

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 20 October 1987
Wednesday 21 October 1987
Thursday 22 October 1987

Tuesday 27 October 1987
Wednesday 28 October 1987
Thursday 29 October 1987

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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Fifth Assembly
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Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
Deputy Chief Minister	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
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Minister for Conservation	
Minister for Tourism	
Treasurer and Minister for Local Government	Barry Francis Coulter
Minister for Mines and Energy	
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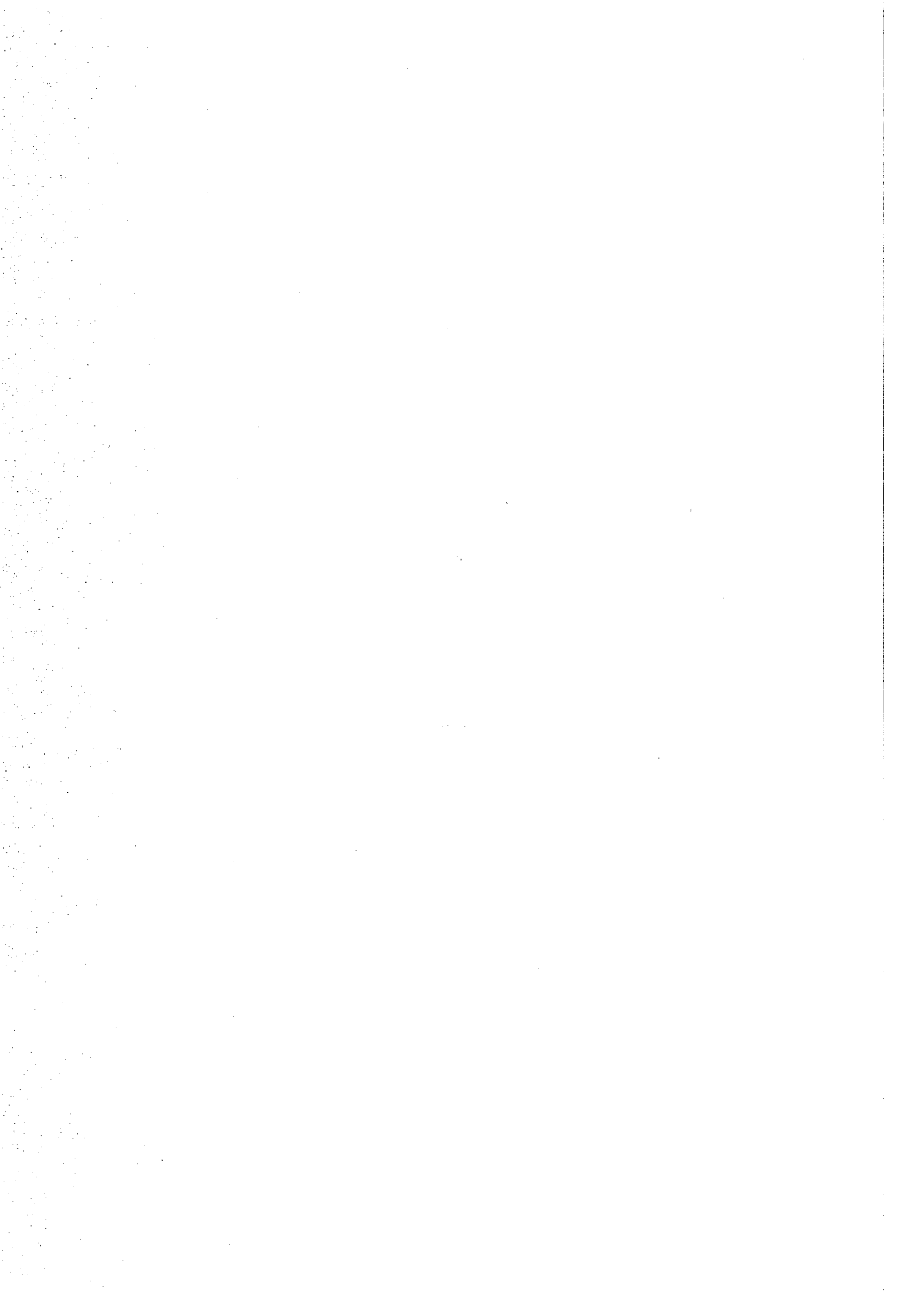
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PART I

DEBATES



DEBATES

Tuesday 20 October 1987

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

TABLED PAPERS
Auditor-General's Report and
Treasurer's Financial Statements

Mr SPEAKER: I lay on the Table the Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the year 1986-87 together with the Report of the Auditor-General upon the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 1987.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the reports be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the papers.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Katherine Gorge National Park

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the Katherine Gorge National Park and the implications arising from the report of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Justice Sir William Kearney. At the outset, I must put paid to the nonsensical diatribe which has been spewed forth by the opposition in recent weeks concerning leadership challenges, policies of appeasement and the like. The Deputy Chief Minister, Ray Hanrahan, was the Acting Chief Minister during my absence from the Territory and he effectively and efficiently managed the affairs of government. In a forthright, open and honest manner, he has brought to the attention of the community the real issue that this government has been endeavouring to resolve for so long. That issue is the inequities imposed on the Northern Territory by legislation which is beyond the control of its elected government. The Deputy Chief Minister has been more honest than the Leader of the Opposition, whose hypocrisy I will detail later.

