But, that is not their end. Their motion has nothing to do with the facts. It has nothing to do with the propriety of the Trade Development Zone. It has nothing to do with the propriety of K.K. Yeung. It has nothing to do with the good accounting of the expenditure of government moneys. It has to do with a base political motive. As I have said, there is no logic in their argument. We are addressing an opposition ...

Mr Ede: What about misleading the House? What do you reckon about that?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, now we have an interjection from someone who has not bothered to be here, from a man who knowingly misled this House and who knowingly told lies about BTEC.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr PALMER: I unreservedly withdraw, Mr Speaker.

We have an opposition which was too willing to denigrate businessmen who were coming into the Northern Territory. They were too willing to try to bring down the economy of the Territory for their own motives.

Let us turn to an issue which was not addressed in the motion, but which somehow got into the Leader of the Opposition's speech. I refer to the letter from Mr Laurie Jones which was addressed, may I add, to Anne Kemp, Development Executive, Trade Development Zone Authority. One would think that a member of a board of any company who had concerns about the operation of that company would at least address his correspondence to the executive officer of that company rather than an employee.

Mr Smith: He was writing in response to a letter from the employee.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I frown on interjections generally but, of course, any that are permitted must be made from the member's seat.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should stay seated because he would perhaps learn more. He spends too much time on his feet, dribbling from his mouth without first thinking. This letter of 7 April 1986 was addressed to an employee of the Trade Development Zone. At a meeting on 17 and 18 April 1986, the conditions of the contract with Mr K.K. Yeung were ratified by the Board of the Trade Development Zone. Not only that, at a meeting in June of 1986, which was attended by Mr Jones, those minutes were passed as a true and correct copy of what happened at that meeting. Nowhere in those minutes is there mention that Mr Jones had any misgivings.

Mr Speaker, the document the minister tabled was not a full audit of Mr K.K. Yeung Management Consultants' financial dealings. Mr Speaker, nowhere in Hansard can you find an instance in which the Deputy Chief Minister uses the words 'full audit'. As I have said, I have a debit note from Louis W.O. Leung for 'professional services rendered in respect of auditing the statement of accounts of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants Ltd'. This certified public accountant, whom I am naming - unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who refers to 2 mysterious, unnamed, phantom accountants - seems to think that what he undertook was in fact an audit. Whether or not it was an audit is the nub at issue, isn't it? On one hand, the Trade Development Zone has a bill for an audit. On the other hand, the opposition alleges that the Deputy Chief Minister has somehow misled the parliament by referring to exactly the same document.

Mr Ede: Table it all.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, on the one hand, we have a public accountant whose qualifications and professional ethics have not been challenged by opposition members. They have not challenged any of the figures. They have not challenged the fact that the moneys were properly spent, although they are intimating that. They have not directly challenged it because they cannot produce any evidence. The Auditor-General has not challenged it because he has not found cause for concern. The Auditor-General has not found cause to investigate it but the pseudo-economists opposite, who would drive the Northern Territory into oblivion for their own base political motives, are quite happy to challenge it without a skerrick of evidence. When an eminently qualified accountant calls it an audit, I believe that the minister is quite within his rights to refer to it in this House as an audit.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to offer to the member for Karama my sincere best wishes in his bid to become a member of the government frontbench.

Mr Perron: He has got more chance than you have.

Mr BELL: I will address that question shortly for the benefit of the Chief Minister because it is obviously bothering him.

Mr Speaker, that was a fairly extraordinary outpouring from the member for Karama. Of course, he failed to address the substance of the motion. He not only failed to do that but he also failed to address the substance of the amendment. In fact, it was only sheer astonishment which prevented me from suggesting that he should relate his comments more closely to either the motion or the amendment before us.

Mr Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the censure motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and to speak against the outrageous amendment that has been moved by the Deputy Chief Minister. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the debates and questions on the subject of the Trade Development Zone during the last 1½ weeks. I have already placed on record my support for the concept of the Trade Development Zone but it has to be said that, if the Deputy Chief Minister, the man who is in charge of representing the Northern Territory government in its management of the Trade Development Zone, is prepared to lie to this parliament - as he has so patently done - then he is himself putting the Trade Development Zone in a precarious position. The Minister for Transport and Works has said that ...

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr BELL: If the Minister for Transport and Works will kindly shut up for a moment, I will respond to his previous interjection that I should substantiate the claim that I have made. In fact, there is no need for me to further establish the claim that the Deputy Chief Minister lied to this House. That proposition has already been demonstrated very ably by the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and by the member for Barkly. The fact is that, last Thursday, the Deputy Chief Minister said that an audit had been carried out. A fairly cursory bit of research by the opposition indicated quite clearly that that audit had not been carried out. Ergo, the Deputy Chief Minister has lied.

Mr Finch: Shame on you!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, perhaps the Minister for Transport and Works might like to get up and try to defend the Deputy Chief Minister. It has been interesting to see the lack of support ...

Members interjecting.

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

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am becoming rather sick and tired of honourable members on the government benches interjecting so vociferously. Time after time, my speeches are interrupted by these people. I am speaking within the bounds of standing orders and I would request you, Mr Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker, with whom I have raised this matter, to give those members a warning.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member wishes to move dissent from any ruling of mine, he should do so in writing. If the honourable member seeks to be provocative, as members on both sides have been during this debate, he must accept some interjections, as occurred during the speech of the member for Karama.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, as I have said, there can be no doubt that the Deputy Chief Minister has lied to this parliament. This has considerable implications for the government of the Northern Territory. It strikes me that there is a close parallel between this episode and another former Treasurer in another place. I refer, of course, to a former federal Treasurer, Dr Jim Cairns.

Mr Speaker, you will recall the circumstances of Dr Cairns involvement in the Khemlani loan-raising affair. You will recall that another Treasurer got into this sort of trouble with overseas dealings. I do not know what his awareness of current political history is like, but I remind the Deputy Chief Minister that under those circumstances the Treasurer of this country was forced to resign because he had misled the Australian parliament.

I point out to you, Mr Speaker, that that is exactly the position in which the Deputy Chief Minister finds himself in this parliament today, and I suggest to you, as my colleague the member for Nhulunbuy so cogently and articulately argued this morning, that the reputation of self-government in the Northern Territory is on the line here. If we are not able to ensure that persons making outrageous statements that are lies are not able to be disciplined in the way that this motion demands that they be disciplined, that has serious implications for the future government of the Northern Territory. That is something that should be of concern, not only to members of the opposition and to the members of the public in the Northern Territory, but also to the people on the government benches here. I make a prediction that Barry Coulter is the Jim Cairns of the Marshall Perron CLP government.

Mr Speaker, the parallels between the Deputy Chief Minister's relationship with the Trade Development Zone and Mr Yeung, on one hand, and that of Dr Cairns with Mr Khemlani and his loan-raising efforts overseas and, most importantly, the responses that were given in the Australian House of Representatives in 1975, are overwhelming. I believe that the precedent that will be created by these comments will come back and haunt us. Certainly, they will haunt the Deputy Chief Minister - about that there can be absolutely no doubt.

I reiterate that I have been an observer of this debate from without, to some extent. It is not a shadow portfolio area for which I am responsible. I have watched the debate with considerable interest and considerable concern. There are various actors in this little drama and I really wonder just where they all fit in. Mr Jones and Mr Gordon have both departed the scene. The Deputy Chief Minister has been the subject of scrutiny in this parliament, and Mr K.K. Yeung and his dealings and his relationship with the government and the Trade Development Zone have been subjected to some scrutiny. But, there is 1 actor whose place in this drama has not been fully explained to me. I refer to the position of the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority. I was surprised to find that the only 1 of the 39 questions that the honourable minister refused to answer was the question in relation to Mr McHenry and his position with the government and with the Trade Development Zone. I must admit that the interview that I saw in the Sunday Territorian, in which Mr McHenry was reported as using some language that would make a sailor blush, was of concern to me.

Mr Collins: Give us an example.

Mr BELL: I regret, Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the member for Sadadeen, that I will not be giving him an example. It would be decidedly unparliamentary.

I am surprised that there has been this power struggle within the board of the TDZ. Mr Jones and Mr Gordon have adopted principled positions and have made it quite clear that their position on the board became untenable because of actions of the chairman. I think that those 2 men deserve some accolade for behaving in such a principled fashion. It is a matter of concern to me that we have not had adequate explanation of the behaviour of the chairman of the TDZ board in that respect and I would very much appreciate hearing some more on that from the Deputy Chief Minister.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, let me once again record my wholehearted support for the motion censuring the Deputy Chief Minister.

Mr Perron: What about the amendment?

Mr BELL: Suffice it to say that I was going to ignore the amendment, Mr Speaker. The amendment is eminently ignorable because it is nonsense.

The people of the Northern Territory once again have been well served by the opposition. The opposition's assessments of what has been going on in the TDZ can only serve to strengthen the possibilities of that organisation. Once it gets a reputation for dealings that are not entirely above board, the only way for that to be rescued is for an assessment to be carried out. I suggest that, instead of moving amendments seeking to criticise the Leader of the Opposition, the government would do far better if it were to congratulate him on his efforts in that regard. In closing, I simply reiterate that I think that the Deputy Chief Minister will be the Dr Jim Cairns of the Marshall Perron CLP government.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this is one matter which should never have needed to be debated. We have spent a tremendous amount of time these sittings on the TDZ. We have other issues before us which are of concern and interest to our electorates. There is no doubt in my mind about who is winning the war out on the streets as far as the TDZ battle is concerned. The victory is falling into the hands of the ALP. One can pick up the public perception as one walks around the streets of Darwin and Alice Springs. Once upon a time, the TDZ was simply something which people did not think or talk about. In recent times, it has been raised with me on a half a dozen occasions in one walk through the streets. People are concerned about it. Their confidence in it is at an all time low and is virtually destroyed.

I know that the government will say that the motivation of the ALP is to win government at any cost. I do not deny that. I believe it is the role of any opposition to try to attain government. The government might say that it is not doing it in an honest manner. Whatever perception the government might have - and it is blaming the ALP, the crossbenches and the media as being involved in dragging down the TDZ - I can tell the honourable minister that people in my electorate are concerned about the TDZ. My electorate is a long way from the TDZ but it is still a part of the Territory and we are concerned about it.

Mr Speaker, I do not know whether my advice will be well received but the whole matter of the TDZ could have been put to bed - to use the minister's expression - if there had been a frank disclosure of everything, warts and all. There might be a few warts there. The opposition is trying to open the cupboard to see if there are any skeletons there. All we have had so far is a hand coming up now and then with a few bits of information. The doors have not been opened. I would like to believe that there is nothing of any great substance which the government would not be prepared to defend as a policy



decision. We will always have differences in policies between the 2 sides of the House. This is the only way that the whole affair can be put to rest. While the door remains closed and occasional bits of information are given, there will always be suspicion. The people in the electorate are suspicious of it.

What the few of us in this House have to say is not what is important. What is important is the public perception and the government is in the shade on this one. It really is, Mr Speaker, your own people. That is an unusual position for the CLP, because generally the CLP has been praised, patted and supported for a very long time. But, at this stage in the game, it is in the shade, and government members do not seem to be able to handle it. I have tried to tell them that they should defend any policy decisions which the opposition might attack, but put the facts out in the open. That would defuse the situation and make it a dead issue. Members of the media are curious, as is the electorate, because not everything has been disclosed. \$1m has not been accounted for at this stage.

Mr Coulter: Rubbish! It has. Tell the Auditor-General that.

Mr Manzie: You didn't listen, did you?

Mr COLLINS: I listened very carefully to the debate, all sides of it.

Mr Reed: In caucus, that was your problem.

Mr COLLINS: Well, well, the honourable member for Katherine! It is rather interesting to see how the government, with its 15 members, who all know that they can win every debate in this House, who take great delight ...

Mr Coulter: We will see where you are when vote is taken.

Mr COLLINS: I will tell the honourable minister right now that I am not convinced from the debate that I have heard today that the minister did not mislead the House. I will give him the benefit of the doubt and accept that it was not his intention deliberately to do so. Maybe, by sticking to the text and not querying the information that he had been given, he has been brought undone. That is the way I see it.

Mr Ede: He can apologise at the very least.

Mr COLLINS: Yes, I think an apology might well be in order.

What I am going to say now will not be palatable to the government or to the honourable minister, but it concerns me that the impression conveyed to me by people whom I meet in the community is that the attitude of the government is arrogant. Government members are cavalier in manner, and the honourable minister has adopted a particularly cavalier approach to this whole business. It would have been so much better if he had taken it seriously and said that he would put the record straight from the word go. But he just sat around and said that the opposition was not asking the right questions. Again, this is simply seen as cavalier and arrogant.

The role of a minister surely is to be accountable to the people of the Northern Territory and, if he had adopted that attitude, the whole matter would be dead. We would not be debating this matter today and the minister would not be in the position he is in. I do not resile from this. I have listened to the debate and I will give the minister the benefit of the doubt

that he did not deliberately intend to mislead but, from what I have heard today, I cannot judge other than that this House was misled. That is the way I see it and I will not be placed under any quasi-threat from the minister or anybody else, such as the member for Katherine with his talk about being in caucus and so forth. In the minds of some people, apparently, we really have some interesting powers on the crossbenches.

Mr Speaker, we should not be having this debate. The whole matter should have been laid to rest and it is ...

Mr Coulter: What matter?

Mr COLLINS: The whole matter of the TDZ. Those things which are ...

Mr Coulter: What matter?

Mr COLLINS: The minister should go out and ask the people in the streets, I would suggest, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: No. You tell us what matter. You are speaking.

Mr COLLINS: The people out there in the streets think that the TDZ stinks. They have no confidence in it. They reckon the government has things to hide and is trying to cover up. Whether that is true or not and whether, when the door ...

Mr Coulter: What things?

Mr COLLINS: When the door of that cupboard is opened ...

Mr Coulter: What matters?

Mr COLLINS: ... and there is no skeleton in there, that will be the end of the matter. I invite the honourable minister to have the common sense to drop his cavalier attitude and to take this matter very seriously, for the sake of the TDZ and the Territory as a whole. I suggest that he disclose the details of the matter and, if there is anything there to debate, let us debate it rather than maintain a closed-door policy which is not helping the Territory one iota. In my view, the ball is in the court of the honourable minister. It is up to him and the government to sort things out and lay the matter out so that it can be put to rest, and we can get on with the business of this House.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 10

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Bell

Mr Collins

Mr Ede

Mr Floreani

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Tuxworth

Mr Poole  
Mr Reed  
Mr Setter  
Mr Vale

Amendment agreed to.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, one of my colleagues has indicated to me that perhaps our tactic in future should be not to ask any questions of the Deputy Chief Minister because all we will receive in reply is lies. I would prefer to continue to ask him questions and to nail him, as we have done today, when he tells those lies. That is in the interest not only of good government in the Northern Territory, but of the parliament of the Northern Territory and, through it, the people of the Northern Territory.

The amendment which has now become the motion is a desperate attempt by members opposite to demonstrate that they have ensured that the Assembly was under no misapprehension as to the status and content of the document by giving a fully detailed description of the document and its status. Mr Speaker, we are under no misapprehension about the document. Thanks to the member for Karama, we can now report that Mr K.K. Yeung himself is under no misapprehension about the document. What he did not say is that, on the cover sheet of the document from Yeung Management Consultants Ltd, which he tabled, there is a heading which reads: 'Re Accountant's Report'. It then goes on to say: 'I have pleasure to enclose herewith the accountant's report which is self-explanatory'. There is no indication that Mr K.K. Yeung believes it is an auditor's report.

The other interesting and extremely strange thing about this debate is that, in support of his case, the honourable minister, who is the subject of the censure motion, has not tabled either his instructions to the first chartered accountant nor his instructions to the second chartered accountant. I ask the question: why? I think I know the answer. If his instructions to the first or second chartered accountant had asked for an audit, we would have seen those instructions tabled in this debate. We have not seen the instructions tabled and one can only wonder why.

Mr Speaker, let us go back to last Thursday when the minister was under some pressure. He had been turning somersaults all week, one moment refusing to answer questions and the next moment saying that he would answer them, and then not doing so. He said that he would not bring on a debate but, when the pressure got to him, he decided that he would bring on the debate. At that stage, he produced a carefully thought-out statement, obviously prepared overnight, which stated the government's position on the question of the payments to Mr K.K. Yeung. The minister had a choice: he could tell the truth about what was contained in the audit or he could lie. He could lie for 1 of 2 reasons. The first reason would be that he was so stupid that he did not know any better. In other words, he was so stupid that he did not know what was in the Yeung report. The second reason would be that he decided to go for what is called the big lie. The theory is that, if you tell a lie that is big enough, you might get away with it. Frankly, I do not believe that the minister is stupid. He has many faults but I do not think anyone could say that he is stupid. Quite clearly, he thought there was some political advantage for himself in going for the big lie. What a big one it was, Mr Speaker!

In his words, what we have is an audit that was supposedly conducted into the financial dealings of K.K. Yeung with the Northern Territory government.

It is revealed overnight that it is an audit into part of those financial dealings over a part of the time that K.K. Yeung has had an agency arrangement with the Northern Territory government. That is the problem, that is where the honourable minister misled the House. Of course, that is merely part of it. We also had the farrago spread around today that in fact what we have in our hands is an audit. It is quite clear that anyone ...

Mr Palmer: Tell us what an audit is.

Mr SMITH: ... with any knowledge of auditing processes would deny that it is an audit.

To answer the member for Karama, if he had been listening this morning, he would have heard what an audit is. I am sorry that he is 3 or 4 hours behind the rest of us. It is understandable because it is one of his better days.

The problem is that the document presented to us today can in no way be described as an audit.

Mr Palmer: Read the debit note.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, can I have some protection?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Karama will cease interjecting.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is something that honourable members opposite still have not come to grips with. All we had was a feeble effort from the member for Karama, an effort that is not even supported by K.K. Yeung himself. I thank the member for Karama for the assistance he has given our side in the management of this debate. Certainly, it has been a very useful point indeed.

What we are debating today is a very significant matter. I am pleased that the minister has the knowledge of the history of parliament to recognise that this morning when he accepted this debate. Censures are the most important motions that can be moved. They are the final resort that a parliament has when one of its members does the wrong thing. I do not think that there is any doubt that, in this instance, the case has been proven.

Unfortunately, because of the weight of numbers, we are not debating that particular motion any longer. All I can do is call on the government and the minister to consider their positions overnight. In particular, I ask the minister to have a close look at his actions, to read the Hansard of Thursday and of Tuesday and then to ask himself the question: 'Have I misled the House?'. If he undertakes that exercise, he will get the same answer that he was given by members on this side and by members on the crossbenches. There is no doubt that, last Thursday, he intentionally decided to go for the big lie technique because that was the only thing he had going. He has been caught out, Mr Speaker, and he should pay the price. The only thing that will stop him paying the price is the numbers opposite.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 10

Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas

Mr Bell  
Mr Collins  
Mr Ede

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

Mr Floreani  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Smith  
Mr Tipiloura  
Mr Tuxworth

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION BILL  
(Serial 146)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

At the outset, I would like to make it clear that it is not the government's intention to seek passage of this bill at these sittings. Indeed, I propose that the ...

Mr Bell: You must be joking. It is the second last day. Good grief!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, who has trouble with his hearing, I will repeat what I said. At the outset, I would like to make it clear that it is not the government's intention to seek passage of this bill at these sittings. Indeed, I propose that the bill will lie before this Assembly through the next sittings and not pass through all stages until the first sittings in 1989. Such a delay will allow sufficient time for adequate consultation with Aboriginal Territorians. It will give them an opportunity to comment on the legislation and it will allow me to consider those comments properly and to make appropriate amendments if necessary.

It might be argued that such a process of consultation should have taken place before this legislation was introduced. However, I consider that, by announcing the government's proposal by way of introduction of this bill, I am announcing this government's commitment to a change in the existing legislation. I am also setting the direction and approach to be taken and, further, providing a proper basis for consultation and comment. I am concerned that, unless a bill is presented in this form, the government's commitment to the changes will be misrepresented by some of those groups who will seek to oppose this bill.

In responding to the speech I delivered when tabling the report of the review committee into Aboriginal sites of significance, the member for MacDonnell said he was quite happy to place on record that he had a great deal of difficulty in deciding the virtues of a goldmine and the virtues of the protection of a particular site. He spoke of his friendship with the principals of a mining company and he was happy to admit that he was not sure where to go in relation to that matter. In fact, the honourable member has identified one of the problems with the existing act.

The problem is that there is no one who makes a decision or, more particularly, there is no one who is accountable in making decisions to resolve the types of problems identified by the honourable member. At present, decisions are shrouded in mystery and are seemingly unchallengeable. The existing legislation creates this problem and I strongly believe it is up to the Assembly to address it. I consider that it would be an abrogation of this government's and this parliament's responsibility if we continued to back away from attempts to resolve these difficulties. It is important to recognise that this matter goes much further than the concerns of the one mining company referred to by the member for MacDonnell. The honourable member obviously recognises there are great difficulties involved in this area. Indeed, every minister in this Assembly and, if the truth be known, every member of this Assembly can no doubt bring forward a litany of similar concerns expressed to them ...

Mr Bell: You are the one taking my comments out of context, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: ... not just by mining companies but by pastoralists, developers, businessmen and ordinary Territorians. While some of these concerns are expressed by parties with what might be described as a vested interest, I am sure that the majority also have a genuine concern for the protection of sites of significance. They have no dispute with Aboriginal custodians and invariably hold them in the highest regard. But the same people also express their grievances regarding the frustrations caused by the existing legislation and, unfortunately, the practices of the existing authority.

Mr Speaker, it is about time this Assembly properly addressed the problems and the concerns which have been expressed over many years. This issue is controversial. The Northern Territory government is continually attacked as being anti-Aboriginal by vested interest groups such as land councils and the like. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is willing to admit, in private, that his dealings with the Territory government on Aboriginal issues are generally better than his dealings with other states on the same issues. He will not admit such matters publicly because that might explode the myth that the Territory government is anti-Aboriginal. Is it wrong to ask that a landowner be given and be seen to be given an opportunity to be heard? Is it wrong to advocate responsible mining development in a Territory whose economy is embryonic? Is it wrong to hope that employment in Aboriginal communities and, thereby, the general well-being of Aboriginal Territorians, be aided by sensible mining development? It is wrong to expect that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority should have complied with its own legislation? Is it wrong to expect that the authority provide, and that landowners receive, natural justice? Mr Speaker, it is most definitely not wrong to have such expectations.

This legislation provides a mechanism whereby Aboriginal Territorians and those interested in the development of the Territory and its people have an opportunity to get together and work together for their mutual benefit. I have read with some interest past debates relating to the introduction of the original sacred sites legislation into this Assembly and the debates relating to the introduction of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act into the federal parliament. It was with particular interest that I noted that the now Senator Bob Collins, then the member for Arnhem, said: 'The Aboriginal Sacred Sites Bill, as far as I am personally concerned, is beyond redemption'. Someone argued that his wise counsel should have prevailed. I note, however, that the position of honourable members opposite now seems to be exactly the reverse of what it was some years ago. Indeed, I suppose that

the opposition might now argue that redemption can be achieved only by retention of the existing legislation. I will come back to the comments of the opposition a little later.

Before proceeding further, there are some important legal and constitutional issues which must be clarified and I ask honourable members to pay particular attention to these issues. I address them now in order to prevent vested interest groups from creating misconceptions, misunderstandings and unnecessary fear in the Aboriginal community regarding the intention of this bill and the results that it will ultimately achieve.

Mr Speaker, the effect of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in the Territory is such that effective or ultimate control in relation to what may or may not be done on sites on Aboriginal land - and I refer here to land granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act - or in relation to who might enter those sites or in relation to who might enter Aboriginal land, rests with the Aboriginal traditional owners of that land or, in some respects, as is much regretted by the traditional owners, with the land councils. Therefore, the people of Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Galiwinku, Ngukurr, Maningrida, Angurugu, Wadeye, Lajamanu, Papunya, Yuendumu etc should not be concerned at this bill. The decisions which can be made in respect of their land will still rest with them. Further, in relation to all of the Territory - that is, in relation to Aboriginal land granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the remainder of land in the Territory - the federal parliament's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act still applies. That act, in effect, provides a second tier of protection in relation to sites wherever those sites are in the Territory. This bill is to some extent conditioned by the existence of that act.

Honourable members will note that, in this bill, subject to overriding Commonwealth legislation, the minister has certain decisive powers to break impasses and to make decisions where the parties are unable to reach agreement. Even then, if a custodian is dissatisfied with a decision of the minister, there remains an opportunity to apply to the Commonwealth minister under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act for a declaration protecting the site. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the powers granted to the minister under this bill are similar to the ministerial powers which exist in the Commonwealth legislation. Indeed, honourable members will note an overall similarity between this bill and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act. I will deal with this issue further when detailing the provisions of the bill.

In summary, decisions relating to sites on land granted under the Land Rights Act ultimately rest with custodians. This legislation cannot affect the operations of that act and, ultimately, whatever decision a Territory minister may make, if a custodian is concerned that a site will be damaged, that custodian can apply under Commonwealth legislation to a Commonwealth minister for a declaration protecting the site. Again, this legislation cannot affect the operation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act.

Mr Speaker, following from my comments in relation to Aboriginal land, some might ask why the situation should be different on land that is not the subject of a grant under the Lands Right Act. Why should the situation be different with your block of land, Mr Speaker, or the Leader of the Opposition's block of land, pastoral blocks and so on? The answer is that, simply and logically, there are other interests in that land, interests which are not subject to the controls imposed by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and

interests which, therefore, must be considered. These interests include those of freehold landowners, pastoralists, the mining industry, the government, people who use the land for recreational and commercial purposes and the general public.

I accept that Aboriginal people were the original inhabitants of the area we now know as the Northern Territory. I accept that they have a living culture and I acknowledge and respect their profound attachment to the land. However, this parliament cannot undo the course of history. There are other inhabitants of the Northern Territory, many of whom have interests in land and other interests which are recognised by law and, therefore, must be acknowledged and taken into account. The attachment of Aboriginal Territorians to land which is not granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act should also be respected. In fact, I consider that this legislation will achieve just that.

Having dealt with the need for consideration of the interests of landowners and others in relation to non-Aboriginal land, the question of what is in this for Aboriginal Territorians must be answered. When I deal with the substantive provisions of the bill, the position will become much clearer. At the outset, let me say that I consider that this bill allows much more involvement of custodians in relation to protection of their sites. Further, the bill is designed to reduce those areas of confrontation which I consider occur too frequently under the existing legislation. Reduction of confrontation will be achieved, as honourable members will see from an examination of the bill, by creating mechanisms whereby custodians and those seeking to develop or carry out works on an area of land on which a site may be situated, will meet to discuss issues of concern to them to try to reach a satisfactory conclusion. There is no doubt that much can be achieved by such a procedure. Such meetings will be meetings of bosses, in which the authority will act as a conduit to agreement rather than being seen as a representative or protector of only one interest, as the authority's role is unfortunately often perceived under the existing legislation.

More importantly, the new mechanisms provided for in this legislation will mean that there is less need for custodians to reveal information which they might regard as secret or confidential or which they would prefer not to disclose. As will be seen, this is achieved by the emphasis placed on site avoidance procedures in the bill. I also believe that the consultative approach, which in itself is in keeping with Aboriginal traditions included in this legislation, will provide a mechanism whereby greater and more widespread respect for Aboriginal traditional culture is achieved.

Turning to the bill itself, it will be seen that an extended title has been included. The title is self-explanatory and is an acknowledgement not only of this government's commitment to the recognition of Aboriginal tradition but also of its recognition of the aspirations of all Territorians for social, cultural and economic advancement and of the need to balance often competing interests.

Clause 3 sets out various definitions. Again, these are largely self-explanatory. However, Mr Speaker, I draw attention to the definition of 'owner' which includes a person holding a mining interest. I note that the definition is similar to that included in section 18 of the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act. The purpose of the definition will be seen by an examination of the legislation. I also draw attention to the definition of 'significant Aboriginal area', which is based largely on a similar definition in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act.



Clause 4 provides that the legislation shall bind the Crown and I anticipate this provision will receive the support of honourable members opposite.

I do not propose to give a clause by clause description of part II of the bill. However, it will be noted that clause 6 establishes the structure of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. The authority shall consist of 6 members of whom not less than 3 shall be Aboriginal people. Provision is made for those Aboriginal people to be nominees of the land councils. I draw honourable members attention to clause 12(5) relating to a quorum, noting again that a quorum is not constituted unless at least 2 Aboriginal members are present. I should also point out that, while 3 members of the authority shall be Aboriginal, that does not mean that the authority is restricted to only 3 Aboriginal members.

Mr Speaker, clause 10 sets out the functions of the authority. They are important functions and, as will be seen from an examination of clause 10(b), set the direction or the approach which the authority shall take. The authority shall be a facilitator of discussion. It shall be responsible for bringing together custodians and persons proposing to use land on which a site may be situated so that agreement can be reached between those parties. Such an approach is clearly essential and should remove present perceptions that the existing authority is either biased or paternalistic or both.

Mr Speaker, an extremely important function and one which I am sure will receive widespread support is that contained in clause 10(d). This should be read in conjunction with the delegation power contained in clause 15. The purpose of these provisions is to allow the authority to establish an effective procedure for dealing with sites of significance to Aboriginal women and I note that such provisions accord with the recommendations of the review committee.

These provisions would also allow the establishment of local committees to consider applications or, where appropriate, committees with members who have expertise in areas relevant to consideration of particular applications. This means that the authority, if appropriate, may coopt local custodians and or representatives of, for example, the mining or pastoral industries to assist in resolving issues relating to individual areas of significance.

Clause 14 sets up a mechanism to provide staff assistance to the authority and for the employment of an executive officer to the authority. These people are to be employees within the meaning of the Public Service Act. This brings me to the issue of why the existing authority is to be replaced and what is proposed in relation to the existing staff of the authority. In many respects, the structure of the existing authority remains. However, I believe we have created a leaner and more functional authority, while maintaining an essential Aboriginal component on it. The structure provided allows the authority to operate and be serviced in much the same manner as the Planning Authority. This is in keeping with the review committee's recommendation that it was not appropriate that the executive officer of the authority be a member of the authority, as is the case presently with the existing director. I detail my reasons for this decision in my tabling speech, and they are otherwise dealt with in the review committee's report. The existing permanent staff of the authority will remain as permanent public servants and, where necessary and as appropriate, will be seconded to assist the new authority.

Part III sets out one of the most important aspects of the proposed legislation. Consistent with my earlier comments regarding natural justice

and the need for accountability, this part of the bill provides for natural justice and a mechanism for accountability; that is, this part provides that the minister should have a role in the declaration process.

Clause 16 provides that custodians of, or persons claiming to be custodians of, an area containing the site of significance, or an owner of land on which such an area is situated, may apply to the minister for a declaration that the site is of significance according to Aboriginal tradition. On receipt of the application, the matter shall be referred by the minister to the authority for investigation and report. Finally, the clause provides that the minister shall not deal with what are, in effect, repeat applications unless there is a substantive difference between the new applications and an earlier application where the minister has refused to make a declaration.

Clause 17 provides a mechanism whereby the minister may make an interim declaration in respect of an area where he is satisfied, on receipt of the application, that a site is of significance. This interim declaration shall be for up to 3 months or such longer period as the minister considers appropriate, if he is satisfied that it is necessary to allow more time for the claim to be properly investigated by the authority.

Clause 18 sets out the procedure to be adopted for investigation and report. These provisions reflect this government's determination to ensure that the owners of land and other interested parties are heard and that account is taken of their concerns.

Mr Speaker, I say again that there should be no legitimate objection to this approach. It follows the approach taken under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act, and I note that members of the existing authority would argue that it accords with their general approach. However, as is the case with the Commonwealth approach, I consider it is important that there be legislative entrenchment of the rights of owners of land to be heard.

Honourable members will note there is provision for publication of applications in the gazette and in a local newspaper, as well as a requirement for service of the notice on owners of land. I mentioned earlier that the term 'owner of land' includes a person holding a mining interest over that area. Submissions may be made by interested persons, and their submissions must be considered. Any report subsequently prepared must, apart from other matters set out in clause 18(2), indicate the effect that the making of the declaration will have on persons with proprietary or pecuniary interests. I also refer honourable members to clause 18(2)(f) where 'areas avoidance certificates' are mentioned. I will touch on this issue soon, but I will take the opportunity to state now that the sites avoidance approach is a major thrust or direction which this government endorses and which the new authority is to take.

Clause 19 sets out that, on receiving a report, the minister shall either make a declaration in relation to the area or refuse to make a declaration. Again, this provision follows the approach taken under the Commonwealth legislation. However, I stress that, if the Territory minister were to refuse to make a declaration - and I think refusals would be rare - there is nothing to prevent custodians from making application to the Commonwealth minister, under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act, if it can be shown that their sites are under threat.

Clause 20 sets out the contents of a declaration. Importantly, the declaration is to include and be subject to the conditions, if any, on which a person may enter, remain on, use or do anything on the declared area. I draw attention to clause 20(2). I suggest honourable members familiarise themselves with the just terms provision of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, recent case law in the area and the review committee's comment on the topic, and they will then understand the purpose of the provision. An inclusion of this provision will ensure that the validity of this act cannot be challenged on the basis of failure to provide just terms. The particular offending conditions will simply have no effect.

I also draw honourable members' attention to clauses 22 and 23 of the bill. Clause 22 provides that declarations are reviewable by this Assembly. Clause 23 provides that a declaration is a caveatable interest under the Real Property Act and the Registrar-General may register a caveat forbidding the registration of any dealing with land comprising or containing a declared area, unless the dealing is expressed to be subject to the caveatable interest of the custodians.

In connection with part III, it might be argued by honourable members opposite that the Territory minister should have no control in relation to declarations. In short, they may favour continuing with the existing system, which is seemingly unaccountable. If so, their approach would clearly be at odds with the approach taken by their federal colleagues, and would also be at odds with the approach taken by their colleagues in Western Australia. Indeed, I would like to draw from earlier debate in this Assembly when, on 9 May 1978, the member for Arnhem, now Senator Bob Collins, said the Bonner recommendations should have been followed in using the Western Australian legislation as a model. That model, of course, includes ministerial control and accountability.

I draw honourable members' attention to committee stage amendments proposed to the existing Land Rights Act by the then federal Labor opposition on 1 December 1976. For convenience, the amendments are set out on pages 17 to 19 of the review committee's report but, quite clearly, the opposition's federal Labor colleagues, through their spokesman on Aboriginal affairs, Mr Les Johnson, also supported the concept of ministerial control. But, most importantly, I draw honourable members' attention to clause 69(6)(b) proposed by the federal Labor opposition. The amendment stated that the section preventing entry on sacred sites was not to apply to land if the act done on the land was 'done in the course of, or in connection with, mining operations authorised by a law of the Northern Territory or by the Atomic Energy Act or any other act authorising mining for minerals and the minister has authorised, in writing, the doing of that act'. That approach, espoused some 12 years ago, is, of course, consistent with the approach still taken by the present federal Labor government. Those who doubt that this is the case might ask themselves or, more correctly, their federal minister about the results of applications for declarations under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

Mr Speaker, before proceeding, I should refer back to clause 16. Honourable members will note that the owners of land may also apply for a declaration under this act which, no doubt, will receive the support of the member for Sadadeen. This provision allows the owner of land, who is faced with a claim that the land contains a site, or where in fact a site exists, a mechanism whereby the matter can be placed before the authority for a determination as to whether or not a site exists on the land and, if so, for a determination in respect of entry on that site. Importantly, this will

overcome difficulties with the present legislation which allows the authority to announce that a site exists on land, without further examination of the bona fides of that claim, regardless of the fact that such an announcement may effectively prevent access to that site. This provision will at least give landowners access to a system which will bring such matters into the open for speedy resolution. Common sense would indicate that such a provision would receive support.

I now turn to part IV, dealing with Aboriginal areas avoidance. The successful operation of this part is essential for the establishment of good relations between custodians and those seeking to develop areas of land in the vicinity of sites. As mentioned earlier, the bill provides a mechanism whereby information which, for various reasons, should remain secret to Aboriginal people, can remain secret. For example, the proposed legislation allows a road builder to approach the authority saying that he wishes to build a road between 2 points without disturbing any Aboriginal sites and wishes to meet with the custodians or traditional owners of the area to discuss how to achieve that without requiring custodians to provide information concerning the sites or their whereabouts if they do not consider it necessary. I understand that the existing authority has conducted such procedures already and it would therefore seem that there would be no objection to legislative entrenchment of that approach.

Clause 24 provides for applications to be made to the minister by persons wishing to carry out work on land or other persons with valid reasons for the issue of an area avoidance certificate. The clause also provides for the payment of a fee and provides that the minister may waive that fee or any part of it. Applications are to be referred to the authority for investigation under clause 25 for the issue of a certificate or, where agreement cannot be reached, for a report to the minister with recommendations.

Clause 26 is of fundamental importance. A reading of this provision will demonstrate that the authority is to be a conduit, a facilitator, for agreement. The authority shall arrange a meeting between custodians, if any, and the applicant and other interested parties. The meeting is to be conducted in a way which is best suited to reaching agreement between the parties and agreements are to be reduced into writing and be signed by or on behalf of the parties.

Clause 26(4) provides that, where the authority is satisfied that agreement has been reached between the parties or where work can proceed without there being a risk of damage and the need for a preliminary conference, or where there is no significant areas or relevant custodians, the authority may issue a sites avoidance certificate. The certificate, amongst other things, shall set out the conditions, if any, under which work may be carried out and, in appropriate cases, identify areas on which work may not be carried out. These conditions will be of some benefit in cases where, for example, a mining company might wish to mine an area but at a preliminary stage not be entirely sure of the exact area to mine. A situation which forced a company to continually apply for avoidance certificates in order to avoid sites as work progressed would be impractical and the mechanisms set out in this legislation therefore allows for the issue of certificates which identify areas where work cannot be carried out. The mining company could then proceed knowing that, if certain areas were avoided, development could proceed.

Clause 26(6) provides that, where parties to a preliminary conference are unable to reach agreement or the authority is unable to issue a certificate,

the matter shall be referred to the minister with a report on the authority's efforts to achieve agreement and with the authority's recommendations. Where it is considered necessary, the minister can discuss the matter further with the parties or persons who have a legitimate interest in the matter.

Pursuant to clause 28, it is proposed that, within 30 days of receipt of a report under clause 26(6), or where in respect of applications for avoidance certificates not dealt with within 3 months, or such longer period as the minister allows, of receipt of such applications by the authority, the minister may issue a sites avoidance certificate or may refuse to issue such a certificate. This provision ensures that there is ministerial accountability and creates a mechanism whereby deadlocks can be broken. Again, I refer to the dilemma faced by the member for MacDonnell. This legislation clearly resolves his concern. These matters must be resolved by a minister who is accountable to the public. If the minister gets it wrong in making a decision under this legislation, that minister wears the consequences both in terms of continued ministerial aspirations or, ultimately, at the hands of the electorate. We should not be shirking that responsibility. It is an onerous one but it is one that I am prepared to bear.

Clause 29 sets out the contents of an area avoidance certificate issued by the minister. Clause 30, as does clause 20 which I mentioned earlier, provides that a condition shall not be imposed which amounts to an acquisition of property. It should be noted that clause 31 sets out the rights of persons issued with a certificate in respect of entry on land, notwithstanding the fact that any part of the land is a sacred site. Obviously, entry must be in accordance with the areas avoidance certificate.

Although not strictly necessary, given the overriding nature of Commonwealth legislation, clause 26 sets out that nothing contained in part IV shall derogate from the operation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act or the Land Rights Act or the requirements of any other Territory or Commonwealth acts. As I mentioned earlier, the protections afforded by the Heritage Protection Act and the Land Rights Act remain.

Part V contains a number of important provisions. Clause 33 provides that persons - and this would include ministers who obtain information of a secret nature according to Aboriginal tradition by virtue of their duties or responsibilities under this act - shall not disclose such information. The breach of this provision warrants criminal sanction and is similar to that contained in the Taxation Administration Act.

Clause 34 is another offence provision whereby persons who contravene or fail to comply with a condition on which entry is permitted to declared areas are liable to 2 years imprisonment. A similar provision exists in relation to conditions imposed in an areas avoidance certificate.

Clause 35 concerns the proprietary rights of owners of land. Subject to conditions which may be imposed in an areas avoidance certificate or a declaration under part III, the owner of land comprising a declared area, or land subject to an avoidance certificate, may enter and remain on that area and do anything thereon for the normal enjoyment of the owner's proprietary rights. In short, a pastoralist can continue to graze cattle unless such activity is prevented in the declaration or the avoidance certificate, and a mining company can continue to mine unless such activity is prevented in the declaration or avoidance certificate.

Clause 36 allows a person to enter and remain on a sacred site with the express approval of custodians, the authority or the minister and be subject to such conditions as are imposed by those parties. The authorisation relating to entry and work remains in force until changed by a subsequent authorisation. However, before the minister gives such approval, he must ascertain the wishes of custodians and take such wishes into account. This provision is also subject to conditions which might be contained in a declaration or avoidance certificate. Importantly, the permission of the custodians, authorities or minister shall not derogate from the owner's proprietary rights of access.

Clause 37 provides a mechanism whereby Aboriginal people have authority to enter and remain on their sites in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. This reflects an existing provision in the Land Rights Act.

Clause 38 remedies a deficiency in the existing act. Apart from allowing use of sites in accordance with tradition, the provision sets out a mechanism for entry to sites by persons for purposes reasonably necessary for carrying out functions under this legislation, or reasonably necessary for the preparation of an application under the Heritage Protection Act or a claim under the Land Rights Act. The provision contains some sensible restrictions in that reasonable notice must be given and the most direct practical access route must be taken. A person who prevents access under this part commits an offence.

Part VI contains the savings provisions. The existing register of the authority is saved. It is to become the property of the Territory and be retained by the executive officer of the authority at the direction of the new authority. In case there are any concerns regarding the confidentiality of this material, I draw the attention of honourable members to the secrecy provision contained in this legislation. Sites presently recorded on the register shall be deemed to be applications for declaration under this proposed legislation unless the custodians of that site withdraw that application either orally or in writing. Pursuant to clause 42, all other property of the existing authority is to become the property of the Territory.

Mr Speaker, that ends my comments on the substantive provisions of the bill. I have mentioned that this legislation will lie before the House over the next sittings and not be passed until the first sittings next year. I trust this will allow for adequate consultation with and or comment from the appropriate interested parties. Honourable members will note that many but not all of the recommendations or approaches suggested by the review committee have been taken on board in drafting this legislation. A number of other recommendations are capable of being dealt with administratively and, in this regard, I refer those who intend to comment on this bill to the committee's report.

In the interests of those whom we in this Assembly serve, there must be constructive debate on this legislation. I sincerely believe that the proposed legislation will achieve a degree of balance between the potentially competing interests to such an extent that those interests will view their respective roles, not as being competing but rather as being mutually beneficial and thereby of benefit to the interests of all Territorians.

I stress again that this bill does not affect the operation of the Land Rights Act or the Heritage Protection Act. The conditions of entry to Aboriginal land remain the same. Custodians aggrieved by decisions the minister may make under this act may still apply to the Commonwealth minister

for declaration under the Heritage Protection Act. There is nothing draconian in this legislation. It is not wrong to provide mechanisms to enable landowners to have an opportunity to make representations in respect of applications for the declaration of sites on their land. There is nothing wrong with the process whereby sites are avoided. This legislation is designed not to divide, but to bring together our community. The Territory government is willing to listen to constructive criticism on this legislation and I undertake to make amendments to it if it can be demonstrated that any part of it is unworkable or that a different approach is more appropriate. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in last night's adjournment debate, the member for MacDonnell cast certain aspersions, firstly on myself and, secondly, on members of my department in a speech that he gave relating to the purchase of equipment for the Radiology Section at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Mr Speaker, there is no doubt, if it has not been illustrated clearly to all honourable members of this Assembly and certainly to the members of the public during the past few days of these sittings, that the strategy of the opposition is to ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is making a personal explanation. If he intends to debate a matter, I suggest he raise it as a substantive motion. I do not want to hear any debate. He is making a personal explanation.

Mr DALE: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am frankly no longer interested in what that member of the opposition - or any other member of the opposition - has to say. I am talking specifically about the adjournment debate last night ...

Mr Leo: You are making a personal explanation.

Mr DALE: I am talking about the tactics of the opposition, Mr Speaker. I refer to comments by the member for MacDonnell last night where he said, in relation to my trip to Asia: 'I wonder whether he had any meetings with either of the 2 companies that he so strongly prefers in relation to this particular contact'. He went on to ask the question: 'Are there any kickbacks involved in the attempt to restrict it to 2 tenders?'. I believe that I am directly speaking to the contents of that debate when I talk about the tactics of the opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: I remind the honourable member that standing order 57 says that 'a member may explain matters of a personal nature, although there be no question before the Assembly, but such matters may not be debated'.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I do not intend to debate the issue. I intend to make a statement explaining my situation in relation to the allegations made in the member for MacDonnell's speech during last night's adjournment debate. I have already said that the honourable member accused me and members of my staff, for that matter, in relation to my recent trip overseas. He wondered whether I had any meetings with either of the 2 companies that he said I strongly prefer in relation to this particular contract. He then asked the question: 'Are there any kickbacks involved in the attempt to restrict it to 2 tenders?'

I have already answered a question in relation to the purchase of the radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I believe that the strategy of the members opposite over the past ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is digressing from his personal explanation. He is debating the substance of what was said in the adjournment. That should not be the substance of any personal explanation. If the minister has to explain his personal behaviour, let him get on with it but it is not an opportunity to debate any matter that was raised in the adjournment.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I would suggest that, if the minister wishes to debate this issue, he may do so by a ministerial statement or in the adjournment debate. He is not allowed to debate an issue in a personal explanation. He can refer to comments made by a member in a previous debate.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I find it difficult to put your direction into context. I have already read out, on 2 occasions now, the comments that the honourable member opposite made. I believe that any reader of this debate in subsequent days ought to know precisely the logic behind why those statements have been made and allow me ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! You have ruled that, if the minister has some matter on which he wishes to make a personal explanation, that is his entitlement. However, he continues to raise the context in which attributed statements were brought before this House. That has no relevance to his personal explanation. If he wants to tell this House that he did not get a kickback, that he is an honourable man, that is fine. However, he cannot debate a matter raised in the adjournment in a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I would indicate again that the minister is able to quote the member for MacDonnell but is not permitted to debate the reasons behind the honourable member's statements.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I have already read out the allegations and the personal attack on myself by the honourable member. I can read into that, on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory, a personal attack on the people within my department who, as I have already said in answer to a question on this subject, advised me in relation to the matter. I will leave it to the people of the Northern Territory to pursue that issue.

In the debate last night, he asked how I went about seeking a certificate of exemption and accused me of doing the wrong thing. I would like to explain now precisely what process we have gone through to arrive at the end result. First of all, I would like to invite the honourable member to avail himself of a detailed briefing concerning my overseas trip. He raised that trip last night in terms of accusing me of being involved with businesses. He is obviously not clear about what happened during that trip and, as I have previously done, I invite him to my office for a briefing on that. I am sure that he will not take that offer up.

Mr Speaker, let us get down to the facts of the matter. The equipment we are seeking, as I have said before, consists of 2 general suites, a linear tomography suite, a special procedure suite, a mammography suite and 5 mobile x-ray units. The whole process is being carried out according to the proper procedure. A number of professionals within my department have gone around Australia, spoken to several companies and assessed precisely what equipment



we would need. They then sought to find out who in Australia could provide the equipment, based on the assessments that they were given regarding the compiling of the specifications for the package we required. That assessment was made by the specialist radiologist, the chief radiographer, the medical engineer, a medical physicist and a range of finance and supply personnel. Those are the people who went around Australia during the past 12 to 18 months seeking out the companies which could supply the equipment I have just listed, according to the requirements of the Radiology Section.

At least 6 companies operating in Australia could have provided some of the equipment that we wanted. All were assessed according to the specifications of the equipment required. The following criteria were used: diagnostic quality of the equipment, equipment reliability and ease of use, standardisation of equipment, cost of supporting the equipment and commitment of companies to supporting their equipment. One of the most important considerations was that we should be able to obtain the whole package from one company. This would allow us to negotiate a better deal, to rationalise maintenance with the economies consequent upon that, and to standardise equipment in the Royal Darwin Hospital.

A major factor in relation to the above criteria was the x-ray generators. The generator is the heart of most x-ray suites. We needed high frequency generators. In fact, we needed 4 of them. These allow faster rise times, reduced HV ripple resulting in more homogenous radiation output and improved image quality and output independent of the supply voltage. All of this means better pictures, irrespective of any power surges or changes. It also results in reduced radiation dosage to the patient. Only 2 companies could supply the specified equipment at the time assessment was done, and this still applies today.