The Northern Territory government is committed to an equitable system of land rights that can satisfy legitimate Aboriginal aspirations for security of land tenure which is compatible with the needs of the wider community. In this context, I will quote from the platform of the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party:

The party accepts and endorses the concept of Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory and will continue to recognise the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land.

This government believes that it should have responsibility for the administration of Aboriginal land tenure. This government regards the right to legislate for the administration of all lands in the Territory, including Aboriginal lands, as an integral part of statehood and, in fact, of government. Before I address the matter of the Katherine Gorge land claim specifically, I would like to give the members of the opposition a lesson on

the failings of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and then perhaps they may be able to better understand this government's position, which obliges it to plan and provide the complete range of services desired by the Northern Territory community.

In 1983, the federal government appointed Mr Justice Toohey to make a general review of, and report on, the provisions and operation of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. Justice Toohey was requested, among other things, to report on and recommend amendments, where appropriate, in respect of any areas of conflict or inconsistency between the administration of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act.

There followed some 4 years of tortuous debate and vacillation on the part of the federal government until various amendments were assented to on 7 June 1987. Significantly, 2 particular sections have not yet commenced, which enables the federal government to continue to hold a pistol at the head of the Northern Territory. The amendments, far from ameliorating the position as far as the Territory is concerned, imposed further restrictions on the Territory's executive and legislative powers.

The Territory has no power to acquire Aboriginal land compulsorily. An attempt to give the Territory such a power, limited to essential public purposes, but not including roads and subject to the federal minister's consent, was successfully opposed by a committee led by the current Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. It is a fact that the Territory is able to avail itself to the provisions of section 19(3) of the act whereby a lease or a licence may be granted. I will quote that section:

With the consent, in writing, of the minister, and at the direction, in writing, of the relevant land council, a land trust may, subject to subsection (7) grant an estate or interest in land.

The ostensible reason for the land councils' opposition to giving the Territory any power of compulsory acquisition is, they say, that they do not trust the Territory. A cynical view of the land councils' opposition is that, in effect, the lack of such a power for the Territory gives the councils a veto on all major projects in the Territory. They can dictate any terms and conditions, even when the Territory is exercising its responsibilities to provide essential services to its citizens. I would emphasise the point that only in limited circumstances should any private citizen's land be acquired compulsorily. The government recognises the special relationships the Aboriginal people have with their land and that Aboriginal land should only ever be compulsorily acquired for an essential public purpose.

Perhaps the most irksome aspect of the land claim process is the legal position which has evolved whereby all Territory public purpose lands are available for land claim. Almost every Northern Territory public park, camping area, stock route and reserve, commonage, public water point, police reserve and agricultural research reserve has been claimed. It is interesting to note that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act prescribed that land set apart for, or dedicated to, a public purpose under the Lands Acquisition Act 1955 of the Commonwealth is not available for claim but that land set aside or dedicated under section 103 of the Crown Lands Act is available for claim. The Commonwealth did propose to prevent claims to public purpose lands in respect of which the commissioner had not commenced a hearing. However, in the face of vigorous opposition from the land councils and the committee led by Mr Hand, the proposed amendment was eventually dropped from the bill.

Section 14 of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act allows for land occupied or used by the Crown, or with the licence or permission of the Crown, by an authority, to continue to be so occupied for such a period as the land is required by the Crown authority. However, this continued right of occupation does not ensure access by the public nor would it enable areas to be established for crews involved in the maintenance of any asset established. It is entirely doubtful whether any facility could be extended, even for a toilet, office or interpretive centre. Thus, whatever protection is being afforded to the government and its assets is a very limited one and, given normal growth patterns, will eventually effectively cease to apply thereby putting an end to the use of occupation.

Mr Speaker, there is an ubiquitous measure in section 74 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act which states: 'This act does not affect the application to Aboriginal land of a law of the Northern Territory to the extent that the law is capable of operating concurrently with this act'. For the benefit of members opposite, I will repeat that final phrase: '... to the extent that the law is capable of operating concurrently with this act'.

Mr Speaker, how do we know whether a law of the Territory is capable of operating concurrently with the act? I will tell you how. We have to go to the courts each time. The federal government, to give it some credit, at least recognised this problem in part. It inserted a new subsection 74(2): 'Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the Control of Waters Ordinance is a law of the Northern Territory that is capable of operating concurrently with this act'. The amendment fails to resolve the real problem of obtaining water from Aboriginal land because it does not allow the establishment of water production facilities nor does it address other laws of the Territory. What is the Territory to do? On every possible doubt of the application of law, does it have to take the matter to court and then mount a 4-year campaign to have the legislation amended?

There is 1 further verse to this lesson. The federal government did see the light and inserted subsection 50(2B) to provide strict criteria before a commissioner could proceed to hear a repeat claim. Maybe it is an unintended consequence or maybe it is Machiavellian in intent. There is also a new section 67A which virtually freezes land subject to claim until it is finally disposed of. If a claim is unsuccessful in whole or in part, a land council can lodge a repeat claim and effectively refreeze the land.

Mr Speaker, no doubt members of this Assembly have heard the foregoing arguments before, but it is necessary to provide the background to appreciate the position the government is forced into and so that the opposition may possibly understand.

The Katherine Gorge National Park - that is, Katherine Gorge Reserve No 1090 - was originally established on 5 June 1963 as a national park under section 103 of the Crown Lands Ordinance. It was land set aside for a public purpose and ought never to have been able to be subjected to a land claim. It was for this reason that the government opposed this land claim. It is for this reason that the Deputy Chief Minister, quite correctly, said that the government does not recognise this land claim. It is for this reason that my deputy put to the federal government that the Katherine Gorge National Park should be excluded from any grant of the land claim.

The Aboriginal Land Commissioner has said that it is clear that the Conservation Commission occupies the park and is entitled by section 14 to continue to occupy and use the park, even after a grant, for such period as it

requires the land. But that does not mean that the Conservation Commission is able to invite or allow members of the public to come on to the land and use it for recreational pursuits. What a conundrum! Public purpose land is available for claim and the public body can continue to occupy and use the land, but not for the purpose of allowing public access to it.

The federal government has always had 3 options available to it: firstly, amend the definition of 'claimable land' so that it excludes land used, occupied or needed by the Crown; secondly, amend the act so that a grant is suspended until such time as the land is no longer used, occupied or needed by the Crown; or, thirdly, amend the act so that such land is automatically leased back to the Territory for the duration of the use or occupation.

The Aboriginal Land Commissioner said in his report in regard to water resources: 'It is essential that all possible options remain open. The matter is of vital importance to the future development of Katherine'. The Jawoyn people have said they will cooperate to ensure that the needs of Katherine for water in the future will be met. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner did not consider it necessary to excise the proposed dam sites, saying: 'Provided there is no obstacle to the construction of either or both of the 2 dams ...'. 'Provided there is no obstacle!'

I am sure the Jawoyn people will honour their commitment, but it would seem that the Northern Territory government is now to go to the Northern Land Council cap in hand to make a representation in accordance with section 11A and to negotiate the terms and conditions under which the Territory can provide an essential service so that the minister can make a conditional grant. If the minister is not prepared to take this matter into account in a conditional grant, then the Territory is required to run the gauntlet of section 19 which I outlined earlier. Bearing in mind the vagaries of this legislation, we may be facing the prospect of making payments akin to royalties to supply water to the township of Katherine and the strategic RAAF base at Tindal.

Mr Speaker, perhaps members opposite are now able to appreciate some of the genuine concerns held by the government in regard to the Jawoyn land claim. They may appreciate them but I doubt whether they will ever accept them. The opposition will never win government and its members will never have to face the real issues. The Leader of the Opposition had the temerity to telex me demanding I dismiss my Deputy Chief Minister because of the statements he made on this issue. What rot!

The Leader of the Opposition was placed in an invidious position when the former leader of the Territory ALP parliamentary wing went on record saying that, if the title were granted to the Jawoyn people, it should be title under Northern Territory legislation. The Leader of the Opposition made some meek and mild comments about management by the Conservation Commission but still advocated grant of title under federal legislation. The former leader, Senator Collins, obviously understands the issues a little better and it is no wonder a number was done on him.

Let us look at what the Deputy Chief Minister put to the federal government on behalf of the Northern Territory government. He requested of the Prime Minister that the federal government give the most careful consideration to the report of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner so that the benefits to all Territorians and to Australia could be maximised. The Deputy Chief Minister sought an early meeting with the Minister to discuss the report. The Deputy Chief Minister drew the minister's attention to the

commissioner's comments on detriment that could possibly arise, management by the Conservation Commission and water resource options. The Deputy Chief Minister again appealed to the minister for further discussions with the Territory before a decision is made and sought the minister's support to ensure that discussions did not take place between the Northern Land Council and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service while the commissioner's report is under consideration.