The department accordingly sought a certificate of exemption to limit the tendering process to 2 companies. My approval was sought for an approach to the Treasurer for the issue of such a certificate. On my approval and in accordance with established procedures, it was referred to the Tender Board for recommendation to the Under Treasurer and the Treasurer. This was subsequently approved and tender invitation documents were sent to the preferred companies.

In summary, the package is an expensive one. \$1.4m is a significant amount of Northern Territory taxpayers' money. The member for MacDonnell is correct. There are a number of companies interested in supplying the radiology equipment. Interest, however, does not mean capability. Many companies can say that they have some equipment in a great many or perhaps all teaching hospitals. In fact, 2 companies have complained to me that they have not been given an invitation to tender. Complaints of this nature can be expected with any large contract.

The Director of Medical Engineering in fact visited the company which the member for MacDonnell referred to in the adjournment debate last night. He met the national product manager of GE Medical on 11 August 1988, who again confirmed previous advice that the high frequency generator would be released in the United States in November this year. He could not give a date for its availability in Australia. Even after the commencement of production in Australia, whenever that might be, the item would still need to be tested and proved here. Let me say that the tender requires that the equipment be installed and commissioned by no later than 15 June 1989. I have sought advice on whether there is any possibility whatsoever of any member of my staff having a conflict of interest, as the member for MacDonnell suggested in

his scurrilous remarks last night, in the assessment or the development of this package. I have found no evidence of any such conflict. One staff member was offered a job by one of the companies in the middle of this year but knocked it back.

The final telling point is that the equipment requirements for the Radiology Section include \$190 000 for an ultrasound unit. This could easily have been included in the package but, because it is a stand-alone unit which could be supplied by numerous companies, public tenders were called.

I called for a thorough investigation to determine what would be the best possible equipment we could purchase for the Royal Darwin Hospital and for the service of the people of the Northern Territory. The investigation has been conducted with the aim of achieving just that: the best equipment available. Over a period of 12 to 18 months, my staff have gone through the process of assessing whether or not that particular equipment is available in Australia, whether or not it is available from a single company and whether or not such a company could provide backup service for the equipment it supplied. Investigations conducted by highly-qualified people have indicated that 2 companies should be asked to tender in relation to the items of equipment.

I believe the appropriate process has been used. My department has succeeded in its endeavour to have the best possible equipment in place as quickly as possible and as efficiently as possible. The people of the Northern Territory will see the benefit of that despite the member for MacDonnell's attempts to continually berate the department and bring about a lack of confidence in the health services provided to Territorians.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 150)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The first purpose of this bill is to amend the Education Act consequent on the proposed abolition of the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology on 31 December 1988 and the establishment of the Northern Territory University on 1 January 1989. The bill provides for representation of the Council of the Northern Territory Open College of Technical and Further Education on the Northern Territory Board of Studies and the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council. The bill amends the act consequent on the Community College of Central Australia being renamed the Alice Springs College of Technical and Further Education by deleting the old name and substituting the new name.

The second purpose of the bill is to extend the powers of a truancy officer, in circumstances to which I shall refer later, to enable him to request of a child, his age and the name of the school at which he is enrolled and to escort the child back to the school and deliver him into the custody of the principal of the school. The power to escort the child to school does not include the power to use force to compel the child to comply with the direction of the truancy officer to accompany him to the school.

The effects of the passing of the Northern Territory University Bill include the repeal of the University College of the Northern Territory Act and the Advanced Education and Darwin Institute of Technology Act and the

abolition of the college and the institute on 31 December 1988. The Education Act contains a number of references to those acts and institutions which have to be deleted and replaced by references to the Northern Territory University. Such references occur in the names of the institutions which are represented on the Northern Territory Board of Studies and the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council.

The act presently provides that the Board of Studies includes 1 member nominated by the University College and 2 members nominated by the Darwin Institute of Technology, being 1 member from the technical and further education sector and 1 member from the advanced education sector. The proposed amendment would result in 1 member being nominated by the Council of the University, 1 being nominated by the Board of the Institute of Technical and Further Education of the University and 1 being nominated by the Council of the Northern Territory Open College of Technical and Further Education.

The act provides that the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council includes the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology and a representative of the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education. The proposed amendment would result in the Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Technical and Further Education of the University and a member of the Council of the Northern Territory Open College of Technical and Further Education becoming members of the advisory council.

The act also provides that the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education, being a council with executive powers established by the Advanced Education and Darwin Institute of Technology Act, is not an advisory council within the meaning of the Education Act. Consequent on the repeal of the Advanced Education and Darwin Institute of Technology Act, the bill deletes reference to the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education and clarifies that a school council, which also has executive powers, is not an advisory council.

The next consequential amendment relates to the provision in the act that the general powers of the Secretary of the Department of Education do not apply to the University College of the Northern Territory or the Darwin Institute of Technology. The bill deletes the reference to those institutions and substitutes a reference to the University.

The final consequential amendment relates to the definition of a 'post school institution' in the act which currently includes a reference to the Community College of Central Australia. The bill deletes the reference, substitutes a reference to the Alice Springs College of Technical and Further Education and includes a reference to the Northern Territory Open College of Technical and Further Education.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the truancy provisions of the bill. The Education Act empowers the Secretary of the Department of Education to authorise a person to be a truancy officer and to issue him with an identity card. A truancy officer who observes a child apparently of compulsory school age in a public place at a time when there is reasonable ground for believing that the child should be at school may produce his identity card and request of the child his name and address and the reason for his absence from school. In 1984, the Department of Education employed 2 truancy officers in Darwin and 1 in Alice Springs. That continued until June 1987 when financial constraints caused the positions, which were then vacant, to be abolished.

The government is concerned to ensure that all children of compulsory school age in the Northern Territory receive a proper education. Department of Education statistics indicate that, in 1986 and 1987, the mean absentee rates as a percentage of enrolments were as follows: in 1986, in the primary area - 15%; junior secondary area - 10%; senior secondary area - 10%; in 1987, primary - 11%; junior secondary - 11%; and senior secondary - 7%.

It should be noted that absenteeism does not necessarily connote truancy. Absenteeism may involve absence from school for valid reasons such as sickness. Truancy involves absence from school of children of compulsory school age without a valid reason. However, the absenteeism statistics are sufficiently high to indicate the necessity for positive action by the government to ensure that truancy does not become a significant social problem. It is recognised that children who are unsupervised are subject to a number of temptations which frequently lead to thrill-seeking activities such as experimenting with drugs and housebreaking which, ultimately, are crimes.

The government considers that it has an obligation to take positive steps to minimise truancy and, for this reason, it has been decided to reactivate the role and function of truancy officers and to enlarge their powers. The bill enlarges the powers of a truancy officer by empowering him, in addition to the powers presently conferred on him by the act, to request of a child his or her age and the name of the school at which he or she is enrolled and to escort the child to the school and deliver him or her into the custody of the principal of the school. The power to escort the child to the school does not include the power to use force to compel the child to comply with the direction of the truancy officer to accompany him to the school. If a child should decline to accompany a truancy officer to the school, the act presently authorises the truancy officer, at any time between the hours of 8 am and 7 pm during any day, to call at an address which has been furnished by the child in the above circumstances and, after producing his identity card, require any person present at that address to furnish him with the full names of all children of compulsory school age who ordinarily reside at that address and the names of the schools at which those children are enrolled. If such a person deliberately does not furnish the requested information, he may be liable to a penalty of up to \$200.

The government has noted that, in South Australia and Western Australia, police officers are authorised to investigate and monitor truancy and, in the latter state, the police are empowered to return truants to their schools or their homes. It is the government's intention that members of the police force will become ex-officio truancy officers and the bill so provides. The utilisation of police officers would immediately provide Territory-wide cover of truancy by trained and experienced officers without the necessity of recruiting, training and paying additional staff. In presenting the truancy amendment to the Legislative Assembly, the government is proposing positive steps to promote education and reduce the potential for juvenile crime without having recourse to the use of coercion. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY BILL  
(Serial 141)

Continued from 11 October 1988.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, as I see it, the bill that we have before us is a result of power, politics, money and one-upmanship. We all know why this bill is before us. The people with the power are the people with the money, because the 2 go hand in hand. In this case, it is the federal government and Minister Dawkins who have the power and the money and they have said that, if you want money for your tertiary institutions, you must do what they dictate and implement their socialist experiment. Everybody must be uniform; we all have to be under the one umbrella. We will all be treated as equals whether we like it or not.

The government had the courage to establish the University College under the auspices of the University of Queensland. Reading between the lines, I gather that, because of money constraints, it has had to bow reluctantly to the power of the federal government and bring under 1 umbrella a most unusual combination of institutions. University studies and research on the one hand are to be brought under 1 umbrella with associate diplomas and certificate courses. That is most unusual for a university. However, I understand that there is very little choice. Either we do as we are told - and that indicates that we are not masters of our own destiny - or the money will not be made available.

In the last few days, I have had the pleasure of visiting the University College. I enjoyed inspecting the campus and learning just how much respect students have for that college. That is pretty understandable. The college has 500 students and the staff and students know each other. That can result in a very happy educational environment. It creates an excellent atmosphere. I can well understand that people at the college regret that they will be dragged into a much larger organisation of some 5000 students. That intimacy and closeness, whereby the head of a faculty actually is involved in tutorials with the students, is lost. You certainly do not have that in the bigger universities down south. In my university days, I remember 350 students being at maths lectures. There was no chance for the close intimacy which is obviously a part of the University College. I understand the feeling of regret of the people at the University College.

They respect the view of some of the Darwin community who claim that the Darwin Institute of Technology is a place that has a very good reputation and accredited courses. I was told that the students who have undertaken those courses are obtaining jobs in the community. They are valued and that is part of the reputation which the students are interested in.

There are concerns and I know the minister will be addressing these in the amendments which he has circulated. One of the concerns is that the 1000 university-type students - 500 at the University College and 500 at DIT - are to be swamped by the 4000 involved in certificate and associate diploma courses. They feel a threat there. I know the staff of the University College feel that there is a threat to the viability and standing of the organisation that they want to maintain. I suppose that they can really thank Mr Dawkins for that because he has the whip hand in all of this.

Another concern, and one that I feel pretty strongly about, is the matter of the government of the university. In my experience in universities, the university senate is a body which is totally autonomous of government. I do appreciate the minister's problem as he has TAFE-type courses for which our Education Act says he is responsible. However, I look forward to a day somewhere in the future when, say, the number exceeds Mr Dawkins' minimum level of 2500 students, when the university can be totally free of outside appointments. It should be a separate entity, free to promote its own

research and its own teaching, which will rise or fall on the quality of the people that it attracts and the reputation that it achieves as a genuine free-enterprise body attracting the best teaching staff that it possibly can. With those good teachers, I believe it will also attract the students, and that is the way I would like to see education go, not only at the tertiary level, but at the secondary level as well.

Mr Coulter: What about primary?

Mr COLLINS: Yes, even primary school. If we ever get around to debating 'Towards the 90s', I would be very keen to have a few words along those lines.

In Darwin, I have been made aware that there is concern that those who become the power brokers within the university will determine where the money goes. Some think that the TAFE-type people will become the power brokers, win all the positions and that the money will tend to flow into that area. Others seem to think the opposite is likely to happen. Of course, a fair division of the money needs to be worked out and I am sure the minister has some ideas in relation to that.

Reputation is very important. I am concerned that Mr Dawkins is forcing the 2 bodies together. I do not deny that people doing trade certificates play a very important role in our society. If money is the measure of success, many people with trade certificates - particularly those who go into business on their own - are more successful than many of our top academics delving into the frontiers of knowledge and research. However, in my view, bringing these people under the university umbrella will result in a strong tendency - as happened with comprehensive high schools - to lower the academic standards, and that will have to be watched. It is a possibility and something which will need to be guarded against very carefully. Other members have mentioned that aspect and their concern about it.

Reputation is all-important, Mr Speaker. If the reputation of an institution is high, it will attract students and it will attract the top lecturers. The bright people and the top people will want to become part of an institution that has a good reputation. If an institution loses its reputation, it will be very hard for it to regain it. The entire staff of an institution or a university could be replaced with crackerjack staff and it would still take a long time to reestablish a good reputation. It is important, and I think everybody agrees that the reputation of the university is something we must do everything in our power to guard and value highly.

I agree that, at this stage, the minister is very right to retain ties with the University of Queensland, which has a good reputation. Work which is considered to be of degree standard can be checked against the standards of Queensland and that can be used as a benchmark. My experience in secondary education has been that, at times, there can be a desire to keep the students happy and to allow them to pass whether or not they have really earned it. However, that is done at the risk of the reputation of the institution and people will vote with their feet.

As far as Alice Springs is concerned, it is as close to Adelaide University, an old and established university, and Flinders University, as it is to Darwin. Apart from the fact that the government helps with air fares to Darwin and assists with travel to other universities only if certain courses are not available in Darwin, I do not really see that people in Alice Springs would necessarily choose the University of the Northern Territory. It would not make much difference to them. However, one of the measures of the success

of the university will be how many university students from Alice Springs come to Darwin. It will certainly be an interesting measuring stick in the future.

Mr Speaker, I regret that Mr Dawkins has used the power of the purse to force this amalgamation. Both bodies were doing a pretty good job. However, the fact remains that we have to do it or we will not receive the funding. I would hope that such things as pay levels and so forth, which I believe are quite a bubble, can be resolved in a sensible manner. Whenever there is change, we will always feel concerned. I trust that, by this time next year, we will be able to look back and know that, whilst we had a great many worries, we put our best foot forward, faced the realities of the situation even if we were not happy about those realities, and worked to develop a university of which everybody can be proud and at which Northern Territory students gain great benefit.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in his second-reading speech on the Northern Territory University Bill, the honourable minister said that he enthusiastically supports the introduction of the bill which amalgamates the University College of the Northern Territory and the DIT, previously known as the Darwin Community College. I suppose there are others who are as enthusiastic and probably it does make sense, to some, to streamline our tertiary education establishments. I say this with some cynicism, but with realism. I know amalgamation is being studied in the states in a similar way and therefore we could ask why it should not occur in the Northern Territory. I am probably a purist on this subject of university educational exclusivity, having definite personal views which will not change, no matter how many arguments are put forward in favour of the amalgamation of universities and colleges of advanced education, with or without the inclusion of institutes of technical and further education.

Mr Harris: What you are saying is that you have a good open mind on the subject.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Nevertheless, I know what I think and I will not be swayed by you or anybody else.

Nevertheless, I am a pragmatist on occasion, and that applies to my consideration of this bill. The bottom line is the dollar. As the minister said, the establishment of a University of the Northern Territory was considered some years ago, in 1980 or thereabouts. The basic reason for its establishment was to stop the brain drain that resulted from the departure of Northern Territory children and their parents. This occurred in the past, and probably has not stopped completely even with the establishment of the University College of the Northern Territory.

I have some personal knowledge of this matter, and I can speak on it. We did not leave the Territory when our children went to university interstate, but some of our children have left the Northern Territory. Four of our children are graduates, having had to undertake studies outside the Northern Territory in Western Australia. One has returned to the Northern Territory; 2 have taken up permanent residence in Western Australia where they graduated from the University of Western Australia; and 1 is taking up postgraduate studies outside the Northern Territory. This proves to me that graduates are more likely to stay where they graduate and take up positions of employment there, all things being equal, because they have made contacts there and know the scene there. It should be noted also in this context that, even with the establishment of the University of the Northern Territory, parents will still continue to encourage their children to attend the universities where they

themselves graduated. It is also important to consider that job opportunities have to be considered for graduates from the University of the Northern Territory. There is no point in having graduates in abundance if there are no positions available for them.

The University of the Northern Territory was talked about when self-government was first granted but it was not until 1985 that the government was able to do anything about it. It is to be congratulated on the initiative it undertook in conjunction with the University of Queensland. The Northern Territory government went it alone on its own financial recognisance but it paid for that. The federal government is to be castigated for its behaviour in this matter. Firstly, it had no idea of the necessity for a university here. It turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the need and offered financial help for only 20 places in 1986. That was patently ridiculous when one considers that there was an enrolment of 250 in 1987, 430 in 1988 and an expected enrolment of 790 in 1989. The opposition in this House can derive no credit from its inability to convince its federal fraternity and sorority members of the necessity to support the youth of the Northern Territory in their search for knowledge through degree studies at the University of the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I said earlier that I am a purist in relation to university education. I know that my narrow view is echoed by other graduates. Nevertheless, I am also a pragmatist and recognise that the Northern Territory government had to consider its stand in relation to continuing to go it alone. Each year, there is a greater demand on government dollars. The federal government's decision to back only 20 university places but many more at the DIT was a strong argument for amalgamating the 2 institutions. I do not believe that the standards of the University of the Northern Territory will suffer from the amalgamation, knowing something of the standard of the current administration and academic program of that institution. Standards are high at the University of Queensland and the courses currently being offered by the University College are those of the University of Queensland.

I am getting sick and tired of the opposition education spokesman's remarks about the composition of the council of the university and his view about what educational institutions could be included in the University of the Northern Territory. He thinks everyone should be in on the act. It seems that he wants every minority group in the community to be represented on the University Council. He wants employer representatives, union representatives, Aboriginal representatives, teachers' representatives, small business representatives, and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all. He probably wants a woman representative, an unemployed representative, a single mother representative and so on. If Aborigines should be included on this council, why not Chinese, Greeks, Maltese and representatives of every other ethnic group in the Northern Territory? Why union representatives? Why not Catholics? Many students will be Catholics and it is just as valid to include Catholic or Muslim representatives as a union representative on the council. Whilst I have the interests of small business people at heart, I fail to see why they, together with employer groups, should necessarily have representatives on the council. I did not hear the opposition spokesman on education ask for representatives from the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, the Australian Federation of University Women or the Institution of Engineers, to name only a few professional groups whose representatives would be more appropriately placed on the University Council.



With the exception of brilliant students, everybody has to work hard to get a degree. I know I did and my mother also worked hard to be able to afford to send me to university. If one works hard to obtain a degree, one values it and consequently one does not want to see that degree debased. If the views of the opposition spokesman on education were to prevail, about half a dozen tertiary education establishments would be part of the University of the Northern Territory. There is nothing wrong with those educational establishments in themselves, but they definitely should not be part of the university. If we offer degrees alongside associate diplomas or some other qualification in cake icing, macrame, horseshoeing, welding, woodworking and motor maintenance, to name only a few, our standing in the academic world would be at rock bottom. We cannot let that happen.

In conclusion, I reiterate that I am philosophically opposed to the amalgamation of the University of the Northern Territory with an education establishment which, in the traditional view, is of lower standing. I am also a realist and I realise that the dollars are of utmost importance. The government was put over a barrel by the federal government and had to proceed with amalgamation in order to achieve federal financial backing. I bow to that.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in my opinion, today is a very momentous day in the educational history of the Northern Territory. By the time this day has concluded, we will have seen the passing through this place of the bill to establish the University of the Northern Territory. We have come towards this point steadily, albeit slowly, over the last decade or so. I can recall Hon Paul Everingham advocating the concept of a university in the Northern Territory. Indeed, a block of land in Palmerston was earmarked as the site for the University of the Northern Territory and I would hope that, at some time in the not-too-distant future, we will see the commencement of construction of buildings on that site which will eventually become the permanent home of the University of the Northern Territory.

The bill before the House provides for the merger of the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology. This merger has been discussed on a number of occasions during the past few years but final acceptance of the concept has come about as a result of the White Paper circulated by federal Minister Dawkins. The Commonwealth has guaranteed funding for the new education institution and that is very important.

Mr Speaker, before discussing the merger, I would like to remind you of the history of higher education in the Northern Territory. Prior to the late 1970s, to the best of my knowledge there was no higher education available in the Northern Territory. When I first came to Darwin in 1973, construction of the Darwin Community College facilities was just beginning at the Casuarina campus. The buildings were destroyed in Cyclone Tracy at Christmas 1974 but were reconstructed in the latter part of the 1970s and the institution evolved to the point where higher education courses were offered. Subsequently, these evolved into degree level courses and, several years ago, the community college became the Darwin Institute of Technology. Whilst that decision created many concerns among students and educators alike, those people would go to the wall today for the Darwin Institute of Technology because they believe it is a wonderful institution, and indeed it is.

Throughout the latter part of this period, the Everingham government was pushing for the University of the Northern Territory, but to no avail. In 1984, the application of this government was rejected by the Commonwealth which told it to come back in 1991 when the idea of a Northern Territory

university might be considered. This government was not prepared to accept that because for too long students of the Northern Territory, at great cost to their parents, had been forced to travel interstate for their higher education. Indeed, many people were not able to afford it and therefore missed the opportunity. That is common knowledge. This government decided to bite the bullet and, as a result, we have seen the establishment of the very successful University College of the Northern Territory which has operated on the old Darwin Hospital site for the last couple of years in spite of the fact that members opposite opposed it all the way down the line.

Why did the ALP oppose the establishment of our university? Let us look at how it went about it. The then Senator Susan Ryan, the former federal Minister for Education who, as we all know, got out of parliament because she was trying to protect her superannuation, issued a press release on 20 February 1987 which said: 'Commonwealth Education Minister Senator Susan Ryan today described the NT University College as an act of total extravagance by the NT government'. I wonder what the 300-odd students of the University College would think about that statement. The Leader of the Opposition is recorded in the Hansard of 28 August 1986 as saying: 'What does the CLP offer? A university with an uncertain future, a university whose students will not be eligible for tertiary allowance'. Why weren't they eligible? Because the federal Labor government knocked them back. That is why. That is what it thought of higher education in the Northern Territory. On 21 October 1986, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'There was no logical reason for establishing the University College at Myilly Point'. Again, on 21 October 1986, a press release stated: 'Mr Smith called on the NT government to abandon plans to establish the University College at the old Darwin Hospital site on Myilly Point'. He was totally against it.

At that time, it is common knowledge that the Commonwealth refused to fund the university. As I indicated, it told us to go away and come back in 1991. It offered, as an alternative, to fund 20 places at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

Mr Hatton: For 1 year only.

Mr SETTER: For 1 year only, with no guarantee for the next year or subsequent years. On top of that, in a fit of spite, it withdrew the Austudy allowance for the students who attended that college. That was a disgraceful act, but their venom knows no bounds. I am talking about the people opposite and their comrades in Canberra. They are still there.

This government had the gumption to put its money where its mouth was. It spent \$12m on that site - \$6m to upgrade the premises and a further \$6m to fund the operation of the University College for that year. Although the federal government had been prepared to fund only 20 places at DIT, the University College had some 250 students in its first year. In 1988, that number increased to 430 students. That was the number that we projected for 1991. The enrolment rate outstripped all projections. It was quite incredible. It indicated the demand in the community and the need that had existed for so long. I understand that, by 1989, we expect about 700 students to be undertaking higher education at the new university.

Despite that, there are still some 900 Northern Territory students undertaking higher education interstate. We would like to attract those students back to the Northern Territory, but I understand that people who are already progressing through courses would not want to leave the institutions at which they are studying. As time goes on, I am sure that situation will

change quite dramatically. The member for Sadadeen commented that perhaps people in Alice Springs would prefer to continue to go to southern institutions, in particular to institutions in Adelaide. I can understand that. Geographically, there is not a great advantage in coming this way as opposed to going that way. There may be some difference in cost. I respect their right so to do, but I am also convinced that, as time goes by, their pride in the Northern Territory and the credibility of the institution that we are establishing today will be such that most of those Alice Springs students and others from all around the Territory will be queuing up to attend the University of the Northern Territory.

I would like to quote what the Leader of the Opposition said with regard to enrolment levels at the university. I quote from the Parliamentary Record of 19 June 1986 when speaking to the Address-in-Reply. He was referring to the university: 'Let us not fudge from this: there is dire resistance from our potential university students in the Northern Territory'. There are 430 students this year! He went on: 'The government has never explained, to my satisfaction, where the students will come from in the first years of the university's existence'. If he did not know then, he should know now because the vast majority of them have come from the Northern Territory. The runs are on the board. The enrolments are in the book. He should reacquaint himself with the true situation and see how totally wrong he was.

Despite the fact that retention rates in our institutions of higher learning have increased dramatically over the past several years, it is a fact that our retention rate is still the lowest in Australia. I think that is very sad because the brain drain to which I referred earlier is still occurring. The establishment of the university will turn that around in time. There is no doubt of that. We must remember that, if this government had not bitten the bullet and established the University College a couple of years ago, we would not be in the position we are today. Our position with regard to negotiating with the Commonwealth would be totally different. It would be one of extreme weakness and not of reasonable strength with a record - albeit only 2 years old as far as the University College is concerned, but much older with regard to the DIT - where the runs are on the board. We are in a much better position and I think that is important.

There is no doubt that the merger that has come about as a result of the Dawkins White Paper has created some difficulties. Honourable members from the crossbenches said earlier that, where you combine university level education with institute level higher education and mix in TAFE training, there are bound to be some organisational difficulties. It has created some problems. Like the member for Nightcliff, I am a traditionalist and I agree with a number of the comments that he made last evening, although not all of them.

Mr Tipiloura: It is a free country.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, it is a free country and I am exercising my freedom this afternoon. He can exercise his, as he indeed did last night.

The reality is that, if we want to achieve the University of the Northern Territory, we must be prepared to compromise on this issue. If you read through the bill, Mr Speaker, you will find that that is exactly the situation. The point I was making is that it has not been without some difficulties. I can understand the concerns of the people at the University College and the people at DIT wishing to ensure that their best interests - and I refer to the staff and the students - are protected in this

whole exercise because it is virtually entirely new, certainly in the Northern Territory.

I would like to congratulate them all for their cooperation and their understanding, particularly the members of the Higher Education Planning Group who, under the direction of the minister, have put this whole concept together. There is no doubt that the staff and the students of both institutions, whilst having the opportunity to forcefully put forward their points of view, have all had to blend in to develop the concept we see before us this afternoon. I pay them great tribute because the situation that was evolving there had the potential to create great conflict. I am not saying that they did not have their arguments behind closed doors, but that is where it must have occurred. As far as the public arena is concerned, the negotiations went almost unnoticed. I pay them great tribute for having fortitude and understanding and effecting that cooperation among themselves to be able to achieve that. I know it has not been easy, but they have achieved it. I am quite sure that the deliberations that they have conducted over this past 6 months or so and the decisions that they have made will be in the best interests of the Territory. That will be evidenced as the university develops.

Whilst I accept the Dawkins White Paper with some reservations and whilst I understand that, at this time, it is doubtless the best course of action for the Northern Territory, there is no doubt that it lays out the federal Labor government's concept of the integration of higher education in Australia. In my opinion, Labor's socialism reflects its opposition to its perception of elitism in universities. The ALP perceives universities to be elitist and that really sticks right in its gullet.

Mr Ede: You are part of the elite?

Mr SETTER: I have no ambition to be part of any elite at all. I have never made any claim like that and I never will. Let us have a look at what Hon Susan Ryan said when she was the federal minister a little while ago. I quote from The Age of 21 April 1983: 'I do not like the term "pursuit of excellence". It has elitist overtones that I really dislike'. Socialism, Mr Speaker? I think so. They cannot stand elitism.

Let us come closer to home, and I am still talking about elitism. Let us have a look at the NT News of Tuesday 4 October 1988. I will quote from a speech made by Mr Bob Wharton who, at the time, was the President of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. He was speaking to its annual conference and I will quote him as he was reported in the article: 'In his opening speech, the NT federation president, Mr Bob Wharton, said that the NT government held public school education in low priority, and it supported private school elitism'. These people have an obsession about elitism, although I notice that the Leader of the Opposition said, when he was speaking the other evening, that he supported a kernel of excellence, and he believed that there should be academic excellence. There is no doubt about that.

But where do excellence and elitism fit together? The Australian Labor Party policy, February 1987, refers to the ALP's concept of 'excellence in the essentials'. I am not quite sure what that means, but the shadow minister might like to enlarge on that. I would like to hear more about that Labor Party policy. There is no doubt that this concept of amalgamation of the various levels of higher education would be - and it is reflected in the Dawkins White Paper - Labor's concept of developing higher education for the working classes, because that is what it is all about.

Mr Ede: You spend more time saying nothing than any 6 people I know.

Mr SETTER: Well, it always gets a response out of you. You must be listening, and you always respond when it starts to hurt a bit. When it starts to cut into the quick, you do not like it because somebody has woken up to what you people are all about.

The merger certainly has created some problems for the Higher Education Planning Group, and I refer to the integration of the various degrees: University College degrees and the degrees offered at the Darwin Institute of Technology and, of course, the development of associate diplomas and determining where they fit into the system. I know that there is an ongoing debate about that situation and, of course, the TAFE and the certificate courses that flow from there. It is a very complex matter because of the precedents that have been created with regard to the qualifications of lecturers at universities, at institutes of technology and, of course, those people who teach the TAFE certificate courses.

It is an extremely complex matter, not only with regard to the accreditation of the various courses, at the various levels, at the various institutes, but also the industrial problems that could possibly flow from that. Again, I compliment the higher education council because it has achieved much. As I said earlier, that has resulted from the cooperation and the goodwill that has abounded between those various institutions. What the merger will provide on the positive side is a much wider range of courses. I understand that it will also provide for additional higher education places and that will be very important as this community grows and as our young people seek to develop their education through attendance at the university. As I said earlier, I am quite sure that, in a year or 2, they will be queuing up at the doors trying to enrol at the University of the Northern Territory. Thus, some good points are coming out of this whole exercise, Mr Speaker.

The bill establishes the University Council, on which there will be representatives from the University College, the Darwin Institute of Technology, the University of Queensland and other organisations. I know that the member for Stuart, speaking in the debate last night, referred to clause 9. He expressed his concerns about the make-up of the University Council and he has put forward a range of amendments, none of which I agree with, but again it is the old socialism coming out. We will be debating those amendments in the committee stage and therefore I will not take up the time of the House by going through those point by point. That will come at a later time.

The important thing is that, at least in the initial few years, our links with the University of Queensland will be maintained. This bill allows for that. That is very important. The University of Queensland has served us extremely well at the University College of the Northern Territory and I would like to see that liaison and cooperation maintained. It is very important for the credibility of the new university, and I will dwell for a moment on the matter of credibility.

The member for Nightcliff mentioned this the other evening. As far as higher education is concerned, the credibility of those institutions is absolutely essential and it is equally essential that we maintain the credibility of the Northern Territory University. I see that the University of Queensland with its vast experience, its guidance, the standard of the lecturers it has recruited and appointed in the past, will maintain that credibility.

The reason why it is important that this bill be passed at this time is, of course, to take advantage of the Commonwealth's funding triennium of 1989-91. We need to lock into that because, if we miss the boat, we will miss out for another 3 years. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that, although we have a long night ahead of us if I have anything to do with it, this bill will be passed this evening and we will be able to take advantage of the opportunity to pick up on the funding advantage of that triennium.

I conclude by saying that the establishment of the Northern Territory University has been a long-time goal of the Country Liberal Party government of the Territory. That is well known and, one way or another, we have been able to achieve that. As I said in my opening remarks, I consider today to be quite a momentous day in the development of education in the Northern Territory. The merger provides considerable benefits for Territory students, and I am quite sure that all of my colleagues and many other people in this House will support that view. With those few remarks, I support the bill.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members very much for their general support in relation to developing an institution which will be of high standing. I do not think any member of this House would want anything else. From the comments that have been made, I understand that, whilst there are concerns, most members have faith that we will end up with a top rate institution offering top class education and research opportunities for the people of the Northern Territory. I am very pleased to note that the opposition has supported this bill. We will agree to differ on a number of issues, but I have been able to accept some of the amendments that the opposition has put forward, and I will touch on those a little later.

I would like to start by referring to the remarks by the Leader of the Opposition when he rose to speak in this debate. He mentioned the need to tread warily in relation to where we are going with the university and the comments that we were making. A great many people in the community are very nervous about what is happening. I accept the Leader of the Opposition's point. This whole exercise has been a lengthy and very difficult one of trying to take account of the concerns of all of the people involved.

The academics from both the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology are experiencing a very difficult time in that we are discussing the whole future of higher education in the Northern Territory. I must say that I was a little disappointed that, in recent times, documents have been presented which really deal with some detail that is of a confidential nature. I say 'disappointed', not because I do not want members to have the information, but disappointed because, when only half the story is received, people can interpret it wrongly and people in the community feel uneasy and start to ask questions. That generates concern.

I guess that what I am saying is that there are people in positions on committees and on the council who are looking very carefully at those particular issues. They need to be looked at sensitively, and I believe that that is what we are doing. I repeat that I am not trying to withhold information from honourable members. In fact, during the course of the debate on the Appropriation Bill, the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, asked whether certain material was available from the minutes of one of the council meetings. I indicated to the honourable member at that time that I was quite happy to provide him with that information on a confidential basis. I want him to have that information. I am not frightened about it going to him because he does understand the issues. However, I hope that, at this time, people will take note of what I am saying. The matter is sensitive and it needs to be treated in that manner.

Throughout the debate, a number of points were raised by members and I hope to cover most of those during this reply. Not everything that I will say will please all those who listen but, unfortunately, there are vested interests at stake. For the benefit of education in the Northern Territory, those who feel put out by what I have to say should forget for a while about their vested interests or what political points they think they can score. They should look at the broader picture of the rapid development now occurring in our higher education system. For the good of all Territorians, we have set out to provide access to a standard of higher education equal to or better than the best in Australia. It behoves all of us to give firm support to those who are working tirelessly to ensure that what we get at the Northern Territory University is the best higher education institution in Australia. A very large number of people are working to achieve that end.

It is happening. When the Territory government set out alone and established the University College of the Northern Territory, we astounded our critics with the way in which the institution took off. Those who said the Darwin Institute of Technology would suffer as a result are eating their words today. The institute is bigger and better than ever, with first class degree courses recognised throughout Australia, as are those at the University College of the Northern Territory, for their credibility and their high standing. This is a positive note and I think it is important to address it at the start of my remarks. Hundreds of people are hard at work in Darwin at present determined that, as these 2 institutions come together, the result will be far greater than the sum of the 2 parts. The government and, I might say, the opposition spokesman on education, the member for Stuart, have gone out of their way to look very closely at the legislation which is now before the House for any improvements which will enhance the development of our university. I thank the opposition spokesman for his efforts in this regard.

There has been a strong commitment from the great majority of staff and students at both campuses - that is, the campuses at Casuarina and Myilly Point - which has broken through any of the petty jealousies and temptations which have simmered at times near the surface. These committed people have shown that they can work towards the common goal of advancing our education system when, at times, that has meant giving ground against the grain in coming to grips with a point of common interest.

When the government began the merging process to form the new university, it faced one of the most difficult tasks which a government can undertake in the education sphere. In other words, authorities organising university mergers in the past have tried and failed for years in attempts to fulfil the task we undertook to complete in a very few months. Mr Speaker, I will touch on that a little later.

Ever since we defied the pundits and went ahead with the University College of the Northern Territory- and we are very proud of that - the Northern Territory government has had only 1 aim in that area: the development of Australia's foremost university here in the Northern Territory. From the beginning of this merging process, I have said that 1 priority is above all others: that the credibility of our courses, the degrees, masters and honours work, the research and postgraduate study, the advanced education courses and those within TAFE, must be beyond question. I keep emphasising that over and over again. It is so important. They must be credible and they must be seen from outside to be credible.

The merger would not go ahead if there were any possibility that the credibility of any of these courses could suffer, and I note the comments of

the members for Sadadeen, Koolpinyah and Jingili in relation to funding. I have made it clear that, if I did not believe that the university would be of high standing, I would not sacrifice the principle of credibility just to obtain a few dollars from the Commonwealth government. I have made that clear. I believe that we can have an institution of high standing, and that is the reason why I have proceeded and why government has considered the propositions that are being put forward by the Commonwealth, even though I am very annoyed about the speed with which the Commonwealth has gone about it, particularly given that we are doing what it wanted.

Mr Speaker, to make my position completely clear, I repeat that it is not just a matter of dollars. If it were, I can assure you that I would not be proceeding down this line now. Credibility is what it is all about, not money. We need money to develop and that issue is very much to the fore in discussions with the Commonwealth at present. We are in a catch-22 situation where, for us to increase our effective, full-time student numbers we need increased resources. We need libraries and other facilities and we need money for them. We are arguing this issue at present.

The Northern Territory government has shown that it is prepared to support higher education in a way that no state does. We have fully funded the University College of the Northern Territory and, if we had any doubt about the future credibility of our courses, we would not be prepared to continue that support. We have no doubts about the future credibility of our courses. The University of Queensland, which puts its name to all of the degrees issued by the University College of the Northern Territory, has no doubt about the future credibility of our courses. Emeritus Professor David Caro, the former Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, who oversaw a previous merger between 2 very different institutions in Tasmania, will help to ensure the future credibility of our courses.

The independent university academics involved in the national registration process guarantee the credibility of awards which, in the past, have been issued by the Darwin Institute of Technology. In the future, independent academics involved in the proposed new national registration process will guarantee the credibility of all degrees studied at the Northern Territory University, including those in the name of the University of Queensland. We have left no stone unturned in our efforts to make every post a winner in the development of our Northern Territory University.

That brings me to the various assurances that I was asked to provide last night, particularly by the member for Nightcliff. He asked whether the prerequisites are the same for all Northern Territory University degrees. The entry requirements for the former university and advanced education degrees are the same. Since 1986, there has been a reciprocal arrangement between the University of Queensland and the Darwin Institute of Technology which allows students to take Darwin Institute of Technology subjects for the Queensland degree in arts, and vice versa. This followed an assessment by Queensland of the Darwin Institute of Technology Arts Unit which Queensland has certified as being of university standard.

There is no reason to believe that the Darwin Institute of Technology Business Degree and Education Degree are not of high standard. In fact, the reverse is true. As an example, honourable members should know that the first course assessment committee for the Darwin Institute of Technology Bachelor of Business Degree was chaired by Professor Barton of the Australian National University, whose reputation in economics in Australia is second to none. All Darwin Institute of Technology degrees have been independently assessed by



course assessment committees which have included leading Australian academics, prior to receiving accreditation and national registration. Since its inception in 1987, the Northern Territory Council of Advanced Education has had on its membership a leading University of Queensland academic.

The member for Nightcliff asked whether Queensland supports the merger. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland was a member of the Higher Education Planning Group. He is also a member of the Interim Council. He has been involved at every stage of the merger discussions and has personally supported and cleared every submission of the Higher Education Planning Group, including the Institute of TAFE section. He was happy to agree to associate diplomas being included in the higher education sector and to the Institute of TAFE arrangement. Professor Wilson addressed the University College of the Northern Territory staff earlier this year, giving his support to the directions being taken. The Chairman of the Higher Education Planning Group was in weekly contact with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland on all sensitive issues throughout the 6-month period, except for a short period when the Vice-Chancellor was overseas. Professor Wilson is aware of the work being done by Professor Caro in looking very carefully at the courses and qualifications of staff in each associate diploma before making a decision on placements within higher education of the Institute of TAFE.

The member for Nightcliff has told the Assembly that, in these matters, he could be called a purist. He has to face up to the fact that higher education in Australia is changing. At present, 4 universities in Australia offer associate diplomas within their course structure, but it needs to be understood that, by the end of next year, given the mergers which have occurred or are planned and the redesignation of existing institutions, there will be only 2 or 3 universities in the whole country which do not offer associate diplomas. Nevertheless, the member for Nightcliff asked how associate diplomas would be handled at the Northern Territory University.

A government amendment, which has been circulated, makes it possible for associate diplomas to be placed either in the higher education sector or in the Institute of TAFE, and it is very important to have that flexibility. The effect of this right now is that 7 existing Darwin Institute of Technology associate diplomas are placed in higher education and the 15 now in TAFE will remain in the Institute of TAFE until the interim chief executive officer completes his assessment of where they should be placed.

On the basis of the latest trends around Australia, it seems likely that some of those in the higher education sector, for example, the Associate Diploma of Fashion Technology which was referred to, will be taught in the Institute of TAFE and most of those already in TAFE will remain there. I have used as an example the course quoted by the member for Nightcliff last night. I could have chosen another course to use as an example because the decision on what course will go where will be properly determined, according to academic criteria, by the Interim Council. I want to make that point very clear.

Mr Speaker, where possible, I have avoided any political interference in this exercise because the decisions are delicate ones which affect the future of individuals engaged in competitive academic careers. These decisions are matters for the council and for the academics to decide and I have made that very clear. They are not matters which should be dragged out in the public forum for consideration by politicians, even those of us who are lucky enough to have degrees. Last night, the member for Nightcliff asked whether inappropriately qualified staff would be employed to teach university courses.

Of course they will not be. Can you imagine the Interim Council agreeing to such a proposal, Mr Speaker? Would Emeritus Professor David Caro agree? Would Professor Matthews or the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Professor Wilson, agree? A whole range of people are involved. Can you imagine the chief executive officer of an academic board agreeing? Would the deans of the faculty or the boards agree? Of course they would not, Mr Speaker. I again emphasise that I have confidence and faith in the people we have placed in very high positions to ensure that this merger takes place in a satisfactory manner. It is acknowledged that there are staff who have been teaching associate diplomas and diplomas who do not have higher degrees. However, they have the qualifications to teach associate diplomas.

Mr Speaker, the interim chief executive officer announced to the Interim Council 6 weeks ago that, while he could guarantee the salaries of all Darwin Institute of Technology staff, he could not guarantee the titles of some. I have been assured that the interim chief executive officer, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deans will be looking at this matter in the next few weeks. Again, this is not a matter for politics and legislation. The legislation will establish a framework within which the matter will be properly resolved through academic and institutional management processes.

Let us consider the Northern Territory University as a whole. We have chosen to go along with the initiatives of the Commonwealth government's White Paper on Higher Education. We have not done that because it is expedient or because it offers obvious financial incentives. I have touched on that. We have chosen to take on the merger because it offers the best potential to continue the kind of dramatic development in higher education that we have seen over the past 2 or 3 years. If there is a hiccup, and by that I mean some silly unguarded statement, it could drive a wedge between those who are working so hard for the betterment of our system. I emphasise that again and refer to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the need to treat these matters sensitively.

The potential that I speak about is not readily apparent at this early stage in the work on the merger. It will appear as the new university, through its internal academic structures, is able to tailor its resources to suit the needs of our students. The merger process is intrinsically a slow one and anyone who expects to see a brave new world - to use the phrase used by the member for Nightcliff last night - appear overnight at the Myilly Point or the Casuarina campus is more likely to destroy the new system than to encourage its healthy development.

During the course of the second-reading debate, the member for Stuart raised a number of points which I would like to touch on briefly. I have indicated that we are prepared to support some of the amendments that he has proposed. He referred in his speech to his remarks of 2 April, in which he put forward his model for higher education. I can recall very clearly that, in those remarks, he referred to the involvement of the Katherine Rural College in this particular exercise and its forming part of the Northern Territory University. He was correct in saying that I wrote to him. I did that because, during the course of that debate, he introduced that particular subject when we were discussing another matter. His comments were not complete and I wrote to him asking for more information on his model. Unfortunately, I never received that information. Perhaps he can fill me in on that.

Other members have touched on the history of this matter. It has indeed been a sad exercise. I can remember the days when Hugh Hudson was the

Chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission and was floating this notion that the 3 tertiary sectors could be combined in 1 institution. I always made the point that I had no problem with that notion but did not want the Northern Territory used to experiment with it. I can recall clearly a number of fights with Hugh Hudson and Senator Ryan in relation to the exercise. As time went by and the issue was debated more openly, and as we became involved with the University of Queensland, I could see that there was potential for a merger to occur if it was handled in the correct manner and retained the credibility of the degrees offered at such an institution.

Following the release of the Dawkins White Paper, we decided to enter into negotiations and pursue the merger. I believe that the only thing which has perhaps caused some distress is the speed with which it is happening. I have told John Dawkins many times that he is trying to push us to the wire too quickly. We have all stops out. We have people working tirelessly to ensure that the degrees we offer will be of high standing. We have been constantly concerned with credibility and the need to ensure that our offerings are not only of high standing but are seen to be of high standing. That was our goal in linking with the University of Queensland and that was how we developed to the stage we have reached today.

It is very important in this context that we stop running down the degree courses offered at the Darwin Institute of Technology. The DIT offers a set of very high-quality courses for people in the Territory. Far too often, we hear of the odd cases here and there where there are problems. No one is denying that there are problems at the Darwin Institute of Technology but let us work together to ensure that the new institution will have very high standing. It is not a 'them and us' situation. The concerns that people have in relation to credibility will be looked at by the people involved. They are not people off the street. They are people of high standing in the academic community who will not put their positions at risk by allowing anything to happen that will detract from the credibility of the new institution.

The member for Stuart argues that the governing body of the University of the Northern Territory needs to be an autonomous body and I could not agree with him more. In fact, in the establishment of the Menzies School of Health Research, the Darwin Institute of Technology and the University College, I fought a number of battles to ensure that such autonomy existed. I agree with him. I do not agree that the number of members appointed by the Administrator under clause 9(e) puts at risk the integrity of the university. I do not believe that at all. Members of the University Interim Council, the members who will eventually be on the council, are drawn from a wide cross-section of the community. They are not controlled or directed by government. That may be a perception but it is not the case. If the government wanted to control that body, it would not have chosen the 10 people who are on it now. The government believes that there needs to be autonomy.

I note the member for Stuart's concern about the lack of union representation. I would like to say that there is tremendous potential for union representation on both the Council of the Northern Territory University and the Board of the Institute of TAFE. Leaving aside the Administrator's nominees, where 1 or 2 places would normally be reserved for someone able to contribute from a trade union background, the bill provides a number of opportunities for union representation on the university's governing bodies. This has been taken advantage of by the unions concerned and the membership of the Interim Council shows that Mr Hunter Harrison is the Secretary of the Professional Officers' Association and a member of the Trades and Labor Council. Dr Charles Webb also has appropriate qualifications and there is a

whole group of people whose credentials indicate that there is union representation on that Interim Council. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that we were trying to cut off the unions. That is not the case at all. Mr Speaker, honourable members would be aware that I have considered the situation and have in fact circulated an amendment which will be dealt with during the committee stage.

Mr Speaker, when discussing the membership of the council, a number of points should be taken into account. The size of university councils or senates throughout Australia varies from a minimum of about 23 up to a maximum of 44 at the Australian National University. We also had the collapse of the binary system which is bringing the university and higher education sectors together.

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time to enable him to complete his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart would be aware that we are moving towards a trusteeship role rather than a governing role in relation to councils. I can quote the section from the White Paper in relation to the subject of institutional management:

The government believes that, in formulating roles for governing bodies, the emphasis should be on the trustee aspect of their responsibilities - that is, on setting broad directions and policies for the institution and on the consideration of regular reports and reviews of how well the institution is performing. This approach requires the appointment of members who have a positive contribution to make to the development of an institution and are clear about their role as a member of the institution's governing body.

Last night, the member for Nightcliff mentioned the need to have people involved who are able to contribute and have input into the council's deliberations.

In relation to union representation, can I just say that it has been a sore point for some time. Again, it is not a matter of trying to deny unions the opportunity to be involved in these exercises. I refer honourable members to an extract from the New South Wales Supreme Court judgment of Chief Justice Street when talking about the duties and responsibilities of members of boards, councils and committees. It is not to deny union involvement or having expertise on the council. The Chief Justice was referring to the 'generally accepted understanding about the purpose of appointment roles, responsibilities and codes of ethics which members of boards, councils and committees of state and Commonwealth departments and authorities have followed since 1967'. The paragraph which really relates to this is:

Nomination of the individual members and their election to membership by interested groups ensures that the board as a whole has access to a wide range of views and it is to be expected, within this wide range of views, that inevitably there will be differences in opinions, approaches and philosophies of board members. But, the predominating element which each individual must constantly bear in

mind is the promotion of the interests of the board itself. In particular, a board member must not allow himself to be compromised by looking to the interests of the group which appointed him rather than to the interests for which the board exists. He is most certainly not a mere channel of communication or listening post on behalf of the group which elected him. There is cast upon him the ordinary obligation of respecting the confidential nature of board affairs where the interests of the board itself so require.

That is the major concern when talking about having union representation. Members would be appointed by the unions and I happen to have a bit of a problem with that. The government is prepared to look at compromise and I understand clearly that the unions want their involvement to be enshrined in legislation. In dealing with the issue, I will take a similar approach to that used by the federal minister, John Dawkins, in setting up the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. I know that that is an advisory body and not the same as the University Council but the example is nevertheless relevant. Mr Dawkins makes it clear, without referring to peak union organisations, that 2 of the government appointees shall be persons having expertise and experience in matters relating to trade unions and 2 shall be persons having expertise and experience in matters relating to business and industry. I am prepared to move an amendment along similar lines and to add 'in consultation with the unions'. We will discuss that further in committee. I believe that indicates that I am prepared to accept the role of the union movement and the need for it to be involved. As I indicated earlier, the education unions are very much involved in this whole exercise.

The honourable member also raised the matter of my powers under the Education Act. We had a very interesting discussion some time ago. There could have been other ways to set up the Interim Council and the honourable member knows that. You could imagine what would have happened at the last sittings if I had trotted out an interim council bill and sought leave to move a suspension of standing orders to allow the passage of the bill through all stages. We would have ended up having a slanging match across the Chamber. There was a far simpler way in which the exercise could be carried out. That is the way we have done it. We have included sections relating to elections and those will be amended during the course of the committee stage.

The member for Stuart also raised the matter of the Academic Board and I believe there is an amendment which will address that particular problem. He also raised the validity of proceedings. He was correct in indicating that other members in fact were covered under their parent acts: the Secretary of the Department of Education in the Public Service Act and the Vice-Chancellor under the University of Queensland Act. The Warden and the Director would be covered under this act. In all cases, the ones not mentioned are picked up under the parent act.

Mr Speaker, I would not have pursued this exercise if I had not believed that we would be able to develop a university of very high standing. I have always felt that we should have the 20th university in the Northern Territory, that it would form part of an overall picture of universities and that we would specialise in certain fields. It is wide open: Asian studies, anthropology, linguistics, engineering and a whole range of studies could be developed over a period of time.

The faculty and academic boards will be involved in looking at all the matters that I have raised. I give the assurance that I will have Professor Caro look at the concerns raised by the member for Nightcliff and

others to ensure that what is happening is in fact in order. I believe that the people involved in this exercise have done their job well and I thank all of them. I refer not only to the departmental people but also to the academics of both campuses and the students. It has been a difficult exercise which has often involved heated debate. I believe they have handled the situation extremely well. I ask that they give us a little more time and continue to show the goodwill that they have shown and we will end up with an institution of high standing.

Mr Speaker, I am sorry if there are people who are feeling nervous and if there are people who are considering leaving. That would be a shame. I believe that they will be the people to miss out most because we will be able to offer careers in the Northern Territory which will be as good as those anywhere else. They will have opportunities through research facilities. We are looking at the government trying to pump more finance into that area. I call on all those academics who are considering their position to think very carefully because it is an exciting move and we will end up with a top-class institution.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.1.

The minister also has an amendment standing against 46.1 which we are prepared to accept. However, we believe that there are too many appointees. In the minister's amendment, the members are to be appointed by the Administrator and we believe they should be there by right. The position in relation to an Aboriginal staff member has not been taken on but I will deal with that in more detail when we come to amendment 45.2.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, we will be seeking the defeat of amendment 45.1.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 46.1.

I have made it clear that I am not trying to exclude or to have union members precluded from being involved in this exercise. I accept that some people perceive that we do not do these things in the right manner. I believe that we do put members of unions on these particular councils. To make it clear, I have circulated amendment 46.1 which would insert a new paragraph (e) to read as follows:

- (e) 10 persons appointed by the Administrator as follows -
  - (i) 2 persons with expertise or experience in matters relating to trade unions so appointed after consultation with trade unions;
  - (ii) 2 persons with expertise or experience in matters relating to business or industry so appointed after consultation with groups representative of business and industry; and

- (iii) 6 persons so appointed as representing between them a broad range of community interests, including persons with expertise in research, training, tertiary education and technology;

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, while this does not go as far as we would like, it is a move in the right direction and I compliment the minister on being big enough to see the concepts involved and to take them on board. The amendment uses the phrases 'after consultation with trade unions' and 'after consultation with groups representative of business and industry'. I would like an indication from the minister that he will consult with groups such as the Small Business Association, the Confederation of Industry, the Master Builders Association and, in respect of trade unions, that he will consult through the Trades and Labor Council with the unions which are directly involved in the area.

References have been made by way of interjection to the possible involvement of waterside workers and so forth and I wish to make it very clear to the House that we are talking about unions which are directly involved in the university itself. It is their members who should be represented so that their input can contribute to the creation of an educational institution of the highest quality.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I have gone about as far as I am prepared to go. I can assure the honourable member that education unions are already represented on the council, through FAUSA, UACA and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. We are looking to achieve much broader input into our university council and the involvement of business and trade union groups will be part of that.

Mr EDE: I wish to correct a misunderstanding. When I talk about education unions, I mean those unions which are involved in educational institutions. The minister referred to 3, but there are 5 others which are involved in administration and so on. These include the Miscellaneous Workers Union, the ACOA, the Professional Officers Association etc.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I believe that those sorts of unions will be contacted.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.2.

While a compromise has been reached with the minister in relation to paragraphs 9(1)(e)(ea) and 9(1)(e)(ec), paragraph 9(1)(e)(eb) has not been satisfactorily dealt with. The amendment we seek through the insertion of that paragraph would place on the council 1 Aboriginal member of the full-time staff of the university, elected by the academic staff of the university. This has not been agreed on.

I would like to point out to honourable members that some very eminent people are currently involved in negotiations to develop a proposal for a centre for Aboriginal and Islander studies at the university. The purpose of our amendment is to attempt to create a direct involvement of that body on the council. It is obvious that the University of the Northern Territory will become the centre of excellence in terms of its involvement in Aboriginal studies. We believe that that process would be enhanced through the presence on the council of an Aboriginal member of the full-time staff of the university.

I realise that that person could be one of those referred to in the new paragraph (e) in the amendment which we have just passed. I ask the minister whether he would be prepared to take on board a representation from the Aboriginal staff involved in developing the proposal for a centre for Aboriginal and Islander studies seeking that an Aboriginal staff member be involved on the university council as one of the 6 people referred to in the amended paragraph 9(1)(e).

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the short answer is no. I am sure that people who are developing new programs will be involved actively in discussions with the council. I do not believe that it is necessary for them to have specific representation on the Interim Council. We already have an Aborigine on the council and she is a fully qualified person. I am not prepared at this stage to give ground in relation to this matter. I believe that the University Council itself will be looking at all of the matters raised by the member for Stuart and that Aboriginal people will have ample opportunity to be involved in those discussions.

Mr EDE: I am aware of the presence of an Aboriginal person on the Interim Council. That is excellent and may allow my proposal to become a reality. That person, however, has a particular difficulty because she comes from a long way from town which is a problem in respect of attending meetings. I hope that the minister will have discussions on the matter and, given that he has accepted the need for an Aboriginal person on the Interim Council, I believe positive developments may result.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.1.

Mr Chairman, the amendment increases the number of representatives of the full-time academic staff of the university, other than staff of the Institute of Technical and Further Education, from 1 to 2. This will provide for more adequate representation of the academic staff. The amendment stipulates that the representative of the full-time staff of the Institute of Technical and Further Education be a member of the academic staff as clause 9(1)(h) already provides for a representative of the full-time academic staff. This achieves a balance from outside and inside and was proposed by Professor Caro.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, later amendments proposed by the minister will exclude the TAFE area from membership. In terms of the increase in the number of members from the higher education area, I ask why the minister has decided to create that imbalance. He has removed a position which could have come from right across the board to one that must come from the higher education area. I would like him to comment on that.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the Institute of TAFE is represented. Professor Caro, the Council of Advanced Education, FAUSA and the University College of the Northern Territory have clearly indicated that this is the direction they wish to take. I believe that all sectors will be looked after. There is a further amendment, as the member for Stuart mentioned, which will prevent double dipping.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.3.



This amendment would omit from subclause 9(2)(b) the words 'until the expiry of the terms for which they were respectively appointed as such' and insert in their stead 'until the end of the year 1900'.

Mr Chairman, subclause 9(2)(b) was inserted to allow the Warden of the University College of the Northern Territory and the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology to continue on the council for a period to allow, if you like, that roll-over effect and to include their experience in the operations of the new council. We thought that was an excellent idea. However, when you look at the terms for which they are appointed, you will see that the Warden of the University College of the Northern Territory has a term which expires at the end of 1990 whereas the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology is a permanent officer and is therefore being appointed for an indefinite term.

After the end of 1990, the whole purpose for which the 2 positions were put in there would no longer be valid. The officer from the DIT, however, would remain indefinitely. The intention was to have those people there for a period of a couple of years to allow the merger to go ahead. It would be completely irrelevant to have somebody there for that purpose in 1997 or 2001. That is why we propose this amendment so that the arrangement finishes at the end of the year 1990.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the government has listened to the comments of the honourable member and we accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.2.

Mr Chairman, as the number of academic staff on the council is to be increased by 1, the number of additional academic staff on the council during the transitional year 1989 has been reduced by 1, from 3 to 2.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.3.

Mr Chairman, as the elections for the academic staff members on the Interim Advisory Council have already been conducted at the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology, and as the advisory council will become the Interim Council constituted by the act, further elections will be unnecessary in 1988, and the clause is amended accordingly.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am rather upset about this. This is being inserted in an attempt to guarantee that the Interim Council membership will continue and there will not be any need for elections. That Interim Council was not elected on the basis that it would continue. It was elected on the basis that it was an interim council. Certainly, the minister found himself in a legal imbroglio because it would have closed off today. I concede that there may have been a need to do something of this nature which would have continued the Education Act Interim Council to the end of 1989. Unless I am wrong, it would appear that it is to continue until the end of 1989, not to the end of 1988.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I touched on this point during the course of my speech. There was a mistake in relation to the Interim Council arrangements

as far as this bill was concerned. It has been made very clear to members of the Interim Council that they would be the formal council and that the elections that were taken at the second meeting of the council would remain in place. They knew that. I had indicated that that would be the case, and that is the situation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the honourable minister still has not clarified that point. As I understood it previously, the Interim Council was an interim council set up for the purpose of carrying us through to 1 January 1989. In fact, the way that he has set up the Interim Council now, there will be no election for a 1989-90 council. The people who formed the Interim Council will continue on the council after the time when the university has been set up, beyond the term that they thought they were to be working for. I see the honourable minister has a note there which may clarify it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is to be an amendment to clause 14 which will relate to the election of Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor at the first meeting after this legislation is passed. Are you aware of that?

Mr EDE: Yes. Mr Chairman, perhaps the honourable minister could tell me if I am correct that this council will not finish its term at the end of 1988, but will go right through until the end of 1989.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, that is correct. In fact, the education unions asked for that. I believe I mentioned that during the course of my second-reading speech.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that would have been in summing up the second-reading debate rather than in the second-reading speech itself. I would like it to be placed on record that I do not think that that is fair. The group of people we are discussing was put in to do the job of the Interim Council for 1988. The idea was to carry us on through the interim period until the university was set up, when an elected body would start from 1 January 1989. To my mind, it is wrong that it has gone beyond that, because it will mean that, for the first year of its life, the new university will have an Interim Council even though it is not an interim university. It will be a university that is up and running and it should start off with a council which is elected as an ongoing university council.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the same situation applied when we were setting up the University College of the Northern Territory. It is very important to have continuity. I do not believe that anyone is being disadvantaged in relation to this. I am sorry that the member for Stuart feels that way.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.4.

Mr Chairman some concern was expressed by FAUSA and also the student unions in relation to the term of office of appointment of elected members. As the elections for the Interim Council have been conducted, the reference to election will be deleted. As the elected members will hold office until 31 December 1989, any persons elected to the council in 1989, other than those elected to fill casual vacancies, will hold office from 1 January 1990 for a period of 3 years.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clause 12:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.5.

If one of the additional full-time academic staff, who is a councillor during the transitional year 1989, ceases to be a member of the academic staff, then he ceases to be a councillor.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a problem with clause 12, not particularly with the amendment as such but in another area that was raised in debate and that the minister spoke about when responding to the second-reading debate. It relates to the number of people who were covered. I accept his point regarding the Secretary of the Department of Education. He stated that the additional members named in clause 9(2)(a) and (b) are covered, and I accept that. I find it very difficult to work out exactly how those named in paragraphs (a), (c) and (d) of clause 12(2) are covered by this legislation.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will provide the honourable member with the information.

Mr EDE: That is fine. It is not a matter that we have sought to amend. I am seeking clarification. It seemed that there might a loophole in the bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.6.

If a councillor who is a member of the full-time academic staff or a student vacates office as a councillor prior to 31 December 1989, the council is obliged to fill the vacancy for the balance of the term with an appointee from the academic staff or students, as appropriate.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this means that, if somebody who has been appointed or elected for a 3-year term vacates the office after 6 months, the council itself will appoint a replacement. One can imagine the uproar if a similar situation occurred if somebody from this House left and this House decided who the replacement would be. Surely we should have a balance which will give us a little more democracy in terms of people being represented. The right of appointment may be appropriate, say, within 6 months of the end of the person's term but, before that, an election should be held to ensure that people continue to be represented according to their wishes.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, my understanding is that, in relation to casual vacancies, in a short-term situation, it is the normal situation for councils to make those decisions. If it is a long-term matter, that is a different situation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we are not talking about a short-term vacancy. In effect, a person who has been elected for a 3-year term could pass away on the first day of that term, or take up another job after 6 months or leave for any number of reasons. The people who elected him would not have the ability to elect a replacement. In most democratically-elected organisations in Australia, that would not be acceptable.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, as I have mentioned, the council makes those decisions. If someone did resign after 1 year, the council would hold an election. The council would make the decision. In the short-term, it would appoint a replacement and that would be done in consultation with staff. The legislation stipulates that the replacement has to be chosen from those particular groups.

Mr EDE: I think we will have to beg to disagree on that. Possibly the minister will be able to take on board my comment. If, in fact, what he is saying is right and there is a short-term appointment until such time as an election can be held to fill the vacancy, we would be happy with that. Our problem is that it appears that a person appointed by the council will hold the position for the balance of the term of the original member. The honourable minister is saying that that is not the intention. I ask him to check it so that we can discuss it between now and the next sittings.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 14:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.7.

This will provide that the councillors qualified to be elected as Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor will be elected from among those who are, at the relevant time, the Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Technical and Further Education or the graduate of the university elected by Convocation or 1 of the 10 members who have been appointed by the Administrator.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.8.

Mr EDE: My problem with this is that it reduces the number of people who are eligible for that position of Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor. It states that the members of the council who are eligible for the office of Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor are the Chairman of the Board of the Institute, who is a government appointee, the members appointed by the Administrator and the graduate member elected by Convocation. If the council decided that it wished to have a Chancellor who was absolutely neutral and had no links whatsoever with government appointment, there is only 1 person that it could appoint - the graduate member elected by Convocation. In time, we will have some excellent and very eminent graduates of this university for it to pick from. At the moment, most of those would be too young or inexperienced to be eligible for the position of Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor.

The clause could have been broadened considerably to allow the council the freedom to pick its Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor. I accept that the changes in relation to the 10 people appointed by the Administrator have given a little more breadth than before, but the point remains. I would like the minister to explain why he has limited it to such an extent.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, it is obvious that we do not want a Chancellor who is an employee or a student. The honourable member knows that. What is he on about!

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 48.1.

Under the proposed amendments, the Interim Chancellor and Interim Deputy Chancellor would cease to hold office at the end of 1988. The amendment will preserve the present incumbents until elections can be held for the permanent council.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we have circulated an amendment 47.1 which invited the deletion of subclause (5). At the last moment, the honourable minister introduced this one. I do not fully understand why this is necessary. I am advised that the council, under the Education Act, will become the Interim Council under this act. Surely, because of that, the persons who hold the position of Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor under the Interim Council as set up under the Education Act will automatically become the Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor under the new act.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, there would be in fact a gap between the end of 1988 and the meeting of the permanent council when there would not be a Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.4.

This amendment would omit from clause 15(1) the words 'Subject to this section, the' and insert in their stead 'The'. This will ensure that the terms and conditions of the Vice-Chancellor are set by the council.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the government accepts the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.9.

The words 'subject to this section' are not needed because there are no other references to Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.5.

Mr Chairman, the opposition said that it would go to the wall on this amendment. Clause 15(4) says that the Administrator, which effectively means the Cabinet, 'may confirm or refuse to confirm a person's appointment as Vice-Chancellor, or a term or condition in respect of such appointment, and no such appointment or term or condition in respect thereof shall have effect unless and until confirmed by the Administrator'.

As I pointed out to the minister, such a clause assumes that the Cabinet of the Northern Territory has the ultimate ability, knowledge and wisdom to make a decision on the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. Such a clause allows for blatant political interference and would call into question the entire credibility of the university. I am happy to say, Mr Chairman, that the minister has indicated that he will accept this amendment and I congratulate him on that. That is a very positive step. The Vice-Chancellor must be totally responsible to the council and that will be ensured with the removal of clause 15(4). Members of the council must have the unfettered ability to appoint the Vice-Chancellor and to set terms and conditions without outside interference.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am glad that the member has spoken so well of me.

Mr EDE: I will do it any time you agree with me.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman I move amendment 44.10.

A new clause 15(5) is necessary because, until the Vice-Chancellor is appointed by the council, the council is not complete. It makes it clear that the council is not deficient in some way during the period prior to the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, having just deleted subclause 15(4), I wonder whether this new subclause should not be 15(4) rather than 15(5).

Mr CHAIRMAN: That will occur as a matter of course.

Clause 15, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clause 17:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 47.2.

At the risk of offending the Secretary of the Department of Education, this amendment has the effect of ensuring that he will not be acting as Chancellor of the University by virtue of clause 14(5) until a first meeting of the council is held. There is already a Chancellor under the interim arrangements and I am afraid we will have to deny him that honour, interim though it was to have been.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, we accept the amendment.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 18 and 19 agreed to.

Clause 20:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.11.

'Technical and Further Education' will be defined as being education other than that which, by way of a course of study, 'leads to the award of a degree,

or of a diploma other than an associate diploma'. The intention is that associate diplomas may be awarded within the areas of both higher education and technical and further education. This issue was raised during the course of debate and it is necessary to have the flexibility which the amendment will provide.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I cannot understand why, in the period of a few short weeks, the minister has resiled from the view which he espoused in this House on 25 August 1988 when he said in his second-reading speech:

Mr Deputy Speaker, some concern has been expressed regarding the placement in the new institution of associate diplomas. Prior to the January 1985 meeting of the Australian Education Council in which I was privileged to participate, associate diplomas were offered in both advanced education and TAFE. Those in advanced education required Year 12 as an entry requirement and those in TAFE did not. The June 1985 meeting of the Australian Education Council moved to establish the Australian Council for Tertiary Awards, a national register for all awards in advanced education and TAFE. One of its first acts was to end the distinction between advanced education and TAFE associate diplomas and to standardise the entry requirement on successful completion of Year 12. Since then, they have simply been called the associate diplomas. For historical funding reasons, the Commonwealth has continued to fund those in higher education while the states have funded them in TAFE. In both the Green and White Papers, associate diplomas have been identified as higher education and funding is negotiable. For these reasons, associate diploma awards are included in the higher education area of the new university. The Institute of TAFE will cover all certificate courses up to and including advanced certificate levels.

The interjection I made at that point, which is not recorded, was 'Hear, hear'. I was pleased that the minister had the guts to stand up in the face of the incredible opposition which has been generated in relation to this issue. That has been caused by people who want to feather their own nests by maintaining false academic standards. They want to inhibit the natural progression from associate diploma level to degree level and to masters level which was to be one of the crucial features of our university, by creating problems in relation to accreditation. The contribution of the member for Nightcliff last night typified that approach and that is about what I expected from him. I thought that the minister would have had more guts. I supported him in terms of the current wording in the bill and I am disappointed that he has backed down at the last moment and moved this amendment.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I wish the member for Stuart would talk to the people who know what this is all about.

Mr Ede: I have!

Mr HARRIS: He should talk to Professor Caro and listen to the various concerns which people have.

Mr Ede: I have talked to him too.

Mr HARRIS: There is no threat to progression through the system. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there are some very good aspects in the multi-campus situation but for the honourable member to get up here and ...

Mr Ede: What made you change your mind?

Mr HARRIS: First of all, the Commonwealth is not regarding all associate diplomas as higher education. There is a need for flexibility. We are looking at developing the courses at our university. The new Vice-Chancellor and the committees set up to look at these issues will do so responsibly. Flexibility is required and the member for Stuart would know that if he talked to people who understand the issues and the need for credibility. We have accepted that associate diplomas should be in universities and, as I have mentioned, 4 universities already have associate diplomas. By the end of 1989, there will probably be only 2 or 3 universities which do not have associate diplomas but you need to maintain flexibility and that is what this amendment achieves.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I do not believe that is the purpose at all. I believe the purpose was espoused by the member for Nightcliff last night. He talked about the number of people in the various levels who have PhDs. The honourable minister stated that people had the very best of teaching qualifications even though they may have had a Master's degree or an Honours degree. If the people have the ability to lecture, we should not get ourselves caught up in some spurious debate about PhDs wanting to have the numbers in the higher education field to ensure that nobody who has only a Master's degree is able to get on the academic boards etc.

Mr Chairman, the honourable minister needs to look deeper into this, because he might find that that is part of the reason why some of those groups have been lobbying so strongly. He is rather wet behind the gills when it comes to some of the power games that have been played in this area. I remain extremely disappointed.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I cannot remain seated and hear that sort of nonsense being spruiked in this Chamber. This amendment enables the academic powers-that-be at the new university ...

Mr Leo: The snobs.

Mr HATTON: The member with a PhD in truck driving, he would know a lot about it, wouldn't he?

Mr Chairman, this particular amendment at least gives the option of saying this particular course is appropriately dealt with through a TAFE institute, a university or advanced education structure. To not insert this amendment would lock every associate diploma into the university structure, whether it should be there or not. Anyone who can stand in here and say that, by definition, everything at an associate diploma level should be taught at a university and should not be taught at a TAFE institute is really kidding himself. It is about time that members opposite grew up and stopped promoting mass education that will bring everything down to the lowest common denominator ...

Mr Ede: Oh, isn't that terrible, having everybody educated.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is that amendment 44.11 be agreed to.

The committee divided:



Ayes 16

Noes 6

Mr Collins

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Bell

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 21:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.12.

The director of the institute will be appointed by the council, after consultation with the board of the institute.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we support the amendment wholeheartedly.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.13.

This amendment is similar to 44.11. It covers the period before a director is appointed.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 21, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 22:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.6.

Mr Chairman, this would insert in clause 22(2)(c) after 'interests' the words 'of whom 2 shall be nominated by the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council (and of which 1 shall represent the Northern Territory Teachers Federation), and of whom a further 2 shall be nominated by a council of an equal number of representatives from the Master Builders Association, the Confederation of Industry, and the Small Business Association'.

I move this amendment hoping that we will be able to convince the government that there is a necessity to lock into the board of the institute representation from the employer groups and from trade union groups. The whole success of the area of technical and further education in recent years

has been due, I believe, to the bringing together of employers and unions and having them sit down and work out the skills that people need in the development of those courses. While the honourable minister may have been on some sort of firm ground in stating that we were in the forefront in terms of having members of the Trades and Labor Council on the council of the university, such representation is commonplace when it comes to colleges of advanced education right around Australia.

Mr Chairman, that is the major reason for proposing this amendment. It will lock those interest groups into the institute and ensure that the quality of the courses is promoted and upheld. The second reason is that it will have the effect that I was talking about in relation to the council. It will ensure that the board is not seen to be dominated by appointees of the minister. At the moment, the director of the institute is to be appointed by the council; there is a nominee of the Secretary of the Department of Education; there is 1 staff member and 1 student member; and there are 5 persons appointed by the minister. Even if we disregard the director, the imbalance between the nominated and elected members is 6 to 2 in favour of the minister. Mr Chairman, I believe that that is a grave imbalance. I believe the honourable minister will get up and talk about funding realities etc. In my discussions with him, I pointed out that we were prepared not to make an amendment to clause 23(3), which gives the minister the power to give instructions to the board after he has had consultation with the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council.

I accept that, in the final analysis, the minister has the right to give instructions to that board if there is a major area of dispute. But, that is very different from the day-to-day operations of the board, which I believe should be broadened. I acknowledge the fact that it is part of a university and has that degree of self-control and self-management. I believe that the amendment that we have proposed will correct that problem. It will bring people together. It will bring in the peak employer bodies and the peak trade union bodies which will select one of the people from the Northern Territory Teachers Federation thereby ensuring the staff representation, and a member of another union to ensure the maintenance of the balance that is so essential in boards of this nature. It will also bring to bear a degree of expertise and knowledge to ensure that the Board of the Institute of Technical and Further Education is able to carry out its functions adequately.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the government opposes the amendment. The people who have been placed on that particular board already represent the areas to which the honourable member is referring. We have people from construction. We have a person from the trade union movement. Business and commerce is represented. The automotive industry is represented, and we have groups covering hairdressing and fashion. The member for Stuart should not be concerned about it, because we will ensure that we provide what is best for the people of the Territory.

It is necessary to have input from people who know what they are about, and we have done that. It is very clear. As I have pointed out on many occasions, we have to ensure that the TAFE sector is able to meet the needs of industry, that the courses are developed along the lines required to service industry, and we will ensure that that happens. Mr Chairman, I am sorry that the honourable opposition spokesman on education feels that we are going about it the wrong way. However, I can assure him that we do have representatives from those groups and let us also remember that the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, through the staff representative, could also be involved. Mr Chairman, I really do not know what the opposition is on about. We oppose the amendment.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, consistency is a great virtue in matters such as this. I find it somewhat staggering that the minister is prepared to provide fairly direct involvement of unions and business groups at the university council level but not here. At the council level, he is prepared to seek advice from the unions and the business groups as to who should be their representatives. There is no similar provision here.

It is fair to say, without denigrating either the unions or the business community, that there is a stronger and more direct relationship between activities and courses undertaken at this level than there is at the university level. The member for Stuart pointed out that, all over Australia, that direct and strong link is recognised. There is direct union and business representation on the boards of the TAFE institutions. I cannot understand why he is not prepared to do it here whereas he is prepared to go at least some of the way at the University Council level. He says that there is a person on that board representing the interests of unions. Can I advise him that that person represents a very small proportion of the union movement in the Northern Territory. In fact, he would be one of the last people elected by the broader union movement to represent the interests of unionists.

Mr Padgham-Purich: He has been in the union movement for 35 years.

Mr SMITH: I do not mean to be unkind to the person concerned. However, it is a fact of life that, through his efforts, he has put himself on the outer of the union movement. He does not reflect the mainstream of the union movement in any shape or form. I expect that he would say that himself. It is very difficult for the minister to argue that there is a member on the board who is representing the interests of unionists when you appoint such a person to that position.

Those problems can be avoided if there is some involvement with the union movement. As I said last night, the people of the Territory and the organisations of the Territory have to own this institution both at the university level and the institute level if it is to work. You can only own an institution if you are made to feel part of it. The minister has gone at least some way towards accepting that principle at the University Council level yet, here, where there is a stronger and more direct link, he has not. I do not understand the logic in that. Since this exercise has gone so well tonight, I invite the honourable minister to postpone further discussion on this. It is a glaring inconsistency.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am happy to look at the situation further. However, it is different because TAFE is 85% funded by the Territory government. We want to ensure that the people on the board are representing those groups.

Further consideration of clause 22 postponed.

Clause 23 agreed to.

Clause 24:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.16.

The by-laws to be made by the council will provide for the election of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Academic Board and not for their appointment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman we have discussed this amendment and the next one with the minister and we are happy to agree to them.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.17.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 24, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 36:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am not moving an amendment but I would like some clarification. Clause 26 relates to the Student Association. I have received representations from one of the student organisations. The reference to 'Student Association' assumes that there will be a Student Association. The students may wish to call it a Northern Territory Association of Students or a Northern Territory Students Union.

The other point is that, by the use of by-laws or rules under this legislation, it does not appear that the Student Association or whatever it is called would have a corporate identity and the advantages that accrue from that such as limited liability. Perhaps I am wrong or it can incorporate under another act. I would like some advice from the minister on that.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, we could replace the capital letters in Student Association by lower case letters and leave it open.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That can be picked up as a Clerk's amendment.

Mr EDE: Clause 33 states: 'Subject to this section, fees or charges are payable to the university at such rates ...'. It provides a general ability to charge those fees and charges. I raised this in my second-reading speech but the honourable minister was pressed for time. I was hoping to obtain from him some statement that the reference to 'fees' will in no way give students cause to fear that we intend to set up a Bond-type university in the Northern Territory and that the fees mentioned in clause 33 are late fees or fees to be paid by overseas students studying at the university but do not relate to Northern Territorian students.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, there is a need to allow the university to charge such fees. People who are experiencing financial hardships have the opportunities provided by scholarships and bursary grants. I cannot see any problem with having a provision in the act to allow fees to be charged.

Clauses 25 to 36 agreed to.

Clause 37:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.18.

This corrects a typographical error.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 37, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 38:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.19.

This also corrects a typographical error.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 38, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 39 to 48:

Mr EDE: Clause 47 says that no proceedings of the council or of the board of the institute or a committee of either and no act done by the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or a delegate of the council or the Vice-Chancellor can be invalidated by reason only of 6 different causes. It refers to a defect in the appointment or the election and a person purporting to be a member of the council or a committee etc. It appears to me that this clause is drawn far more widely than is normal in these types of bills.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I indicated in the second-reading debate that, where possible, we have tried to relate provisions to those applying in other institutions of a similar nature. The answer is that this is 1 of the normal provisions included in such legislation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, clause 48 states that the university will not discriminate against or in favour of a person on the ground of that person's sex, religion, race, physical disability or political beliefs. I seek clarification on this because, within the last 10 years or so, a number of universities have initiated positive discrimination campaigns to attempt to assist people who, because of their backgrounds, found it extremely difficult to enter a university. Of course, once they are in the university, they have to comply with the full requirements of courses. I know that the University of Queensland has a program which assists Aboriginal people from the rural areas of Queensland to undertake degree studies. Of course, this does not mean that anybody receives a degree without competing on an equal basis. It simply gives those people a chance.

Another aspect of positive discrimination related to gender. It is often found, for example, that the number of people of Aboriginal descent is well below the level which could be expected in terms of their representation in the general community. A program of positive discrimination, in a situation where 2 people with equivalent qualifications, experience and aptitude, applied for a position, would award the position to the woman or the person of Aboriginal descent. Such a program in a university would operate to attempt to allow more women or more people of Aboriginal descent to move into academic positions because of their proportionately low representation in that area. I would like the Minister to comment on that sort of positive discrimination and whether or not it is precluded by section 48.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I note the member for Stuart's comments. This side of the House promotes equality, and I believe that programs of assistance such as those described would not be circumscribed.

Clauses 39 to 48 agreed to.

Clause 49:

Mr EDE: I move amendments 45.8 and 45.9.

Amendments 45.8 would insert in clause 49(2)(d) after 'Council', the words '(including committees or boards to consider the grant of tenure to staff)'. The intention of the amendment is to remove any doubt that the committee or boards which can be set up under this clause may include a committee or board to consider and grant tenure to staff in the university after it is established. We looked at various options to achieve this objective but the simplest one was to do so through a committee set up under the council by-laws.

Amendment 45.9 seeks to set up a tenure committee in the university. It would insert a clause 49(3A) setting out the membership of that committee as follows:

- (a) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic);
- (b) the head of the faculty or school of the university in which the staff member is employed;
- (c) a representative of the appropriate union covering the employment of the staff member to be considered for tenure; and
- (d) subject to the approval of the union representative specified in paragraph (c), a tenured staff member of the faculty or school in which the staff being considered for tenure is employed.

A further clause 49(3B) allows for a by-law to set up a tenure review committee to which an appeal may be made by a staff member who has not been granted tenure. Such a review committee is to consist of the following persons:

- (a) the Vice-Chancellor;
- (b) a representative of the appropriate union covering the employment of the staff member making the appeal (not being the union representative appointed under subsection (3A)(c); and
- (c) a person appointed by the members specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) as Chairman.

The intention of the amendments is to ensure that people who have already been employed for periods of less than 12 months at the DIT or the University College have that time counted as part of their service at the new institution in terms of applying for tenure after serving the 12-month qualifying period. Staff at DIT have been able for many years to achieve tenure through a system such as the one we are proposing in contrast to staff of the University College who are employed on contracts. The tenure review committee will grant tenure as it sees fit, which does not mean that everybody will achieve tenure by right of having occupied a position for the appropriate period. However, a procedure will exist and appropriate people will have positions on the tenure committee. People will be assessed by their peers and their superiors. FAUSA and UACA are agreed on this. They believe that it will give their members much more comfort and security and ensure that they will feel better about moving into the new university.

I hope that the minister will not reject these amendments out of hand but either will accept them or give some indication that he is prepared to

negotiate further. It is very important that we retain the high-quality staff we now have, people who have been there for a number of years and who will stick with us through the merger. They need to feel that they can build careers in the Northern Territory. We need people with experience of the Territory so that the university has stability rather than being a place where people stay for 2 or 3 years. We need research programs and other programs which suit the particular needs of the Territory and that will only come about if we have long-term staff. I believe that tenure is an essential component of that and I ask the minister to support our amendments.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart has had a pretty good day and I am sorry that, in this instance, I am unable to agree with him. The Interim Vice-Chancellor has negotiated with the relevant unions on this matter and, subsequently, the Interim Council has agreed to a proposal that all staff of the University College of the Northern Territory whose performance is satisfactory and who have completed 12 months service by 31 December 1988 should be appointed with tenure on 1 January 1989. Those who have not completed 12 months service should be considered for tenure on completion of a year's service.

Mr Chairman, similar arrangements are already in place for the Darwin Institute of Technology staff. That has already occurred. Future appointments made after 31 October 1988 should be either by contract or tenurable following a probationary period of 4 years. Since this matter is being handled by the Interim Council, there is no need for legislative amendment. I believe the opposition's amendment can be accommodated in whatever committee structure the council establishes to advise it on how satisfactory performance or tenure should be determined. I am indicating to the honourable member that the matter has been discussed with the academic unions and I believe that they are satisfied with the arrangements that have been agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, as I understand it, what the minister is saying is that they may end up with our system, but he is not prepared to legislate for that system. Who will decide in the interim period? He is saying that the system is set up and that people will become tenurable at the completion of their 12 months service. Has a system been set up to decide who will decide on who does and who does not become tenurable or is that still to be decided?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I believe those details are with the appropriate people for decision. I can find out for the honourable member, Mr Chairman, but I do not believe that it should hold up the committee stage tonight.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 49 agreed to.

Clauses 50 to 53 agreed to.

Clause 54:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clause 54.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we agree with this. It was impossible as it stood. In our discussions with the honourable minister, we pointed that out to him. It appears that he has come to the same conclusion with regard to the Interim Council as it was originally constituted.

Clause 54 negatived.

New clause 54:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.20.

The members of the advisory council appointed by the Minister for Education consist of the persons referred to in the original clause 54(1). As the necessary elections for the staff members have already been conducted at the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology, that clause was unnecessary. New clause 54 will provide that the persons who are the elected members of the advisory council at the date on which the act commences operation will become the members of the Interim Council constituted by the act until 31 December 1989. New subclause 54(2) will provide that the present Interim Chief Executive Officer will become the Interim Chief Executive Officer under the act.

New subclause 54(3) provides that the Interim Chancellor and the Interim Deputy Chancellor elected by the advisory council will become the holders of those offices respectively under the act.

New clause 54 agreed to.

Clause 55:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.21.

The Interim Council will be empowered to make by-laws with respect to any matters about which the permanent council will be empowered to make by-laws, including the procedure to be followed in continuing and disposing of proceedings for misconduct which have been commenced against a student of the University College or the Darwin Institute of Technology.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 55, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 56 to 60 agreed to.

Schedule 1:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.22.

As the Interim Chancellor has been elected, the paragraph will be amended to empower him to call the first meeting of the Interim Council after the commencement of the act.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.23.

Mr Chairman, in the event of a casual vacancy on the Interim Council, the minister may fill the vacancy. If the casual vacancy is that of an elected staff member, the replacement will be appointed from among the relevant staff, for example, the University College of the Northern Territory or the Darwin Institute of Technology. If the vacancy is that of the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Interim Chancellor or Interim Deputy Chancellor, the replacement will be appointed to fill the vacant office.



Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am quite outraged by this. Once again, we have a situation where, if there is a vacancy, the minister does not call another election and the council does not call another election - nobody calls another election. The council continues, but with a ministerial nomination instead of an elected person.

Mr Chairman, the whole idea of the balance of the membership is to obtain that community feeling and breadth of views on the Interim Council. We had this debate earlier with regard to the council. This allows for a situation where, if a councillor dropped out tomorrow, during the following 18 months, people would not be represented by somebody whom they had elected but by somebody selected by the minister. I cannot tolerate that. I am completely against it. It is not a situation that members of this House should support as believers in democracy and believers in this university. If a vacancy occurs within the next 12 months, a replacement should be elected. There should be an election, Mr Chairman.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I believe I have answered that question previously and the answer remains the same.

Mr EDE: Why is it necessary? If somebody drops off within the next month or so or next week, why is it not possible to hold another election?

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I do not know what the honourable member is on about. I have mentioned that it is normal for those involved to make the decisions in relation to that. If an election is required, if it is to be for a long period of time, it will be looked after. What is your concern?

Mr EDE: This is the Interim Council. Mr Chairman, the minister is looking at the wrong amendment. In this case, the minister will appoint a person where a vacancy occurs. The other had the council appointing for a short period of time. Under this, the minister appoints for the whole period of the Interim Council.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, we are talking about an Interim Council which will run until the end of the year.

Mr Ede: No. Next year.

Mr HARRIS: The member for Stuart is laughing. He is trying to prolong the proceedings. If he is concerned about it, he can take it up with me afterwards. I am quite happy to talk about it.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.24.

As the elections have already been conducted, the reference to it in subparagraph (a) will be deleted.

Mr EDE: Once again, Mr Chairman, there will now be no elections. Elections were held which everybody believed were for members to be on the Interim Council until the end of 1988. That is now to run for a further year, but there is no provision for the election of a replacement member if a vacancy occurs. It will be filled by a ministerial appointee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.25.

As the Interim Council will become the Interim Council under the act, the provision in paragraph 6(d) is unnecessary and should be deleted.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.10.

This is consequential on the amendment that we moved earlier when attempting to set up a tenure board or tenure committee for the university. We lost that amendment and therefore there is no point in proceeding with a statement on this. It states that:

Where the length of service (including service with the college or the institute) of a servant transferred by clause 3(1)(a) does not exceed 12 months until a date later than 1 January 1989, the servant shall be entitled, as soon as practicable after the expiry of the 12-month period, to apply to a committee or board, appointed under the by-laws to consider and grant tenure, for tenure.

On reflection, it would appear that that is exactly what the honourable minister said was the agreement Professor Caro had negotiated and that the council had stated that it would accept. Given that, Mr Chairman, possibly the honourable minister could indicate whether he is willing to accept it.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I am not opposing this simply for the sake of opposition. The council of a university would normally make the by-laws concerning the granting of tenure and changes that would be too restrictive to enshrine in legislation. Requirements have been changing over the years. It is best to let the council make such by-laws.

Amendment negatived.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.11.

This is to insert into clause 3(3) after 'altered' the words '(but, until 1 September 1993, not reduced or lessened)'. As I said in my second-reading speech, this is an essential component of ensuring that the people who are there now have that umbrella to take them through the period of the merger and into the new university. It is crucial that we do not lose our current staff who have been working in the university or in the DIT for a number of years. They will experience a period of upheaval where they will have to negotiate work practices and different relationships with their peers and different bosses. A whole new system will be imposed on them and it will be a time of extreme frustration for some. I think that we should indicate to them that we will guarantee that their existing salaries and conditions of service will not be reduced or lessened until 1 September 1993. Whatever residual misgivings people may have about the composition of this or that group or whatever dissatisfaction may exist about this or that, the bottom line is that their salaries and conditions would be guaranteed until 1 September 1993.

I ask the minister to support this because it will not hurt anybody. I am quite sure that the honourable minister does not intend to strip away peoples'

terms and conditions. It will ensure that people will work their way through these difficult times and continue with us.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I do not believe that it is necessary to have that provision inserted. All of those working at the University College of the Northern Territory, provided they are satisfactory, are protected. The matters of salary levels and working conditions are examined by the appropriate bodies.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, paragraph (4) substantially provides the protections for any transferred personnel. It basically says that the conditions shall be the same as the conditions of his or her employment with the college, the institute or the Interim Council immediately before 1 January 1989. There is a protection, subject to any specific award variation. There is a continuity and a protection individually for the staff.

Mr EDE: That is not right. It does not provide the assurances that people who are there now want. Wages is only 1 component. There is a whole range of terms and conditions including air fares etc. It is all very well to say that the salary will remain the same. There may be a substantial decrease in the total salary package by removing other conditions that people may have negotiated such as rent subsidies, air fares or whatever.

Mr Chairman, I hope the minister does not reject this because he and I both know that there are many very nervous people there. The Leader of the Opposition talked about how necessary it is to give people that feeling of security to continue at the university. We do not want people saying that they will pull the pin or invoke industrial action over this. I implore the minister to think again. It is essential that he give people that security.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I will take on board what the member for Stuart has said but, as I indicated earlier, I believe that the processes that have been put in place are adequate and that people should not fear for their positions. Those who have been working at the University College and at the Darwin Institute of Technology have been examining all of those matters and they will continue to discuss them. I do not believe that it is necessary to include the words that the honourable member has proposed in his amendment. We oppose the amendment.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I rise to support the member for Stuart. In a sense, we are talking about nothing, particularly from a government point of view. I accept that, over the time scale that we are talking about, nothing is likely to happen that will adversely affect the existing terms and conditions of the employees who have been compulsorily transferred. In another sense, we are talking about a great deal. We are talking about the sense of security that people want during what for them is a period of turmoil in their lives. Let us not forget that the whole basis of their employment is about to change. Although they may work in the same office or teach in the same building or clean the same rooms, they will report to a new authority as their boss.

It will be a time of disturbance and confusion that will cause considerable anxiety for many people. If we can put a protection in place for a period of time for basic things such as wages and other terms and conditions of employment, we should consider it. It will not cost the government anything. It will give it an enormous amount of goodwill among a number of voters in very marginal seats in the northern suburbs. Even from a political point of view, there is a good argument for doing it.

More importantly, this sort of protection is certainly useful. It was a protection that public servants enjoyed on their transfer from the Commonwealth Public Service to the Northern Territory Public Service in 1978. That has now changed but it was certainly a useful buffer for public servants who were looking at the prospect of making a leap from the Commonwealth Public Service to the Northern Territory Public Service in 1978 and 1979. The same principle applies. It will not cost the government anything and it will offer a degree of certainty and security to the personnel involved. I urge the government to reconsider its opposition to this amendment.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the compulsory transferees from the Commonwealth Public Service were in a similar situation in that they were very unsure of themselves. They were provided with a lifelong guarantee. We are not asking for a lifelong guarantee; we are asking for a 5-year guarantee. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it will not cost a brass razoo. What we are saying is that each individual should be given a guarantee that his terms and conditions will not be reduced and that he will not lose out in this transfer. Surely people deserve that degree of security. Some people who have spoken with me in relation to this issue have been union members but students have also expressed their concern. They have done so on the basis of attempting to secure for us the very best possible University of the Northern Territory and it is quite unworthy to assert that they are only looking at the issue in terms of personal gain.

Some concern was expressed to me in relation to a statement made in the Arbitration Tribunal after a certain case involving the Power and Water Authority that, if the government was successful in reducing terms and conditions such as air fares, the next group to lose its air fares would be people employed at the university. The fact is that the employees at the Power and Water Authority successfully defended their conditions and it may be that the people employed at the university are no longer under threat. The fact is, however, that they feel threatened because those remarks were made. The problem can be overcome at no cost if there is no plan to reduce the terms and conditions of these people. The government can accept this amendment and it will not cost it a brass razoo. If the government does have a plan to reduce their terms and conditions, it would be worried about putting in this bottom line. I would like the minister to advise us that he will accept this amendment so that he can give those people the assurance that their terms and conditions will not be reduced for the next 5 years.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I would like to take issue with the member for Stuart on this. If one cares to study the terms and conditions of staff at DIT and the University College, one will see that, based on superior educational qualifications, the merger would place people from the University College in charge of people from DIT. In comparing people with PhDs and people who have ordinary degrees, one would expect a discrepancy in wages which may well run into thousands of dollars. The member for Stuart tends to argue that nobody should be disadvantaged. If a person from the University College with a PhD happened to find that he was earning thousands of dollars less than a person from the DIT with inferior qualifications, the honourable member's concern that nobody should be disadvantaged means that he would want the first person's salary increased considerably. For him to claim that it would not cost anybody a brass razoo is silly. The poor old taxpayer would be the one to pay. It is a thorny problem which the minister will have to address very carefully and I wish him well in the difficult task ahead.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I hope that the minister will rise and tell us whether he has any plans to give some comfort or security to the people concerned.

Mr HARRIS: Come on! I have given them comfort throughout the whole process.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.26.

Provisions will be included for the continuity of the operation of by-laws made by the Interim Council until repealed or amended by the permanent council.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.27.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Postponed clause 22:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I seek leave to withdraw my amendment 45.6 which I moved earlier when the committee was considering clause 22.

Leave granted.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 49.1.

There is a need for continuity, as was pointed out during the earlier discussion on this clause. I accept that, but I must say that the member for Stuart makes things difficult when he discusses sensitive issues in the community before taking the trouble to sit down with me and talk about them. That can create terrible problems. In this case, however, I have accepted his proposal.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister's comment about my actions is very wide of the mark. I circulated my amendments. If there was something that was a matter of such national security that it should not be a subject for open debate, he could have spoken to me about it. I do not resile from raising issues that are brought to me by people, whether they be constituents or people who operate within the areas of my shadow portfolios.

In respect of clause 22, I am becoming quite schizoid because the minister is such a mixture of good and bad. I cannot agree with him at all on the other issue but I compliment him on his approach to this amendment. We have a philosophical difference about how people should become members of boards and committees but we have come a long way towards agreeing about which groups should have input or representation. The minister's amendment will place on the board a person with expertise or experience in matters relating to trade unions to be appointed after consultation with trade unions. The same applies in relation to a person with business and industry expertise. There will also be 3 persons representing a broad range of community interests. I compliment the minister on the amendment. It will strengthen the TAFE section in the new university and will ensure that the people who come out of that TAFE area will be better qualified and will have the skills that we need to develop the Territory.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I rise to support the amendment. There has been a great deal of discussion during the second reading of this bill and subsequently about the role of the university. When that occurs, we often forget the very valuable role that is played by the TAFE institute and the important role its board will play. The work of the Community College and the Darwin Institute of Technology, in my view, have been quite significantly beneficial to the Northern Territory. As a TAFE institute should be, it has been particularly responsive to the needs of the community, and the involvement of the community at many levels within such an institute is very important. It does differ fundamentally from the work of a university. The need for a TAFE institute to be able to react to the latest skills demands, in particular, is far more immediate than, for example, a university. The reaction to particular industrial growth and therefore skills requirements has a very direct bearing on the work of a TAFE institute. It is important that it react and operate quite closely with the business community and the trade union movement, the worker and the employer, right across the spectrum.

One of its strengths has been that wide-ranging representation. I must reiterate the minister's words that, even though this change may be seen to be bringing that into effect, it is not. It is recognising the already existing situation and the situation, in fact, that has existed since the original creation of the Community College. It is recognising legislatively the value of that broad interest level across the community. I support this amendment and I look forward to the institute carrying out this very vital and important role in much of the skills development and skills training, technical and further educational work that will be very important to support much of the industrial development occurring within the Northern Territory.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.14.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 45.7.

This amendment seeks to omit clause 22(3) and insert the following: '(3) the board shall elect one of its members to be chairman'. Mr Chairman, what could be more reasonable than that? On our first day of sitting, we elect our Chairman. You yourself were elected to that position and therefore I am sure you would support this principle, Mr Chairman. I am quite confident that the honourable minister, who is a great believer in democratic principles, will support this position. It will make the chairman's position that much more powerful. It will make him so much more powerful in his relationships with the board and in his relationships with the council and will strengthen his authority throughout the institute. He will be there not because he was appointed by the minister, but because the people wanted him there.

As honourable members know, nothing gives more strength to the arm than the knowledge that you are here because the people want you here. That power will be provided to the chairman in his relationship with his peers and his relationship to the people on the council when he attends council meetings, as is his right. In his negotiations within the board, he will be strengthened by the knowledge that it has put him there and that it will give him that support. The honourable minister did not communicate to me that he would support this amendment, but I am sure that that was simply an oversight and he will do so now.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I can assure the honourable member that it is not a simple matter of an oversight. The government opposes this amendment. It is not normal for TAFE institutions to elect their chairman. They are normally appointed. I indicated clearly at the start that we are looking at ensuring that the Institute of TAFE is responsible and does make decisions relating to the future of Territorians in a manner that government sees fit. Because we are providing the majority of funds to that area, I believe that the way in which we have done this is appropriate.

Amendment negatived.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 44.15.

The by-laws to be made by the council, which will affect the board of the institute, will be made after consultation with the board.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, it is appropriate that we do not finish in disagreement with each other. We fully support this amendment. It will ensure that the council does not adopt a domineering attitude towards the board and that it will in fact undertake consultation before making any by-law which will affect the operations of the board.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I believe that the bill as amended in committee is substantially different from the bill that we had before us on 25 August 1988. I do not think anybody who sat through the last couple of hours would disagree with that. We have processed close to 60 amendments and we agreed on the vast majority of those. In many of the areas where we had very substantial disagreements in philosophy, we were able to negotiate around those areas and to find the essential core that both sides agreed on as being necessary for the advancement of the new university and for its success. Having found that core, those were then put into amendments which are now part of the new bill which will soon become an act.

Mr Speaker, I think that augurs very well for the University of the Northern Territory and its success. It will provide a clear message to those who wish to go there, whether as students or as teachers, that members on both sides of the House have a fundamental commitment to making it work well and making it a university of the very highest standard.

Mr Speaker, I give my best wishes to the new University of the Northern Territory and all who sail in her.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the officers of the minister's department and, indeed, to the officers of the University College and the DIT. The draftsmen were very heavily involved in this very important piece of legislation. As has happened on a number of occasions in this Assembly, this is historic

legislation that we are passing through the Assembly this evening. Whilst we sit here and debate these issues over a few hours, the work that has occurred behind the scenes in the preparation of Cabinet submissions and liaison with federal government, particularly on an issue such as this, has been very extensive. I am sure that honourable members are aware that the hours worked by staff in meeting deadlines for Cabinet submissions, deadlines for submission to the federal government and deadlines for legislative drafting programs are very extensive indeed. It is a credit to all the officers that this matter has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. I commend the minister for his handling of the affair from the beginning. I am very pleased to note that the legislation passed through the House with only 1 division in the committee stage. Indeed, I do not think that even that division was strictly necessary.

Mr Smith: You are not going to spoil this moment of goodwill, are you?

Mr PERRON: Well, it would have been nice if it had gone through without a division.

Mr Smith: If you had been reasonable, it would have been possible.

Mr PERRON: But you did not call for the division anyway. Mr Speaker, I have made my point.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, a great deal of work occurs behind the scenes that makes it possible for us to put forward legislation that is for the betterment of Territorians and, in order to achieve that, many people should be thanked. I would like to go on record with the Chief Minister in thanking all of those people involved, particularly the staff of the Department of Education, the draftsmen and women who have been involved and also the people from the University College of the Northern Territory and the Darwin Institute of Technology. In the latter case, I would like to make particular reference to Professor Thompson and Kevin Davis.

As I indicated, it has been a difficult task and a lot of goodwill has been demonstrated to reach the stage we have reached today. I am very pleased that we were able to work together in relation to some aspects of the bill to improve the legislation. Could I impress on members that there is still a way to go. I ask them to be aware of the sensitivities that are still to be addressed. It is a difficult time and there are some awkward decisions that will need to be taken in the not-too-distant future. We have a respected and highly-qualified team working under the guidance of Professor Caro, the Warden of the University of Queensland. I can assure honourable members that we will ensure that the university's degrees have high standing, not only in the Territory but throughout the world.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

DISASTERS AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 121)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this bill which is self-explanatory. It concerns the role of the Commissioner of Police in relation to disasters or emergencies. The Commissioner of Police is to be the Territory Controller. The opposition supports the bill.



Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 125)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is quite a large bill, but it deals with a number of matters with which we have no great quarrel. It seeks a broadening of the stamp duty base, introduces some administrative efficiencies and fiddles around the edges of the dreaded bed tax - or as members opposite prefer to call it, the dreaded tourism marketing levy - by exempting caravan parks from the bed tax except where they have on-site vans.

The stamp duty base on conveyancing transactions is extended to the transfer of shares or units in a company or unit trust where that company or trust is set up temporarily for the purpose of holding and selling land valued at more than \$1m and comprising more than 80% of the company's assets. A person who holds a greater than 50% interest in such an entity is liable to lodge a return. The stamp duty base is extended also to transactions made orally - that is, where no documents have been executed.

Mr Speaker, to make a brief general comment, obviously legislation such as this is eminently supportable at a time when we are all looking at ways of more equitably distributing the tax base and at raising more money without increasing the tax load on individuals. Wiping out inequities and putting in place efficiencies is certainly one of the ways to do that. This bill does attempt to broaden the stamp duty base and we have no problems with that.

Administrative savings are potentially gained from the provisions enabling the commissioner to approve certain persons to lodge returns for levying of stamp duty rather than submitting all documents. Governments right throughout Australia should be attempting to reduce the level of red tape. That small step is a positive one and it certainly has our support.

In relation to the dreaded tourism marketing duty, I received instructions from my colleagues to move an amendment to remove the duty. I found that I could not because it relates to a money matter and only ministers of the Crown can move motions in this Assembly which have the effect of reducing or increasing taxes or introducing new ones. Our good intentions in that area have been thwarted.

Mr Manzie: I thought you supported it.

Mr SMITH: I supported it at one stage and was soundly chastised by my colleagues. They were right and I was wrong because of the unrest that it has caused in the industry and among a significant percentage of the visiting public who use our hotels, motels and caravan parks etc. Has it been worth it? That is why we have formally changed our position in relation to the tourism marketing duty. However, as we are unable to change that whilst in opposition, that matter will have to wait until we are in government. In the meantime, anything that improves the tourism marketing duty will gain our support. This amendment removes the inequity whereby a person towing a

caravan is required to pay the 2½% tourism marketing duty at a caravan park. It was one of the few taxes anywhere on mobile homes and we are very pleased to see the inequity removed.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, to comment on the Leader of the Opposition's remarks in relation to the tourism marketing levy, it is a shame that he has that view. The tourism marketing levy is a good revenue-raising measure. It is quite broad in its application and is commonplace around the world as honourable members have been told many times. There have been difficulties with its settling down in the Northern Territory and that has been due mainly to the resistance of people who do not want to accept it, as is their right. However, I think the problems have been overplayed in many respects. The duty will raise a couple of million dollars in a full year. That is a significant sum of money and refutes the views of some who held that it would raise only a small sum and that the administration would not be worth the effort. It is worth the effort and we will certainly be persisting with it. Where it is necessary to amend it, we will do that. In my view, it has been a success. The implementation of any new revenue-raising measure is always unpopular and requires a little settling down.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 41.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 41.2 and 41.3.

Mr Chairman, I have complete explanatory information on every clause and every amendment to the bill. I appreciate that taxation bills, particularly those concerned with closing loopholes, are very complex technically. As all the states do, we follow court cases in this country and try to keep up with the dodges aimed at the avoidance of duties and taxes. We are doing nothing out of the ordinary in this respect. These amendments are necessary to correct this section.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7 negatived.

New clause 7:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 41.5.

Mr Chairman, this amendment substitutes a new clause 7 to clarify the concession provided to caravan parks. It ensures that accommodation provided by caravan parks is placed on an equal footing with that provided by motels and hotels. As honourable members are aware, the intention of the amendment is that persons who are providing their own accommodation in caravan parks will not be required to pay the tourism marketing levy. However, it would have been inequitable to exempt the fixed accommodation on the caravan parks, such as demountables, units or on-site caravans, from the tourism marketing levy. It would place them in a different position to other motels and hotels. That is the reason for this amendment.

New clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 41.6 and 41.7.

These amendments provide that all statements to be made under the section are to be in an approved form and are to be lodged within 2 months after beneficial ownership has changed. Obviously, this refers to the duty.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I was of the opinion, and I am sure that the community is also of the opinion, that the so-called bed tax applies right across the board in caravan parks. I would ask that the media be used to clarify the situation so that people will understand the facts. I know that I have been guilty of saying that the tax is forcing people out of caravan parks. That is obviously not true and the message needs to be got across.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, there has been some confusion. I can assure the honourable member that the Tax Commissioner has been writing to caravan park operators in the Territory to make the situation very clear to them. I am sure that any confusion which exists will quickly evaporate.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, during these sittings, the opportunities to ask questions have been limited for various reasons. I have a couple of issues on which I am seeking information and, hopefully, the relevant ministers may be able to supply it at some stage.

Recently I have had a number of inquiries from people in Alice Springs in relation to letters they have received from the Land Titles Office indicating that they can submit their leasehold titles and have them converted to freehold. That has come as some surprise to many of these people, some of whom have been around for a long time. I have been able to assure them that this process is a result of the government's action in the very early part of the 1980s when it set about converting leasehold titles in towns to freehold titles without cost. It surprised me that the results of this process have taken so long to flow through. I would like the Minister for Lands and Housing to advise me what progress has taken place and how long it will be before this work of freeholding titles is actually sorted out.

The second matter I wish to raise relates to X- and R-rated videos. I recall a proposal to put X-rated videos into a closed section in shops. We never did get around to that and it has been nationally known that the Territory, together with Canberra, is an area where there is access to X-rated videos. I know the Attorney-General made a few noises recently when the Conference of Attorneys-General came down against these videos. I certainly am against them and many of my constituents also feel very strongly that they add nothing to family life. Many people who commit horrendous crimes do so after watching videos whose content is violent, sadistic and indecent. Even some M-rated videos leave much to be desired and are detrimental to family life and to the country. I ask the Attorney-General what action the government is proposing to take because people are becoming pretty anxious.

The next issue I wish to raise relates to the responsibilities of the Minister for Health and Community Services. I understand that the chaplain at the Royal Darwin Hospital has been paid for many years by the government. It has been brought to my attention, and I recall hearing it a couple of years ago, that the chaplain at the Alice Springs Hospital, Mrs Brenda Macdonald, has been doing that work on a totally voluntary basis. She is well-respected in the hospital and I believe that what is good enough for one should be good enough for the other. I would like the minister to take that on board and to reply to it.

My final question, which concerns the Minister for Industries and Development, relates to the treatment of crocodile skins. I understand that he has had an approach from a gentleman who has worked in the leather trade for many years and who believes that he can treat crocodile skins in the manner required to add value to the crocodile industry. We talked about crocodile meat bringing \$28 a kilogram. Crocodile skins sell at a very high price but, at present, they have to go overseas for tanning prior to being used in the manufacture of handbags etc. I would be interested to know about the minister's response to the approach he has received. I understand that there has been a request for a few thousand dollars, as is usual in these cases. I am sure that all members would be very keen to see the establishment of an enterprise which can add value to this Territory product.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight in the adjournment debate to raise a couple of issues I have wanted to speak on for some time. First, I would like to pay tribute to the late Mr Phillip Roberts who died in Darwin in the middle of last month. I would like to pay tribute also to his family because I believe they have contributed in a very big way to the Northern Territory's development and the progress that my people have made in the Territory.

The late Phillip Roberts was the first Aboriginal health worker during the 1950s. He died when he was only 66. Recently, he left Roper River to

come to live in the electorate of my colleague, the member for Arafura. Mr Roberts was of the Alawa Tribe which resides at Roper River at Ngukurr. He was educated by the Church Missionary Society and very easily mastered the English language which, at that time, would have been very difficult in anyone's terms. However, with the assistance of the Church Missionary Society, he succeeded in gaining a command of the English language which some take for granted nowadays in the Northern Territory.

His father, Barnabas Roberts, was a lay preacher and he also was educated in the way that Mr Phillip Roberts was. Most members would be aware of his brother if they have had anything to do with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I refer to Silas Roberts, who served during the days when Mr Harry Giese was the Director of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the early 1930s and through to the 1950s. Mr Speaker, you would recall that Silas Roberts died 3 or 4 years ago and was buried at Roper River.

Members who study the history of the Northern Territory would be aware of the excellent contribution that the late Mr Roberts made to the health of Aboriginal people. He assisted doctors, such as Dr Langford, in the early 1950s. He travelled with him to visit Aboriginal communities where they tried to cure the sickness of leprosy. Mr Speaker, you would appreciate that, at that time, leprosy was a sickness for which people did not have a cure. Our people were afraid of it and the isolation of remote areas made it very difficult, at that stage, for any European to try to travel in the harshness of Arnhem Land. The late Mr Roberts worked very capably, sometimes dealing with very nomadic tribes, assisting them to understand and appreciate the techniques that were being brought out to Arnhem Land by way of medicine. He was very successful in this work.

He was also very successful in other ways. Douglas Lockwood wrote a book about him called 'I, The Aboriginal'. At that stage, Mr Roberts was living at Nightcliff, and I believe that when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was in Darwin, she took the time to visit the late Mr Roberts at his home in Nightcliff.

Mr Speaker, after saying those words, I would like to pass on my condolences to the family. I would not be able to tell you exactly how many family members are left at Roper River. They are scattered around the Northern Territory. As I said earlier, the last that I knew of him was that he was living at Patonga on the outskirts of the Kakadu National Park. I would like to put on record that Mr Harry Giese said that the late Mr Roberts was one of the greatest Aboriginal men that he has ever come across. He praised him for his contribution to the well-being of my people in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the other matter that I would like to raise tonight is equally important in terms of some of the concerns that my people have. Recently, the Northern Territory witnessed a most tragic massacre. We heard the news on 28 or 29 September about a family in Arnhem Land being massacred by a person who had lived there with them for some time. I was very sad about it, as were many people in Arnhem Land. We do not know how it happened. We are still trying to find the reason for it. However, I am upset at the fact that the NT News, which has a monopoly in the Territory to be able to print such stories, published an issue on 29 September which had a photograph of the deceased on the front page. That is the worst thing that I have seen in the NT News with respect to the cultural aspects and the differences in our beliefs. Some of my people are very sensitive about those things. Given the fact that a person had just murdered 5 people, a month or so ago, Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: I should caution the member for Arnhem that the matter which he is speaking about, if not sub judice, is very close to it. I suggest that he be very careful of anything he says in relation to that incident.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I take back whatever I said in respect of the events that happened there. I would still like to express my concern at the report in the NT News on the hunt for a person in the area where the alleged massacre had taken place. In the Northern Territory, one paper has a monopoly on advising us on matters of importance on a day-to-day basis. Given that 30% of the Territory population is Aboriginal, NT News reporters should be aware of some of the matters which are very sensitive to our people. I speak for myself and for the member for Arafura and most of the people whom we represent within our electorates. However, not only in the top part of the Northern Territory but also in the central part of Australia, headlines of that sort do not encourage good race relationships. Having more cultural awareness, at least the ABC displayed some sensibility in not portraying photographs of the deceased. As you may have heard, Mr Speaker, one of the deceased was a very well-known artist whose work is seen right throughout Australia and even overseas.

For the people in the Oenpelli Maningrida area to see, 2 days later, the face of a deceased person on the front page of the NT News was emotionally very disturbing. Several people have telephoned me expressing their grave concern not only about this latest action by the NT News but about the attitude of that newspaper to my people generally. I will refer to an example that occurred some time ago and the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services will correct me if I am wrong. He was announcing a major employment strategy of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the NT News published a cartoon indicating that an Aboriginal person would put a goanna in the fridge. I believe that the honourable minister wrote to the NT News saying that he hoped that cartoon did not illustrate the mentality of the publisher of the paper. Some of these issues are very sensitive, particularly those such as the one that appeared on 29 September. I ask the NT News to be more cautious in its treatment of matters of that kind in the future.

Mr MCCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, the comments of the member for Arnhem with regard to Phillip Roberts prompted me to rise to my feet. I met Phillip Roberts for the first time in the early 1960s when he came to Bathurst Island to carry out a health survey. In fact, he stayed on the island for some considerable time. I was very impressed with the work that he was undertaking at the time and with the obvious strength of character of the man. Quite clearly, Phillip Roberts was a man of great substance. He was able to fit in with the staff and local people of what was to him an entirely new community, take part in what was occurring there and, at the same time, remain very dedicated to the job that he was sent there to do. He did that job thoroughly.

I grew to admire him a great deal in that period. Our paths never crossed after that but I did hear about him from time to time and was always interested to know where he was and what he was doing. I was very sorry to hear of his death. I join with the member for Arnhem in expressing sympathy and concern for his family. I trust that all members will join with me in those comments.

Mr Speaker, there is one other point that I would like to raise in relation to comments by the member for Stuart in a previous debate in this Assembly. He referred to the apprenticeship numbers in the Northern Territory and compared them with apprenticeship numbers in other states. Before I read

out the real figures, I would like to quote from the comments of the member for Stuart which indicate that the truth is not particularly important to him. His main aim in life is to state supposed figures and facts because he is able to deliver them so unblushingly that people may tend to believe them. It has been said often that facts do not mean much to the member for Stuart and this indicates clearly that that is the case.

The honourable member said: 'In employment and training, one thing that has really worried me has been that the number of commencements of apprenticeships have been trending downwards since 1985-86'. Nobody can have a great problem with that. There has been a slight trend in some areas but not across the board. 'These commencements in apprenticeships, which are figures which I believe were provided by the Northern Territory government, are in stark contrast to what is happening nationally. In fact, since 1982-83, the apprenticeship intake has increased by some 60% on a national level'. Mr Speaker, I will point out quite clearly later that that is not so.

Mr Ede: Yes it is.

Mr McCARTHY: He went on: 'In the Northern Territory, at the very best, the figures are bumping along at an equal level but to me they appear to be trending downwards. We are not keeping up with the national programs in being able to increase the number of apprentices. It would appear to me, and it is starting to appear to everybody around the Territory, that almost alone this Northern Territory government has slumbered while the states have been out there getting on with the job'.

He went on to say: 'You have to admit that a state like Victoria, with the highest growth in the land and the lowest unemployment, South Australia which has moved into technology and defence-related industries, Western Australia incorporated, all were affected by the slump in terms of trade but, instead of sitting back and saying, "the federal government", all the time, they got in there, got stuck into it and got on with the job'.

Mr Speaker, those were the comments of the member for Stuart. Let me point out the facts. These are the facts which are taken from the same publication, I might add, that I believe the member for Stuart was referring to.

Mr Ede: Actually, I was quoting from a press release of John Dawkins.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart said that there has been a 60% increase in apprenticeship commencements nationally since 1982-83. He said the Northern Territory is not keeping pace with that. He compared the Northern Territory's performance with what he said were the go-ahead policies of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia where, despite the general economic situation, those states were doing well in respect of apprenticeship commencements. The fact is that the number of apprentices in training nationally has not increased by 60% since 1982-83 but has decreased by 0.7%. The number decreased from 138 843 in 1983 to 137 834 in June 1987. That is a decrease of 0.7%. These are the latest figures available from the publication of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Training's publication entitled 'Apprenticeship Statistics 1977-78 to 1986-87'.

The situation in the Northern Territory for the period 1983-87 is a 10.6% increase from 1159 apprentices in 1983 to 1282 in 1987. That is quite different from the figures given by the member for Stuart who claimed that

there had been an increase nationally of 60% and, most likely, a decrease in the Northern Territory.

The member for Stuart then chose to draw a comparison with Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Let us look at the statistics from 1983 to 1987. In 1983, Victoria had 38 216 apprentices in training and, in 1987, there were 43 661. That is an increase of 14.2% - not a bad effort. In South Australia, in 1983, there were 9647 apprentices in training and, in 1987, this had increased to 11 236 - an increase of 16.4%. Again, that is quite good. In Western Australia incorporated - and I can guess where the honourable member gets his information for Western Australia - there was a downturn in that time. In 1983, there were 12 089 apprentices in training compared to 12 065 in 1987, a decrease of 0.19%. So much for Western Australia incorporated.

I thought it was very important that I bring that to the notice of members because it makes it quite clear that the member for Stuart has little regard for the truth. He likes to offer figures that suit him and which have no relevance to the facts and the facts I have stated have, quite clearly, put him in his place.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have just had a perfect example of the honourable minister's ability to compare apples with oranges, then compare them both with pears and come up with peanuts. I will not answer that in detail right now because I have 2 other issues that I wish to address.

The first relates to a point raised by the member for Sadadeen regarding Brenda Macdonald and the fine work that she has been doing at the Alice Springs Hospital. I wrote to the minister almost 12 months ago in relation to the fact that she is working there unpaid and asked him to come up with a solution. I do not think that I have had an answer from him. I am glad that the honourable member has raised it again.

Brenda Macdonald is a fantastic woman. I knew her when she worked as a bookkeeper at Tangentyere, when there were 3 staff there. It is now a multimillion dollar organisation. I think she was the third staff member of Tangentyere. She left that job to take up her position as the chaplain at the Alice Springs Hospital and has worked for nothing ever since. Given that the chaplain in Darwin is paid, I believe something should be done in relation to the position in Alice Springs. There is no doubt that it is a full-time job, and a very onerous one. It is a big hospital which has many problems. Many people who are moving through from down south have to go to the hospital briefly. Many people also come in from out bush. There are many problems and Mrs Macdonald does a fantastic job. I really think that the government should pay her. It has set the precedent in Darwin and it is another instance where, unfortunately, the Berrimah Line has become a Berrimah wall.

The major matter that I wish to raise tonight concerns the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre in Alice Springs. As you know, Mr Speaker, the other day I presented a petition signed by 1642 people. Other petitions are still circulating in Alice Springs and those will be presented when they are ready. Mr Speaker, the Walk-in Theatre is one of those places which had an incredible amount of character, the sort of place that you and others would remember with a chuckle or a smile. Everybody who was in Alice Springs in the theatre's heyday has a story to tell about the place. It reminds us of the less technological, less computerised age when people sat in the open air on canvas seats. It was an interesting place. It is not only unique in the Territory's history but I am told now that it is unique in Australian history as the last example of one of



those open air projection areas. It has been allowed to run down but it has considerable potential and I am sure that it would attract tourists as well as locals if it were developed.

The fact is that numbers of interstate and international tourists have said that they have been disappointed to find that Alice Springs is not the town they thought they were coming to see. They have a romantic perception of a town in the middle of the central Australian bush, built up through series such as 'A Town Like Alice'. Unfortunately, a remark now being heard frequently is 'A Town Like Dallas'. That is an unfortunate perception. The continued knocking down of old buildings and the further eroding of the town's heritage, if it is allowed to continue, will confirm that perception. We have to resist further destruction.

The government has an opportunity to save the Walk-in Theatre. The Northern Territory University Bill has demonstrated that members on both sides of the House can sit down and discuss the issues reasonably. That needs to occur in relation to heritage. At some stage, we will have to sit down around the table and work out how we can set in place legislation which will ensure that the places that are worth preserving are preserved. The current absence of guidelines is not fair to developers. A person with the very best of intentions can discover, after planning to develop a site, that it is held in affection by the local people and has real heritage value. The would-be developer may then find that his plans are frustrated and that he is losing money. The government must establish those guidelines. It needs to set the parameters so that people know what they can and cannot do before they start committing money.

The character of Alice Springs will be enhanced by the sympathetic development of these heritage sites which will have economic spin-offs for the tourist industry as well as making us locals feel much better about the place and our role in preserving what needs to be preserved for future generations. The government's failure to put into place sensible heritage legislation leaves developers in the lurch. Legislation is a tool for the developer. It does not have to be an impediment. It enables the planning processes to be clear and concise because, if the developers know in advance what they can and cannot do, they can work on that basis. In the long term, heritage legislation will be to the benefit of Alice Springs and the Northern Territory. I call on the honourable minister to sit down with us and work out what we need to do to save not only the Walk-in Theatre but other heritage sites in the Northern Territory.

The minister cannot continue to sit on his hands and do nothing. This government has done that on a number of occasions. We have seen it refuse to budge in relation to the impoundment of vehicles under the Liquor Act. I really do not know why the government behaves like that because the result is that it cops an enormous amount of flak. It knows that it will eventually have to sit down at the table and work something out. I do not know why the government goes through all the pain and the agony in the interim. That continues to amaze me. We all know that we need decent heritage legislation in the Northern Territory. Why don't we sit down and work it out? The same should be done in relation to the liquor legislation. The Northern Territory University Bill showed that it can be done and we are all the better for it.

There is one final matter that I wish to raise very briefly because the Minister for Transport and Works said that he had not heard it mentioned recently. I refer, of course, to the Tanami Road. He stated that he had a speech all ready to deliver in response to my making a fuss about the

Tanami Road. Just so that all is not lost and he does not feel disappointed, I will put on record once again my concern that the Tanami Road now carries far more traffic than it did in the days when you represented Stuart, Mr Speaker. Much of the wealth of the Northern Territory flows along that road with the development of goldmines, with the increasing number of tourists that move through that way and with the trucking of cattle down that road. Yet from your day to this, Mr Speaker, no expansion has been done on the bituminising of that road. In fact, at the moment, there is not even a counter out on the road that will enable an assessment to be made of the number of vehicles that travel through there.

As a first step, if the honourable minister does not have the funds to do anything right now, I would challenge him to put a counter out there, perhaps at the other side of the Papunya turnoff with another this side of Yuendumu. From that, he would be able to see just how much traffic travels along that dirt section through to Yuendumu. That area needs immediate upgrading, immediate bituminising through to the Yuendumu turn-off, and there is a need for substantially more work on maintenance to be done beyond Yuendumu out to the goldmines which are expanding in that area and through to Western Australia.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I too rise in this adjournment debate to express my condolences on the recent passing of Mr Phillip Roberts, who was a friend of mine. I did not know him closely but he became a friend of mine after I became the member for Arafura. He lived in my electorate at a place called Patonga which is an outstation near Cooida.

Mr Roberts was a very intelligent person. He would always have time to talk to you, and you could talk with him for hours on any issues relating to employment, training, working, land rights - in fact, anything. I remember that, one evening, I spent about 2 hours just talking to him. I was supposed to be there for about half an hour talking generally to the people at Patonga. Mr Speaker, you do not meet many people like Mr Roberts. He had a very wide understanding of both white and the black, and he had the best of both worlds because he had a great understanding.

It was a sad loss to me because he was a friend of mine since I became a member, and he was a friend to the people in Patonga because he did help them a great deal. Many older people live at Patonga. There are not many young people out there. He helped them to manage their consultations with the mining companies and with the Gagadju Association, even though he was not from that area. He lived in the area around Kakadu for the last 10 years. The mob from the Gagadju Association told me that they missed the man because he was a great friend of theirs as he was mine.

There is another matter that I would like to touch on. I would like to congratulate the government on its part in showing the Channel 9 television program 'Today' show which was shot in my electorate - firstly, at Kakadu. It showed segments of the wetlands, up around Jabiru area, the new crocodile hotel and also my own town at Bathurst Island. The people were very excited. It is the first time they have seen a live television show about the community. I was sorry not to be there, but that is the way it is. I cannot be in both places at once, but the people appreciate that. Perhaps another time I will see it there. I rang the principal of the Oenpelli School, Chris Baldwin. He mentioned on the program that the community does not have any television. The children see only videos. I think we might find a television set-up out there sooner or later. We are working on that with the Imparja Television mob. Unfortunately, we cannot get the ABC mob onside. We

need a dish out there so that we can pick up ABC and Imparja Television and maybe Channel 8.

As I said, the kids in my community and the community at Oenpelli were rapt in the show, and I am very excited about it. I would like to place on record my appreciation to the NT government for making it possible for the show to be screened in the Territory. It will be shown right across Australia, and I am sure the people of the Northern Territory will appreciate the part that the government has played in making it all possible.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

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

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill entitled Fisheries Bill 1988 which in part appropriates money from the Consolidated Fund for the purpose of making refunds of any overpaid fees or levies.

Dated 12 October 1988  
E.E. Johnston  
Administrator.

PETITION  
Videos

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 112 citizens of Alice Springs requesting the Assembly to legislate to ban the sale, rental or possession of X- and R-rated videos and tighten up the classification on M-rated videos. 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, we the undersigned citizens of central Australia respectfully showeth that the violence, immorality, depravity and drug-taking portrayed in X- and R-rated and even some M-rated videos is detrimental to family life and hence to the nation of Australia. We therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory do speedily enact legislation to ban the sale, rental or possession of X- and R-rated videos and tighten up the classification of M-rated videos, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving that:

1. a select committee to be known as the Select Committee on the Trade Development Zone be appointed to inquire into and report upon the operations of the Trade Development Zone, with particular reference to:
  - (a) the zone administration;
  - (b) the Trade Development Zone Authority's contractual arrangements with consultants;
  - (c) the relationship between the minister, the board and the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority;

- (d) the marketing of the zone;
  - (e) the suitability of incentive packages offered by the authority; and
  - (f) the future prospects of the zone;
2. the committee consist of 6 members, 3 being members of the government to be nominated by the Chief Minister and 3 being members who are not members of the government to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition or by any minority group or independent member or members;
  3. the quorum of the committee shall be 3;
  4. the committee shall have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any such subcommittee any of the matters which the committee is empowered to consider;
  5. the quorum of a subcommittee shall be 2;
  6. before the commencement of business the committee shall elect a government member as chairman;
  7. the chairman may from time to time appoint a member of the committee to be deputy chairman and the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee at any time when there is no chairman or the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee;
  8. the chairman, or deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a deliberative and a casting vote;
  9. the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and such interim recommendations it may deem fit;
  10. the committee shall report to the Assembly no later than the sixth sitting day in 1989;
  11. the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it and a Daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and
  12. 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, there is an enormous amount of concern in the community at present about the operations of the Trade Development Zone. In the community, there is a feeling that something is wrong, that something is not going as it should. These concerns have not been lessened by the government's answers in the last 6 days. We have not introduced this motion until the last day of these sittings in order to give the government the opportunity to come clean

and to take the people of the Northern Territory into its confidence. But what has occurred? There has been a refusal to answer questions fully. Incomplete and misleading answers have been given and misleading documents have been referred to. Instead of the government seizing the opportunity offered in these sittings to provide answers to the people of the Northern Territory, it has succeeded in increasing people's anxiety and fear about what is happening in the Trade Development Zone. Those anxieties and fears have to be addressed, and that process has to begin now. That is why we have sought urgency through the suspension of standing orders.

Until people's concerns are addressed, the level of anxiety in the community will not change. The government has not begun to address the issues. The motion which the opposition intends to move will provide the parliament with an opportunity to establish a select committee which can immediately commence investigations into what is happening in the Trade Development Zone and to report back to the people as quickly as possible on what has gone wrong.

The alternative to not proceeding today is to allow an aura of distrust and unease to continue to hang over the Trade Development Zone. Until the issues are addressed, that aura will not go away. That is why we wish to debate this matter today. I do not want to take up too much of the Assembly's time on arguing the case for a suspension of standing orders because I would be surprised if the government did not accept this motion. I hope that it will do so without delay so that we can proceed with the debate.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, the opposition's motion to suspend standing orders will not be supported by this side of the House. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to move such a motion, he can do so on 30 November which is the next General Business Day. He seems to think that he can trapeze in and become an instant expert on the Trade Development Zone. An inquiry on the zone is being carried out at this very moment and the government will await its outcome. The report is to be delivered to me on 30 October and the government has no intention of allowing the Leader of the Opposition's motion to proceed.

Mr Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 10

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

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

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10	Noes 15
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Collins	Mr Dale
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Floreani	Mr Finch
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Firmin
Mr Leo	Mr Harris
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Hatton
Mr Smith	Mr McCarthy
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Manzie
Mr Tuxworth	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER  
Public Accounts Committee  
Report on Public Administration Recurrent Expenditure  
(Waste-Watch)

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the Sixth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Public Administration Recurrent Expenditure (Waste-Watch). I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION  
Public Accounts Committee  
Report on Public Administration Recurrent Expenditure  
(Waste-Watch)

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

This report arose out of a reference given to the Public Accounts Committee on 6 July 1987 by the previous Chief Minister. All honourable members will be aware of the circumstances surrounding that reference, including the media hype. The Public Accounts Committee had some problems in coming to grips with how to address the reference it had been given. Initially it placed advertisements in the NT News and arranged for all Northern Territory Public Service employees to be provided with a pre-addressed envelope so that they could identify any matters of concern to the committee without fear of recrimination. We also entered into correspondence with the chief executive officers of the Territory departments and put to them various problems which we had identified or which had arisen as a result of the submissions. We then determined whether we needed to

gather any further evidence in relation to particular submissions. We collated the issues raised in submissions and summarised them under the heading of the department or instrumentality to which they applied before asking the appropriate chief executive officers to respond.

Mr Speaker, not all matters raised with the committee fell within the ambit of our terms of reference and the committee has yet to decide whether or not some of those issues should be referred to the relevant ministers for further investigation. The committee received a total of 257 submissions covering a total of 651 separate issues. The committee categorised those issues and the list of categories appears on page 9. They were as follows: public servants (general); use of government motor vehicles; numbers and levels of staff; conditions of service; education in general; government procedures, including administration of legislation; health and community services; government assets, holdings and property; coordination and rationalisation of government functions or activities; tenders and contracts; conservation; works; housing; and general management issues. The summaries of issues under those headings appear on pages 10-39. A reading of those pages will allow honourable members to ascertain the wide range of topics which the committee covered in addressing this report.

Chapter 6, beginning on page 40, provides an overview of the committee's inquiries and lists actions which should be taken as a result of some of the observations received in submissions.

Chapter 7, beginning on page 43, is titled 'Waste Watch Concerns'. It addresses some areas of major concern which include the government vehicle fleet, official telephones to private residences, office stationery, indoor plants, official hospitality, office furniture, public relations expenditure, special job pools and media advertising. Those are a few of the issues which the committee thought should be highlighted.

Chapter 8, beginning on page 46, deals with the central agencies. It is the view of the committee that the role of the central agencies is critical in maintaining the degree of accountability required to ensure that moneys are not wastefully expended. In the strict terms of this reference it may seem somewhat irrelevant, but it is the view of the committee that the role of those agencies is critical in maintaining a high level of public accountability.

Mr Speaker, the committee's conclusion appears on page 70 and I will take the time of the Assembly to read them into Hansard:

The Waste-Watch inquiry has been useful in providing a public forum for the airing of grievances regarding government expenditure.

There appears to be very little in the way of coordinated strategies within the bureaucracy to either accept such grievances, detect wasteful practices and procedures or provide a mechanism for the reduction of waste through performance monitoring and reporting

Most if not all the matters raised should be capable of internal resolution by the bureaucracy.

The fact that an external body such as the Public Accounts Committee has had to undertake this inquiry suggests that the necessary function of performance monitoring and review is not being adequately addressed.



There is confusion between the wording of section 14(1) of the Public Service Act and the role required by government of the Public Service Commissioner.

In the absence of any involvement of the Public Service Commissioner to 'take all necessary steps to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service', as prescribed at section 14(1) of the Public Service Act other than 'the control of and the effective use of human resources', no central agency has a clear mandate to report to government on the efficient use of human or other resources in the public service. That is to say waste is not being watched.

I might point out here that the phrase 'the control of and the effective use of human resources' is a direct quote from the Public Service Commissioner himself.

The Public Accounts Committee recognises that at least some of the issues raised by members of the public are worthy of more detailed investigation than is possible through the committee's limited resources, and this would appear to be a matter which the former Chief Minister considered worthy of some priority, as evidenced by his terms of reference for this inquiry.

It is difficult for the committee to be specific, but it is equally difficult for it to accept that some degree of waste does not exist and, given that a mere 1% improvement in efficiency of the public sector could produce savings of around \$6m per annum, the matters of performance assessment and value for money must be fully addressed.

Mr Speaker, the committee's 5 recommendations are on page 71. I quote:

1. A staff suggestion scheme be introduced and managed by an appropriate authority.
2. A working group be established comprising representatives of each central agency to develop strategies for detecting and addressing instances of waste through performance monitoring and reporting.
3. A review of the role of the Public Service Commissioner be immediately undertaken addressing the conflict between the practical undertakings of the commissioner in relation to sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Public Service Act and the clear intention of that act.
4. Efficiency targets be introduced throughout the public sector requiring management to reduce resource input costs relative to agreed levels of output.
5. That the Public Accounts Committee maintain a watching brief over the introduction and management of waste control and performance improvement strategies.

Mr Speaker, recommendation 3 relates to a review of the role of the Public Service Commissioner. I have spoken to the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government previously and he advises me that the government intends to undertake a review along exactly those lines. I am

sure that members of my committee will join with me in urging the minister to undertake that review as a matter of some urgency.

Mr Speaker, may I just add that the committee has worked well since the tabling of its first report a year ago. That is evidenced by the sheer number of reports it has presented to this House on a variety of topics.

Finally, I would like to advise honourable members of a seminar which is being held on 4 November 1988. It is being promoted by the Public Accounts Committee in conjunction with the Government Accounting Group. A number of speakers of note will be addressing the seminar, beginning with myself. We also have Mr Mick Vallentine, Head of Business Studies at the Darwin Institute of Technology, our Under Treasurer Dr Neil Conn, and Dr Ted Campbell, General Manager of the Power and Water Authority. They have already seen 1 Treasurer off between them. We have John Rosier from the Auditor-General's Office and a journalist - I do not know whether he is of note but he is certainly of notoriety - Mr Frank Alcorta from the NT News. As a special guest speaker, we have David Shand, the First Assistant Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Finance. I am sure that the topics addressed at that seminar will be of interest to honourable members and I urge them to attend. The seminar will be held on the morning of 4 November. With those few words, I commend the report to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will not go through the facts and figures in the report. However, I do intend to comment on a single recommendation within the report. Before I do that, I would like to express my thanks - and I think I can do so also on behalf of other committee members - for the work of Mr Tony De Silva, whose task it was to correlate all the responses to our request for public and public servant inquiries or complaints about perceived or actual instances of wastage in the public service. It was quite exhaustive work and I must say that Mr De Silva performed the task most admirably. Members will note that it is an extremely compact document. He managed to compact a wealth of information and numerous responses into a relatively small document.

Mr Speaker, the recommendation that I intend to speak on is recommendation 3, which I will read out. The committee recommended that:

3. A review of the role of the Public Service Commissioner be immediately undertaken addressing the conflict between the practical undertakings of the commissioner in relation to sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Public Service Act and the clear intention of that act.

Mr Speaker, despite the words of the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government on the last occasion this matter was debated, on Thursday 26 May 1988 - and his comments commence on page 3379 of the Parliamentary Record - it is the committee's clear opinion that there is genuine conflict between the commissioner's understanding of his role and the actual requirements of his role as determined and dictated to him by the Public Service Act. The minister indicated on 26 May that he believed that the commissioner was not acting illegally and that he was performing his tasks within the constraints of the act. That is not my opinion and the words contained in recommendation No 3 on page 71 of this report clearly indicate that it is not this committee's opinion. Indeed, we do not believe that the Public Service Commissioner is doing his job. That is either because he does not understand his job or because he refuses to accept his job. That cannot be allowed to continue.

Further to that, Mr Speaker, I refer members of this House to a letter from the Public Service Commissioner, which appears on page 62 of the report, in response to a letter from the chairman of the committee. It would seem that the commissioner has some difficulty - and I am not necessarily blaming the commissioner as an individual - either because of the constraints of the bureaucracy or the constraints of his minister, in coming to terms with his task as dictated by the Public Service Act.

Mr Speaker, for the sake of the Northern Territory and for the sake of the many public servants within the Northern Territory, that cannot be tolerated. It is not a matter of legal opinion. It is a matter of statutory requirement that the commissioner recognise and undertake his obligations as dictated in section 14 of the Public Service Act. As I have stated in this House, until the head of the Northern Territory Public Service understands and accepts his clear obligations as dictated by an act of this parliament, we cannot expect any public servant in the Northern Territory to accept any laws that we pass.

I appreciate that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government is inevitably briefed by numerous persons on his role and indeed the representations he makes on their behalf in this House. However, I ask the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to read the act and ask the Public Service Commissioner what he thinks his role is within that act. Until that is done, there is no point in the minister standing up in the House and reading briefs which have been prepared for him by the Public Service Commissioner. That sort of response simply epitomises the predicament in which we find ourselves and there is no point in the minister making it.

The minister has said that amendments will be made to the Public Service Act. I will accept that, and I will debate the amending legislation when it comes before this House. The fact of life is that we have laws. We have a Public Service Act and the Public Service Commissioner must act within its constraints. The opposition will debate any amending legislation which comes before the House and we hope that the amendments will further delineate the constraints and obligations of the Public Service Commissioner.

At this time, there is a Public Service Act which the Public Service Commissioner is obliged and required to understand and conform with. Until he does so, the entire public service in the Northern Territory can justifiably say: 'My boss ignores his employment contract. Why shouldn't I ignore mine?' That is the bottom line. Such situations can have a devastating effect on morale in the public service and they should not be ignored, as this one is being ignored. Until the fundamental problem is addressed, we have a real difficulty no matter what our political persuasion. The laws of the Northern Territory must be understood and respected by our Public Service Commissioner.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must respond to the member for Nhulunbuy because, in my view, he has made some rather outrageous statements. Quite clearly, the Public Service Commissioner has the ability to delegate certain authority to other people within the public service. Quite clearly, he has the ability to delegate that authority to chief executive officers of departments. That is the action that the Public Service Commissioner has taken in this regard. He has delegated responsibilities in order to allow chief executive officers to manage their departments effectively. How can the Public Service Commissioner manage all of the resources of the Northern Territory Public Service on his own? He does not. He cannot do that. It is quite clearly the responsibility of a chief executive officer of a department to ensure that the department

adequately carries out its functions in the context of the available financial and human resources.

Chief executive officers have been delegated that authority by the Public Service Commissioner. There is no conflict in that. There is, however, a belief held in some quarters that a conflict exists between the provisions of the Public Service Act and what is actually happening in the public service. Because that belief is held, there is a clear need to review the way the functions are carried out in respect of the obligations of the Public Service Commissioner under the Public Service Act. I have undertaken to do that and it is an ongoing process. It is tied in with a number of other possible amendments to the Public Service Act which aim to bring it more into line with equivalent acts throughout Australia. Members will be fully aware that our Public Service Act derives from the Commonwealth act at the time self-government was granted. The Commonwealth act and all equivalent state acts have been reviewed quite significantly since then. Our act has not been brought up to date, and we hope that we will be able to effect that in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime, chief executive officers are acting with the delegations of the Public Service Commissioner and are carrying out the functions effectively. There is no conflict in that. There is no reason at all why public servants should feel that the Public Service Commissioner is not fulfilling his role and that this is setting some sort of precedent for other public servants. The Public Service Commissioner is quite rightly doing what he must do in order to ensure that the resources of the Northern Territory, both human and financial, are properly utilised within the public service.

Chief executive officers have a clear responsibility to manage at departmental level. It is only where there is an overriding need to ensure that the best use is made of all resources that the Public Service Commissioner would take an active day-to-day role. He certainly does that when the necessity arises. There is no conflict. The commissioner understands the act, as I do. We understand that there is need for some changes in the act, and I doubt where any public servant in the Northern Territory, at any level, would dispute that. There is need for review. That does not mean that people will lose anything. It means only that efficiency will increase and that public servants will be able to carry out their jobs more effectively. The review will continue, Mr Deputy Speaker, over the next few months.

Debate adjourned.

#### STATEMENT Domestic Violence

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, on 16 August 1988, I indicated to this Assembly that I would be introducing legislation to deal with domestic violence in these sittings of the Legislative Assembly. It was intended that the legislation would take account of comments by various organisations on the draft legislation tabled by my predecessor in May of this year. Today, I advise that I will not be introducing this legislation in these sittings of the Legislative Assembly. My reason is that some comments have indicated that there needs to be a reconsideration of the tabled legislation and, in particular, whether it gives the protection to victims that it should.

Interstate figures indicate that most domestic violence situations occur in times of peak workload for police. That in itself is not always conducive

to an effective police response. Concern has been expressed that, having regard to this consideration, the procedures in the tabled legislation are too cumbersome to be workable in all situations. The question which has been raised is: what can be done to quickly and effectively separate the parties in cases where arrest is not appropriate or warranted, until such time as things cool down? To this end, the concept of an ouster provision has been suggested. Put simply, an ouster provision would give police the authority to remove the violent party from the home to cool down. The idea raises many policy considerations, including whether it is right that a person should be removed from his or her home. There is a downside to maintaining that right of a person to remain in his or her home, although perhaps for too long society has failed to acknowledge it. Why, in 1988, should victims of domestic violence and their children have to seek urgent refuge outside their homes whilst the violent person remains in the home? In other words, an ouster provision involves a reversal of the traditional assumption that, if there are problems in the home, the victim has a responsibility to take action and move out.

Perhaps society has to accept that the social interest in the protection of the lives and health of victims and their children outweighs traditional civil liberties arguments regarding the treatment of alleged defendants in such matters. I want to make it clear that, in raising the issue of removal by police of the violent party from the home in cases where arrest is not appropriate or warranted, I am not saying that my government is committed to it. However, I am saying that the idea has some merit and must be given consideration. That cannot be done in time for the introduction of legislation in these sittings of the Assembly.

The introduction of legislation will not end domestic violence in the Northern Territory. The incidence of domestic violence can only be effectively reduced by proper education in the community. For this reason, the importance of the public education campaign referred to in earlier speeches on this issue cannot be overstated. The Northern Territory is not alone in holding these views. The Commonwealth government is funding a national education campaign on domestic violence over the next 3 years, aimed at influencing community attitudes and achieving a long-term reduction in its incidence. To ensure that Commonwealth initiatives integrate and build in projects undertaken by the states and territories, the Commonwealth State Task Force on Domestic Violence was established in 1987. Ms Helen Coburn, Director of the Office of Women's Affairs, represents the Northern Territory on the task force.

While the national public education campaign will reinforce community attitudinal changes to domestic violence, it cannot take the place of the local campaign which, given all the circumstances, may run back to back with the national campaign. This will ensure an extended media coverage of the issue of domestic violence in the Northern Territory in the first half of 1989. The Northern Territory campaign is being designed to have specific relevance to Territory people, as it will address aspects of Territory life which contribute to stress and violence. It will include media promotion aimed at all sections of the community and will be run in conjunction with in-service training programs for police officers and counsellors.

The revised legislation will be introduced in the November sittings and, subject to the concurrence of this Assembly, will be passed in the first sittings of the Legislative Assembly next year. This will ensure optimum media coverage in the Northern Territory of domestic violence at a time when the Northern Territory legislation is enacted. The commitment to tackle

domestic violence was an election promise of this government. It has received wide support throughout the Northern Territory community. It is hoped that the legislation, when debated, will receive bipartisan support in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, this decision to defer the introduction of the legislation once again is not to be interpreted as an indication that tackling the problem of domestic violence is no longer a government priority. The decision to defer is based on a commitment by my government that any legislation which is finally enacted must be simple, workable, effective and, most importantly, must provide proper protection for victims of domestic violence.

Mr Speaker, I can advise honourable members that, yesterday, I informed the Women's Advisory Council of the Northern Territory of my decision to defer and of the grounds for deferral. Whilst I did not have time to discuss the matter in depth with the council, no serious concerns were raised at that time. Members of the council informally expressed their support for the principle that the victim should not have to leave a domestic situation to enjoy protection. I am examining that principle very closely but, as I have said, it raises fairly sensitive civil liberties issues. We will ensure wide circulation of these proposals at the appropriate time.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the comments of the Chief Minister. We are reaching a stage where we need to have another look at the rights of the victim and the rights of the perpetrator. It is important that we come up with legislation which reflects current thinking. The opposition clearly will not be criticising the government for delaying the proposed legislation. We understand what is happening in the community. We understand the range of discussions that are being held both within government circles and in the broader community. It is important to get the legislation right and we would like to be involved in that process. It is a very sensitive area and it would be beneficial if the government allowed the opposition to have a role in providing input into this policy. I signal the opposition's willingness to be involved in discussions to determine the extent of common ground in relation to legislation which has the ultimate purpose of protecting the victims of domestic violence. I think that we are getting closer and closer to a situation where we realise that that is the most important factor.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by repeating the opposition's offer to be involved in further discussions to ensure that we get the legislation right.

Motion agreed to.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 145)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the forfeiture provisions of the Liquor Act. The restricted areas provisions of the Liquor Act allow an area to be declared restricted or dry. Under section 96(1) of the Liquor Act, the current penalty on conviction of taking liquor into a restricted area is

forfeiture of the liquor and mandatory forfeiture, by the owner, of the vehicle, vessel or aircraft used in conjunction with an offence for which the driver was found guilty.

The forfeiture provisions of the Liquor Act have been under criticism for some time by various sectors of the community. The existing provisions appear to impose penalties on innocent parties and it is even alleged that the legislation has been called draconian by the Ombudsman. Complaints have been lodged with the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission over the non-discretionary powers of the act. Officers of the commission, and indeed myself, have spoken at length with communities affected by this restricted areas provision and the consensus of opinion from the majority of these councils is that, if the owner of a vehicle commits an offence, he should suffer the existing penalties. The same communities believe that, where an owner or lessor has no knowledge of his vehicle being used to commit the offence, that person should not suffer the penalty of loss of his or her vehicle.

In such situations one would expect that the police would charge the offender, not being the owner of the vehicle, with illegal use of the vehicle or some similar offence, assuming that it was used without consent. Likewise, I would expect it to be clear that there was no tacit approval for the use of the vehicle by family members of the owner. In these circumstances, the person whom the great majority of Aboriginal communities wish to see punished is the offender rather than the innocent owner of the seized vehicle. The retention of the forfeiture provisions is seen, however, to be a valuable deterrent to breaches of the restricted areas legislation and is strongly supported by communities in all but a few cases.

There are many incidents in which an offender is not brought to trial for up to 6 months after the alleged offence. The discretion these amendments seek is to limit hardship on any innocent party by returning the vehicle, vessel or aircraft to the owner, pending trial. The amendments sought to section 100 do not inhibit the courts in imposing any other penalties on offenders. An amendment in the form of a new section 100A will allow the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to consider applications for the release of the seized vehicle, vessel or aircraft prior to a trial. The government is firm in its commitment to this legislation and is prepared to place the onus fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the responsible minister.

The final amendment sought relates to section 101. Under current legislation, once a vehicle is forfeited, it becomes the property of the Northern Territory government and can be disposed of only by public auction, tender or some similar method. There needs to be a compatible amendment after conviction to protect innocent parties who may not have had the opportunity to seek the return of their vehicle prior to a trial. These occasions may be few and far between but it is an option that must realistically remain open if the amendments sought are to accomplish what they set out to do, and that is to protect any innocent owner or lessor of the vehicle, vessel or aircraft seized under the Liquor Act.

I personally set out to speak to as many Aboriginal communities as possible to be clear in my own mind that the government is treading the right path and interpreting the messages correctly. The weight of support I have encountered from these communities has convinced me that offenders who breach the provisions of the restricted areas legislation should certainly continue to be punished but that discretionary powers need to be available for the innocent parties. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I speak from the dispatch boxes because this subject has been of considerable concern to many constituents represented by opposition members in this Assembly. It would be less than appropriate if we were simply to adjourn this debate now. Let me say at the outset that my fundamental reason for wishing to speak this afternoon is that I want to urge the government to seek urgency for this bill today. I believe it should pass through the Assembly today.

Mr Speaker, I hear the Deputy Chief Minister demur.

Mr Coulter: We have difficulty getting urgency motions up ourselves.

Mr BELL: I hear the Deputy Chief Minister not only demur but suggest that the government has difficulty in getting the opposition to agree to urgency. I would suggest with respect, Mr Speaker, and I am quite sure the Attorney-General will support me, that the opposition has bent over backwards to accommodate the government in respect of bills that have gone through this Assembly under urgency. I am quite sure the Attorney-General will agree that, on several occasions in almost every sittings this year, the opposition has been requested to agree to urgency. In addition to other legislation that has been processed in the month or 2 between sittings, this small, hard-working opposition has been requested to deliberate on legislation brought before the House during a sittings with a request for urgency. We have been extremely cooperative in that regard. All I want is a simple indication from the government that it is prepared to accede to this request. I believe that the debate could be adjourned at this stage, and that it would be possible for the legislation to be debated fully later in the day.

The minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission suggested that a great deal of consideration has been given to the bill. He said that the forfeiture provisions have been criticised by various sections of the population. As you know, Mr Speaker, the issues have been canvassed on numerous occasions, not only by myself but also by government members and, particularly, by the member for Nhulunbuy and other opposition members. Because those issues have been so strongly canvassed, it should be possible for the government to accede to this request to pass the bill under urgency. If I were to get a simple indication from the Leader of Government Business or the minister himself, that it was possible to consider it today ...

Mr Perron: You couldn't even have read it yet, Neil.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, in response to the Chief Minister's interjection, suffice it to say that I am intimately familiar with the forfeiture provisions of the Liquor Act. I have read and re-read the act during the last 5 or 6 years, since sections 96(3) and 96(4) were removed by amending legislation.

Mr Coulter: You sit down now and I will give you an indication.

Mr BELL: All right. Mr Speaker, with those few comments, I seek the leave of the House to continue my comments at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

FISHERIES BILL  
(Serial 151)

Bill presented and read a first time.



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

Mr Speaker, this bill is for an act to replace the Fish and Fisheries Act which commenced in January 1980. That act was amended on several occasions with the aim of improving the machinery for fisheries management and to cover such matters as the Offshore Constitutional Settlement between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory. The result has been increasing complexity and a mosaic of interpretative difficulty. The Fish and Fisheries Regulations, in turn, have been amended and extended to keep pace with the development of the act and for other purposes, such as the intensive management which is now necessary for the protection of our barramundi stock.

Whilst the legislation is capable of providing a basis for fisheries management, it is not readily understood by those whose activities it controls. The overall result is a package of legislation which is difficult to administer and enforce and there are some doubts as to whether a certain activity contrary to the well-being of our fish stocks can be effectively controlled. At the same time, the complexity of some provisions may be a damper to potential investment and industry development.

Since the present legislation was put in place, a much higher profile has been given to recreational fishing and the tourism development associated with it. Shortcomings of the legislation with respect to that profile should be rectified as soon as possible. The government has adopted an active policy of developing the fishing industry as a major component of the Territory economy. Following the Norgaard consultancy studies, it became clear that there were sufficient resources in the waters of northern Australia for this purpose. A lack of onshore infrastructure was recognised to be a major limiting factor and steps are being taken to progressively overcome this limitation. The goal is to ensure that the Territory, particularly Darwin, is adopted as a shore base for fishing, processing and marketing operations. Without this, we cannot expect to maximise the economic and social benefits to the Territory from the exploitation of resources within our reach.

The capacity of the Australian fishing industry has expanded dramatically in recent years. It is now most significant and sufficient to place excessive pressure on the majority of our national fisheries resources. Honourable members will be aware that, in the Northern Territory, we already have 2 intensively managed fisheries which are closed to additional licences. These are, of course, the barramundi and crab fisheries. The management of the barramundi fishery includes a buy-back scheme to actively reduce the effort and the number of participants in the industry. Although, as a flow-on from the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, the Commonwealth is now responsible for the northern prawn fishery, the Territory has retained a role in the management of this important fishery which is also subject to active reduction of effort.

Not only does fisheries legislation need to take into account the complexity of the management arrangements now necessary to effectively husband our resources and gain optimum economic and social benefits from them, but the breadth of the industries to which it is relevant has progressively increased. Recreational fishing in the Territory was estimated to turn over approximately \$60m in the economy in 1986 and was directly or indirectly responsible for the employment of some 700 people. This raises significant questions about the allocation of fish resources between commercial and recreational fishing, which cannot be ignored.

Other areas to which greater attention must now be paid include post-harvest handling, processing and marketing of fish, the aquarium fish industry and aquaculture. Aquaculture interacts broadly with many facets of the traditional fishing industry, such as the capture of wild stock as parents for breeding, as well as processing and marketing. It is, however, the principal fisheries activity where disease has a major potential to influence profitability.

The development of new fisheries legislation must include a clear picture of what the act and regulations should generally achieve, to avoid being overwhelmed by the many factors that I have mentioned. A statement of broad principles was therefore developed to underpin the preparation of the bill presently before this Assembly. These principles in summary were: keep the legislation as simple as possible; create an atmosphere conducive to industry development; facilitate close consultation between all parties; and effectively manage the fisheries resources over which the Territory has jurisdiction.

A number of strategies have been adopted to achieve these goals. These include: designing the act to cover the key aspects and major enabling provisions only and referring the details for inclusion in regulations; structuring the legislation to permit normal commercial processes to take place and to allow fisheries administration to evolve with the industry rather than to be constrained by it; establishing advisory committees for significant fisheries; and providing for the development of specific management plans for declared fisheries.

This general approach to the development of the legislation has been the subject of consultation between my department and the commercial fishing industry, amateur fishing interests and the police, who are responsible for most aspects of fisheries enforcement. These parties were agreeable to the principles and strategies that I have outlined. Four drafts of the bill have been circulated for discussion to representatives of the parties mentioned. Comments and suggested amendments arising from this consultation have been taken into account. My predecessor as fisheries minister made a commitment to continue this consultation process including, if necessary, the period during which the bill is before this Assembly. I have fulfilled this commitment and I am pleased to say that the cooperation from both the commercial and amateur fishing representatives has been commendable.

The most recent meeting between officers of my department and commercial fishermen occurred on 30 September. During the meeting, about half of the provisions contained in the bill were discussed. It is proposed to hold another meeting to complete discussions on the bill. However, I would like to refer to a couple of issues which have been raised in these discussions in order to indicate the level of cooperation that has been achieved with industry and the degree of input that it has seen fit to provide. A couple of examples might be of assistance to honourable members.

The commercial fishing industry believes that any money raised by auctioning fishing rights, quotas and so forth should automatically go into the Fishing Industry Research and Development Trust Fund. This suggestion has been agreed to and, indeed, an amendment has been included in the bill. There was considerable discussion about the powers of fisheries officers and eventual acceptance that they are all necessary. Although there have been some reservations, it is generally agreed by the industry and the amateur fishermen that, if we are to have an effective fishing industry, we need adequate controls. An earlier draft bill contained provisions relating to

body searches and these created some concern. I am pleased to say that, as a result of discussions between industry, the amateur fishermen and my department, those provisions have been removed. I congratulate commercial and amateur fishermen for their assistance in drafting this bill.

I would now like to outline the major features of the bill. The bill is divided into 7 parts which cover: preliminary matters such as definitions; administration, including licensing and other authorisations; fisheries management plans, which are the core provisions for protection and management of our resources; control and enforcement, including powers of the minister and fisheries officers, search and seizure, confidentiality of information, offences, records and regulation-making powers; the miscellaneous provisions, which fall outside the categories mentioned; fisheries arrangements which deal with the Offshore Constitutional Settlement between the Commonwealth and the states and the Northern Territory; and savings and transitional arrangements. It also includes 3 schedules dealing with repealed legislation, the content of fisheries management plans and the categories of managed fisheries for which management plans may be prepared. The preliminary clauses include numerous definitions. This illustrates the complexity and scope of fisheries matters, particularly when arrangements between governments are a significant component.

The scope of the bill is beyond that of previous legislation. A definition of 'aquatic life' and provisions relating to its utilisation have been included. This is necessary for aquaculture and similar purposes to provide for the utilisation of certain organisms as food for fish or direct production purposes such as the culture of algae from which natural pigments of commercial value may be extracted.

The fisheries arrangements provisions in part VI preserve the machinery negotiated between the Commonwealth, the Territory and the state governments to rationalise jurisdiction over fisheries in the waters of the Australian Fishing Zone under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement. Six Territory arrangements under the provisions of the existing legislation were promulgated in April of this year. These will permit the Territory to have a greater influence on fisheries development in northern Australia. The machinery of the Offshore Constitutional Settlement was embodied in Territory legislation in 1981. The provisions of the bill are the same as those previously enacted, apart from a few minor changes which are the consequence of changes in other relevant legislation or simple updating.

In its miscellaneous provisions, the bill preserves the Fishing Industry Research and Development Trust Fund which has significantly benefited the fishing industry since its establishment in 1980. Some adjustment in the sourcing of moneys included in this fund will be required for it to continue to contribute to research and development at the present level, but this is not a legislative matter.

The core of the approach to fisheries embodied in the legislation is in the licensing provisions, the machinery established for promulgation of fisheries management plans and the control and enforcement provisions. These are designed, firstly, to simplify the licence structure applied, secondly, to clarify and consolidate the management regimes under which the Territory's fisheries resources are exploited and, thirdly, to provide a framework within which enforcement can be pursued effectively whilst preserving the rights of those who play the game honestly.

To date, Northern Territory fishing licences have been issued to people rather than the boats they use, which is the practice in some other jurisdictions. This approach will be retained. The bill envisages a single licence to cover all fisheries and related activities instead of the several categories of licence which are presently utilised. This would be quite specific in its description of the activities which the holder is permitted to undertake and would clearly spell out the conditions which apply. When a licence holder is authorised to undertake more than 1 activity, the details will be written in the same document. The taking of fish for personal use or subsistence is excluded from the licensing provisions. At the same time, it is envisaged that special permits may be granted to take fish for purposes such as education, research or experiments, the sport or recreation of disabled people, and other purposes approved by the minister.

Part III of the bill and the related schedules enable an effective approach to be adopted, by means of the development of specific fisheries management plans, to resource management and associated goals such as the achievement of economic and social benefits. Mechanisms are included for the declaration of managed fisheries and managed areas, together with procedures for the development of accompanying management plans and the matters to be addressed in such plans.

There are 2 important features of this part, to which I would like to draw particular attention. Firstly, provision is made to appoint advisory committees for each fishery or area subject to management. This is seen to be an important consultative mechanism, particularly with the people involved in the specific activities concerned. The second important point is that, once in place, the management plans developed will have the force of regulations under the act.

The approach adopted has particular advantages in focusing the process of resource management. It has the further advantage that the majority of the control measures relating to the particular fishery or area are gathered together in a single document and the details of these are more accessible to the industry. It is envisaged that this document could form the basis of a package which could be made available to licensees concerning all aspects of the fishery in which they operate.

The control and enforcement provisions of the bill include those enabling the preparation of the regulations, and are quite extensive. They establish a framework for enforcement which has as its goal the protection of resources and, therefore, the industry, from harmful activities. When there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that an offence has been, is being or is about to be committed, powers of search are an important part of the backup to effective enforcement. These powers have been conferred on fisheries officers, without warrant, by the present legislation and the bill proposes that this should continue to be the case.

It is further proposed that powers without warrant be extended to fisheries officers to enable them to examine vessels, vehicles, places, containers, documents and similar things, and to question persons where there are reasonable grounds for believing that the persons concerned are or have been engaged in taking, selling or buying fish. Only those persons who are operating outside the law, including recreational fishermen as well as poachers, should expect to feel the impact of powers of this nature. Similar provisions exist in other fisheries legislation, such as in the South Australian and Commonwealth acts and in New Zealand legislation, where they play an important part in effective enforcement action.

Company operations have become a common feature of the fishing industry. It is important to clarify the responsibilities of company directors and managers under the act. The bill specifies the position of these people in relation to offences which are found to have been committed by the body corporate. They will be guilty if the offence is found to have taken place with their authority or consent or if they were aware of it and failed to take steps to prevent it.

The bill defines all offences as regulatory offences. This is in keeping with the evidentiary difficulties which are often a part of fisheries enforcement. Considerable attention, however, has been given at the same time to defining the defences to a prosecution for an offence. These are quite extensive and consistent with the preservation of the rights of defendants.

The fisheries industry is concerned about the confidentiality of information and records of its activities which it provides to government. Strict arrangements for confidentiality were a feature of previous legislation and these will be preserved along with heavy penalties for contravention.

Mr Speaker, I have stated that the bill will address the key issues and includes major enabling provisions, leaving the regulations to take care of the details. The regulation-making powers contained in the bill are therefore numerous. These include: control of amateur fishing and dams which may block waterways and fish movements, disease prevention and control, translocation of live fish, landing of fish, and fish handling, processing and packaging for marketing. Specific regulation-making powers in relation to aquaculture are also included. Careful attention has been given to ensuring that these regulation-making powers do not go beyond those which are necessary. At the same time, a forward-looking outlook has been adopted to provide for the evolution of legislation consistent with the evolution of the industry without the need for frequent amendment of the act.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMES (FORFEITURE OF PROCEEDS) BILL  
(Serial 149)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds) Bill represents a major new weapon in the fight against crime and, in particular, against organised crime. It follows similar legislation passed or introduced in the Commonwealth and state parliaments. A number of significant inquiries - including the Williams, Costigan and Stewart Royal Commissions - have focused attention on the large profits which can be made from crime and the increasing sophistication with which those profits are concealed. This bill is directed at depriving criminals of their ill-gotten gains and their tools of trade.

Mr Speaker, present legislation allows the courts to confiscate certain profits of the illegal drug trade but this bill goes much further. It extends to all types of serious crime and allows courts to make forfeiture orders under which the profits of crime and any property used in connection with the commission of the crime may be confiscated, to make restraining orders

freezing suspect property when charges are laid, and to issue search warrants for the seizure of suspect property. The bill also includes provisions for registration and enforcement in the Territory of interstate forfeiture and restraining orders, and the issue in the Territory of search warrants for the seizure of properties suspected to be liable to forfeiture under a corresponding law of a state. The interstate enforcement provisions allow agreement between the Commonwealth, state and Northern Territory Attorneys-General to set up a reciprocal scheme for freezing and confiscating the profits of crime.

I shall now turn to the details of each of these aspects. The bill provides for 2 types of confiscation orders: firstly, forfeiture orders, dealt with in part II, which allow a court to order the forfeiture of tainted property - that is, any property used in connection with the commission of a serious offence or which was derived as profit therefrom; and, secondly, pecuniary penalty orders, dealt with in part III, which allow a court to order the offender to pay a pecuniary penalty equal to the value of the ill-gotten gains.

Applications for the making of an order will generally be made after a person has been convicted of an offence. The bill also allows orders to be made against persons who have absconded after being charged with an offence. However, the prosecution must satisfy the court that the evidence would convince a jury that the person committed the offence. The courts have extensive powers to give effect to confiscation orders. Rights of appeal are also provided.

Forfeiture orders may be made even where the ill-gotten gains have passed to a person other than the offender. In some recent cases, large-scale drug offenders have concealed the proceeds of their crimes behind company and trust structures nominally controlled by third persons. The bill will allow courts to break through such structures and get at the criminal profits. It will also allow the forfeiture of property which has been transferred to third parties who have turned a blind eye to the illegal source of the property. In this regard, the bill represents a major attack on the laundering of the proceeds of crime. At the same time, the bill ensures that the rights of an innocent third party who has acquired property in good faith are protected. Third parties having an interest in the property will be notified of any application for its confiscation and will have an opportunity to be heard by the court.

In making a pecuniary penalty order, a court may assess the value of any benefits derived by the offender as a result of committing the offence. These benefits may include increases in the value of the offender's property and any benefits, service or financial advantage provided to the offender or another person. It is notorious that some major criminals have used the best legal and financial advice available to them to launder and conceal their profits and to invest them so as to ensure the maximum return. The bill will allow the confiscation of these profits also.

Part IV deals with restraining orders. The court is empowered to make orders restraining any dealings with property which represents the proceeds of, or which has been used in the commission of, a serious offence. In cases where it will be in the public interest, the court may make an interim order for up to 14 days without giving notice to persons who might have an interest in the property - and this period can be further extended - but otherwise those persons will have a right to be heard before any order is made. The court may require the applicant, normally the Crown, to give undertakings to

the court concerning the payment of damages or costs. This operates as a further safeguard for innocent parties.

The court has a very wide range of discretionary powers in freezing property. This allows for restraining orders to meet the needs of each case in the most effective way in the particular circumstances. In appropriate cases, the court may appoint the public trustee or a receiver to take control of property to ensure that its value is maintained. In addition, the court may order the examination of a person whose property is restrained, or any other person, in order to determine the nature and location of any property which may be liable to confiscation. In accordance with normal principles of justice, the bill provides that a person examined may not be compelled to incriminate himself or herself.

Part V contains interstate enforcement provisions. The scheme agreed on by the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory means that, if an interstate court makes an order for forfeiture of assets in the Territory, the assets will be forfeited to the Territory. Conversely, if the court makes an order under the bill for the forfeiture of assets in another state, the assets will be forfeited to that state. This arrangement allows local authorities to enforce orders against local assets in local courts. The scheme also means that any legal challenges to the making of orders or the seizure of property in another state must be brought in the state where the offence was committed - the home state - not where the assets are located. In this way, all issues relating to a forfeiture or restraining order or to the seizure of property under a search warrant are resolved in the home state, thereby preventing litigation in different states about the same subject matter.

The bill provides for full recognition in the Territory of forfeiture and restraining orders made by courts in other states under corresponding laws, if the orders apply to assets in the Territory. Upon registration of an interstate order in the Supreme Court, the effect will be the same as it would be had the order been made in the Territory and it would be enforced accordingly.

Part VI deals with search warrants. The court may issue warrants to allow the police to search for and seize tainted property. Procedures are provided for applications for warrants to be made by telephone. In cases of emergency, there are provisions for search and seizure to be made without warrant. In such a case, the circumstances must be so serious and urgent that they require the exercise of such powers in order to prevent the concealment, loss or destruction of the property and the seized property must be returned if no person is charged with a relevant offence within 7 days or if no forfeiture application is made. Warrants may also be issued for the seizure of property which may be liable to forfeiture under a corresponding law of a state.

Part VII provides special information gathering powers. Where a serious offence has been committed or is suspected of being committed, a court may order production of what the bill calls property-tracking documents. A property-tracking document is one which would identify or find property of the offender or property tainted by the offence. The court may issue a warrant to empower police to search for and seize such documents.

Mr Speaker, the bill is an important measure in giving courts and law enforcement authorities further powers to combat serious crime. By attacking the rewards of crime with economic penalties, the bill will also operate as a significant deterrent to those who would profit from their crimes at the community's expense. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

STREHLOW RESEARCH CENTRE BILL  
(Serial 142)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to provide a legislative basis for the establishment of the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. Honourable members no doubt would be aware that the Strehlow Collection is considered to be one of the most comprehensive and original studies of Australian Aboriginal people in existence. It represents some 45 years of anthropological and ethnological research by the late Professor T.G.H. Strehlow and comprises field notes, films, genealogies, artifacts, sacred objects and recorded oral traditions associated with the culture and ceremonies of central Australian Aboriginal people. The collection is recognised as being of great distinction because of the meticulous recording and documentation of Professor Strehlow's findings. It is of national and international significance and it is a major heritage asset for all Australians.

The collection also contains material of more general interest and reflects Professor Strehlow's involvement with his professional contemporaries, politicians and administrators during his lifetime. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, the Strehlow family had made a significant contribution to the history and development of the Northern Territory. Professor Strehlow's father, Carl Strehlow, was appointed to the Hermannsburg Mission in 1894. He produced a considerable amount of ethnographic material, including translations and publications, and his genealogies of Aboriginal people in the area date back to 1800.

When Professor Strehlow began his studies in central Australia, many Aboriginal people were still living as hunter-gatherers. His field visits into the Petermann Ranges as a Commonwealth officer in 1936 and 1939 were among the first contacts with Pitjantjatjara tribes by Europeans.

A member: Paul Hogan knows more than you.

Mr MANZIE: I missed that interjection. Obviously, it was worth while.

This early fieldwork is very much part of Territory history. It was completed under very arduous conditions. It was carried out alone, on camel back and in very isolated areas. The collection is closely related to Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. It is understood that the decision by Aboriginal custodians to give sacred objects into Professor Strehlow's keeping was a result of the pressing need of custodians to find a proper and secure place for them. Professor Strehlow was able to provide this security at a critical time, when old men were questioning the commitment of young Aboriginal people to cultural tradition. At the same time, European development was making it increasingly difficult to find secure storage areas for sacred objects.

In 1987, Professor Strehlow's widow, Dr Kathleen Strehlow, passed the collection to the Northern Territory government to care for, preserve and manage for the benefit of Aboriginal people and as a national heritage asset. This legislation is intended to meet the aspirations of Aboriginal people



people regarding the collection and will provide for its long-term preservation through the establishment of appropriate management controls and a purpose-built facility to house the collection. The legislation will also honour the memory and the work of Professor Strehlow. I now turn to the major aspects of the bill.

Honourable members will note that clauses 4 to 15 provide for a 7-member board to manage the Strehlow Research Centre. The board will be known as the Strehlow Centre Board and it will be a prescribed statutory corporation within the meaning of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. This will require the board to provide to this Assembly an annual financial statement and an annual report of its activities. The board's powers will enable it to carry out a range of administrative functions for the management of the centre, and these include the power to enter into contracts, raise funds, consult with organisations of like interest, charge for services and acquire and hold property. However, in exercising its powers and functions, the board will be subject to the control and direction of the minister.

The board will comprise Dr Strehlow and 6 others appointed by the minister. Of those appointed by the minister, 1 will be nominated by the Council of the Northern Territory University, 1 will be nominated by the Commonwealth minister primarily responsible for Aboriginal matters, 1 will be appointed to represent the interests of Aboriginal people and another will be nominated by the Museum and Art Galleries Board. The chairman of the board will be the nominee of the Northern Territory University. This composition has been anticipated in the establishment of a steering committee chaired by the Warden of the University College which presently advises the government on matters pertaining to the collection.

Clauses 16 and 17 relate to the appointment of a research director, other staff and the engagement of consultants. The board is stated to be a prescribed authority within the ambit of the Public Service Act in respect of the appointment of the research director and other staff. I should point out that Dr Strehlow has been appointed research director of the centre, the appointment having effect from 1 October 1987.

Clause 18 covers the construction of a building in Alice Springs to house the collection. This matter is presently being investigated by an interdepartmental committee formed of representatives of the Treasury, the Department of Transport and Works and the Conservation Commission.

Clause 20 gives the board the ability to engage in commercial activity. It is proposed that the centre will charge a fee for entry to the public display areas and a combined kiosk and shop will also be located within the premises. This clause allows for such activity within the centre precinct or elsewhere as appropriate.

The other clause I wish to touch on is clause 25. This clause provides for a transition of operations from the Strehlow Centre Steering Committee to the Strehlow Centre Board. This is achieved by providing that, for a period of up to 3 months from the commencement of this legislation, the present members of the steering committee will constitute the board of the Strehlow Research Centre.

Mr Speaker, this bill is a major initiative by the Northern Territory government to provide a repository for Aboriginal cultural material to be managed for the benefit of Aboriginal people. In doing so, we will be acting to the benefit of all Territorians and Australia as a whole.

I would like to briefly commend the Minister for Industries and Development for the part that he has played in retaining the collection and establishing the Strehlow Research Centre.

Mr Bell: What about me?

Mr MANZIE: The member for MacDonnell has also made some contribution, as he has just volunteered so readily.

I can also say that I was involved in the initial decision to attempt to solve the problems which arose from the attempt to send the collection overseas. I am very pleased to be responsible for initiating this legislation which will bring the Strehlow Collection back home to where it belongs. I certainly commend the bill to honourable members of this House.

Debate adjourned.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 22 November 1988 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 137)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have a few concerns about this bill and I will touch on some of them. My colleague the member for Stuart will cover the other matters which we think should be debated. The overall intention of the bill is fair, as it attempts to deal with a number of administrative loopholes. However, a number of details need to be addressed.

One amendment would enable an alderman to resign from an office without there being the need to call a by-election until the poll has been declared. It would be virtually a Clayton's resignation. All members, however, will be able to recall past instances in which this provision has caused great confusion. It places individuals in difficult situations where they have to make hard decisions about their futures within a vacuum of information.

The amendment that attempts to restore the flat rate system as another option for councils is obviously an attempt to pay heed to councils which are dealing with rural populations. This population is often in possession of sizeable land holdings. Where there is a municipality in which there are mixed properties - for example, commercial and residential - a number of problems may be encountered. Is it fair to charge the same rate for a residential property as for a central business district multi-storey property where there is a greater capacity to pay? For councils dealing with urban populations, there would be an advantage if a schedule of properties does not have to be declared. Instead, only a classification of properties would need to be developed. This would make the management of the system easier.

However, there is a bigger issue at stake. We all know that funding to local government has been cut back severely in recent times. Councils

obviously will need to find different sources of revenue to make up the difference and the most obvious source is rates. If some councils decide to utilise flat rates and if they have to retain their previous levels of income, they will need to establish some high ceilings on rates. Under this system, the residential properties will be at a great disadvantage at the expense of commercial and development properties. The obvious problem is that the flat rating system does not recognise the capacity to pay.

It is important that an equitable tax base be applied to all citizens to ensure that those who can pay do so and that those who cannot are not unfairly disadvantaged. The flat rating system is an option but I can only hope that councils will be responsible in their choice of what method they use to tax the community. In this age of reduced government funding for local government, a council may choose to adopt a different system, particularly in areas where there is a mixed bag of properties.

Capacity to pay is a fair and just way to approach the payment of rates. Obviously, the concept of land-based value is an essential ingredient in this. If the Northern Territory were serious about equity in the community, it would impose a flat percentage as opposed to a flat amount. The introduction of a flat rating system may well financially disadvantage councils in the long run and it may also anger those who are financially disadvantaged. Local councils need to be responsive to such issues.

Another amendment which is of great concern is that which enables the minister to suspend the provisions of section 81 where the business interests of the spouse of an alderman are affected by the restrictions on pecuniary interests. It would seem more appropriate that this responsibility should remain with the councils and not be in the domain of ministerial interference. The approach that the minister has adopted reflects yet again the minister's lack of trust in the people who are responsible for local government - the aldermen.

I agree with the amendment to include the mayor as a member of the quorum of the committee. That is consistent with what is happening interstate and should have been included in the act in the first place. What sort of awkward situations has this led to in the last 2 years?

I have no problems with the amendments aimed at reducing the extent of consultation required when community councils seek amendments to their schemes. However, if there was ever an attempt to reduce the consultation process involved in establishing community councils, I would express serious concern. Anyone who has an understanding of Aboriginal decision-making would be most reluctant to amend these provisions. They were designed to take account of Aboriginal ways of talking to everyone and coming up with a decision. The existing provisions in relation to establishing councils should not be changed.

Where a council has been suspended and there is a need to provide appropriate penalties for non-disclosure of information, I suggest that \$10 000 would be viewed as far too harsh, whilst I recognise that \$100 is too low. Perhaps the principle which needs to be adopted is that the penalty should be determined by the nature of the offence and that it should take account of current monetary values in the community.

The amendment which affects the urban farm rate achieves exactly the opposite to what is intended and needs to be changed.

I support the amendment which relates to the residential requirements which are to apply to an alderman. It goes without saying that appropriate representation can come only from someone who lives in the area and knows the issues.

The amendment that will enable councils to determine matters by resolution as opposed to regulation is very sensible when it is applied to matters affecting individuals in a particular way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will summarise by saying that the amendments overall are reasonable. Where there are concerns, I have attempted to address them. As a final point, I have no problems with the minister's amendment schedule.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, this Local Government Amendment Bill encompasses the evolution of the original Local Government Act which was brought before this House in 1985. The formulation of the bill is a result of input from all areas of local government administration and the recommendations of a working party comprising community government associations, local government associations and officers of the Office of Local Government.

The bill contains many amendments of a minor nature and 2 more significant ones which I would like to touch on. The first relates to mayors or alderman unsuccessfully contesting election to this House. This amendment provides those representatives with the same sort of provision that applies to public servants. They can temporarily resign their positions in order to seek election to this House and, if unsuccessful, return without the necessity of by-elections and the costs thereof. If that sort of provision had been in place for the last election, the Minister for Education would have been opposed by Jamie Robertson and the Leader of the Opposition would not have the problem he was presented with in finding a last minute candidate to contest the seat of Port Darwin.

The second important provision is the amendment concerning rates. I do not believe it is the role of this House to dictate to local governments the rate regimes that they may care to impose. I share the concern of the member for Arafura that some of those regimes may be unfair. However, as elected representatives of the people, it is properly incumbent on local government bodies to impose those regimes which they consider fair. Being subject to election every 4 years, they are under the same sort of public scrutiny as members of this House. If the voters do not agree with the way rates are imposed, they are quite entitled to vote their councils out. I have no brief for the flat rate syndrome and nor do I have any real brief for the ad valorem or UCV systems.

In the diverse local government situation we have in the Northern Territory, ranging from Darwin through to some of the small Aboriginal communities, there must be a variety of available options in terms of rating structures. This bill essentially frees up the Local Government Act so that the responsibility for imposing rate structures lies with those who are elected to do that.

In a truly democratic or perhaps utopian society, elected bodies, whether they be local councils, state parliaments or national parliaments, will truly reflect the opinions of the people and will do exactly what the people want. Fortunately, local government in Australia has not been politicised. I believe that, in more cases than not, the rate structures imposed by those local government bodies will truly reflect the wishes of the vast majority of

the people. Under any rating regime, there will always be those who feel that they are hard done by and are paying more than their fair share and there will be those who do not carry their weight. Unfortunately, in the pursuit of democracy, those things happen. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the most important part of this amendment to the Local Government Act is clause 27 which deals with the flat rate. Before I come to that, I will comment on other parts of the bill.

The honourable minister said that the government is always receptive to views put forward by the public, in this case local government councils or community government councils wanting changes. He said that the government listens to them. He was drawing a pretty long bow when he said that. Mr Deputy Speaker, if I said 'about bloody time' in respect of the amendment pertaining to flat rates, you would say that was unparliamentary. Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw it. This is the fourth time the government has tried to do something about the flat rate issue and I hope that it has got it right this time.

I do not have any argument with most of this bill. In fact, I think most of the amendments make sense. Clause 6 inserts a new section 16A relating to members of local government seeking preselection to run for the Legislative Assembly. It allows them to temporarily resign their seats on local government bodies and go back to them without the necessity for another election to be held. This makes sense to me and it makes sense to the public because such elections cost money which local councils could put to better use elsewhere in the interests of ratepayers. The general public is also becoming sick and tired of repetitive by-elections. Often, as an indication of their annoyance, they vote against the alderman who resigned to run for election elsewhere and, after losing, is attempting to win back a seat on the council. The voters probably do not have anything against such a person, who may well have been doing a good job before resigning to stand for the Assembly. When it comes into effect, I think this amendment will be welcomed by everyone.

Clause 13 relates to division 9 of the principal act and proposed new section 55, referendum or survey by council, says:

A council may, for its information and guidance on a matter under this or any other act, cause the matter to be referred to its electors by referendum or a survey of opinion to be taken from electors, in such manner as the council thinks fit.

This looks pretty good on the surface but I believe that, if the aldermen - or councillors as they are called in our rural area - are doing their job and listening to the people who elected them, a referendum is not necessary. They will know what the people want and what the people do not want. They should be able to put those views forward to a full meeting of the town council or, as in our case, the shire council. In our Litchfield Shire, if there is any matter of such importance that it would necessitate a referendum, the local councillors would certainly hear about it.

I was interested to read clause 20 which seeks to amend section 81 of the principal act. Proposed new subclause (4A) says:

Where the minister is of the opinion that any commercial business or activity of the spouse of an officer or an employee of a council may

be unduly restricted by the operation of a provision of subsections (1) to (4) of this section he may, by notice to the council, suspend the application of the provision.

Again, that sounds good on the surface, and I am pleased to see it inserted there. I think it was the member for Arafura who said that he could not understand why the minister had to make the decision. I agree with the honourable member. It would be more appropriate for the council to make that decision.

I believe that it is good that the pecuniary interests of officers and employees be made public, as we declare our pecuniary interests at about this time every year. A matter that I intend to speak further on this afternoon is the seeming lack of knowledge of the pecuniary interests of senior public servants working for the Northern Territory government, which I think is a very interesting subject.

Mr Hatton: Why not senior private enterprise people too?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Because they do not work for the government. They work for themselves.

Perhaps the honourable minister will be able to tell me why section 81(8) of the principal act is to be omitted. It seemed to deal with matters in relation to appeal, employment conditions and superannuation. If the honourable minister could give me a reason why that is to be omitted, I would be very pleased to hear it.

I come now to clause 27, which seeks to amend section 110 of the principal act in relation to the flat rate. The member for Arafura certainly delivered a beat-up on the flat rate issue, which members of the ALP in the rural area will be very interested to read. For the information of the honourable member and other honourable members, the decision of the people of the Litchfield Shire to request the imposition of a flat rate in preference to other rating systems resulted from the expressed wish of many groups of people. Their approach to the subject was completely apolitical. There were people of all colours, from the deepest red right across the spectrum to the deepest blue - if the conservatives can be called blue. We all agreed, no matter what our political views were, that we wanted a flat rate. It is the fairest form of rating in the rural area because we want our rates to pay only for the 3 Rs: roads, rubbish dumps and reserves. One uses roads, rubbish dumps and reserves irrespective of the size of one's block of land.

The member for Arafura had a point when he said that it was unfair to tax a domestic dwelling at the same rate as, say, a large block of flats adjacent to it. I agree with that. There is a larger capacity to pay in the case of the flats, although that is an argument that I would never use, and the flats contain many more people who use the services supplied by a council to much greater capacity than the occupants of a domestic house. It might be interesting for people in Australia, even in Darwin, to consider looking at a system now being used in some parts of England where rates are charged according to the number of residents. If 10 people live on a block of land or in a house, rates are charged at a certain level whereas, if 1 person lives there, another level of rates is charged.

Mr McCarthy: You would be changing the rate every day of the week.

Mr Hatton: It depends how productive you are.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You can get around that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is the fourth time the government has tried to legislate for a flat rate and let us hope it gets it right this time.

Mr Hatton: It is not the fourth time.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is the fourth time. You don't know a darn thing about it and I do. It is the fourth time that it has tried.

Mr Ede: A zero-based rating system.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The government tried to legislate for a flat rating system when the Local Government Act was introduced in 1985. It was not ...

Mr Hatton: That is what she would like for Litchfield: zero-based rating, with an upper limit of zero.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, do I have to speak louder than these interjectors? If I do, I will.

Mr Collins: Hear, hear!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think it is fair and reasonable that the honourable member be heard in silence. A considerable number of interjections have been made in the last few moments and it is the member's privilege to be heard in silence.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your help in silencing these honourable members.

The Local Government Act was introduced in 1985 and the Shire of Litchfield was formed in December 1985. The councillors and interested members of the public really believed, as a result of what they had been told by certain public servants in the then Local Government Division, that we could operate under a flat rating system as a result of the newly-introduced Local Government Act. This belief continued until just before the Litchfield Shire had to declare a rate, at which time we were told by people who shall remain nameless that the rate had to be declared under an unimproved capital value system. Somehow the Litchfield Shire did that and it struck a rate which was equal to what it would have declared under a flat rating system. That was in 1986.

We did not have a specific piece of legislation dealing with our rating system until 1986 when the Assembly passed act No 59 which related specifically to the Shire of Litchfield. That was the government's second attempt to introduce a flat rate. Because of legal problems relating to a certain subdivider in the rural area, the legislation had to be amended in 1987. That was the government's third attempt.

The legislation now before the House is the government's fourth attempt. If it is successful, it will give considerable joy to one man in the rural area who put this idea forward in 1982-83. Other people on the Rural Advisory Committee, of which the Deputy Chief Minister was a member, agreed with him. That is how far back our thinking in terms of a flat rate being the fairest form of rating goes.

We asked for this consistently at every meeting with the government before local government was foisted on us. We had stand-up fight after stand-up fight with public servants who insisted that a flat rating system would not work. There was one particular public servant who would not be welcome in the rural area at any official meeting or discussion on this matter. I would suggest that, if this gentleman is still in Darwin, he does not show his face in the rural area. He fought against us hardest of all because we dared stand up for what we wanted and we went against what he thought was right for us. His arrogant attitude certainly did not go down well.

The fact is that we have proved that a flat rating system - actually, it is a differential flat rating system - can work. The system has worked so well that other places in the Northern Territory are also interested in it. It all goes back to one man who had the idea in 1982 or 1983. Others followed it up afterwards. There were 3 men in the rural area who encouraged people in relation to this matter. We all saw the fairness of it and agreed that it was the right way for us to go.

This fourth attempt goes even further than our flat rating system and I am very pleased to see that. It says that the flat rate can apply to a ward, a town within the meaning of the Crown Lands Act, part of a municipality and a planning zone without any regard for the assessed value of the parcel of land. As it is written, it seems to be what we want and I hope it is what we get in its administration.

Mr Hatton: It wants the council to live with its own decisions.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The honourable member says we will have to live with it. We are not complaining about the flat rate.

I would like it known that, perhaps unlike other honourable members in this House who seem to have disagreements with the local governments in their areas, I have worked consistently with the Litchfield Shire Council and it has worked with me so that our voices have been one in terms of looking after constituents in the rural area. This is one of our strengths. We all stick together, regardless of political views, when we feel that the continued enjoyment of our way of life in the rural area is threatened.

Clause 29 will amend section 112 by reducing from 3 years to 1 the period in which the method of determining the assessed value of land can be varied. This applies where the council uses improved or unimproved capital value, or an annual value, to determine the rate. The amendment makes sense. The same applies to clause 34, amending section 127, which seems to improve the grammatical construction of the original.

Clause 36 amends section 136 of the principal act. There seems to be a contradiction in the act here because section 135 states: 'A council may sue a person who is liable for payment of a rate or charge for the recovery of the rate or charge which is due and unpaid at any time within 6 years ...' Section 136, however, says that 'where a rate or charge payable under this or another act to a council in relation to ratable land has remained unpaid for not less than 5 years', the council may sell the land. Section 135 allows a person 6 years in which to pay outstanding rates or charges but section 136 allows the council to sell such a person's land after 5 years. Sections 135 and 136 seem to be incompatible and, if the minister thinks otherwise, perhaps he could explain his reasoning when he sums up.



New section 235B will allow councils to act as trustees of cemeteries. This is very relevant in the rural area now. The Litchfield Shire Council, the Darwin City Council and the Palmerston Town Council have all amalgamated in the administration of the new regional cemetery which happens to be in the Litchfield Shire. Initially, like many other people, I was very concerned that this was being foisted on the Litchfield Shire and that we would have to pay dearly in years to come. Everything has worked satisfactorily, thanks to the strong stands taken by our shire president and councillors. The cemetery will be administered by the 3 shires on an equal footing and, to my knowledge, there will be no extra levy or rate on the rural residents.

Mr Deputy Speaker, by and large I think the amendments to the Local Government Act will be for the betterment of local government communities, especially in terms of the flat rating system in the Litchfield Shire. All I can say is that I hope to heaven it works this time, because this is the fourth attempt.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, originally I did not intend to speak on this bill, but the comments of the member for Koolpinyah have changed that. Quite frankly, one gets sick and tired of the acrimonious nonsense that sometimes flows from honourable members without any basis in fact.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is a fact. It is the fourth time.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, when the member for Koolpinyah was a member of the Country Liberal Party, she did an excellent job in representing ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Now you tell me! You didn't say that when it was time for preselection.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the honourable member did an excellent job in representing the views of her electorate in the debates concerning the establishing of local government in what became known as the Litchfield Shire Council. I recall a number of meetings which she organised, including a very memorable one attended by the Deputy Chief Minister - then the Minister for Community Development - in the Darwin River Dam area. There was extensive debate about whether or not local government would be created in the area. The community was absolutely opposed to local government because it did not trust it to do the job properly. It therefore asked the Northern Territory government to impose restrictions on the new council in order to minimise its ability to charge rates.

Far from wanting to free themselves from centralised bureaucratic control of government, people in the Darwin rural area were begging the government not to impose local control through local government. If it was to be imposed, they asked the government of the Northern Territory to ensure that this new council, elected solely by the constituents of Litchfield Shire, could charge no form of rate other than a flat rate with a maximum value. The government agreed to that. Subsequently, a legal opinion indicated that the government had no legal capacity to impose such a requirement on the council. The member for Koolpinyah, who was close to the ground in her electorate, came to the Chief Minister of the day, who happened to be me ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I went to you?

Mr HATTON: ... and argued the case quite forcefully that this was an undertaking to her constituents and that the government should ensure that it was honoured. The government passed a law during 1986 to ensure that the

Litchfield Shire Council could not impose other than a flat rate at a maximum value, and this law was to apply for a specific period. What do we get for having taken that action to honour undertakings made to the Litchfield Shire? We get a mouthful of abuse from the independent member for Koolpinyah. This government has honoured every undertaking to the Litchfield Shire Council.

I would like to take up the other inconsistency which the honourable member needs to address and I ask members to think this through. She and the local residents wanted the government of the Northern Territory to impose their will on the decision-making rights of the local governing shire council for her electorate. We did that. Ever since then, she has abused the government on every occasion when we have sought to exercise our legitimate right to be involved in various activities and projects in her electorate. She says that we should not impose our will on her constituents at all. I refer members to debates that have occurred in this House about the application of planning and building legislation in the Koolpinyah electorate.

She cannot have it both ways. This government has honoured every undertaking to the Koolpinyah electorate, in particular to the Litchfield Shire, in respect of local government. This legislation enables the Litchfield Shire Council to make its own decisions beyond the stipulated and agreed freeze period. It can now decide itself if it wants to continue flat rating or whether it wishes to adopt an ad valorem or UCV system or something else. It will be the council's choice. I am sure that the member for Koolpinyah who, according to her statements in the House this afternoon, works as one with the Litchfield Shire Council, will be as one with it in whatever decision it makes and will be as one with it in explaining to her constituents the level of services it can afford to provide as a consequence of its rating decisions. I hope that she will not walk into this Chamber in future ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Don't you threaten me.

Mr HATTON: ... and try to throw the blame on the Northern Territory government because of decisions being taken by the Litchfield Shire Council with whom she is at one. I look forward to the day when the member for Koolpinyah walks in here to defend the Litchfield Shire Council against her constituents when they want services that the council cannot afford to provide because it is setting its rates at too low a level. That is a matter for the Litchfield Shire Council to sort out. If we are to have 3 tiers of government with different responsibilities, the rights to make decisions should rest at the appropriate levels. That applies to the third tier of local government. Having been given authority, it should be held accountable and responsible to its constituents. It should not try to blame the Northern Territory or federal government when things get tough. We are getting sick and tired of that.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: This will make good reading in the Palmerston branch of the CLP.

Mr HATTON: I hope it does because I am saying that I support local decision-making by the local government body. Having made those decisions, it should live with them

I would like to make one other point because it goes beyond the Koolpinyah electorate.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: We are living with our flat rating decision quite well.

Mr HATTON: That is good. I do not mind whether Litchfield Shire has a flat rate or any other type of rate. That is its own concern entirely and I support the local member in relation to the right of local government authorities to make such decisions. They should not be limited by the Northern Territory government and this legislation safeguards them in that respect. I fully support that and I wish the Litchfield Shire Council all the best its future decision-making. I trust that it will not complain to the Northern Territory government when it has to live with the consequences of whatever decisions it happens to make. I am sure the member for Koolpinyah will fully support me in relation to the localisation of decision-making.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I don't know about supporting you.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, she wants it both ways.

I often hear from the Darwin City Council, the Alice Springs Town Council and other councils that, as local governments, they are the form of government closest to the people. I see things differently. A full-time elected member of the Legislative Assembly, who has no duties other than to service an electorate, represents a constituency one-third the size of that of an alderman of the Darwin City Council who is a part-time representative. Who has the time, concentration and dedication to be closer to the electorate? The full-time member of the Legislative Assembly or the part-time alderman who represents 3 times the area of the MLA? On face value alone, one cannot argue that the local government representative is closer to the people. Alice Springs is divided into the 4 electorates of Flynn, Araluen, Sadadeen and Braitling, each represented by 1 member of the Legislative Assembly. There are 2 other members of this House who represent extensive areas of the community outside Alice Springs but who happen to live in Alice Springs. The aldermen of the Alice Springs Town Council are elected by the entire community. Who is closer to the people?

Mr Speaker, I am sick and tired of hearing the nonsensical argument that a part-time alderman elected on such a broad base is much closer to the people than a full-time member representing a smaller constituency. It is about time the community and local government recognised that members on all sides of this House are in fact much closer to the views of the constituency than elected aldermen. The same applies to the member for Koolpinyah who is a full-time dedicated worker for the Koolpinyah electorate.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You are trying to butter me up now.

Mr HATTON: No, I am not trying to butter up the member for Koolpinyah. I am simply pointing out the logic of the situation. It is about time we recognised that and stopped falling for the line that is thrown around by local government. Council aldermen have a long way to go to attain anywhere near the level of contact with their constituents that full-time members of the Legislative Assembly have. Every member of this House is engaged regularly in representations to local governments on behalf of constituents. I know that many members spend at least half their electorate time making representations to local government on behalf of constituents. That is the measure of who is closer to the people.

Mr Speaker, I would like to turn now to the new electoral provisions contained in the bill. In 1987, I expressed the view in this House that it is not appropriate that a person should hold office as an elected representative in one level of government whilst seeking office in another. I believe that, if a person decides to stand for local government, he should commit himself in

that area rather than trying to have a second bet and, whilst hanging on to that job, attempting to be elected to a state, Territory or federal government.

There is potential for a conflict of interest. The people who elect us have a right to assume that, if we stand for election and are successful, we will serve our terms in the positions we have been elected to. It can be argued cynically that local government is a stepping stone to Territory government and that Territory government is a stepping stone for federal politics. That is not good enough. Our constituencies deserve better than that. It seems, however, that the general view of the community is different and that the mighty dollar is more important than the concept of democracy and constituent representation. In that sense, I admit defeat. The broad view is that it is better to save the cost of by-elections than to place pressure on elected representatives to serve their terms.

The provisions which allow for what is essentially a provisional resignation from one position in order to contest another are a consequence of that broad community view. Those provisions also apply to public servants running for political office although, in my view, they totally contravene the concept of an independent public service. I recognise, however, that it is a fact of life that the community would prefer to avoid the costs of local government by-elections and that, because this House must ultimately represent the views of the community, we must compromise some principles to achieve that result. On that basis, I support the legislative change that provides for the provisional resignation of elected local government personnel to enable them to stand for elections in the Northern Territory and, if they are unsuccessful, to resume their positions in local government. I only hope that the electors make the appropriate judgment when people take advantage of this provision.

Certainly, the local government by-elections of April 1987 showed what the electors thought of people in local government who wanted a quid each way. I believe that none of the aldermen who resigned to contest Legislative Assembly seats was re-elected to their council positions. That reflects the lack of respect in which people who want to take a bet each way are held by the community. I know that a number of those aldermen were candidates of my party. Be that as it may, I will not resile from stating my belief that people should commit themselves to one level of government and not attempt to change in midstream.

Mr Speaker, I note that some amendments relate to the issue of licences to places of public entertainment. Whilst there may be some necessity to amend the Local Government Act in that area, I believe there is a need to look very seriously at all legislation which applies to it, because it is a regulatory nonsense. Places like hotels, motels, taverns and restaurants are affected by the planning and building approval process and the onerous licence provisions of the Liquor Act. They have to be fully examined for fire safety, public amenity and health and, having gone through that entire exercise, they then have to go to local government and obtain a licence to operate. The duplication is a classic case of unnecessary red tape.

Whilst there is a need to have specific legislation to cover such things as open-air public entertainment functions in parks or reserves which would not normally be covered by legislation relating to places of public entertainment, the overlapping regulatory requirements applying to hotels, motels, taverns, restaurants and so forth are a classic instance of red tape which needs to be cut through by means of legislative amendment without causing one skerrick of detriment to the community.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I do not want to say much about this bill but, having listened to the member for Nightcliff, I would like to offer a few comments about the relationship between local government and this Assembly, and the various tiers of government.

It is about time that this Assembly recognised the fact that we are involved in governing about 170 000 people. I know it sticks in the craw of everybody in this Assembly, including opposition members, that the recently-appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs referred to this Assembly as governing what would barely constitute a grand final crowd in Melbourne. But the fact of the matter is that he is not far wrong. There are not a great many people living in the Northern Territory and the relationship between the Legislative Assembly - the second tier of government - and the third tier of government ought to be much closer than it is in the states.

In the states, there are a large number of people who serve at both state and local government level. As far as I am concerned, that is highly appropriate, and I am totally amazed to hear government members espousing, as if it is some high-level policy, the decision to prevent that as far as possible. I listened to the member for Nightcliff very carefully, noting the internal contradictions in his argument. One such contradiction arises in the context of the member for Nightcliff's very apt comment that members of this Assembly are closer to their constituencies than people in local government. I heartily agree with him. The logical consequence of that comment, however, is that we ought to look very closely at the position of local government in the Northern Territory and at the relatively recent innovation of having full-time legislators at either local government or Territory government level, which dates only from self-government. Mr Speaker, there are a few people who continue to be members of the Legislative Assembly, such as yourself, who would recall that, between the time when there was a fully elective Legislative Assembly in 1974 and 1 July 1978, almost 4 years later, all 19 members were in part-time positions.

I have a couple of passions as far as government is concerned. One of them is democracy. I continue to keep in mind the ideals of Athenian democracy which was not representative democracy. Athenian democracy meant that every citizen was able to come to the ...

A member: Senate.

Mr BELL: No, it was not the Senate. That was the forum for the Roman Republic. The term just escapes me at the moment. I have some Latin but little Greek, I am afraid. Every citizen was able to move what I believe was called a 'provouleuma'. This is not simply a diversion, Mr Speaker. Of course, what spoils the argument is that the Athenians had slaves but let us ignore that for a minute. Every Athenian citizen was able to go along and propose laws, and this was a pure form of democracy.

One could almost say that, in the Northern Territory, we have a population that is small enough to allow that pure form of democracy to apply because, as Senator Evans suggested, the entire population of the Territory would just about fit into the MCG, although it probably would be rather expensive to hire it for the 30 days a year that the parliament sits. I jest, of course, but the point is nevertheless relevant when one looks at the absurdly rapid rate at which the professionalisation of both levels of government has proceeded in the Northern Territory. As a ratepayer, that professionalisation at local government level irks me. It irks me as a payer of the various indirect taxes, power charges and other service charges when I see that there are too many people sitting down pushing bits of paper around.

I do not believe it is necessary, in a town like Alice Springs with a population of 25 000 or so, to have a full-time mayor. I believe that members of this Legislative Assembly not only should have a right, but have some obligation, to be involved in local government. I am quite happy to be involved in local government in Alice Springs or elsewhere. As the member for Nightcliff quite rightly pointed out, members of this Assembly frequently become involved in local government issues. He said that half of the constituency work of members of this Assembly - and this is another little internal contradiction of his - involves making representations at local government level. What more powerful argument could there be for collapsing the 2 levels of government to some extent than that comment of the member for Nightcliff? It is blatantly, painfully obvious that it is absolutely necessary, just for the sake of saving dollars, to have people involved at both levels of government.

Look at the members of this Assembly who have been involved in local government. I do not happen to share the member for Nightcliff's jaundiced view of his colleague on the frontbench. I happen to believe that it is appropriate that the Minister for Health and Community Services came to this Assembly via local government. I believe that it is an appropriate proving ground for people. I have not had the experience but I have seen ...

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr BELL: It is not having a bet each way. The point I am trying to make for the member for Nightcliff is that political systems do not exist so that ambitious young men can have careers. Political systems exist to do a job. If the best way of doing that job is by having people working at both levels or moving from one level to the other, so be it. The people make their decision about that and, frankly, I do not think that people care 2 hoots whether people serve at one level or both or whether they move from one to the other. The minister made an absurd comment in his second-reading speech: 'The government's proposal does not enable a person to hold an elected office at both local government and Legislative Assembly levels irrespective of whether remuneration is received at the local government level or not'.

There is a general issue here. We have a federal system of government and this legislature has a peculiar relationship within that federation. The statehood arguments impinge on that but let us put them to one side at the moment. This Legislative Assembly has a large legislative responsibility in terms of providing the legislative and administrative structure for a wide range of public services in the Northern Territory. Likewise, the federal government has responsibility at a different level. There is an interrelationship between the 2 levels but it would be physically impossible for somebody to serve at both federal and state levels of parliament. The issue is one of logistics rather than one of principle. The task would be impossible because of the sittings of various parliaments and so on.

The conflict of interest argument used by the minister and the member for Nightcliff is patently absurd. The government is quite happy, in the case of the Planning Authority which deals with multimillion dollar applications, that its members have to declare any interests which they may have. If they do not, they are likely to be brought to book through the process of government or through the invigilation of Planning Authority processes by people such as myself and other zealous members of the opposition. I know that the government does not particularly like that and often finds it embarrassing but it is an important part of the process. Likewise, if conflicts of interest arose from the involvement of individuals in different levels of government,

and the individuals involved failed to declare those interests, it is quite clear that they would likewise be brought to book.

Mr Hatton: We did not refer to that issue.

Mr BELL: I hear complaints from the honourable member for Nightcliff that he did not refer to that issue. I was extending his argument. In fact, he was first of all arguing against membership of the second and third tier of government.

Mr Hatton: Concurrently.

Mr BELL: That situation does not apply anywhere else in the country. I hope the minister will pick that up because there are no prohibitions in the states, as he should well know. I can only wonder at the cynicism of this government that refuses to allow it to happen.

I would have thought, Mr Speaker, that you would be quite happy to work at local government level in Alice Springs. You put a lot of work into the Alice Springs community at that level, as do the members for Sadadeen and Flynn. I would be prepared to say that I have a greater workload than other members who live in Alice Springs, with the possible exception of the member for Araluen who is now a minister. I am prepared to do the work. I have looked fairly closely at the sort of activities involved in local government and I really do not see why it should not be possible for members to be involved at both levels. The fact is that it would be a sensible expenditure of taxpayers' money.

The member for Nightcliff argued that there was some revulsion in the community to the movement of politicians moving from the third tier of government to the second tier of government and that that revulsion was expressed in by-elections caused by that movement. I must admit that I have not detected any such revulsion in my soundings of the electorate. In fact, the only sentiment I detect in the electorate under those circumstances is one of resounding boredom.

That boredom is exemplified by an example from New South Wales, which came to me from an impeccable source. In that state, compulsory voting at local government elections was abolished. As an indication of the resounding boredom with which most people regard government, probably at all levels, the subsequent turnout in the local government election at Queanbeyan was a massive 20% I have established my case. I think that is a fairly good indication of people's attitude to the relative importance of local government. Those of us who are involved in government full time often make the mistake of believing that people in the community care as much about government and elections as we do. The example I have just cited indicates that that is patently not the case.

We are in a situation which is rather like blowing a tyre on a Toyota with 16-inch wheels and finding that the only spare available to get home is a 15-inch wheel. This is a 15-inch wheel amendment. What we need is an amendment to the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act which, at present, does not allow a member of this House to receive remuneration from any other public authority. The key expression is 'being entitled' to receive it. It does not matter whether you receive it or not but, if you are entitled to receive it, you are prevented from serving on that public authority at the same time as being a member of this Assembly. That is patently absurd and actually prevents members from fulfilling their public roles. One needs only

to consider the large number of boards where sitting fees may or may not be paid to see that that is the case.

Subsequent to my resignation from the Uluru Board of Management, I found that the problem had existed there. Although I had not received sitting fees, I was entitled to them, which meant that my membership of the board was in fact ultra vires. If, during that period, somebody had petitioned the Special Minister for State requesting a by-election in MacDonnell, I would have been done. The member for Wanguri was in exactly the same position prior to the last election.

Mr Tipiloura: And Ludmilla.

Mr BELL: And the member for Ludmilla. It is patently absurd, but this amendment is a patch-up job. It is a 15-inch wheel on a 16-inch wheel car. It will roll along for a while but it is really quite absurd.

One specific aspect that really does need addressing is the absurd requirement that, if the election has not been determined 7 days after the declaration of a poll, a candidate who has temporarily resigned from local government to contest the election is permitted to resume his local government position. That is an absurd provision. I cannot imagine any logical reason for its inclusion in the bill. There are situations where a particular seat could still be contested 6 or 12 months after the declaration of a poll. We had one such situation in Barkly last year. The provision is absolutely unnecessary.

Mr Speaker, with those comments and with that guarded support, I am pleased that the government has made this small step along the way to a slightly more sensible relationship between Territory and local government and I hope that it will move further in due course.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, my first point relates to the flat rate issue. I would like to correct the impression that may have been left in members' minds by the member for Koolpinyah's comments to the effect that the member for Arafura and other members on this side of the House were opposed to the flat rate provision. The honourable member was not opposing the flat rate per se. He was simply issuing a fairly timely and, I believe, a fairly correct warning to local government bodies that to embrace flat rating systems with too much gusto could leave them in considerable difficulties. The opposition, however, believes that there is a place for the flat rate option.

The situation in the Alice Springs rural area is worth looking at in this context. The council has gone through incredible contortions in its endeavour to strike a fair rate in that area. There was basic agreement about the amounts people should pay and about the level of services provided in the various locations. In its efforts to rationalise all this, the council had to use strange formulas, including discounting. In such a situation, there is quite a strong argument for levying a flat rate to solve the problem. The situation is different in urban areas. I would argue that any council which used a flat rate in a town of any size would have rocks in its head and would be doing a disservice to many of its constituents. We are not saying that the flat rate is the be-all and end-all but it is reasonable that it should be allowed for as 1 of a whole range of options.

As a former humble practitioner in local government finance, I noticed a matter which relates to clauses 38 and 67, which are substantially the same. Clause 38 repeals the existing section 151 and replaces it with a new section



which reads: 'Where, under section 150, a council adopts estimates it shall ensure that, as far as practicable, the estimated expenditure does not exceed the estimated income'. Clause 67 amends section 281, basically saying the same thing in relation to community government councils. That is completely meaningless. The problem is the phrase 'as far as practicable'. I think that this government would probably say that 'as far as practicable' it has balanced one side of the ledger with the other. I am sure that federal governments, of whatever ilk, no matter what the size of the deficit, would argue that they balance their books 'as far as practicable'. Clearly, the phrase is completely meaningless.

This leads me to a bugbear of mine. I am not sure how long it is since municipal governments abandoned this practice but, until quite recently, community governments were still using receipts and payments rather than income and expenditure. The receipts and payments system can present a completely different picture to that presented by income and expenditure. When some community governments are still technically using the receipts and payments approach, it is jumping the gun to require income and expenditure under the act.

I believe that the government is moving in the right direction in terms of membership of councils and the Legislative Assembly. It is coming to grips with what has been a ridiculous situation. The member for MacDonnell was correct in saying that the act we really need to change is the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. However, I commend the honourable minister for attempting to find a way of rectifying the situation by means of the Local Government Amendment Bill. I have written to the federal government on a number of occasions seeking that the Self-Government Act be amended and I have been told that that will occur. However, there is an 18-month lead time to get such things through the federal parliament, as honourable members would know.

New section 16A(4), as contained in clause 6, states: 'A resignation under this section may be revoked by notice in writing to the clerk ... before the election to which the resignation relates, if the person to whom this section applies withdraws his or her consent to act as a member of the Legislative Assembly ...'. Of course, if that withdrawal was after the nomination date, the election would fail. There would be no nomination and therefore no election. The resignation may also be revoked 'before the expiry of the seventh day after the declaration of the poll for the election to which the resignation relates'. I have heard the arguments in relation to this and, with all due respect to the members who have put them, I do not understand what the problems are. All recounts would be completed before the declaration of the poll and situations like that which occurred in Barkly can arise at any time after the declaration of the poll. It is just not possible to set a specific period which would be long enough to encompass the possibility of a challenge to the eligibility of an elected person to be a member of parliament. The time should be as short as possible. I am not going to quibble about whether 7 days is sufficient.

I will raise an interesting possibility, however, which I hope the minister will comment on when he sums up. The notorious section 21(1) of the Self-Government Act says that a person is not qualified to be a candidate for election as a member of the Legislative Assembly if, at the date of nomination, he holds an office of appointment receiving remuneration etc. At present, members of local government bodies affected by that section are simply resigning their local government positions to stand for election to the Legislative Assembly. What happens, though, if a person loses the election

and returns to local government - as will be possible under the amended Local Government Act - only to find a year later that the person who won the election was born in Lithuania and had never taken out Australian citizenship?

Mr Firmin: A 30-day rule for objections applies. That would have no effect in that case.

Mr EDE: No. Under section 21(2) of the Self-Government Act, a person who does not have Australian citizenship would not be entitled to be a member of the Legislative Assembly. It is possible that, if only 2 candidates had stood in the election, the losing candidate - the one who had returned to local government - might then be declared the winner. He may have missed out by a handful of votes in the first place and the judge of disputed returns has the right to install the losing candidate as the winner in that situation.

An interesting situation arises in relation to section 21(2) in terms of its requirement that a member of the Legislative Assembly must vacate his office if he becomes a person to which any of the paragraphs of subsection (1) applies. In fact, the person referred to above would not be a member of the Legislative Assembly but a member of the council. Section 21(1) does not apply because, at the date of nomination, he was not receiving the reward. He did not become a person receiving a reward after he was a member of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, neither section 21(1) nor 22(2) would apply. The person could continue as a member of the town council, if he so wished, until the next nomination date because the act does not correct that situation. Let us hope that it does not arise and that the act can be amended in due course to deal with that situation. In case we do not, it is something that members may wish to bear in mind next time that they are arguing with federal members about the need to amend the Self-Government Act.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the legislation. Whilst some of it obviously is desperately needed to sort out a few minor problems, there are some aspects that we could afford to look at again. A common myth in the Territory is that there is something mystical about separating the 2 tiers of local government and Territory government - and, indeed, the federal government - and that there is some sort of impropriety in being involved in more than 1 tier. It takes me back to the class of '74 that was elected to this place. At the time, I happened to be the Chairman of the Tennant Creek Town Management Board as well as the member for Barkly and a member of the executive with all the accompanying responsibilities. I never came across any conflict of interest and I never came across a situation where the workload in one job prevented me from satisfactorily carrying out the other, at least to the satisfaction of the voters.

I really believe that we treat the voters like dopes and do not give them enough opportunity to speak for themselves. I ask honourable members opposite what is wrong with the voters of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or Katherine deciding for themselves whether they want their local member to be on the council or whether they want their mayor to be in the Assembly. What is wrong with the President of the Mataranka Community Government Council being a member of the Katherine Town Council if the voters have no objection? If that is the wish of the voters, who are we to be the policemen of the world and tell them that it cannot occur?

In an interjection a moment ago, the minister made some denigratory reference about the possibility of somebody receiving 2 payments, 1 from the local government and 1 from the Assembly. Why is that a problem? If a person

is doing both jobs, why shouldn't he receive 2 payments? It is not a matter of having your snout in the trough. Local governments and this Assembly make determinations that reward their members in a fair and reasonable way. If you are doing both jobs and satisfying the electorate, why shouldn't you receive 2 sets of remuneration? The minister might be aware that, over the years, there have been some aldermen and mayors who have been receiving some fairly handsome pensions from one source or another whilst collecting their remuneration as councillors. Would he argue that they had their snouts in the trough? I think we should back off and let the voters make up their minds about whom they want to represent them as a president, mayor, councillor or MLA. They are quite capable of doing that at the ballot box.

The member for MacDonnell expressed his displeasure at the fact that Alice Springs has a full-time mayor. That is a matter for the people of Alice Springs.

Mr Smith: He is from Alice Springs. He is expressing his opinion.

Mr TUXWORTH: He is entitled to that view. Obviously, Mr Speaker, it is not one that we ought to be interfering with. If the people of Alice Springs feel that way, they can express their view at the ballot box. They have the capacity to make that decision at the next election.

Whilst some of the minister's proposals are very positive and constructive, we have probably reached a time in the Territory's development when we should stop being the policemen of the world in terms of telling other communities how to run their affairs. In that regard, I would say that it is high time that we started to devolve to local government more responsibility in such areas as town planning, building regulations, health inspection and a range of other matters. The development of the Territory has reached a point where we can consider that satisfactorily. One would have only to look at the disputes on town planning issues that have occurred in the last 9 months in just about every Territory centre to realise that it is time for local government to take responsibility and for the Territory government to step back.

Mr Dale: I have never seen anyone change so much in 2 years.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Minister for Health and Community Services says that he has never known anybody to change so much in 2 years. One of the benefits of being where I am and not locked into the glasshouse syndrome is that I have a better perspective on what people want. What they wanted a few years ago is a little different from what they want today. I am not worried if the minister wants to continue in his present path. That is terrific. No one wants him to change anything that he is doing. He should keep on doing it because people on this side of the House will get a fair amount of encouragement from that. We would be a little disappointed if he did start to change his direction.

Mr Dale: You didn't do anything about it.

Mr TUXWORTH: The minister has been where he is for 2 years and has yet to do anything about anything. He is in no position to talk about anybody else, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dale: They have not thrown me out. They threw you out, remember?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, could I say that the biggest favour that they ever did for me was to throw me out.

Mr Coulter: They did not throw you far enough.

Mr TUXWORTH: They threw me far enough to know that I am better off where I am than on your side of the House. The other honourable members on the crossbenches count their blessings too, because they feel the same as I do.

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: Do not stop him, Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: I will stop anyone if I so desire. The member will be heard in silence.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, you have just taken all the fun out of it. We do not often have somebody making a turkey of himself like that and I am sorry that the opportunity has disappeared.

Mr Speaker, I would say to the minister that it is not too late for us to decide to back off completely in terms of controlling the number of levels of government people are able to be involved in simultaneously. If the minister is prepared to consider any change in that regard, I would be happy to support him. Generally, there is no argument that the initial changes proposed by the minister are a start. As he said in his second-reading speech, there will be more to come and I join with other honourable members in saying that those changes will be welcomed, not only by people in the community but by local government itself.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, before the member for Barkly leaves, I would remind him that he is quite able to propose amendments if he so chooses. I thank honourable members for their comments because, in general, they have been fairly positive. There are a few areas of philosophical difference but the input has been positive overall.

The member for Arafura referred to comments I made in the second-reading speech with regard to the reversible resignation. I certainly did not say that it was a Clayton's resignation. I did say that that had been said by some people. I do not believe it to be a Clayton's resignation. It does provide a mechanism to overcome the very high cost that has been imposed on councils following the resignation of council members in order to contest Legislative Assembly seats. Regardless of what people may wish to call it, it will be effective. It has been sounded out at the highest legal level, and it is believed that it will get around the restrictions imposed on us by other acts.

There was considerable comment from all members with regard to the flat rating option. I was a little nonplussed by the opposition spokesman's comments in this regard because he seemed to be saying: 'Yes, it is something that we would like councils to have but please do not leave it up to them to make the decisions about where it should apply'. I have confidence in the ability of local governments to make those decisions themselves. They exist in order to make decisions on behalf of their residents and I have no doubt that they will make the right decisions for their communities. If a council

decides to impose a flat rating system in an area where it is quite clearly not appropriate, I am quite sure that the voters will pass the appropriate judgment at the next election.

The member for Arafura indicated that he could not understand why the minister should be able to decide to suspend the provisions relating to business interests of spouses of aldermen in conflict of interest situations. He argued that that should be the province of councils. Councils, however, do not have the power to suspend provisions of any act of this parliament. Quite clearly, the suspension of those provisions would be the responsibility of the minister. How would a council be able to take on that responsibility when, in the member's view, it does not even have the ability to decide whether or not a flat rate should be levied? I believe it is quite appropriate for the responsibility to rest with the minister.

Levels of rating around the Territory would be among the lowest in Australia. The extra options these amendments provide in terms of rating systems will not cause the imposition of rates which constituents would be unable to pay. I am sure that councils will be very careful to ensure that they do not do that. All councils have sought the option to levy flat rates and I am sure that those which use it will do so to good effect.

The member for Arafura commented on the amendments that would make it less difficult to amend community government schemes. As things stand at present, the full consultation process has to occur if a community government wishes to make even a minor amendment to its scheme. Clearly, that is undesirable because it takes considerable time. Community councils have sought amendments to the act in order to be able to amend their schemes without the full consultation process. If a community council desires to have full consultation in order to amend its scheme, that can still occur.

There was also concern in relation to the fairly heavy penalty of \$10 000 for non-disclosure of information in the case of a council which is suspended. That provision merely brings the penalty into line with other penalties in the act. It is a maximum amount; it is not a mandatory penalty which must be imposed.

The member for Arafura and opposition spokesman on local government also referred to the urban farm rate and stated that the amendment would achieve the opposite to what was intended. In fact, as things stand, the urban farm rate appears to be a rate that could be imposed only on top of a normal rate. The amendment makes it quite clear that an urban farm rate is not something that is imposed on top of a normal rate. The effect of the amendment is to ensure that it is a rate which is set below the normal rate.

The member for Karama spoke mainly about rating options and was, I believe, in general support of the rating options that would be provided under this legislation.

The member for Koolpinyah made much of the flat rate per parcel option and her part in bringing that about. I think the member for Nightcliff answered the member for Koolpinyah quite effectively and I will not go into that matter any further.

Mr Speaker, there has been considerable comment in regard to the reversible resignation and the 7 days during which a person can apply to go back into a council following the declaration of a poll. It was quite clear that, in order to get around the problem of having to hold council

by-elections when people who have resigned from councils are unsuccessful in attempts to win election to the Legislative Assembly, we had to come up with a proposal that would provide for members of council to resign prior to the date of nomination whilst retaining the ability to return to council if they are unsuccessful at the Assembly poll. I believe that the amendment will be effective in that regard.

The 7-day period for reversal of the resignation will protect councils. It is quite possible, particularly with the larger councils such as those in Darwin and Alice Springs, that a number of members of council could be seeking nomination for a Legislative Assembly election. If a council member had longer than 7 days in which to reverse his decision to resign, his council would clearly be disrupted. If a number of members of a council were sitting around waiting for the declaration of a poll, the council would not be able to function normally. I think 7 days is a reasonable time. I am not prepared to extend the period beyond 7 days because that would be unfair to councils and contrary to the intention in terms of solving a problem.

The member for Stuart expressed concern that a situation could arise as a result of a council member running unsuccessfully for the Legislative Assembly, only to find later that the person who won the election was not entitled to sit in the Assembly. There is no way that we could provide for that situation under this act. In fact, as I see it, if the courts found that the council member should take the place of the ineligible candidate in the Assembly, that council member would be eligible to move into the Assembly.

Mr Ede: And stay on the council.

Mr McCARTHY: And not stay on the council, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ede: No, and to stay on the council.

Mr McCARTHY: No, there would be no ability to stay on the council, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ede: Why not?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah said that it was not necessary for councils to hold referenda. I would expect that it would be very unlikely that Northern Territory councils would need to hold referenda on many matters. The amending clause simply makes it clear that the legislation is referring to referenda rather than general polls in this particular case.

There was a question about clause 20 which dealt with industrial matters and awards. Mr Speaker, all ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The repeal of section 81(8).

Mr McCARTHY: It was the repeal of a subsection that really had no place in the Local Government Act. Quite clearly, it was a matter that should be and is covered by awards rather than by the Local Government Act.

The member for Koolpinyah also claimed that this was the fourth time that we had tried to put flat rating into place. I think that was answered quite adequately by the member for Nightcliff, but let me say that the provision in this bill is quite clear and unequivocal. There is not doubt at all that it will have the effect of providing councils with the option of levying a flat rate. We thought that the flat rating option was allowed for under the Local

Government Act as it stood but a court case, I believe in New South Wales, made it clear not only to us but to other governments around the country that this was not the case. Now, quite clearly, it will be.

Another query from the member for Koolpinyah related to sections 135 and 136 and concerned the period during which a council could sue for recovery of rate charges or exercise its power to sell the land. The 2 sections certainly are not in conflict. Section 135 says:

A council may sue a person who is liable for payment of a rate or charge for the recovery of the rate or charge which is due and unpaid at any time within 6 years from and including the date on which it first became due and payable.

Section 136, relating the power to sell the land, says:

- (1) Where a rate or charge payable under this or another act to a council in relation to ratable land has remained unpaid for not less than 5 years, the council has, by virtue of this section, power -
  - (a) to sell the land and to transfer the land sold; and
  - (b) to transfer the land sold.
- (2) A power under subsection (1) shall not be exercised unless, in the 5-year period, the council exercised its rights under section 135 ...

In other words, once a council has exercised its rights under section 135, it has the power to sell the land in that 5-year period.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Could I ask you about the 5- and 6-year periods?

Mr McCARTHY: That is exactly what I was referring to. The council has 6 years in which to catch up with a person who has not paid rates and to sue for those rates. If that happens before 5 years elapse, the council can sell up the land.

There is obviously a philosophical difference in the approaches of the government and the opposition in relation to people holding office at both local government and territory or state government levels. Under no circumstances will this government countenance a person being able to simultaneously hold elected office at both local and Territory government levels. Frankly, it is unnecessary. I believe there is a strong conflict of interest involved and, attending local government ministers' meetings and discussing this matter with other ministers around the country, I find that very few agree with the principle of allowing local government members to sit in their state parliaments. In fact, I have been told that, in many cases, such people have not been effective members of parliament because most of their time was taken up with local government matters. In many cases, these people have used their ability to sit in parliament simply in order to collect a pay packet.

I find it difficult to accept that there could be any case in the Northern Territory where it would be a reasonable situation to have a person sitting at both council level and Territory government level.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Harry Chan did it.

Mr McCARTHY: The situation was entirely different in those days and the member for Koolpinyah well knows it.

The member for MacDonnell gave us a lesson in Greek. That is what I have written here.

Mr Bell: You cannot have been listening too bloody well.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell expressed the view that, if people were able to sit at both local council and Territory government levels, there would be a saving of dollars. I cannot see where that saving would occur. Persons in that situation would be paid either as members of the Legislative Assembly or would receive council sitting fees. I think the former is most likely and it does not represent much of a saving. Frankly, I think the possibility of a conflict of interest is such that I could not agree to such a situation. The feedback I have had on this subject is such that I believe that there are very few people in the Territory who would agree that people should be able to sit at council level and Territory government level. I know that others disagree with me but that is my view.

The member for Stuart indicated that it was very difficult under the present system to set anything like a flat rate. That is true and that is why we have moved to amend the act. Some councils have been a little bit more disinclined to use the options available to them than they might have been. In that context, I must commend the Katherine Town Council which this year has struck a differential rate which allows it to go as close as possible to a flat rate in its extended boundary area.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why don't you commend the Litchfield Shire Council too?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, the Litchfield Shire Council operates under its own act in relation to flat rating. If it wants to make changes when that act expires, it is quite at liberty to do so.

The member for Stuart also referred to the accounting regulations. Community governments would not normally be in quite the same position as municipal governments in terms of borrowing money and moving too far outside the system that ...

Mr Ede: They could have accruals.

Mr McCARTHY: That is correct. In fact, the accounting regulations currently being drafted for local government will apply to community government and that should overcome any concerns that the honourable member has.

The member for Barkly spoke about the devolution of responsibilities. I might make the observation here that he had the opportunity at one stage in his career to do something about that but certainly gave no signs that he had any inclination to do so. In fact, with the exception of town planning and building controls, the government has devolved all functions to councils in



the Northern Territory. In a community as small as our own, which is in a fairly dynamic growth mode, town planning and building controls are both functions that could not reasonably be devolved on councils at this stage. However, I have no doubt that, at some time in the future, councils will have responsibilities in that area.

Mr Speaker, before sitting down I would like to record my thanks to the Office of Local Government and to the local government industry both at council level and through its peak organisations for their contributions in the formulation of these amendments. It has been a process of consultation. The Local Government Act is arguably the biggest or the second biggest piece of legislation we have. It has worked very well since it was put into place in 1986. It is a very good piece of modern legislation and the states see it as the most workable local government act in the country. Many of its provisions are being considered by state governments. Most of the amendments now before the House are very minor. The local government industry has had an input in their formulation and most of them are at the direct request of local government. As always, there were some areas where agreement was not possible. We have agreed, however, on a great deal and the government has often changed its stance in order to reach agreement. I thank people involved in local government for the efforts they have made and for their willingness to accept our views when we were determined to maintain them.

The bill brings into line the provisions of both the Local Government Act and the Community Government Act. Community government is growing in the Northern Territory. Yesterday I agreed to the formation of the fourteenth community government council in the Northern Territory, the Dagaragu Community Government Council. Members will probably be aware that Dagaragu is Wave Hill. Wave Hill has a great history in relation to land rights and rights of Aboriginal people and that, together with the fact that it is situated in my electorate, makes me very pleased that the people of Dagaragu and Kalkaringi have taken on community government. It indicates to me that community government has turned the corner. Every major community in the Katherine region is now under community government. That is a tremendous tribute to the people who have worked so hard in that area to bring local government to communities and also to the willingness of Aboriginal people to take on this form of government. They now have a local government system that is in line in all respects with the broad local government system in the Northern Territory, a system which is perhaps the most advanced in the country.

There are some interesting features of the community government scheme at Dagaragu. There is a special method of voting using coloured tokens for the various male and female skin groups. There is an extra skin group for the non-Aboriginal population of the community. That shows the flexibility of the community government section of the Local Government Act. The scheme at Dagaragu has been established after 3½ years of consultation.

I would like to allude here to the problems we are currently facing in establishing community government in the Northern Territory. I recently met with the federal Minister for Local Government together with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. It took me some time to have that meeting organised because there was clearly an initial reluctance on the part of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to meet me in conjunction with the Minister for Local Government. I believe that was related to the concerted effort that is being made in the Northern Territory to thwart local government for Aboriginal people. A number of things have come to light in that respect, Mr Speaker. I know that the land councils approached the federal Minister for Local Government to discuss the directions of local government in the Northern

Territory and I know that approaches have been made to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in relation to local government for Aboriginal people.

I do not say that members of the land councils are opposed to local government. Quite clearly, many of their communities are operating under the community government system. There has been, however, a concerted effort on the part of the land council bureaucracies to stop the growth of local government for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. A number of methods have been used to achieve this. For example, land council staff have been following our own staff around community government areas and telling the communities that something else is available to them, that they could use the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act to set up local government associations in their communities.

Mr Ede: I wish you would come back to the bill some day.

Mr McCARTHY: This one hurts a bit, does it?

Mr Speaker, organisations set up under that act are not the same as those which can be set up under the community government scheme. For example, non-Aboriginal people cannot be included in councils set up under that act, nor can the councils impose restrictions or otherwise regulate people other than Aborigines. The then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Viner, made it clear at the time that the act was never intended to impede the growth of local government in the Northern Territory or anywhere else for that matter. It was enacted as an interim measure until local government was put into place. Organisations set up under that act will not fulfil the role of local government in the Northern Territory.

I asked the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to remove part III of that act which would enable him to establish such councils in the Northern Territory. During that meeting, the minister responded that he would not remove it at this stage.

Mr TIPILOURA: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The issues the minister is addressing are outside the scope of the bill before the House. He is referring to a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and is speaking about different legislation. The issues do not apply to this bill.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I am trying to point out to honourable members that the Northern Territory Local Government Act is obviously second to none. We are quite capable of running our own local government in the Northern Territory. We have an act in place and we are now amending it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that there is possibly a point of order, and the minister should relate his remarks more closely to the legislation before the House.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I will conclude my remarks by repeating that we have a very workable local government system in the Northern Territory and I abhor any attempt by agencies of the land councils to stop it in any way.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 18 agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.1.

This corrects a minor drafting error. The amendment provides that the town clerk's other functions are those imposed by the council. The present drafting also included powers given by government regulation. This creates a potential for the clerk to have 2 masters and is undesirable.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 29 agreed to.

Clause 30:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.2.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 30, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 37 agreed to.

New clause 37A:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.3.

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 37A, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 38 to 41 agreed to.

New clause 41A:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.4.

This amendment will enable an auditor to administer an affirmation as an alternative to an oath, parallel to the provisions of section 195(1).

New clause 41A agreed to.

Clauses 42 to 62 agreed to.

Clause 63:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman I move amendment 42.5.

This amendment provides a clarification of the existing wording of sections 271(1) and 271(2).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 63, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 64 to 68 agreed to.

Clause 69:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.6.

This provides similar provisions in relation to penalties under community government by-laws as exist for by-laws in municipalities. The amendment also provides a similar qualification relating to certification of proposed by-laws by the Parliamentary Counsel. It parallels the amendment to section 204(3) accomplished by clause 44(b) of this bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 69, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 70 to 75 agreed to.

New clause 76:

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 42.7.

New clause 76 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government):  
Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

WORK HEALTH AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 128)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the interests of brevity and relevance, I indicate that this bill corrects a minor administrative problem concerned with common law. The opposition supports it.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 122)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this bill introduces an infringement notices enforcement scheme that will obviate unnecessary court appearances. A considerable amount of time, particularly for the police, is taken up in pursuing fines for relatively minor offences. The purpose of this bill is to streamline that process. The opposition has considered this bill carefully. It introduces a scheme involving courtesy letters, infringement penalties and enforcement orders. The opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TABLED PAPER  
Publications Committee - Seventh Report

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

Motion agreed to; report adopted.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 134)  
SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 135)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, essentially the opposition supports this legislation, but with some reservation. The terms of the new section proposed to be inserted in the Liquor Act are a little difficult to follow but, essentially, the Liquor Amendment Bill deals with the presence of minors on licensed premises and the supply of liquor to minors. The cognate bill deals with minors drinking in public places and introduces a new offence in that regard. There are a few general comments that are worth making about this legislation.

Mr Speaker, we have a problem to which you yourself have drawn attention publicly - the problem of underage drinkers. There has been a great deal of speculation about appropriate measures to overcome the problem, including the use of pub cards. The problem of young people drinking to excess in uncontrolled circumstances is a matter of a great concern, not only in the Assembly but in the Territory generally. I do not have close personal experience of the problem. Within the Aboriginal community that I am familiar with, underage drinking is not a problem. Within the community of Alice Springs, perhaps I do not see that side of the town. I therefore hesitate to make blanket assertions. I have been told, however, by police and social workers that there are considerable problems in this regard. It is certainly a problem that needs to be addressed.

With respect to the amendments before us, there is a general issue that is probably worth noting. There seems to be a shift in responsibility for the presence of underage drinkers on licensed premises away from the licensees and towards the parents. It seems to me that the control of minors is, to a considerable extent, the responsibility of parents. If underage kids of mine were on licensed premises, I would be absolutely horrified. I would feel considerably responsible. There is some question in my mind, however, about how far parental responsibility should reasonably extend. If that is a problem, it should be addressed as well.

My view is that the responsibility of licensees should not be reduced, which this legislation does to some extent. I appreciate how tough it is for somebody running a crowded pub to know whether a kid is 17 or 19. I appreciate that problem. The current section 106 makes it an offence for a

licensee to supply liquor to a person under 18 years of age. It is a sanction against the licensee. What is proposed here is that the sanction be against the young persons themselves in terms of being on licensed premises.

In his second-reading speech, the minister referred to the circumstance in which minors are on licensed premises with their families. It is my personal view that families should be encouraged to be on licensed premises, however pleasant the freemasonry of the all-male front bar might be. The freemasonry of the all-male front bar is an institution that has great antecedents in Australian history and one that I have been known to enjoy from time to time, and I make no apology for it. However, I feel that it is appropriate that, under civilised circumstances, families be encouraged to be on licensed premises for a meal and a drink. I do not think that, in practice, this legislation particularly affects matters in that way. There will still be the problem of identifying minors however section 106 is written. The licensee always felt some responsibility because he knew that an inspector or a police officer might come in and say that he has served someone under the age of 18.

Mr Poole: That hasn't changed.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to listen to the minister's argument but section 106 of the current act is pretty specific. It creates an offence for a licensee or any person employed by a licensee to sell or supply liquor to a person under the age of 18 years. The bill replaces that with a section which says that a person who has not attained the age of 18 years shall not enter or remain on licensed premises. That is a matter of concern to me. I appreciate that the new section 106A will allow minors to be on premises and to be supplied with liquor by a parent or guardian and that there is an exclusion for a spouse under the age of 18. Having analysed it reasonably carefully, I can see the links between existing legislation and what is proposed here.

With those comments, I repeat that the opposition supports the bill. I simply reiterate my concern about the problem of underage drinking and express some concern about the movement of the responsibility away from the licensee.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill and to congratulate the minister on its introduction. Underage drinking and attempts to control it have plagued the liquor industry for many years. Certainly, the problem has been exacerbated in recent years. Having spent a number of years representing both on-licence and off-licence licensees in the Northern Territory prior to entering parliament, I am well aware of the frustrations and difficulties they face in dealing with the problem of underage drinking. At the same time, like most members of the community, I am only too painfully aware of the true stories of people as young as 14 being able to get away with pretending they are over 18.

The difficulties that this bill addresses cannot be examined in isolation. They must be looked at in conjunction with the initiative that has been taken by the Australian Hotels Association and the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to introduce the pub card. This is designed to provide those people who are legally entitled to be in licensed premises with some way of proving that they are entitled to be there. The purpose of the pub card is to assist the licensee in that process of clarification as to whether a person should or should not be on the premises. I congratulate the Minister for Transport and Works and the staff of the Motor Vehicle Registry on their assiduous application in stopping attempts by people under the age of 18 to obtain pub cards and strictly ensuring that there is proper proof of age prior

to issue of cards. That will make a very effective contribution to its status within the industry.

This bill addresses additional matters that must be addressed if there is to be anything even approaching effective control over underage drinking in licensed premises. Whilst it has always been an offence for a licensee to supply a person under the age of 18 with alcohol, there was a loophole. It was not an offence for a person under the age of 18 to actually be on licensed premises and it was not an offence for a person other than the licensee to supply an underage person with alcohol. The situation often arose where underage people happened to be on licensed premises and a person who may have been 20 or 25 years of age would obtain alcoholic beverages for them. That placed the licensee in a very difficult situation because neither the person supplying the alcohol nor the person consuming it was committing any offence. Quite clearly, that is wrong. People supplying alcohol to minors should be held accountable for their actions. This legislation will make underage persons who are legally on licensed premises accountable and any person who supplies those young people with alcohol will also be held accountable. It will provide some opportunity for control

A second area of real concern in respect of underage consumption of alcohol is the significant incidence of consumption of alcohol away from licensed premises, particularly in public places such as beaches or parks or around the town. There is considerable gossip about where young people gather, from time to time, for the purpose of alcoholic binges. There has been much media coverage of that particular practice and the problems that have arisen with teenage alcoholism and alcohol consumption.

Unfortunately, it has not been an offence for underage people to consume alcohol in such public places, provided they are at least 2 km away from licensed premises. The amendment to the Summary Offences Act deals with that. It applies the same rules to underage drinking in public places as on licensed premises. If a minor is not in the company of his parents or guardians, he cannot consume alcohol on licensed premises or off licensed premises in a public place. It is logical to deal with underage drinking in public places through the Summary Offences Act, to give police the ability to act in the course of their normal policing duties. It is appropriate that that particular offence be dealt with by the police and that is why it should come under the Summary Offences Act.

These legislative measures are important and essential innovations to deal with the growing problem of alcohol consumption. They will provide the act with teeth and they are actively supported by the administrative arrangements, made through pub card, to assist in the identification of people who are under or over the age of 18. Those initiatives will be supported by campaigns such as that run by the Department of Health and Community Services, seeking to discourage young people from engaging in harmful drinking practices. Whilst we cannot assume that every problem will be solved by the amendments, these are certainly significant steps towards providing a legislative armoury which has the capacity to do something about the significant social problems that are confronting not only our community but communities throughout Australia.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, my remarks in speaking to this bill will be brief. I am very pleased that the government has introduced it. It certainly seems to be a step in the right direction from a number of points of view, the first one being that responsibility for drinking alcohol in certain situations is put firmly on the shoulders of the parent or guardian of the young person involved and that the responsibility for drinking or not drinking is also placed on the shoulders of the young person.

I would like to think that the bill represents the thin edge of the wedge in terms of a return to old-fashioned family values, where the family stayed together and parents were responsible for what their children did. Whether children are below the age of 18 or older, a parent always has to accept responsibility for bringing that particular child into the world. Many parents these days have children and then go on their own merry ways, with or without the partner who helped them bring the child into the world, while the child is left to fend for itself from a very early age, probably from primary school age onwards. One has to feel very sorry for such children because they are most often the ones who lack the friendship and love of a normal home. Of necessity, they turn to crime, sometimes to feed and clothe themselves. If their parents really looked after them, they would stay on the straight and narrow. Parents do not have to be wealthy to do that; they simply have to give their children a bit of attention, love and care when they are small.

This legislation has my support. I reiterate my hope that it is the thin edge of the wedge in terms of a return to old-fashioned family values.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to compliment the minister on introducing this piece of legislation because there is no doubt that underage drinking is of major concern to almost everybody in the community. Amongst other things, the bill addresses the problem of the entry of minors to licensed premises and the supply of alcohol to minors whilst on those licensed premises.

There are literally thousands of young people who are lying cold in their graves today as a result of consuming alcohol and then driving motor vehicles or becoming involved in some other dangerous exercise. It is a very difficult issue because nobody really wants to take away from young peoples' enjoyment of their social life. By the same token, there is a need for some control because it is a fact of life that young people below the age of 18 sometimes find great difficulty in being able to handle in a mature fashion the drinking of alcohol.

This legislation is the result of numerous complaints from concerned parents and citizens in the community who have seen young people drunk and disorderly as a result of having access to alcohol. Discotheques are one of the major problem areas. It is extremely difficult for the licensees of discos to assess the age of young people when they come through the door. We all know that, in this day and age, when young women dress smartly and wear make-up, it is very difficult to assess their age. I know that, on occasions, the proprietors or licensees of discotheques have asked for driver's licences and tried their best to ascertain the age of young people, but it is extremely difficult.

Licensees share this concern because they have responsibility under the law to ensure that young people are not served with alcohol whilst on their premises. I know they have a desire to eliminate underage drinking and, indeed, it is in their best interests to do so. We have to understand that licensees have very limited powers to demand identification from their patrons. I suppose they have the opportunity to refuse access to premises but I do not know whether that would stand up under common law if anybody took them to court over it.

The member for Nightcliff mentioned that the Australian Hotels Association has introduced the pub card and I compliment it on that initiative. I also understand that the Motor Vehicle Registry is assisting by producing the pub card. I would like to get some feedback on the operation of that scheme



because I am sure that there are many young people who would like to know how to access the pub card system.

Mr Hatton: Go to Motor Vehicle Registry with your birth certificate.

Mr SETTER: I see. It is issued by Motor Vehicle Registry after production of a birth certificate. Maybe a better name could have been found. To me, the name pub card suggests that you have to go to the pub or you only get the card if you want to go to a hotel. That is not the case at all because, obviously, it applies to all licensed premises.

The bill allows persons under the age of 18 to consume alcohol on licensed premises when they are accompanied by their parents, guardian or spouse. I would assume that that applies if the spouse is over the age of 18. The important proviso in this case is that they are supplied with a substantial meal. This would also apply to restaurants, clubs and, I imagine, roadhouses where meals are supplied. As I indicated earlier, there is no intention to interfere with the normal family entertainment which is enjoyed by many people.

The member for Koolpinyah referred to family values and that is very important. In my electorate, there is an establishment called the Billabong Restaurant. I know that many parents and their children of varying ages go there regularly to enjoy a meal. If the parents decide that they want their children to have access to some alcohol, that is their responsibility provided it is done in a reasonable manner. The member for Nightcliff alluded to the consumption of alcohol in a public place. For example, a family might go to Berry Springs for a picnic and dad might take along the esky. He might well decide that it is appropriate for his 17-year-old son to have a light beer or perhaps a small glass of wine with the meal. That is his decision, and rightly so.

The bill also tightens the definitions of 'parent' and 'guardian'. Those definitions certainly needed clarification.

The subject of supermarkets has been raised on a couple of occasions this evening. One of the things that concerns me greatly and which is not addressed in this bill is the fact, which is common knowledge, that there are groups of young people throughout the northern suburbs of Darwin - and some of them are over the age of 18 - who buy a carton or a flagon from the local pub or supermarket and get stuck into it down at the local park. The Attorney-General quite often complains to me about how, when he goes jogging in the park adjacent to my office early in the morning, he trips over flagons, empty cans and so on. I do not know who is actually consuming that alcohol in the park but one wonders whether or not young people are involved. I suspect from time to time that they are. I do not lay the complete blame at the feet of young people but I am rather concerned about the welfare of the minister. I would hate him to trip over a flagon and stub his toe or break his leg while jogging in the semi-darkness of the early morning.

Mr Speaker, with those few words, I express my concerns about the under-age drinking problem and indicate my support for this bill.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I thank the members for Nightcliff, Koolpinyah, Jingili and MacDonnell for their comments. Let me make it quite clear that there is no intention in this amendment to lessen the responsibility of licensees to ensure that the people they serve are of legal age. Of course, if the opposition's spokesman on liquor matters, the member

for MacDonnell, had bothered to read the amendment, he would have seen that that issue is amply dealt with.

The onus of proof of age rests with drinkers and that is where this legislation sets out to place it. It gives licensees the opportunity to demand from people seeking to purchase alcohol, proof that they are above the legal age limit. I note that we will have to declare supermarkets as licensed premises under the terms of the act to ensure that they are covered properly. Legislation such as this will not fulfil the purpose of educating people about alcohol abuse which is, after all, a parental responsibility. The legislation is simply a means to an end to assist responsible people in the community, in the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, in the liquor industry and in the police force to do their jobs properly.

I thank members of the Australian Hotels Association for their initiative in introducing the pub card and I thank employees of the Motor Vehicle Registry for issuing the pub card which will make a great contribution to the control of the sale of alcohol in the Northern Territory. I assure honourable members that we, as a government, will do what we can to ensure that young people in our community take a responsible approach to the consumption of alcohol. Through the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, we will insist that suppliers of alcohol also take a responsible approach.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr POOLE (Tourism)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 136)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, this bill has caused me considerable concern and, for that reason, there has been a need to undertake extensive consultation with the community. The first area that is of great concern to me is the proposal to amend section 5 of the act. The intention is to reduce the membership of the Grants Commission from 7 to 4. No doubt, the government seeks to obtain some financial savings and to eliminate the potential for conflicting opinions among members of the commission. Up to a point, I can understand the logic behind what the government is trying to achieve.

Any changes to the commission should take into account the need to obtain a fair and equal distribution of representation from all sectors of the community who will be affected by the decisions of a body such as the commission. However, fair representation is not just a numbers game in which 1 person represents a particular sector. It goes beyond that and takes into account whether 1 person can fairly represent the views of a large and diverse section of the community.

I have no problem with 1 member of the commission being a public servant. A public servant is restricted by government policy. I have no problem with 1 member coming from the municipal council area. Municipal government is responsible for a large percentage of the community and, in the case of municipal councils, there is at least an element of common interest and a common approach to issues. The municipal councils are united and, despite the

existence of a range of concerns between regions, they have more in common than not. Mr Speaker, by now you will have realised where my greatest concern lies. It is, of course, with community councils.

Community councils are numerous and are located all over the Territory. Each community has characteristics which make it very different from the others. Community councils do not have a long and established history. They are still in the early stages of development and are still learning about how to function effectively in order to do the best that they can for their communities and people. It is important that community councils are united and have a strong say. Aboriginal people will need to have a strong say on matters that relate to funding. Of course, the commission is an essential part of this. Aboriginal communities have a long way to go before they can establish a system of services that are the same as those that municipal councils have developed. Community government, therefore, should be given a far greater amount of money in the future if it is ever to be given an opportunity to truly realise its potential.

The only way this can happen is if there is a fair representation of community councils on the Grants Commission, representation that can take into account the needs of very different communities which vary in the nature of their cultural practices. I cannot emphasise the differences enough, in terms of how wrong it would be to place 1 person in the position of attempting to represent everyone. There is an enormous difference between the communities in the south and in the north. This distinction is very important and, when you take into account our skin groups, language and decision-making processes, treating those communities as if they are the same simply shows a lack of understanding of how complicated the Aboriginal culture is.

Aboriginal people are becoming stronger and more articulate. Everyone will be able to remember occasions when Aboriginal people have got together and made their opinion known. This getting together and support needs to be encouraged. I therefore call strongly on this government to ensure that there are 2 representatives from community government on the Grants Commission, 1 from the north and 1 from the south. Only this step will enable Aboriginal communities to be truly represented. If this government fails to act on my recommendation, then it can only be viewed as irresponsible in failing to understand the nature of government in community councils. Historically, community councils have had 2 representatives on the commission. They wish that state of affairs to continue and I support them in that wish.

Clause 4 says that the members of the Grants Commission will be the Director of the Office of Local Government, 1 representative from municipal councils, 1 representative from community councils and 1 other representative. I would like to know who that representative is to be. Am I right in assuming that it is the present chairman, Mr Jim Robertson? Why is this not stated? What will be the factor that determines who will be the fourth representative in the future? This needs to be very clearly spelled out, otherwise people may become very suspicious of ministerial interference. It is this ministerial interference which causes people alarm and which makes a mockery of true, independent representatives. I am referring to the manner in which the representatives from both municipal and community councils are to be nominated.

Has the minister responsible so little faith in the Northern Territory Local Government Association and the Northern Territory Community Government Association that he cannot accept 1 nominee from each? It would seem logical, if they each nominated 1 person, that that person would be the one they

considered most capable of representing them. If the minister chooses from a list of 3 names presented by each association, he may choose in each case the person whom the associations least prefer to be represented by. The persons so selected could then be placed in positions of difficulty in relation to the associations. I call on the honourable minister to trust the associations and to recognise them by accepting their direct nominees on the Grants Commission. Given the tragic state of affairs in the Office of Local Government, the minister responsible will need all the support he can get if local government is to have a future in the Northern Territory.

Another matter of concern is the period of time for which an appointed member is to hold office and the fact that section 7 states that this can be up to 5 years or a lesser term subject to the minister's approval. There should be a fixed term. An appropriate fixed period of office would be 4 years. This would ensure that the length of the period for which an alderman is elected to a council corresponds to the period of his membership of the commission. It seems ridiculous that a person can stay on as a member of the commission whilst not being an elected alderman. Whom would he be representing? Surely it is essential that the representatives from local and community government be currently elected members of councils.

Under section 9 of the act, the Director of the Office of Local Government is able to appoint a deputy. However, the municipal and community government councils have to nominate a panel of 3 for the minister's consideration. Where is the fairness in this? They should be able to nominate 1 deputy. It is another example of the distrust this government has for its local government people. It also reflects the contempt he has for local alderman.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, local government is in a state of crisis. Unless the minister begins to trust aldermen and the people employed in the area, it has a bleak future.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to speak on this bill but, when listening to the comments of the opposition spokesman on local government, I realised that similar things could be said about planning matters. The member for Arafura's comments about the period of appointment of members of the Local Government Grants Commission were quite appropriate. Section 8(2) of the act says that the minister may terminate the appointment of a chairman or a member only for misbehaviour or incompetence when he becomes incapable of performing his duties, when he becomes bankrupt, applies for relief of bankruptcy, is convicted of an offence involving dishonesty, absents himself without leave granted by the commission from 3 consecutive meetings or becomes of unsound mind. That list does not include the situation where a chairman or member ceases to be a member of a local government council. Surely, when a person ceases to be a member of a local government or a community government council, that person should also cease to be a member of the Local Government Grants Commission. I would like to hear the minister address that issue in his reply because it is very important. It is possible for a person who has no interest whatsoever in local government to continue to be a member of the Local Government Grants Commission.

I believe the same situation used to apply in the case of local council appointees to the Planning Authority, although I think it may recently have been remedied. I conclude by requesting the honourable minister to address himself to the termination of appointment of members.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Arafura made some interesting comments and I rise to respond to them. This bill appeared

to be a fairly straightforward piece of legislation which, it seemed, had general support. Unfortunately, things are sometimes said in the course of debate which, if they go unchallenged, are taken by default to be correct. Some comments have been made which fall into that category and they need to be addressed.

We need to look first at the functions of the commission as set out in the principal act. Broadly speaking, the commission's function is to divide up the available funds for allocation to local governments and community governments throughout the Northern Territory. It assesses the various forms of local and community government, looks at the needs and determines what proportion of the available funds should be allocated to each council. In general terms, the role is similar to that of the Commonwealth Grants Commission in determining the proportional allocation of funds from the Commonwealth to the various states. The commission certainly is not a lobby group for local government or community government. Its function is to carry out a financial assessment of needs and to report on that to the government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, having said that, let us look at the proposed composition of the commission under clause 5(2), which the member for Arafura referred to. It says that 1 member 'shall be a person who, in the opinion of the minister, is capable of representing the interests of councils' and that 1 other member 'shall be a person who, in the opinion of the minister, is capable of representing the interests of community government councils'. Those members are not there to represent the views of a particular council and, most particularly, I would ask all honourable members to note that there is no reference to those people being aldermen or elected members of councils. They may well be nominees of the Local Government Association or the Community Government Association or recommended by those organisations as being capable of representing their interests.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr HATTON: It certainly does get a few things off my chest because, quite frankly, I get a bit sick and tired of hearing some of the nonsense which is spouted in this House.

Another example is the member for Koolpinyah's remarks about the Planning Authority. If the Minister for Lands decided to appoint a member of the Legislative Assembly as a government member of the Planning Authority, I can imagine the screams about political interference. For some reason, however, we ignore the fact that we appoint 4 politicians in every centre where the Planning Authority meets; they happen to be called aldermen. If that is not political interference at the local level, what is? Those aldermen vote themselves a personal sinecure on the Planning Authority. That is what they do. How could an alderman from a particular council act with impartiality in carrying out an assessment of the allocation of funds across local government? I think one of the worst appointments which could be made to such a body would be an alderman or an elected member of a community government council.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Koolpinyah will cease interjecting.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is vitally important that such assessments be carried out by people who have no vested interest in any

individual community government council or local government council. Whether they happen to be elected members of a council or not is not particularly relevant. They need to have an independent standing. I support the bill in its current form and I totally reject the arguments of both the members for Arafura and Koolpinyah.

I might make one further comment. I know this is a sensitive issue but, quite frankly, I do not accept the argument that we should have a Top End community government representative and a Centralian community government representative.

Mr Tipiloura: You don't understand.

Mr HATTON: I do understand exactly what the member for Arafura is saying. He is referring to differences in attitude and cultural approaches among Aboriginal people in the Top End and central Australia. It is an interesting approach to have on the public record. I am sure that it will be dragged out with great alacrity in response to talk about a community of views among Aboriginal people throughout Australia. People like Kath Walker - or whatever her new name is - start trotting out their argument of 1 nation, 1 people, 1 attitude whilst, according to the member for Arafura, we cannot even get 1 representative of community government for the Northern Territory. It is more than possible to find somebody who can represent the interests of community government across the Territory and have that person appointed to the Local Government Grants Commission. Equally, it is possible to appoint a person to represent the interests of municipal local government.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have just come from a little conference outside with regard to the member for Arafura's comments about the tragic state of affairs in the Office of Local Government. I am afraid my officers are still busting themselves laughing about that because, quite clearly, they do not regard it as a tragic state of affairs. The Office of Local Government would be one of the most positive sections of government in the Northern Territory. Its officers have maintained that positive attitude all the way through. I might say that I have a very good relationship with the Office of Local Government, as I have with local councils, and I intend to maintain it. That obviously does not matter to members opposite because they will never be in a position where they have to deal directly with those people, as I do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, like the member for Nightcliff, I was amazed at the views of the member for Arafura whom I know to be a reasonable man. As I understood it, he was saying that there had to be a representative from the north and a representative from the south on the Local Government Grants Commission because of cultural differences. Just as an aside to that, community government in the Northern Territory is not based on racial grounds. It can apply to non-Aboriginal people as well as to Aboriginal people. Suppose that the northern member on the Grants Commission came from a community such as Batchelor and was not Aboriginal or that the person from the centre came from a community such as Elliott, and was not Aboriginal. There is no argument on cultural grounds for a representative from the north and a representative from the south.

One of the things that this bill will do is to reduce the number of people on the Grants Commission so that it will be more effective and more cost-effective. Why should we put extra people on the commission because of somebody's whim? We might just as well say that there should be a member on the Grants Commission for Bathurst and Melville Islands and one for Nhulunbuy.

Where do you draw the line, Mr Deputy Speaker? If it were drawn across the middle of the Territory, the representative from the north might come from just north of Elliott and the representative from the centre from just south of Elliott. They might come from no more than a few miles apart.

I have allowed in this bill for 1 representative who would represent the interests of community government and 1 who will represent the interests of local government. Why should there be any more? Look around the states, Mr Deputy Speaker, and see what sort of Grants Commissions they have. Those commissions are certainly not blown out to suit everyone in the locality. They are appropriately constituted and effective.

Whilst on this subject, I might point out that a number of current members of the Northern Territory Grants Commission are not serving members of councils. Gatjil Djerrkura is one. Nobody could deny that he has an interest in community government but he is not an elected member of a council. Nobody could deny that Gavin Carpenter has an interest in municipal government but he is no longer an elected member of council. There is also Jim Gallacher who, to my knowledge, was never an elected member of a council. All of them have very strong views and are very capable men. I have no doubt that they have fulfilled their obligations on the Grants Commission as effectively as many aldermen might.

It was suggested also that we should place people on the Grants Commission for 4-year terms to coincide with council terms. We hold our council elections in May when the Grants Commission is in the middle of its very formidable task of moving around the Territory and working out what the distribution of funds should be. If a person lost his seat in May, he would then no longer be able to be on the Grants Commission and would need to be replaced. It was never intended that members of the Grants Commission had to be members of council. They need to have an interest in local government. In fact, that is what members of the Grants Commission will have under these provisions.

It was suggested that members of the Grants Commission should be able to nominate deputies. I would not be keen to see this happening because it is essential that members of the Grants Commission are committed to the job. It would make it too easy to appoint a deputy for insufficient reasons: 'I want to pay my electricity bill. Would you go along in my place?' That is not good enough. By not allowing for the appointment of deputies, we ensure that there is continuity.

I cannot accede to the requests of the member for Arafura. I know he will not die at the stake over it because I know that he is a reasonable man, unlike many other members on his side of the House. I have no doubt at all that councils will put forward names of people of substance, not names of people whom they do not believe will reflect the interests of their councils. It does not matter at all if their terms as elected members expire; they will still retain their concern for local government.

I think I have covered all of the points that were raised. These changes to the workings of the Grants Commission will serve us very effectively. The Director of the Office of Local Government will be a member of the commission, together with a person representing the interests of local government, a person representing the interests of community government and, of course, a chairman appointed by the minister. I believe this will be a very effective structure which will continue to service us well.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### MOTION

#### Noting Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy

Continued from 4 October 1988.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, the opposition seems to have its collective knickers in a twist about the publication and distribution of the booklet entitled 'The Territory on the Move'. It is interesting to examine why that is so. I guess it comes back to the very nature of this opposition. After all the fine and pompous talk about the opposition's charter to do this or to do that on behalf of Territorians is over, it really must be remembered that this opposition never actually does anything. It waits for the government to do something and then it reviews the government's actions, usually in the form of criticism. All the doing is on the government side. The opposition side is all talk and that is the important point to remember in this debate. Without denigrating it in any way, the booklet is also all talk. It is useful because it tells the world the general directions of the Territory economy and the government strategy to keep that economy growing and developing. But, the real importance is in the doing and that is what I want to address today.

Mr Speaker, the subtitle of the booklet is: 'A framework for progress in the 1990s'. I have not the slightest doubt that the Territory economy will indeed be making progress in the 1990s, and substantial progress at that. I am highly optimistic that, in fact, a better description might be economic boom, a period of unprecedented growth which will make the progress of the 1980s seem pedestrian by comparison. All the indicators are extremely positive. The member for Nightcliff correctly pointed out in his contribution that the important industries, the ones which lead the Territory economy, have continued to show strong growth right through the recent period of reduced Commonwealth assistance and consequent reduced government spending. The growth path for mining, for energy and for tourism continues strongly upwards.

Let me now add some compelling new factors into those growth patterns. In mining, the new factor in the 1990s will be more uranium mining and the development of major new deposits such as McArthur River and Coronation Hill. In energy, the development of the Timor Sea oilfields will bring new industry, new business opportunities, new employment and new people to Darwin. Gas developments will bring new manufacturing industry and will convert the Territory into a supply base for industrial and population centres in other parts of Australia. Developments of this nature will transform the face of Darwin and the economy of the Territory. They will make Darwin an extremely important national resource and development centre and contribute strongly to the economy of the whole nation.

Let us look at the resource and industry sector a little more closely. The mineral export market dominates the Territory's overseas trade, making up 83% of the total export value. Mining directly employs around 3100 people in the Territory and the number of people employed as an indirect result of mining activity is conservatively estimated at around 11 000. All figures in the mining industry keep on growing. The Territory produced more than \$1000m



in minerals in 1987 and we will top that easily in 1988. In future years, the \$1000m benchmark will be left far behind.

The future of the mining industry in the Territory is very bright. It will include: the development of the world's largest silver, lead and zinc deposit at McArthur River; development of palladium and platinum deposits in the Alligator Rivers region; production from the rich Coronation Hill goldmine; many more substantial goldmines throughout the Territory, particularly in the Pine Creek region; revitalisation of the tin mining industry; the planned doubling of production at the Ranger uranium mine; continuing production of bauxite at Gove and manganese at Groote Eylandt; and the possible, even probable, start to further uranium mining at either Jabiluka or Koongarra or, dare I say, at both.

In addition, the government is placing new emphasis on the development of downstream or secondary processing of our minerals. The value-added component of enriched or purified mineral products will significantly increase export earnings and assist in building up the Territory's industrial base. The spin-offs will repay government support of downstream processing many times over. The mining industry has kicked on in the Territory, at least in part, because of the benefits of the Territory government's 1-stop-shop approach to the industry. We will bring that style to our efforts to establish downstream processing ventures and we will succeed.

A large part of the paper on the Territory's economic development strategy paper is devoted to energy and that is because there is a big story to tell. The real excitement is offshore in the Timor Sea. By this time next year, 2 oilfields will be producing in the Timor Sea with at least 2 more moving towards commercial development. The who's who of the oil business will be off the Territory's coast exploring and developing further discoveries as the Timor Sea moves towards its inevitable position as Australia's premier oil supply region.

This will mean the substantial development of Darwin as a support and supply base for the oil industry. Also offshore are internationally important gas reserves, in particular the Petrel 4 field in the Bonaparte Gulf. The government is currently examining options for the development of this field, including piping gas 135 km along the seabed to Darwin, to integrate with our existing onshore gas supplies. Those existing reserves, particularly in the Amadeus Basin, will be further proved up and developed. It is no secret that the government currently is involved in a series of meetings with gas producers, suppliers and potential users to look at all the exciting options that are open to us. These options include supply of gas to Gove, to Mt Isa and to South Australia. They also include establishment of a major manufacturing plant using gas as a primary source material.

All this means jobs, business opportunities, revenue and development across the Territory spectrum. It also means a real option to reduce electricity tariffs at some stage, perhaps in the medium-term future. The development of any of these major products will have the effect of making economies of scale work for us instead of against us, and the development of a number of such projects will almost certainly put us in the position of being able to reduce substantially the cost of electricity to the local, domestic and commercial markets.

The Department of Industries and Development has a crucial role in all these development strategies and opportunities. Since the department was restructured in mid-year, the big effort has gone into setting up

infrastructure which will be able to assist developers to turn their plans into action. Much of the effort has been put into establishing a streamlined financial section which can turn its expert hand to any facet of any development enterprise. That expertise moved to the department from Investnorth, and it has since expanded the scope of its activities.

The department undertakes feasibility studies, assesses any requirement for government assistance, and promotes commercially-viable prospects with potential investors. It undertakes commercial analysis of private sector infrastructure and business development proposals. It supports industry in market and trade research. It supports investors in their development of bankable business plans, and it assists in securing land and other requirements. It also works with existing Territory businesses with the aim of expanding the potential for growth, and it can offer financial and advisory assistance to expansion activities. Most importantly, it encourages and facilitates the use by all investors of Territory products and Territory people in their works and services.

In conjunction with all this effort, the Department of Industries and Development is building up a comprehensive knowledge base and resource inventory, and a 'Territory perspective' display unit to promote Territory economic and industrial development. This important facility will focus on presenting the Territory as a competitive investment location. It will also identify major existing business, government and semi-government authority capacity, and emphasise specific commercially-packaged investment opportunities. The unit will use a variety of promotional elements in displaying the Territory industry database for the practical use of potential investors, interstate and overseas trade delegations, local industry and even the general public.

A vitally important cog in the Territory's industrial development machine is the Trade Development Zone. This embattled zone has been discussed and debated on every single day of these current sittings, and none of it has helped the zone move towards its future position as a vibrant centre for successful export industry. Nevertheless, the government's commitment to the zone remains as strong as ever. If anything, it is stronger as a result of the unprecedented levels of attack that have been unjustifiably brought against it. Nobody in government has ever had the view that the zone would be easy to establish. There have been early and well-publicised failures, but there have also been successes - and there will be more. Within 5 years the Trade Development Zone will be a leader in the Territory growth story.

Some honourable members do not have the vision required to see that, but they will see it as time passes. I will not go on with an overview of the zone in the context of this debate. Somehow, in the light of what has transpired this week and last week, it would seem like a waste of words. The atmosphere has been polluted by an opposition bent on destroying public confidence in the zone and anybody associated with it. I reiterate that there is no weakening of the government's commitment and resolve. We will prove the zone to be a magnificent and unique Territory asset despite the opposition.

Mr Speaker, in my contribution to this debate, I have ranged through the Territory's outstanding prospects for economic and industrial growth. There are exciting times ahead. In the 1990s, we will witness the establishment of large-scale manufacturing industry in the Territory. We will make greater use of our natural resources, we will expand national and international trade and all this will mean substantial population growth, jobs and opportunities for Territorians, those now in the work force and those being educated to enter it. Mr Speaker, it will be a privilege to be a part of it.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, the planning document 'The Territory on the Move', tabled in the Assembly this week by the Chief Minister, places considerable emphasis on the importance of the Territory's second most important industry: tourism. The economic development strategies outlined in the document, which are designed to provide guidelines for continued progress in Northern Territory tourism in the 1990s, are creative and far-reaching. For the benefit of members, let me outline what those strategies are. We will create 6 zones of opportunity within which the development of tourist facilities, services, attractions and supporting systems will be concentrated. The zones are the West MacDonnells, the Tablelands, Katherine, the Top End, the Wetlands, Arnhem Land and Darwin and its associated environs. We will encourage the establishment of at least 2 further major tourist attractions over the next 10 to 15 years. These will be flagship attractions designed to provide a lead for wider tourist development in the zone concerned.

We will develop and market Darwin as an international tourist city, with special emphasis on attracting visitors from Asia. We will encourage greater commitment to servicing the special needs of overseas tourists by providing such things as multilingual guides, money changers, and longer business and shopping hours in tourist zones. We will foster the development of Aboriginal culture centres, including the proper housing of the Strehlow Collection. We will also foster ranch-style tourism opportunities on existing pastoral holdings. We will try to create a tourist loop road as a link between Yulara and the West MacDonnells. We will encourage visitors to lengthen their stay. We will develop and further promote man-made attractions in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Improved tourist access to the Territory and its many tourist attractions is critical to the expansion of the tourist industry. We will continue therefore to upgrade the Northern Territory's transport network. For the same reason, we will improve public access to coastal areas of the Territory and our inland waterways. We would have liked to have been solely responsible for the construction of new airport terminals at Darwin and Alice Springs but the federal government has given this task to the Federal Airports Corporation. Rest assured, Mr Speaker, that this government is committed to maintaining pressure on the federal government for the early completion of both of these projects because they are essential to the continued development of the Northern Territory tourism industry. We see Darwin as a major air link between Australia and South-east Asia and we want international gateway status for the Alice Springs Airport.

We will actively pursue these strategies with the cooperation of the Northern Territory tourist industry, investors and developers. In contrast to the Labor opposition, the CLP government has had practical, enlightened and successful tourist industry development policies in place for many years. These policies have been responsible for the planned growth of the tourist industry and the highly successful promotion of the Northern Territory as a tourist destination in competition with the remainder of Australia and the world.

This year, our efforts were rewarded by a 22% increase in visitor numbers despite the powerful pull of Expo 88, and we were the only area in Australia to achieve such a result. Achieving that took years of creative marketing backed by a government which has offered constructive support to operators and investors, and which has developed the necessary infrastructure for continued planned growth.

The importance of 'The Territory on the Move' is that it pulls together in one easily-read document all of the interlinked strategy policies of the CLP government, policies for the ordered, integrated, economic development of the Northern Territory. It sets out the CLP government strategies for development, the essential objectives of which are to create a business climate which is dynamic but controlled so that more employment is created - stable employment which, in turn, will create continued stability, security and confidence in the future among all Territorians. The quality of employment - not jobs for the sake of jobs - is central to our plans. We want jobs in the Northern Territory to be long-term, encompassing a wide spectrum of skills in industries which are a permanent and stable part of the Territory's economy. That is why this document is so essential. It identifies areas for new and expanded business activities to provide the solid employment base needed.

Our strategy recognises the key role of education and training. We have to ensure that Territorians are ready to fill the employment opportunities created and that they are not only skilled but adaptable. The biggest resource the Territory has is not our beautiful wilderness areas, not our unspoilt coastline, not the rich mineral deposits nor our agricultural potential. Our biggest resource is people: strong, independent, thinking people - the kind who have gravitated to the Northern Territory because of our climate and natural attractions and because this is one of the last bastions of free enterprise.

The CLP government is committed to maintaining an economy driven by market forces, not an economy manipulated by government. We are the stewards of that economy, the managers. We manage the economy for the people of the Territory and we manage it in a way that gives free enterprise room to move. As Territorians, we admire and foster adventurous developers, developers with both flair and business acumen, because it was adventurous, strong-minded people who settled here and built this Territory which was once described as the last frontier of the western world.

To overcome the limitations of our market size, we will be adventurous. We will seek markets outside our borders in the other states and overseas, particularly in Asia. Thanks to the activities of the Trade Development Zone and its consultants, we have already developed extremely strong ties with Asian nations and Asian businesses. These ties should enable us to attract a wide range of industries and thus create the diversification needed for a strong, stable economy.

At the same time, we need to develop the Territory's natural attributes in partnership with the Aboriginal community which will continue to be encouraged to develop its own commercial enterprises. Tourism will play a vital role in all our development planning because it offers the scope and diversification for continuing long-term employment. That is why the CLP government has in place plans for the integrated expansion of the tourist industry with supporting development, training and marketing policies.

Mr Speaker, it was interesting that the NT News ran an article today on the NT government's backing of tourist development. That article was both critical and favourable. In fact, for a change, it was quite well balanced. The major critic was Mr Keith Williams. Basically, he said that, if Yulara could not stand on its own 2 feet, it should not have been built. He said that, if there is a genuine demand for a resort or a hotel, that demand should be met by private enterprise. I have the greatest admiration for Keith Williams. He is the man who developed Sea World on the Gold Coast and,

more recently, has developed Hamilton Island in the Whitsunday Group in north Queensland, a place that is probably one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Australia. It is in an area where I have spent many wonderful holidays. It was developed originally as a deer park and I believe the licence to operate it was given to Mr Williams. If the Queensland government had not given him that licence, I suggest that the island would still be undeveloped. Of course, many locals in places such as Airlie Beach, Proserpine or Shute Harbour might argue that Hamilton Island has been ruined by the development that has occurred there. Apart from the tourist accommodation, there is a major real estate development.

I had never heard Yulara criticised in those terms and Mr Williams' argument staggered me. Anybody in private enterprise could tell you that, if you had the money in the early 1980s to build a 5-star hotel or resort, you would have built it in Sydney or Melbourne because that is where you could get the maximum return in the quickest possible time. In the early 1980s, nobody was interested in building a 5-star hotel in the Northern Territory. It was easier to do it in the south. Why take the risk?

Those times have passed. In fact, they passed quickly after Yulara, the casinos and the Sheratons were built. As a tourist destination, the Northern Territory moved into the 21st century. I think everybody in this place would agree that some of the hotels, motels and caravan parks which have been developed in the last 5 years, together with some of our natural attractions, are quite remarkable.

Aboriginal involvement has grown from fairly modest beginnings with tour businesses such as Tiwi Tours. If my memory serves me correctly, Tiwi Tours was probably the first tour company to actively employ Aborigines in promoting their own part of the country. It operated in the Top End and Rod Steinert ran a dreamtime tour down in the Centre. I believe the Aboriginal people have started to realise that there is great potential to become involved in the tourist industry to obtain an income, bring benefits to their communities, maintain their independence and win the respect of their counterparts in the industry. From fairly modest involvement to ownership of one of the largest hotels in the Territory and certainly the most distinctive hotel in Australia - the Four Seasons Kakadu Crocodile Hotel - Aboriginal people involved in the tourist industry have taken great strides and come a long way in 8 short years.

I look forward to seeing Aboriginal people in senior management positions in the tourist industry. If people are sceptical about that, they should think of the example set by Fiji. 10 to 15 years ago, it was difficult to find a local person in a management position in Fiji but nowadays the opposite applies. It is very unusual to find anybody running a hotel in Fiji who is not a local. Only the opposition has been able to find fault with the successful tourism guidelines that we have implemented.

I commend the strategy document to this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory. It is a timely, intelligent, no-nonsense guide which will enable Territorians - indeed, any one interested in investment and the welfare of the Territory - to know the precise framework for the future. It enables people to participate confidently in the planned development of the Territory. Unlike the opposition, which takes every opportunity to talk down the Territory, its economy and its future and to attack the government for every single initiative without offering even one viable alternative, the CLP government sees a vision splendid for the Northern Territory.

The opposition, on the other hand, does nothing positive in this place or elsewhere to encourage community optimism. All we get from it is the active orchestration of fear and apprehension through allegations, hearsay and negative thinking. Already the Leader of the Opposition had made a public attack on this strategy document. Perhaps the fact that it is couched in simple terms deluded him into believing that it is not comprehensive, but I think not. I think he was back to his usual trick of knocking anything the government does, regardless of its value to the community at large.

Mr Speaker, the Labor opposition has been insulting the intelligence of the Northern Territory people for years. It will continue to try to dampen enthusiasm for our future progress by knocking far-sighted, important policy documents like this. It will fail, because Territorians are much smarter than the opposition gives them credit for and they will continue to reject the Labor opposition and its anti-Territory attitude. I commend 'The Territory on the Move' to the Assembly. It provides a framework within which the Territory's economy can be further expanded to the betterment of the lifestyle of every citizen.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the government's glossy publication is very pretty. It is suitable to hand out in any hard-sell of the Northern Territory but I would like to know the details of the distribution. I suppose it is only natural that we try to present ourselves in the best possible way to the public. I suppose a glossy, optimistic publication like this makes us locals feel warm inside when we read it and say to ourselves: 'All these nice things are being said about us and the place we live in'. It reinforces the correctness of our decision to live here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was impressed with this publication but I think there are some areas which need to be spelled out in more detail. It talks a lot about what has been accomplished and there is nothing wrong with that. However, honourable members opposite are always talking about the future and what the Northern Territory government will do. In some areas, such as mining, definite statements are made about what the government will do in the future. The emphasis is not on what it can do or thinks it can do but what it will do. Overall, however, that approach is lacking in the report. There is not enough definition of plans for the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government intends to address the subject of the rail link between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr Perron: We will have goats in it, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It would be a hell of a lot cheaper to bring them up by rail than by plane.

The government is still pursuing the rail link from Alice Springs to Darwin and the revamping of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. I know the Minister for Transport and Works has made that his hobbyhorse for some years. The document also states that a 'regular shipping service from Darwin to Singapore with adequate capacity and frequency will increase port utilisation in Darwin'. That is a pretty cagey form of words. It does not give a definite plan for the future; it just describes what can happen. I would like something a bit more definite about what the government intends to do in relation to turnaround of ships in the Port of Darwin and encouraging different lines that come to Australia to use the Port of Darwin.

I was interested to read that the government is still considering reducing the cost of electricity. This will be a great boon to everybody. On a personal note, this year for the first time, I have desisted from watering the garden except when the plants were very badly under-watered and dehydrated. That was simply because of the cost of electricity and the cost of running the bore. Other people are doing the same thing. They are restricting the use of water.

Whilst on the subject of water, I must say that one statement in the document was very interesting to me because it is at complete odds with an item on the ABC radio news last Tuesday morning. In a section discussing the proposed dam sites in the rural area, the document says: 'Both Katherine and Darwin have considerable potential surface water sources. Planning is well advanced to reserve dam sites to meet the long-term needs for water. The government has decided that, when required, the next dam site to augment Darwin water supply will be the Warrai site at Adelaide River'. The item on the ABC news, on the other hand, said that Cabinet would be considering 3 sites. It mentioned Marrakai, Warrai and Mount Bennett.

Mr Finch: Those are the sites for the first, second and third ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I stand to be corrected but I would still like to see it black and white. I will check it out.

Still on the subject of water, the document says: 'Horticulture development through small scale irrigation is escalating rapidly and further opportunities are available. River sources are generally unreliable ...'. River sources in some cases may be unreliable but, Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Northern Territory government could well look at some of the major rivers in the Northern Territory that run throughout the year and have very large flows. When one thinks of the huge amounts of water, hundreds of millions of gallons, which go to waste during the wet and pour into the sea, it seems logical to look for some way of conserving that water for use in the dry, either for human consumption or for horticultural and agricultural production.

I know the government has a good record in the communications field and I was interested to read about its proposals for satellite and communications networks, distance education networks servicing South-east Asia, and a satellite ground-station manufacturing facility in the Trade Development Zone. Those are very interesting initiatives. I do not profess to be a specialist or to have intimate knowledge of how such projects work, but one only has to look around to see their results.

The section dealing with the Aboriginal contribution to the Northern Territory development was interesting and some definite points were made. The document makes a very positive statement about the government's belief that 'the development of economic enterprises in Aboriginal communities ... will take the form of joint venture arrangements with Aboriginal people'. This is very interesting and I think it augurs well for further good relations between the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and the government. Both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people can contribute in their own ways to such projects. I have seen them work in some parts of the Northern Territory and their success has led not only to improved black-white relations but also to the financial betterment of all participants.

I was also interested to read that the Northern Territory government will join with Aboriginal groups and organisations to promote research and

investigation of future industry and employment opportunities for Aborigines and the associated training requirements. That brings to mind projects I saw in Kenya, which I visited some years ago on a CPA trip. We were taken through the countryside and we inspected a jam factory, a sisal factory and an abattoir. In all of those places, sophisticated machinery had been introduced and the operations would have measured up to safety standards anywhere. However, the sophisticated machinery was not fully utilised. The jam factory, which also produced chutneys and pickles from local vegetables and fruit, took advantage of the unskilled labour force in the area. The government wanted to keep people in their own areas rather than have them drift to the city to become unemployed and dissatisfied with life. The project was also part of an education program. The factory employed large numbers of men and women and processed the horticultural products of the area. Thus, it served several purposes. Projects like that could be examined if the government is really keen to promote research and investigation into future industries which will create employment opportunities for Aborigines.

It was interesting to hear the Minister for Mines and Energy being enthusiastic about mining prospects for the Territory. Without doubt, I would agree that there are interesting prospects for mining in the Northern Territory. My only regret is that the federal government intends at some time to introduce a gold tax which will immediately inhibit small, marginal goldmining operations which, at the moment, can afford to go ahead. As a result, jobs will be lost in prospecting and mining. Jobs will not be lost from big companies but from the small concerns. It is very important that we avail ourselves of every opportunity to maintain jobs for the people involved in these smaller operations.

The minister waxed lyrical about the McArthur River silver, lead and zinc deposits, as everybody has done for years. He neglected to mention that the government can seek to develop the McArthur River deposits to its heart's content but, until some way is found of extracting and processing that very finely divided ore, the development will not proceed. That will not be up to the Northern Territory government. The development will have to be initiated in places where there are special skills. When the skills are developed and publicised to enable the extraction and processing of this finely divided ore, only then will the project proceed and McArthur River become a boom area.

The section devoted to mining and energy was interesting. I believe that it will be one of the big prospects for the future for the Northern Territory. It will also employ many people in the Northern Territory. It will introduce skills which our labour force has not had. It will also find markets for its products interstate and overseas.

Turning to primary industries, I was pleased to note the government's intention to increase the level of secondary processing in the Territory of cattle turned off Territory properties. I would really like to say that I have been pushing that line ever since the State Square development was first mentioned. I believe the money that the government intends spending on the State Square project would be much better spent on increasing the level of secondary processing in the Territory, not only of cattle but of other horticultural and agricultural produce.

The document indicates that, at the moment, only 30% of cattle turned off are slaughtered in Northern Territory abattoirs, two-thirds being sold live interstate. Members of the opposition have spoken about this. I do not believe we should inhibit what a farmer or a pastoralist does with his produce. It is his produce and only he has the right to say where it will be



sold, how it will be sold and to determine any other details connected with its sale. The government must not use the stick to prohibit the sending of live cattle interstate. It should use the carrot and make it attractive for pastoralists to keep their stock in the Territory and have them slaughtered here.

Mr Perron: How will we do that?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am not paid to think for you. You have a minister to do that. That is his job. If I were the minister, I would tell you.

The document also refers to the provision of industry training and indicates that the main vehicle for achieving this is the Katherine Rural College. I agree with that. The college has received my enthusiastic support ever since it has been in operation. It is doing a good job. It is turning out young people who are a credit to it, as well as to the Northern Territory and the cattle industry.

The Katherine Rural College only trains young people who have a direct involvement in the primary management of the industry. We also need courses devoted to the adding of value to primary products, either at the Katherine Rural College or elsewhere. It is all very well for the government to mouth platitudes and say that something should be done about developing these secondary skills. I have yet to see it actually do something about it. I think the Treasurer indicated in his budget speech that a tannery was to be set up for exotic skins - meaning fish skins. I am more interested in having goat skins tanned. The government must encourage private investment in secondary industries based on our primary produce.

The government says that it will continue to provide advisory and extension services. There has been talk from time to time that users of these services - the farmers and pastoralists - would have to pay for them at some time in the future. That would be like a red rag to a bull to me because we need farmers and pastoralists and other people engaged in primary industry in the Territory. If it is good enough to provide free social welfare counselling to all the people who want it in the Northern Territory - and they are not usually the productive members of the community - it is well worth the government's effort to continue this free advisory service to all sections of primary industry.

The booklet talks about the buffalo industry. I believe it will take a very long time for the buffalo industry to get back on its feet. I believe it might behove the government to give consideration to the importation of genetic material from other countries and from other strains of buffalo. I have been suggesting this for some time. The buffalo that we have in the Northern Territory are very generally draught buffalo, not milking buffalo or dairy buffalo, and I think the government could do much worse than take up my suggestion. Then again, it will be necessary to have sufficient staff in the minister's department to carry out the task and perhaps that situation does not exist.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my time has almost run out, but I have to ask the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries for details about the downstream processing of primary products. The booklet says: 'There are also the prospects for kenaf, the tanning of skins and the processing of horticultural and dairy products'. I would really like the honourable minister to give me some details about the government's plans for the downstream processing of dairy products. I do not know whether the government intends to do anything

or it intends to advise that something needs to be done. I do not know whether the big Katherine dairy is doing something. I believe it may be, but I would like the minister to provide details about the downstream processing of dairy products.

The prospects for tourism are pretty bright in the Northern Territory and I believe that the efforts of the little people in that industry have made a great contribution. It is all very well to bring tourists here and accommodate them in 5- or 4-star hotels or whatever is their fancy. We must have good accommodation for tourists but we also must have places for them to see and visit. In that context, I would like to commend the 9 small operators in the rural area who have formed their own little group and are now seeking to publish a little booklet publicising their operations and projects so that tourists can come and see them. That is a case of people trying to help themselves. You do not often find that in the world these days because people so often expect help from the government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have spoken several times about the utilisation of native flora and fauna. Governments should do more work on the utilisation of native flora and fauna. I believe there is a market for much of our native flora and fauna. Most of it can be husbanded, and there would be a market for the end product that would also help in the conservation of species.

In conclusion, this strategy appears to concentrate more on the past than putting forward solid strategies for the future. The sections on mining and tourism contained the most hard information about plans. The section on primary industry contains too many 'shoulds' and 'coulds' and not enough 'wills'. I certainly would not condemn the strategy for its content or its omissions, but I would not give it unrestrained congratulations either. Some sections are thought-provoking, some are enthusiastic and contain detail for the future, but other parts are lacking in concrete strategies. On the whole, I will give it conditional approbation in the context of my previous remarks.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must congratulate the member for Koolpinyah on her most generous - I think almost conclusive congratulations - on the development strategy. It was not entirely fulsome but, in comparison with the contributions of other members who are not on the government benches, it was most favourable indeed. In terms of whether or not the document provides a framework for the future, there is no doubt at all that it does. The member for Koolpinyah also discussed the amount of detail contained in the document. The document certainly provides sufficient detail. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would understand only too well the importance of getting the message across without going into so much detail that people become confused or disoriented about the basic direction and intention of the document.

The knockers opposite have made much of their view that the development strategy lacks dynamic features, so to speak. Whilst I do not agree with that perception in any way, it is my view that it has come about because, ever since self-government, the Northern Territory government has been to all intents and purposes living and working within the framework which has now been enunciated as a development strategy. Much of the work defined in the document is already in train, as is appropriate in the context of the government's direction.

Since self-government, the Department of Transport and Works has been responsible for total expenditure of about \$1000m on capital works. Of course, that is about half of the total government program. As the

government's construction authority, it is closely involved with the Territory's development strategy through the provision of infrastructure. This year's Transport and Works budget alone allows for expenditure of \$182m. Once again, that is about half of the government's total commitment.

The department's role has been enhanced, over the years, by a number of appropriate planning programs which it has developed itself. The Roads Division has a minimum, ongoing, roll-over, 5-year development program which gives an indication of future directions to both government and developers. The Assets Management Program which has now been developed is a very responsible approach to ensuring that the government's assets are maintained in an appropriate manner and that the best value for dollar is achieved in the long term. The department's corporate plan sets out strategies in all sectors of its operations.

I have mentioned those administrative initiatives to illustrate how, together with other departments, my department has been taking practical steps, as opposed to the theorising which members opposite like to indulge in, in implementing the government's strategies. Another example of this relates to land transport of which the 2 key elements are the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link and the extension and upgrading of our principal road links. The Territory will not realise its full developmental potential until the railway, that last link in the Australian national transport system, is completed. The rail link will lead to many consequential developments and the government is working very deliberately towards ensuring that that long-awaited infrastructure is completed.

The railway will supplement the existing road capacity in providing the opportunity for land bridging from South-east Asia to the rest of Australia and vice versa. In itself, that may not seem terribly attractive to Territory scoffers, but with its capacity to move much larger volumes of freight through the Territory, it will allow Territorians and developers within the Territory to take on projects of considerable scope.

In the past decade, with the lack of rail and only limited coastal shipping, roads have been the most important facet of our transport infrastructure. In 1988-89, we will spend a total of \$51m, an increase of \$13.5m over previous years, which reflects the government's attitude. The major highway system is the principal area of expenditure within the 26 000 km of roads which we maintain but, given that our priorities relate to roads of economic importance, roads linked to mining and tourism developments are also receiving attention. As the Territory represents some 16% of the Australian land mass, naturally enough roads will be a key feature of our ongoing development program. We must strive to increase the amount of road which will allow all-weather access to our various regions during all seasons.

As mentioned by the Minister for Tourism, the Federal Airports Corporation is about to take over the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. It has assured us that work will commence at both locations very shortly, providing long-awaited basic infrastructure, not only for tourism and for travelling Territorians but, just as importantly, for freight movements.

This government has developed in excess of 100 airstrips throughout the Northern Territory and these provide the lifeblood to many isolated bush communities. The Kakadu region is becoming very popular and the Jabiru strip is no longer adequate for handling some of the larger aircraft such as F27s which now bring tourists in with great frequency. The government is looking towards the development of a jet-standard strip out there. A proposed site

has been identified and much work carried out in order to satisfy the Aboriginal, environmental and park requirements. Once again, that is a sign of the government's foresight and attention to forward planning.

In the area of public works, the Department of Transport and Works has undertaken a number of developments on behalf of other departments including the Marrara Sporting Complex, the Berrimah Police Centre, fire stations, lower courts, the university and colleges of advanced education, high schools and so forth. Now that the initial emphasis on infrastructure development is declining in favour of an increased emphasis on repairs and maintenance, the department's Assets Management Program is becoming more significant. The department has also introduced a number of appraisal systems to ensure best value for dollar for government public works. We have a system of value engineering which, very simply, takes into account the all-of-life value and cost of projects and ensures that the government's details of construction are appropriate for long-term costing appraisals. Other areas of uniform and appropriate standards have been established to ensure that there is maximum value.

The Port of Darwin also comes within my portfolio responsibilities. We have spent some \$35m on infrastructure in recent times to provide a roll-on roll-off facility, the container crane and some wharf extensions. Continued efforts are being made to attract overseas shipping and it is pleasing to note that a regular scheduled Darwin to Singapore shuttle service will be commenced very shortly by a local NT company, Perkins Shipping, with a capacity of 150 containers. I understand that it will operate on a fortnightly basis, providing a land-bridge from South-east Asia to southern Australia by utilising backloading capacity on road trains.

The railway will be, of course, the major tool in attracting overseas shipping through the land bridge system. The port has the potential to be one of the most important infrastructural facilities in the Territory and we are doing a great deal to improve efficiency. Additional stevedoring companies have provided the opportunity for cooperative ventures involving the watersiders and the private sector. I am quite confident that the emerging attitude in the waterfront industries will continue to lead to improvements in port services between now and the completion of the railway. A key aspect in the success of the railway will be the efficient operation of the port both in dollar terms and industrially. I should mention that the Port of Darwin has the best industrial reputation of all Australian ports. That was acknowledged by the Philippine Shipping Association when I met with its members earlier this year. Its members already knew that the Port of Darwin has a very good record. We should build on that. The attitude of all people involved in the waterfront is very encouraging.

The framework provided by the economic development strategy will enable the private sector to participate to the fullest extent. Its role is to take up the broad opportunities identified by government and to work towards the fulfilment of developmental opportunities within the Northern Territory, not only for its sake but for the sake of all us and, should I be so bold, for the sake of Australia.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy because I am extremely impressed with the way it has been developed and with the ultimate outcome. In my contribution to the debate, I intend to touch only on those strategies which impact directly on the labour areas of my portfolio.

One of the earliest strategies mentioned in the document recognises the key role of education and training in ensuring that Territorians are properly prepared and fit for the employment opportunities which emerge and in providing the skilled and adaptable work force on which the Northern Territory's economic development depends. The work force is one of the most important components of any development strategy. Nothing will work without people and it is essential that people are trained effectively to fit the new opportunities that will arise as this economic development strategy is implemented.

It is obvious that the Northern Territory has a very narrow economic base. The document does not try to hide the fact that the Northern Territory has some way to go in terms of developing its infrastructure. That, in itself, will provide many opportunities. People will be able to recognise the strategic location of the Northern Territory and its ability to service areas which have not been considered before in Australia. One important purpose of the document is to encourage people to see the opportunities and to help put the infrastructure in place.

As our economy diversifies, we will need skilled people to fill new roles. That is happening already with the development of the Trade Development Zone. Some of the new skills may have to be provided from outside the Northern Territory or outside Australia but that certainly will not be the case forever. We need to train people to fill the jobs that will become available when new developments occur in areas like the Trade Development Zone and elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

I have said many times before that the Northern Territory needs to start filling out its ribs. We have development along its spine but we need to really flesh out the ribs with regional development. That will be very difficult in areas which do not have direct transport links with other parts of the country or other parts of the world. Those regional areas will not be able to compete unless they come up with something fairly unique. I think the Territory has the capacity to create unique regional development. One area of opportunity is in the utilisation of our magnificent natural resources, not only in our landscape but in our people. The main contribution to unique regional development will come, I believe, from the people who live in and have responsibility for the remoter parts of this great Territory. To a large extent, they are Aboriginal people but there are also some other unique people in the nether regions of the Territory, beavering away to make a living, succeeding in some cases and battling in others but really putting in a great effort in the pastoral industry and a range of other industries.

I have said before that I believe the pastoral industry has to grow. That does not mean that it has to extend its area of land or that individual owners have to expand their holdings. 'Mature' is probably the best word. It needs to look at more intensive development. I know that such an idea frightens some people in terms of the fairly sensitive nature of our land but I believe that, with careful development, we can populate much more of the Northern Territory by involving more people in existing industries, particularly the pastoral industry. Pastoral improvement and developed waters offer the opportunity to support a much larger population in many regions. There are stations in the Northern Territory which, with careful planning, could be subdivided into much smaller areas and support family groups which could run 10 000 or 15 000 head of cattle, buffalo or even kangaroos. Until that happens, we will not see much development in the regional areas.

Aboriginal people have a strong commitment to their localities. In many cases, as much through frustration as anything else, they have been unable to come to grips with the natural resources that they have and their ability to develop in their own areas. A number of communities are starting to come around to the view that they need to use the resources they have and are putting in an effort to do that. We need to identify the potential in Aboriginal communities. We need to take the blinkers off and look at some of the unique opportunities which can provide an economic base in those places. Tourism is one area of opportunity and it is nice to see that Aboriginal people are now taking their place in the delivery of tourism services. However, it has not gone far enough. It needs to go much further. We need to look beyond our very blinkered view and come up with things that do not have to compete with the more heavily populated areas of the Territory.

The government has a role in that. Obviously, we need to set the pace. The document before us gives the framework. It was never intended to be the be-all and end-all. It was never intended to be something that would need to be transported in a pantechicon, as it would have been if we had tried to include everything. It does offer us, however, an overview of the potential and sets out a framework in which that can be developed.

I note that the document refers to work health and I thought that, for the interest of members of the Assembly, we might look at what the Work Health Act has done for the Territory in terms of decreasing the cost of workers' compensation. Of the 262-odd areas that I could have chosen to talk about and in which the figures are all similar, I have chosen 4 of the larger ones. Since the inception of the Work Health Act, premium costs have fallen from 19.47% to 11.15% in the building industry, from 0.92% to 0.78% in the administrative and clerical area, from 7.33% to 4.57% in the motor trades and from 9.44% to 4.04% in the transport industry. I could have quoted figures from any of the 262 areas which would have indicated that there has been a reduction, right across the board, in premium costs to employers. That is one of the very positive things that is happening in my portfolio area. It is making it much easier for employers to take on people in the Northern Territory and, because of the savings in workers' compensation premiums, to have more funds available to put into development.

As I said earlier, a properly trained work force is essential for development. Part of the implementation of our development strategy will be the preparation of that trained work force. We need to identify the skills that will be needed and to gear up to provide them. As part of that, we need to ensure that our own public service has the skills to play its part in the Territory's development. We have looked very closely at the training requirements of the public service and it is my intention in the near future to put to Cabinet some suggestions relating to the direction that we are taking in meeting training requirements in the public service.

In his contribution to this debate, the Leader of the Opposition commented on the opening remarks in the document in relation to reductions in the public sector as compared to the private sector in the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition gave the impression, while he did not say so in as many words, that the government was doing nothing about reducing the percentage of public servants in the work force as compared to the private sector. That is clearly not the case. Since 30 June 1979, when we took over the full functions of government in the Northern Territory, we have reduced the percentage of the public service component of the work force from 25.5% in June 1979 to 20% in August 1988. I think that is very commendable. It is an ongoing trend which reflects careful maintenance of numbers in the public sector and a quite significant increase in the private sector.

With the creation of a Department of Labour, the Northern Territory government has put into place a support system for training in the Northern Territory. That support system is not simply words; it has been backed by dollars and it has been backed by a survey of training requirements in the Northern Territory. At this very moment, a consultant is looking at the future training needs of the Northern Territory. I expect to have the report available to me in about mid-1989 and, at that time, I will be able to put into place much of the necessary training that will be required to meet this emerging need.

During the last 6 months or so, I have travelled through a number of the Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and sought their views with regard to the training needs. I am very keen to obtain a clear picture of what they see as being their requirements. I have views, but obviously my views will not always be the right ones. I am seeking their views on their training needs now and for the future. Quite separately from that, I have put in place a process whereby the field workers of the Office of Local Government are also undertaking a survey of training needs on Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory. We will set out to meet those needs as the picture becomes clearer. At present, we are developing some new courses, particularly in relation to the pastoral industry. These include the stockmen's training and general station hand courses. We are expanding our group intakes, and we are looking at a series of other courses with application to management of commercial enterprises and management and service provision in the tourist industry.

I believe that our Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Policy and Strategy will be very effective. I have had discussions today with the task force that the Commonwealth government has in place to overview Aboriginal employment and training. The members of that task force believe that AEEDPS is the best program of its kind in Australia and are very keen on seeing it work. I have no doubt that it will work. It will work if everybody pulls together, if they are all keen and attempt to develop the strategies that we are putting in place. If the Aboriginal people, in particular, are committed to it and seek to obtain training and then seek to obtain jobs, I have no doubt that it will be very effective.

In my view 'The Territory on the Move' is an excellent document. As I said earlier, it provides a very good framework and a background to what has happened in the past and what we hope for in the future. It outlines some of the things that we are doing to ensure that our hopes are realised. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Chief Minister for bringing this document to the Assembly and I support it wholeheartedly.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy tabled in the House by the Chief Minister is a document aimed at pulling together this government's development objectives and initiatives for the growth of the Territory economy. As the Chief Minister indicated when tabling the document, it is not a list of investment opportunities nor an attempt to create a planned economy. This government's platform supports private sector development and initiatives and, accordingly, the strategy is based on consultation with the private sector and provides the opportunity for business people and producers to develop their activities in a climate conducive to such development.

The government's record since self-government in providing a platform for development speaks for itself and can be evidenced in all industries by substantial growth progressing towards a diversified NT economy. Despite

10 years of considerable progress, each of our industries has a way to go before reaching the maturity of those in the states, and this is particularly so with some of the newer initiatives in industries such as agriculture and horticulture.

The document 'The Territory on the Move' assembles information on the government's programs and initiatives, together with sectoral industry statements which will enable existing and potential industry disciplines to base their business development programs on sound foundations. The strategy document indicates clearly that employment and maximisation of benefit to Territorians are major objectives of this government. In doing so, it recognises the importance of developing the Territory's industry base and ensuring the provision of an appropriate education and training base for our growing work force.

For a long time, the Northern Territory government and industry have recognised the potential that exists in our proximity to South-east Asia, but the benefits of realising this potential can be reaped only by positive strategies which work on the constraints and capitalise on our NT industry strengths. Accordingly, the strategy document places appropriate emphasis on marketing linkages and transport considerations.

The document develops sectoral strategies on an industry-by-industry basis, and these have been built on the industry consultation arrangements and developmental work that preceded the preparation of this document. The government has established consultative committees with industry sectors, and they have been addressing issues relevant to the development and stabilisation of each industry. Those issues have been brought forward in the document.

Industry advisory committee participants in the cattle and buffalo industries and the grain and horticultural industries are well advanced in addressing the problems within their industries, and have formulated positive programs aimed at future development. Advisory bodies are considering the research and development programs of my department and providing advice on the suitability and priorities of these programs. In this way, industry needs are being pursued actively and the department's programs are being adjusted, where necessary, to ensure that they are driven by those industry needs.

The strategy document has a fully integrated approach to development, addressing production issues, marketing and support arrangements and infrastructure requirements necessary to facilitate development. In addressing the cattle and buffalo industries, it identifies the strengths and constraints and proposes positive programs for those industries. It clearly recognises the changing circumstances of those industries and the requirements which will need to be met if it is to remain a force in the Australian and overseas meat trade. Programs like BTEC and structural adjustments in the industry cannot be dealt with lightly. This strategy responsibly addresses the industry of the 1990s rather than attempting to relive past eras.

The strategy document particularly emphasises the objective of increasing the level of secondary processing of the Territory's primary produce. The government believes there is considerable scope for increased economic activity based on primary production and, to this end, is encouraging and, where appropriate, facilitating private sector development of further secondary processing.



Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer to comments made by a couple of previous speakers in this debate. Opposition members, including the opposition spokesman on primary industry, commented on the number of cattle slaughtered in the Territory. Whilst I agree that there is a need to attempt to lift the level of processing of stock in the Territory, I was disappointed that he did not suggest any means of achieving that. All he offered were a few platitudes from the AMIEU and the Trades and Labor Council - nothing constructive at all.

The member for Koolpinyah was a little more constructive and had obviously given the strategy more thought, in keeping with the value of the document. I totally agree that there is a need to address the problem of the lack of local processing of produce. I understand that, this year, there has been an increased throughput in Territory abattoirs in the order of 58% over the last year. That is a real achievement and, as stated in the document, the government will be initiating a study to see if we can facilitate a further increase in that regard.

We are all aware of the mixed fortunes over the years of the Territory's abattoir industry. Ownership structures within the industry and a trend in recent years for major abattoirs to be located in the eastern and southern seaboard have contributed to this situation despite significant assistance from the Territory government to support the growth and stability of the industry. I think it is wise to keep in mind that the key factor is market forces. The price that producers can obtain for their product is what ultimately rules the day. That is a problem we all have to face.

Structural adjustments within the industry have also significantly influenced the location and nature of abattoir activity. My department has, as a major objective, the maximisation of the throughput of cattle in Territory abattoirs. Market evaluations which identify alternative markets for meat produced in the NT are the key to effecting any real change to the abattoir structure. The government has tabled in this Assembly a pastoral industry study which clearly identifies this market issue as central to the future directions of the pastoral industry. The trends in 1988 for the number of cattle killed in Territory abattoirs have been most encouraging.

The unfortunate fire at the Alice Springs abattoir will cause some setback to the progress being achieved but work will continue in the pursuit of options to maximise abattoir activity. A significant breakthrough in improving abattoir throughput in the Territory has been the decline of the meat centralisation policy sponsored by conference shipping lines. The recommencement of the shipment of meat through the Port of Darwin and the significant growth in that area in 1988 is a major step forward. This is not to deny the valuable live shipment trade which will continue to complement the marketing strategies of the pastoral sector.

The strategy document sets out the bright outlook for the horticultural industry in the NT. Some sound commercial projects are already operating whilst other programs are in the research and development stage. The development of the Territory's melon industry shows how the Territory can take advantage of market opportunities. Mango production is now entering a similar phase and this year will see a significant increase in mango production which, this year, will be in the order of 100 000 trays. Processing of product is of major importance and I see opportunities for sliced and pureed mango production in the years to come. With 100 000 trays being produced this year, there will be a substantial amount of second-grade product for which we do not have a ready market. That that is another area where we need to look at optimising the benefits which will be derived by the industry.

Work in the cashew industry is continuing in the research phase of a joint private sector and government initiative which offers good prospects in future years for the commercial development of a tree crop industry.

The problems of the Territory's grain industry, in the context of poor seasons in the last 3 years, are well known. The strategy is to persevere with this industry in the light of expected long-term benefits, although some adjustment will be necessary.

The government has recognised the potential of the fishing industry and has been prepared to initiate infrastructural development in order to facilitate industry growth. The success of the Frances Bay Mooring Basin and its importance to the development of the industry clearly evidence this and we are now seeing considerable commercial development taking place to support the fishing industry. The strategy document takes a responsible attitude in respect of the fishing industry where it is very necessary to balance the government's responsibilities for the management of the resource with development initiatives. Further infrastructural development is occurring at East Arm as the result of this year's budget initiatives.

The government will continue to focus its efforts to maximise the benefits to the NT of fishing activity in northern Australia. The complex jurisdictional arrangements in respect of waters adjacent to the Northern Territory mean that this government does not hold all the cards. The government, however, is adopting strategies which seek to maximise the onshore benefits and servicing of the fishing fleet of northern Australia. This government will continue to seek the responsible development of northern fisheries resources despite the Commonwealth government's tardy approach to such development.

It is not appropriate that I attempt at this time to outline all the government's initiatives in respect of progressing the rural and fishing industries. Rather, I support the thrust of the strategy document as a platform for the future development of those industries. Along with my departmental officers, I will be working closely with primary industry groups to progress the strategies outlined in this document. The views of those groups will be addressed in this process. The document places particular emphasis on sensible regional development and the rural industries will be an important base for this approach. My department is carrying out resource surveys in regional areas which will provide an information base for government, industry and the community generally to determine regional development initiatives.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr REED: Mr Deputy Speaker, I notice that the member for Stuart is back in the House. He did not contribute constructively to this debate.

Mr Ede: I contributed.

Mr REED: Mr Deputy Speaker, the relatively small Territory population and the local market size is further accentuated in the regions of the NT and particular attention will be given to identifying ways in which the diversification of the Territory's economic base might specifically address regional development aspects. The emphasis of the document on the role to be played by Aboriginals in the development of the Territory is very welcome and will be important in the future development of regional strategies.

The Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy is not a static document but, rather, one that provides a framework for government and industry alike to progress the Territory's development. To be successful, the strategy must have broad acceptance by industry groups and I am pleased that the NT Development Council, which represents a wide cross-section of industry and community interests, has endorsed the strategy document. I will be referring the document to the industry advisory committees within my department to ensure that the initiatives and strategies put forward in the document are fully discussed and that implementation then proceeds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to pick up a couple of comments made by the member for Koolpinyah in relation to the buffalo industry and the importation of genetic strains. She has made those points previously in the House. I would have thought that genetic diversity already exists in the Northern Territory buffalo herd and that considerable opportunity is already there. Programs such as the Buffalo Development Scheme will ensure that this genetic diversity is used to the best advantage. The market will determine where the best opportunities are and I am not sure that there is a big market for milking buffalo in the Northern Territory. I guess only time will tell, but the opportunities will be taken up if indeed there is a market.

The honourable member also raised the matter of downstream processing of dairy products. The largest dairy in the Northern Territory, which before much longer will be the largest in Australia, was established in Katherine a few years ago. Its problem at the moment is that it cannot supply the market. A month or so ago, it started supplying Broome for the first time. It commenced with the supply of 0.5 t of milk a week. Within a fortnight that had grown to 2 t and it has been going through the roof since then. That is a clear indication of just how successful it is. I do not believe that we need to offer much incentive in that situation. The achievements of that enterprise offer a classic case of how initial assistance in various ways by this CLP government enabled an industry to establish in the Northern Territory.

The strategy provides a framework and guidelines to facilitate development of our resources and thus attain a position in the Australian economy commensurate with our potential and our ability. We face exciting times and, as a Territorian and minister responsible for primary industry and fisheries activities, I am proud to be playing my part in the growth and development which will create a sound future for our children.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has done it again. From the team that brought Territorians that memorable campaign 'Don't vote for self-government it won't work' comes the cry from the wilderness on the development strategy. So long as the Leader of the Opposition acts in his now very familiar negative and unconstructive role and continues to put down the Territory and its people, he will never have to wonder what the view is like from this side of the House. So long as the Leader of the Opposition mindlessly reads from notes prepared for him by people who do not understand the Territory ...

Mr Ede: Who is reading from notes now?

Mr Coulter: 'Mindlessly' was the key word.

Mr PERRON: Yes. To pick up the interjection, Mr Speaker, the key words are 'by people who do not understand the Territory'. As long as he is advised by people who have not put in the necessary work, the Leader of the Opposition

will continue to be seen as a shallow individual lacking in any sense, wisdom or judgment and unfit for any real responsibility. The Leader of the Opposition is fortunate indeed that no one listens any more to what he has to say. If they did, as incredible as it might seem, his rating in the community would be even lower than it is today.

The Leader of the Opposition says that the strategy provides no guidance, no development, no broad framework and no vision for the Territory's future. Mr Speaker, those are not my words or my interpretation. Those are the words of the Leader of the Opposition. He seems to think that, because he says something, that automatically makes it true. I have news for him about that. For the time being, however, I want to look at the Leader of the Opposition's words. If they are a real indication of his view, he must presumably be able to offer the guidance, the development, the broad framework and the vision. He can tell us what a development strategy should provide.

His strategy is that it is the government's job to develop the Territory. He throws in an occasional gratuitous comment about the private sector and he waxes painful about the reduction in the number of public service jobs. Then, in stark contradiction, he argues for more government. Never mind the economic and fiscal realities, never mind the motivation of the private sector that we must capture and encourage, never mind the genuine desire of Territorians to get on with their own affairs in their own way. No, the Labor Party's answer is more government.

I feel that I should apologise to the Leader of the Opposition for giving him an advance copy of the development strategy. Clearly, he did not read it but jumped into the debate notwithstanding. As usual, he landed with both feet in his mouth. He told us that the business community would be disappointed in the strategy which offered it no guidance or help whatsoever. The Northern Territory Confederation of Industry and Commerce, one of the bodies which speaks for the business community on issues of this type, has issued a press release on the development strategy. It calls the strategy 'a step in the right direction'. It describes it as 'a realistic look' at the directions of the Northern Territory economy and says that 'everyone can now see what the thinking is, what the attitudes are and there are many positives if people care to look for them'. It continues: 'With refreshing candour, this document clearly defines the government's role in the Territory's economic development'. It further says: 'Overall, the document is a useful, worthwhile tool. Never before has there been a more factual, clinical analysis of our situation and the whole exercise is a giant step in the right direction'.

If it comes to a question of whether the Leader of the Opposition speaks for the business community or whether the Confederation of Industry and Commerce is to be relied on, I have no doubt at all where my money would lie. The business community has been consulted extensively and has participated actively and creatively in the preparation of the strategy. The Master Builders Association, the pastoral industry, the tourism industry, the grain growers, and the mining industry have all had their say and are all committed to the directions established by the strategy.

The Leader of the Opposition stands repudiated by those he has pretended to represent. The Confederation of Industry and Commerce has stated clearly that it will promote the strategy to potential investors, both locally and elsewhere. The Leader of the Opposition bleats from the sidelines that there is no vision. Fortunately, no one is listening. The strategy does provide vision, and much more. It provides clear, concrete steps that the government

and its private sector partners will be taking together to continue the growth and development of the Territory. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition began to highlight some of these steps in his own comments before he realised that he was turning his own pathetic argument on its head.

The development strategy recognises that the key objective is jobs. No one would argue with that. It then sets about establishing the economic directions to achieve those jobs. The strategy correctly recognises that industry growth in the Territory will occur if we take better advantage of the Territory's natural and economic strengths. The strategies to achieve that are as follows: adding value through the further processing of mineral and primary product; achieving a greater input into the servicing and supply of Territory resource-based industries; improving our access to the markets of Asia, with the essential first step being better knowledge of the market; opening new transport arteries between Australia and South-east Asia; developing closer links with Austrade by using its resources more effectively; and by realistically assessing the ways in which we can encourage greater Aboriginal participation in development.

The strategy is an acknowledgement by government of what can be achieved and what must be done if we are to reach our development potential. It includes a realistic assessment of what needs to be done in such areas as further infrastructural development and employment training. I might say here that the Leader of the Opposition claimed that the strategy ignores productivity. Like his other comments, that is wrong. The heart of improved productivity is an improvement in training and skills, together with well-focused and directed research.

The strategy goes on to outline a range of specific opportunities. It does not pretend, of course, to list all opportunities. As I indicated in my foreword to the document, that is not what the strategy is intended to be. However, I invite honourable members to do something which the Leader of the Opposition clearly did not do - to read the document. Look, for example, at pages 12 to 16 for the scope of industry direction and initiative, and then move through the subsequent chapters for the appropriate detail and context. Anyone who reads the document - and many people will - will be left in no doubt as to the strategic directions which the government and private industry agree will form the approach to future development. Only someone who has not read the document could parade the kind of nonsense dished up to this House by the Leader of the Opposition.

He was sternly critical of the fact that the document makes no reference to the Territory Insurance Office. Of course it does not. Nor is there any reference to the MLC, AMP or the local supermarket. This is a strategy for the Territory's economic development. I have every confidence that the strategy will be digested carefully by the board and management of the Territory Insurance Office and other institutional investors and that it will provide guidance for them in their investment decisions. Mr Speaker, that is how these things work.

The Leader of the Opposition also seemed to complain that the development strategy did not settle town planning issues. Of course it did not. I find it difficult even to respond to this kind of criticism which simply misses the whole point. The Leader of the Opposition has hit a new standard of feeble one-liners and takes refuge in dictionary definitions. He is welcome to that area in any further serious debate and consideration of economic development. He will be lonely because neither the government nor the business community, nor anyone else, will be there with him. We have things to do, and the strategy is there now to point the way.

People in the business community, contrary to the opinion of the Leader of the Opposition, do not need or particularly want projections of future population and jobs. They want direction. They want to share ideas and suggestions and they want a partnership in shaping the future. They want confidence that the government has set strategic directions and will adhere to them. That is what this strategy gives them and that is why it has their support.

Mr Speaker, although it is hardly worth the effort, I might respond in passing to the member for Stuart's trivial contribution to this debate. The honourable member took a leaf out of the Leader of the Opposition's book. He described the strategy as a 'grab bag' and a 'wish list', and asserted that the government does not know where it is going. Any development strategy must blend the past, present and future. We need to establish what has happened in the Territory, what our present circumstances are and where the opportunities are to build for the future. It is the member for Stuart who does not know where he is going, and who has not had the ability or the commitment to use the strategy to help him. The strategy does provide that blend and then looks to the future to establish the directions for growth.

I would have hoped that opposition members would do more in this debate than mischievously and destructively misrepresent the very valuable substance of the strategy. The Leader of the Opposition told us in his remarks that the member for Stuart would provide evidence of the strategy's internal contradictions. He simply did not do so for the simple reason that there are no inconsistencies. What the member for Stuart actually did was to give some selected quotes, out of context, with the obvious intention of deliberately misrepresenting the contents of the document. If the opposition has to stoop so low to find criticisms, the government has very little to worry about.

The member for Stuart went on to give us his views about what the strategy should have contained. The extraordinary feature of his remarks in this regard is that he detailed precisely what the strategy does, and in the form that he actually recommended. The one exception was his comment about the need for targets. The purpose of a strategy is to provide direction. Targets limit vision and creativity. They set a false measure of success and failure. The substance of the strategy is far more significant than that but, in all other respects, the development strategy provides exactly the content which the member for Stuart recommends.

Mr Speaker, in closing this debate, I want to acknowledge the contribution of all those who have participated in the preparation of the strategy. Members of the Northern Territory Development Council, representing a cross-section of business and community interests, made valuable input. I am pleased to acknowledge that participation and support which, in turn, was supported by government officers in many departments and authorities. The willing cooperation of those officers is acknowledged and it is appropriate for me to convey my sincere thanks to them. The strategy is presented as a framework for progress in the 1990s. The government will use it as such with commitment and confidence.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, in rising tonight, I would like to put on the record a matter I raised with the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, namely an article that appeared in The Australian yesterday about a study in Queensland that suggested that the feral pig in Australia could be bringing this country something like \$15m a year. I appreciate the assurances of the minister that he will contact the group carrying out the study to see if it offers any potential for the Territory. If feral pigs are worth \$15m, perhaps the feral buffalo could be worth a few bob too.

During last week's debate on the budget, I was roundly castigated in relation to shipping issues. I have here an article in a booklet called the Institute of Public Affairs Review, Australia's Journal of Free Enterprise Opinion. The article is headed, 'How Shipping is Sinking Our Industry', and is written by David Trebeck. It begins by pointing out that it costs more to send a car on a ship from Melbourne to Tasmania than it does to send a car on a ship from Melbourne to Japan.

Mr Palmer: How many go?

Mr COLLINS: It is not a matter of how many go. It is the cost. If the honourable member was not like 2 short planks, he would understand that.

It gives a very vivid outline of reports on the Australian shipping industry and how inefficient it is, on our port practices which are costing this nation dearly and why, as I have argued previously, the railway and a free enterprise port in Darwin would not only be a great contribution to the Territory's economy but also a great contribution to Australia and save many millions of dollars each year.

This is quite an interesting magazine. It has a page of IPA indicators and I will give some interesting snippets. The number of international environment treaties to which Australia is a signatory is 49 but the number of countries which have enacted specific legislation to fulfil obligations under the World Heritage Convention is but 1 - Australia. I will come to that again shortly.

The number of trade unionists in Britain when Margaret Thatcher first won government was 13 million and the number of shareholders was 3 million. Today, the number of unionists is 9 million and the number of shareholders has risen to 8.5 million. Thus, 5.5 million more people in Britain are sharing in the prosperity of that country as a result of privatisation.

The proportion of immigrants qualified to take out Australian citizenship who have not done so is 43% or 1 million people. That is interesting in the context of the immigration debate. One million people who have come to Australia and are eligible for citizenship have not become Australian citizens.

A comparison of the leading industrial nations in terms of the number of workers employed in government enterprise places Australia second behind Austria. Our government work force is large when compared with those of other economically developed countries.

The number of Australian-born babies given up for adoption in 1972 was 9800. In 1987, it was a mere 800. I will let members work out some possible reasons for that change. To me, they are fairly sad reasons.

Since 1967 - and this might surprise some of the radicals around the traps - the number of US nuclear weapons has decreased by 8000. In fact, the reduction measured in megatonnage is 75%. It is a quarter the 1967 figure.

Mr Ede: They can wipe out the world 10 times instead of 100.

Mr COLLINS: We could have an interesting debate on that subject on another occasion. I am more than happy to take on the member for Stuart in such a debate.

The proportion of votes required to elect a Labor government in Queensland is 51.4%. The proportion required to elect a Liberal-National government is 52.5%. That is an interesting variation.

Box office sales from Crocodile Dundee 2, 6 weeks after its release, totalled \$US92m whilst the sales from Rambo 3, were \$US50m. Production costs for Crocodile Dundee 2 were \$US14m and for Rambo 3 \$US62m. Thus Crocodile Dundee 2 came out a winner there as well as being extremely profitable.

The next figure is an interesting one. In 1957, 1 in every 50 people - or 2% - were paying 40% of their incomes in tax. Today, 1 in every 2 people pays that much in tax - or 50%. The greed of governments is staggering.

Another article of interest relates to the explosive implications of external affairs powers. We have seen ample evidence of that. As I said, of the 49 countries which have entered into agreements on world heritage, there is only 1 country that has been stupid enough to legislate - Australia. It is a bit like the CITES agreement relating to crocodiles, which I was discussing with Dr Letts this afternoon. That agreement only works in Australia because we are honest. I would suggest that some countries which are signatories also have many crocodile skins for sale.

Getting back to external affairs powers, we had that referendum, and wasn't it a beauty? It was marvellous. I agree with Mr Hawke for once. He has great trust in the common sense of the people of Australia and I could not agree with him more. Nevertheless, he did not look too happy after the referendum result. An article in the IPA Review refers to something which is of considerable danger to the freedom of ordinary Australians. It says: 'The door is wide open for anything originally intended under our constitutional balance to be within the sphere of the states to be transferred to the Commonwealth'. This is because the external powers are being abused in a manner which would make our founding fathers roll in their graves. Matters of interpretation being placed in the hands of the High Court have put us in a position where, if we succeed in our struggle to open the door to statehood, we may find an empty cupboard because of Mr Hawke's plans for Australia. He would like a strong central federal government, regional governments and no states.

An interesting letter was sent to The West Australian although that newspaper did not print it. It relates to concerns from journalists and others about the way in which the Western Australian government undertakes its stewardship of taxpayers' funds. I will read a short extract which is quite relevant in the context of some of the issues which have been addressed during the course of these sittings. The letter asks: 'Why do the media tolerate this and the frequent airy dismissal of questions from journalists going to the heart of the government's stewardship of the public purse? Replies that retreat behind claims of commercial confidentiality when large amounts of



public money are involved are nonsense and a defence against the public's right to know'. I will not say anything further. Of course, the government concerned is a Labor government.

Another interesting subject is the \$50 000m liability which never appears in the government's accounts at budget time. It is comprised of things like depreciation provisions on plant and the cost of old-age pensions and superannuation. It is a hidden liability.

Another interesting article was written by Des Moore. It is headed 'Economics - Achieving the Impossible'. Members may recall that, during the last federal election campaign, the leader of the federal opposition, Mr John Howard, suggested that he would be able to cut government spending and bring back the spending percentage of GDP from something like 42% to about 38%, and would then be able to finance tax cuts which would create 2 tax brackets, a top one of 38% and a bottom one of 25%. Many people pooh-poohed that suggestion, including Mr Max Walsh of the Carleton-Walsh Report. His comments were fairly damaging to the federal opposition at that time.

Des Moore goes on to point out that what Mr Howard said he would do in 3 years has actually been achieved in 2 by Mr Keating. I congratulate Mr Keating on his achievements since 1986-87 but I think that he and Max Walsh owe an apology to Mr Howard for their misleading comments during the last election. I certainly look forward to the next conversion - the next change in the thinking of the federal Treasurer.

Another page in the IPA Review is headed 'Public Finance Hall of Shame'. It lists situations where governments have created extraordinary messes, losing huge amounts of taxpayers' money. The winner is the \$2000m-worth of excess electricity-generating capacity in New South Wales under Mr Wran. The Dowding government in Western Australia also gets a mention: 'The Dowding government's refusal to provide the public with details of the deals entered into by those bodies on the rather specious ground of commercial confidentiality makes it difficult to determine whether the West has a strong candidate for the award, but watch this space'.

Another interesting piece, headed 'One for the Road', relates to the law in the ACT. If you get into a motor car in the ACT knowing that the driver is drunk and, if you are then involved in an accident, it is on your own head. You receive no compensation. There is one situation, however, where that does not apply. If you are drunker than the bloke who is driving, you will not know he was drunk. You will then have a legal defence and be in a position, as someone was recently, to receive \$100 000 compensation - paid by all the sober drivers of course.

It is an interesting booklet. I recommend that all honourable members read the August-October 1988 edition of the IPA Review.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, hopefully I will not keep you long. I want to refer to the Chief Minister's disgraceful performance in question time this morning when I asked him a question about the Territory Insurance Office. The TIO has lost \$1.4m, \$0.5m of which was supposed to be secured. Yet the Chief Minister said that he had nothing at his fingertips. Will he give us an answer now? Nothing at his fingertips! That is bad enough, but what is even more disgraceful is to have people in the business community carrying losses from Hungerford Refrigeration for 6 months now - \$460 000-worth of local losses.

Many local businesses entered into commitments with Hungerford Refrigeration and extended credit on the basis that the Territory Insurance Office was involved. Despite the fact that the previous Treasurer gave an assurance some months ago that the TIO was looking at those matters, the Chief Minister still has no answer as to whether the small businesses which were sucked into extending credit to Hungerford on the basis of TIO involvement will receive any relief from the problems they now find themselves in. It simply is not good enough. Unfortunately, it is typical of this government's attitude to small business.

Ministers sit in their ivory tower across the road and dream grand visions of the Northern Territory in 100 years time. The Chief Minister makes grandiose speeches in Alice Springs about what the Territory will have achieved 100 years from now. Meanwhile, the government forgets that people in the community are trying to earn a living. It forgets that, when those people enter into arrangements on the basis that the firm they are dealing with is backed by a semi-government instrumentality, the government has some responsibility when those arrangements go bad. The Chief Minister did not even have the wit to realise that we would be asking him a question on that matter during the course of these sittings and that he might be expected to answer. That is simply not good enough. Unfortunately for the Chief Minister, it confirms the growing perception that he is not on top of what is happening in the business community in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: We do more for it in a day than you do in a year.

Mr SMITH: Get up tonight and tell us what you are doing for the unfortunate businesses which were caught because of TIO's bad investment. That would be a good start in demonstrating what you do for small business in the Northern Territory.

Mr Perron: The receiver has not finished his job yet.

Mr SMITH: If that is the case, how is it that the Territory Insurance Office can wipe off \$1.4m as a bad debt?

Mr Perron: Prudent accounting practices.

Mr SMITH: Everyone knows that, if the TIO does not get its secured investment back from Hungerford, those poor unsecured debtors will get nothing. Many of them are hurting and have had their confidence severely dented. I do not expect to get an answer from the Chief Minister tonight. The subject is obviously too hard for him to come to grips with quickly.

Mr Perron: You will not be here, no doubt.

Mr SMITH: No, I will not.

Mr Speaker, I hope that, at some time in his very busy schedule, the Chief Minister will find time to think about the unfortunate people who have suffered because of this particular matter and to think about how the government can offer them some support. I say again that many of them would not be in their present situation if it had not been for the involvement of the government and the reassurances they were given that Hungerford Refrigeration was a safe investment, when anyone could have realised and should have realised that it was not. At best, it was a risky investment.

Mr Perron: Particularly with your attacks on it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, one of these days, the real story of Hungerford Refrigeration will come out and then there will be some very red faces.

Mr Perron: You have got the real story, have you?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I have the real story as a matter of fact.

Mr Perron: No doubt, you will let us know about it.

Mr SMITH: I will let you know at the appropriate time. The story is not very flattering to the so-called financial wizards in the government and the Territory Insurance Office but that will wait for another day. What is more important at this time is that the government address the legitimate concerns of those small businesses. I hope that the government will do that as quickly as possible.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to refer to what I consider to be a considerable achievement for Northern Territory industry. I refer to an article in tonight's NT News, which is headed 'Slipway Wins Royal Australian Navy Contract'. I will read some of the article into Hansard because I think it is quite significant.

Darwin shipbuilder, Frances Bay Slipway, has clinched the deal to service the Royal Australian Navy's Fremantle class patrol boats. The slipway's general manager, Mr Rod Reid, said the navy had confirmed that 2 patrol boats would be coming to Darwin next year - the first time the job has gone to a Territory shipyard. 'The first, HMAS Dubbo, will arrive early in March for a 2-week intermediate refit', he said. 'Then, at the end of March, the HMAS Cessnock will undergo a major refit which will take 9 weeks. This is the first of the 6 Fremantle class patrol boats to undergo a major refit over the next 4 years'.

Mr Speaker, the shipyard recently won a contract worth \$500 000 to refit the Papua New Guinea navy landing craft and, as far as I am aware, that was the first major contract which it has won. It is really good to see that this deal has been clinched with the Royal Australian Navy. I believe that there are considerable opportunities for servicing the expanding defence forces in northern Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory. The winning of this contract is a major achievement. There are also significant opportunities for servicing the aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force. Whilst 75 Squadron has just transferred to Katherine, I understand that Darwin will remain a major base and a large number of aircraft will be operating through here, thus providing opportunities for defence force contracts. Similar opportunities will arise in Katherine, and these will extend beyond normal service and maintenance of small engines into the more sophisticated areas of aircraft hydraulics, avionics and related trades.

The army is moving to Darwin in a few years time and that will lead to further opportunities. I believe we should begin to assess these opportunities. We should see whether it is possible to attract specialised service industries to the Territory or have local companies branch out into this field. It is a fairly specialised area but there are opportunities for companies to pick up the technology and I believe that, from the Territory's point of view, we would have much to gain. There are real business and employment opportunities and, from the point of view of our kids, it will enhance prospects for their future employment.

I think the opportunities have been recognised by the Western Australians. According to the Western Australian press, many companies are taking up opportunities which have been created by the transfer of some defence facilities to the west coast. I urge Territory companies to look seriously at the business opportunities which might exist in servicing the defence forces in the Northern Territory.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly on 3 matters in tonight's adjournment debate. The first relates to an area of land in the Oolloo locality near the Douglas-Daly farms. I know the farmers down there have had a hard trot for the last few years. The seasons have not been good and their income from farming has not been as high as they would have liked. In those circumstances, if a farmer can take advantage of any other source of income, that is to his benefit, and farmers who take advantage of such opportunities are to be congratulated.

However, a constituent has drawn my attention to a matter which causes me some concern. It relates to the operation of camping permits on a piece of vacant Crown land immediately next to the Daly River. I have before me NT Gazette G40 in which there is a diagram of the Douglas-Daly farm area showing all the farming blocks numbered and all the new blocks named. It shows a section of vacant Crown land immediately next to the river.

My constituent is a fine upstanding family man. He is not a person who leaves gates open, starts fires or shoots stock when he goes camping. He is a very responsible person and the members of his family are very responsible too. From time to time, over a number of years, he has camped at this spot on the banks of the Daly. When he went there recently, a permit fee was demanded from him. The place where he camps, as I have said, is on vacant Crown land. It is not on land occupied by a farm. The land I am referring to is designated Northern Territory Portion 2973 in the gazette. In fact, I believe that, at this stage, it is only proposed to be included in Portion 2973 and is presently part of Portion 1190. Originally, that was part of Crown Lease Perpetual No 93, which was held by ADMA. That is now Northern Territory Portion 1190. I intended to pursue my inquiries with ADMA, but I did not have the opportunity at the time.

The situation as it now stands is that ADMA owns that land. I would like the Minister for Lands and Housing or the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries to investigate the situation. Has ADMA given permission to the farmer, whose land adjoins the vacant Crown land, to use it to further his income by issuing camping permits or is this not the case? Many years ago, the old Reserves Board registered an interest in areas of land adjacent to rivers in the Northern Territory. It was particularly concerned with big rivers like the Daly and the Katherine and the scheme was called the 'Wild Rivers Project'. The project did not get very far because it was hampered by pastoral leases that went right down to the rivers.

Whilst I believe that the freehold land owned by the farmer is sacrosanct and is his to do what he likes with, I also believe that responsible camping people have certain rights. I will be pursuing the matter with the minister to determine the exact situation. I want to know whether my constituent and other campers can camp on this Crown land free of charge, as they have been doing for some years, or whether it is necessary for them to pay a permit fee. If it is necessary to pay a fee, I would like to be assured that ADMA has actually handed the land over to the farmer who owns the land adjacent to it. If that is the case, I believe it sets a precedent which we will have to consider carefully. If we do not set aside land for people to camp on, they

may be tempted to camp in undesirable places and damage surrounding areas by leaving camp fires alight, leaving gates open and so forth.

The Leader of the Opposition has already raised the subject of the TIO and the second matter I wish to raise also relates to that organisation. I have been told of a most unusual set of circumstances involving the TIO. I do not want to identify the person involved, who was the victim of a robbery in which jewellery was stolen. The jewellery was not exceptionally valuable but among the pieces were some which were reasonably valuable to members of the family. One of these was an item made of silver.

The victim of the robbery had an insurance policy with the TIO and, when she submitted her claim, a TIO staff member recommended that she go to a Darwin firm which deals in gold and diamonds to obtain a quote on the value of the stolen items. That in itself seems pretty odd to me because an insurance company usually asks for 2 or 3 quotes and there are at least 2 other reputable jewellery manufacturing firms in Darwin. At that point, the woman became rather curious about the operation of this company that deals in gold and diamonds. She went there to obtain a quote even though it seemed strange to her that she had been directed there because her jewellery was silver. The gentleman who served her told her that she should not think about replacing the item in silver because he could easily replace it in gold.

As everybody knows, Mr Speaker, the price of gold is approximately twice that of silver. I do not know who was getting a cop out of it but the woman became very suspicious. I can give the honourable minister details right down to the actual amount quoted for the value of the item in silver and in gold. She was beginning to become distinctly worried so she went back to the TIO and asked: 'What's the drum?' She was told: 'When the claim is put in by the person who deals in gold and diamonds, we will contact him directly and tell him to go ahead or not'. That sounded a bit odd to her so she went back to the TIO again. Obviously, she was going to get a good deal by having the item made from gold instead of silver but something smelt a bit along the line. Rather than be caught up in anything smelly - and this smells like last week's fish to me - she said she would rather have the cash value of the article of silver jewellery and forget about the gold. At least she was honest. I have serious doubts, however, about the person involved in the gold and diamond business and the person at the TIO. It seems to me that there was something pretty smelly going on.

Somebody brought another similar matter to my attention last night in relation to TIO and the commissions paid to certain people and not paid to others, depending on political affiliation. However, to bring details before the minister or even before this House would result in the person who brought the matter to my attention being victimised because of his political affiliations. It is better left unsaid because he is doing okay and he does not want his political affiliations to hinder his business and his private dealings.

The third subject that I would like to touch on this evening is one which I raised briefly earlier today. It relates to a disclosure of pecuniary interests of senior public servants. Parliamentarians have an obligation to disclose their interests. About this time of the year, we submit our pecuniary interest returns so that anybody who has a legitimate reason can inspect those returns.

Mr Speaker, I think it is just as important that the pecuniary interests of senior public servants - and I mean those of the highest ranks - should be

open to public inspection. I would not suggest that the extent of these pecuniary interests be stated. The disclosure requirements should be similar to those which apply to parliamentarians - interests in shares, land-holdings and any gifts received. More importantly, not only in relation to public servants but also to parliamentarians, it would be interesting to know a person's debts as well as his pecuniary interests.

This is a very important matter because not only do things have to be right, they have to look right. Senior public servants are exerting more and more control over our parliamentarians. The interests of the senior public servants should be laid out clearly so that they may be inspected if anything questionable arises. It may be sufficient if they are available for inspection only by the minister so that he has a clear understanding of where his senior public servants, his advisers, stand in relation to certain matters that may come before him for consideration. I put this to the Chief Minister for his consideration.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal town camps, formation of council 4350  
Advertisements for government contracts 4344  
Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Hospitals, contract for supply of fruit  
and vegetables 4344  
Alice Springs Hospital, chaplain 4548, 4552  
Ali Curung School, retention of teaching staff 4342, 4346  
Apprentices, numbers in NT 4550, 4552  
Arafura electorate, non-availability of television 4554  
Beebe family, Territory pioneers 4228  
Black Jungle, preservation of rare palms 4351  
Building industry, government contracts 4231  
Camping fees, Daly River 4645  
Conservation Commission, preservation of flora 4351  
Crocodiles in Barkly electorate 4446  
Crocodile skins, proposal for local tanning industry 4548  
Defence forces in NT, opportunities for local industries 4644  
Expo -  
    employment for staff of NT stand 4234  
    NT stand 4233, 4234  
Feral pigs, economic potential 4640  
Flora preservation 4351  
Fruit and vegetable supply, contract for hospitals 4344  
Gapuwiyak, unused centre 4348  
Heritage legislation for man-made buildings 4350  
Hickman, John, death 4232, 4235, 4340  
Housing Commission, foreclosures 4447  
Hungerford Refrigeration, creditors 4643  
Identification parades 4345  
Imparja Television, government support for remote area reception 4349  
Institute of Public Affairs Review 4640  
Kargaru Preschool, staffing problems 4342  
Kargaru School, parade 4447  
Leasehold titles, conversion to freehold 4548  
Lovegrove, Jeanie, incident at Helen Springs Ucharonidge boundary 4229  
Macdonald, Mrs Brenda 4548, 4552  
Member for Flynn -  
    maiden speech 4119  
    Order of Australia Medal 4450  
Nicholson River, need for school 4350  
Northern Territory News -  
    cartoons relating to Aboriginals 4549  
    photograph of deceased Aboriginals 4549  
Nyirripi School, inadequate building 4342, 4347  
Orthodontic services for Tennant Creek 4446  
Pioneer Walk-in Theatre 4552  
Planning Act, deficiencies 4441  
Police line-ups, provision of 1-way screen 4345  
Public servants, disclosure of pecuniary interests of senior officers 4646  
Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, lodgment fee for complaints 4231  
Radiology equipment, contract 4448  
Remote areas, government assistance for television reception 4349  
Roberts, Phillip, death 4548, 4550, 4554  
Royal Darwin Hospital, radiology equipment contract 4448  
Schools for outstations in Stuart electorate 4342, 4347  
Sewerage rates 4348  
Sherwin, Florrie, Territory pioneer 4229  
Silversulphadiazine 4444

Slipway, Navy contract 4644  
Strip shows in Territory hotels 4230  
Tanami Road 4553  
Territory Insurance Office -  
    commissions on basis of political affiliation 4646  
    compensation claim for jewellery theft 4646  
    loss 4642  
Ti Tree School, 10th anniversary 4321, 4346  
Today Show 4554  
Videos, government policy on X- and R-rated 4548  
Willowra School, no staff 4343, 4347  
Women's Information Centre, letter to member for Koolpinyah 4230  
Yuendumu, hearing problems of schoolchildren 4343, 4347

#### BILLS

Aboriginal Areas Protection (Serial 146) 4485  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4073, 4139, 4304  
Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds) (Serial 149) 4574  
Disasters Amendment (Serial 121) 4544  
Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4498  
Fisheries (Serial 151) 4569  
Justices Amendment (Serial 122) 4605  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4579  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 4611  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4606  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4567  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 4404  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4421, 4500  
Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4303  
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 4577  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4606  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 125) 4545  
Work Health Amendment (Serial 128) 4605

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Ms Dawn Lawrie 4123  
Dr G.A. Letts 4462

#### MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

BTEC program 4287  
Flynn by-election results 4072  
Health, safety, economy and heritage of Alice Springs 4123

#### MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR 4557

#### MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4451  
Noting papers -  
    Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4065, 4383, 4617  
    Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public Administration Recurrent  
    Expenditure 4560  
Noting statements -  
    Domestic violence 4567  
    Trade Development Zone 4244  
    Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements 4380  
M Select Committee on Constitutional Development - extension of time 4382  
    Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4357



PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr Bell 4375, 4420  
Mr Dale 4495  
Mr Harris 4088

PETITIONS

Pioneer Walk-in Theatre 4353  
Videos 4557

RETURN TO WRIT

Division of Flynn 4065

STATEMENTS

Broadcast of question time 4123  
Domestic violence 4565  
Letter from federal parliament 4353  
Trade Development Zone 4237

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Select Committee on the Trade Development Zone 4557

TABLED PAPERS

Auditor-General's Report 1987-88 4065  
Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4065  
Ombudsman of the Northern Territory - Tenth Report 4379  
Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public Administration Recurrent  
Expenditure 4560  
Publications Committee - Seventh Report 4340  
Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements 4380

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Radiology equipment, contract 4448

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4099, 4220

Justices Amendment (Serial 122) 4605

Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4590

Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4606

Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4569

Natural Death (Serial 113) 4405

Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4606

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health, safety, economy and heritage of Alice Springs 4132

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4477

Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4280

Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4365

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS 4375, 4420

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Advertisements for government contracts 4344

Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Hospitals, contract for supply of fruit and vegetables 4344

Alice Springs Hospital, chaplain 4548

Crocodile skins, proposal for local tanning industry 4548

Feral pigs, economic potential 4640

Institute of Public Affairs Review 4640

Leasehold titles, conversion to freehold 4548

Macdonald, Mrs Brenda 4548

Police line-ups, provision of 1-way screen 4345

Silversulphadiazine 4444

Videos, government policy on X- and R-rated 4548

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4094, 4222, 4313, 4339

Natural Death (Serial 113) 4416

Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4501, 4540

Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 125) 4547

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4480

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4396

Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4271

PETITION

Videos 4557

COULTER B.F.

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4160, 4223, 4340

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health, safety, economy and heritage of Alice Springs 4135

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4456

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4617

Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4244, 4283

Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4373

STATEMENT

Trade Development Zone 4237

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Select Committee on the Trade Development Zone 4559

DALE D.F.

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4197

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 4495

DONDAS N.M.

MOTION

Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4277

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs Hospital, chaplain 4552

Ali Curung School, retention of teaching staff 4342

Apprentices, numbers in NT 4552

Macdonald, Mrs Brenda 4552

Nyirripi School, inadequate building 4342

Pioneer Walk-in Theatre 4552

Tanami Road 4553

Ti Tree School, 10th anniversary 4341

Willowra School, no staff 4343

Yuendumu, hearing problems of schoolchildren 4343

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4081, 4147, 4222, 4304

Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4593

Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4421, 4518, 4543

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

BTEC program 4296

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4462

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4387

Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4255

Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4361

PETITION

Pioneer Walk-in Theatre 4353

FINCH F.A.

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4314

MOTION

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4627

FIRMIN C.C.

ADJOURNMENT

Expo, NT stand 4233  
Hickman, John, death 4232

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4073

FLOREANI E.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Member for Flynn -  
maiden speech 4119  
Order of Australia Medal 4450

HARRIS T.

ADJOURNMENT

Ali Curung School, retention of teaching staff 4346  
Nyirripi School, inadequate building 4347  
Schools for outstations in Stuart electorate 4347  
Ti Tree School, 10th anniversary 4346  
Willowra School, no staff 4347  
Yuendumu, hearing problems of schoolchildren 4347

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4213, 4305, 4339  
Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4498  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4510, 4518, 4544

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 4088

HATTON S.P.

ADJOURNMENT

Expo -  
employment for staff of NT stand 4234  
NT stand 4234  
Hickman, John, death 4235

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4088, 4147  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4586  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 4613  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4607  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4432, 4542  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4607

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4392  
Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4273  
Select Committee on Constitutional Development - extension of time 4382  
Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4370

LANHUPUY W.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Northern Territory News -  
cartoons relating to Aborigines 4549  
photograph of deceased Aborigines 4549  
Roberts, Phillip, death 4548

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4110, 4197, 4314

LEO D.M.

BILL

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4149, 4225

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4469  
Noting paper, Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public  
Administration Recurrent Expenditure 4563  
Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4260  
Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4369

MCCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Apprentices, numbers in NT 4550  
Roberts, Phillip, death 4550

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4319  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4597, 4604  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 4615

MOTIONS

Noting papers -  
Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4629  
Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public Administration  
Recurrent Expenditure 4564

MANZIE D.W.

BILLS

Aboriginal Areas Protection (Serial 146) 4485  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4183  
Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds) (Serial 149) 4574  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 4417  
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 4577

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Black Jungle, preservation of rare palms 4351  
Building industry, government contracts 4231  
Camping fees, Daly River 4645  
Conservation Commission, preservation of flora 4351  
Heritage legislation for man-made buildings 4350  
Planning Act, deficiencies 4441  
Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, lodgment fee for complaints 4231  
Strip shows in Territory hotels 4230  
Territory Insurance Office -  
    commissions on basis of political affiliation 4646  
    compensation claim for jewellery theft 4646  
Women's Information Centre, letter to member for Koolpinyah 4230

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4145, 4318  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4582  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 4613  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4608  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 4413  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4503  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4608

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4623  
Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4368

PALMER M.J.

BILL

Natural Death (Serial 113) 4412

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4471  
Noting papers -  
    Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4383  
    Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public Administration  
        Recurrent Expenditure 4560  
Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4269

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee, Report on Public Administration Recurrent  
Expenditure 4560

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

Hickman, John, death 4340

BILLS

Aboriginal Areas Protection (Serial 146) 4139  
Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4145, 4227, 4338  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4543  
Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4303  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 125) 4546

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

BTEC program 4300  
Health, safety, economy and heritage of Alice Springs 4127

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4465  
Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4065, 4636  
Noting statements -  
Domestic violence 4567  
Trade Development Zone 4250  
Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements 4380

STATEMENT

Domestic violence 4565

TABLED PAPERS

Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4065  
Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements 4380

POOLE E.H.

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4329  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4610  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4567  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4610

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4620  
Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4363

REED M.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Defence forces in NT, opportunities for local industries 4644  
Slipway, Navy contract 4644

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4333  
Fisheries (Serial 151) 4570

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

BTEC program 4292

MOTION

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4632

SETTER R.A.

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4105, 4225  
Liquor Amendment (Serial 134) 4609  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 4415  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4505  
Summary Offences Amendment (Serial 135) 4609

MOTIONS

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4400  
Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4262

TABLED PAPER

Publications Committee - Seventh Report 4606

SMITH T.E.

ADJOURNMENT

Hungerford Refrigeration, creditors 4643  
Territory Insurance Office, loss 4642

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4146, 4220, 4224, 4319, 4339  
Natural Death (Serial 113) 4404  
Northern Territory University (Serial 141) 4438, 4531  
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 125) 4545  
Work Health Amendment (Serial 128) 4605

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

BTEC program 4287  
Health, safety, economy and heritage of Alice Springs 4123

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4451, 4483  
Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4067  
Noting statements -  
Domestic violence 4567  
Trade Development Zone 4244  
Tabling of documents by Minister for Tourism 4357, 4376

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Select Committee on the Trade Development Zone 4557

TIPILOURA S.G.

ADJOURNMENT

Arafura electorate, non-availability of television 4554  
Roberts, Phillip, death 4554  
Today Show 4554

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4145, 4325  
Disasters Amendment (Serial 121) 4544  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4579  
Local Government Grants Commission Amendment (Serial 136) 4611

MOTION

Noting paper, Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy 4398

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal town camps, formation of council 4350  
Beebe family, Territory pioneers 4228  
Crocodiles in Barkly electorate 4446  
Housing Commission, foreclosures 447



Imparja Television, government support for remote area reception 4349  
Kargaru School, parade 4447  
Lovegrove, Jeanie, incident at Helen Springs Ucharonidge boundary 4229  
Nicholson River, need for school 4350  
Orthodontic services for Tennant Creek 4446  
Remote areas, government assistance for television reception 4349  
Sewerage rates 4348  
Sherwin, Florrie, Territory pioneer 4229

BILLS

Appropriation 1988-89 (Serial 127) 4112, 4164, 4226  
Local Government Amendment (Serial 137) 4595

MOTIONS

Censure of Deputy Chief Minister 4471  
Noting statement, Trade Development Zone 4265

VALE R.W.S.

STATEMENT

Letter from federal parliament 4353