The Deputy Chief Minister also telexed the Chairman of the Northern Land Council to obtain its policy on the management of the Katherine Gorge National Park in the event that the claim was to be granted. The telex was dispatched in light of the knowledge that the NLC was negotiating to hand over this vital resource to a Canberra bureaucracy some 4 years ago. The Deputy Chief Minister represented the views of this government most effectively and I commend him.

Where does the Northern Territory government go from here, Mr Speaker? This is not a fight with the Jawoyn people. This is a fight against an imposed legislative regime which sets the Territory up as a salve to the imagined national conscience as a playground for every social engineer in Australia. The role of the Commonwealth government in this farce which is called an act should not be underestimated. The Commonwealth has created an act which clearly has done nothing for the furtherance of harmonious relations between Territorians. The Commonwealth has established an adversary system for dealing with land claims. It is not a system of negotiation.

What is meant by an adversary system? It means that evidence must be tested. But, when the Northern Territory government tests evidence, we are unfairly branded as racists. When we suggest there is detriment, when all we might do is identify a public road, we are taken to oppose the claim. This ridiculous propaganda that the Northern Territory government is opposed to land rights and has opposed all land claims must yet again be demonstrated to be wrong. As I have said, there is a mythology perpetrated that the Northern Territory government opposes every land claim.

What has occurred in respect of the 34 land claims in which a hearing has commenced is: agreements to settle in whole or part were reached in 2 - Cobourg Peninsula and Timber Creek; the Territory proposed a settlement in respect of the Lake Amadeus claim; and the Territory was not heard on traditional evidence in 6 - Walpiri and Kartangarurru/Kurindji, Alyawara and Kartitja, Limmen Bight, Mt Barkly, Walpiri Kukatja and Ngarti, and Ti Tree. While the government is opposed to the conversion of Aboriginal-owned pastoral properties, the traditional ownership was not challenged at Utopia, Willowra, Dagaragu or Tjilla Well. The Territory took a high profile in 6 claims because of the effect on the wider community - Jawoyn, Warumungu, Alligator Rivers Stage 2, Finnis River and Kenbi. In the remaining claims, the Territory has appeared, made submissions on detriment and sought to test the traditional evidence in an appropriate manner.

There is also a myth that the Territory constantly and unsuccessfully resorts to the expensive legal appeals process. There have been 23 appeals heard, 9 initiated by the Territory and 14 initiated by the land councils or others. The Northern Territory government is not ashamed of its active involvement in the land claim hearings. We represent all the people of the Northern Territory. We have a duty to test evidence. We have a duty to make submissions on detriment and, when we consider there is no strength of attachment to land or that to grant the land under the Land Rights Act is not in the interests of the people of the Northern Territory, we will oppose a

claim and oppose it vigorously. If that means we will take the matter to the High Court or be taken there by a land council, we will not shirk from our responsibilities. Responsibility is something that we as a government in the Northern Territory accept.

Unfortunately, responsibility is not something dear to the heart of the Commonwealth. It is simple to describe the Commonwealth's role in the land claim process: woeful. It forced an act upon us which does not work and it does not have the guts to amend it in any substantial way. It criticises all the parties who involve themselves in the process. It pontificates in the style of all colonial masters. When it comes to taking part in a land claim, it runs away and hides. The reason for its lack of involvement is again simple: it is embarrassed by its own act and it does not want to be caught out. The Commonwealth's role is compact, but then it is good at powder-puff solutions.

In this Assembly, on 16 September 1987, the member for Arafura said: 'I was very glad to hear about the way in which the government is negotiating with traditional owners'. Mr Speaker, the government is more than willing to negotiate with traditional owners in all sorts of areas whether or not the land concerned is Aboriginal land, but it seems that any attempt to genuinely deal with Aboriginal people is more often than not subverted by the land councils in their constant mission for sovereign powers.

The Northern Territory government believes that the Katherine Gorge National Park should remain a national park managed under Territory legislation and held under Territory title. The Northern Territory will make immediate representations to the federal government to exclude the national park in any grant of the land claim, but will not oppose the balance of the area. The Territory will enter into immediate negotiations with the Jawoyn people to establish joint management arrangements for the national park. We are prepared to accommodate the aspirations of a traditional owner for a living area that was not recommended for grant. Should the minister proceed to make the grant, the Territory will use every endeavour to ensure that the park will continue under the management of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory through a joint management agreement with the Jawoyn people. I will be approaching the minister for Aboriginal Affairs to ensure that, if he proceeds to make a grant, questions of detriment are taken into account in a conditional grant. Under no circumstances will the Northern Territory countenance the involvement of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in the management of the Katherine Gorge National Park.

Finally, the government does not deny the association of the Jawoyn people with the Katherine Gorge National Park. It is essential, however, that the questions of detriment are resolved in the most sensitive manner to maximise the benefits to all Territorians in advance of any decision of the minister to finally dispose of this claim.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be amended as follows:

Omit all words after 'that', and insert in their stead:

(1) this Assembly:

- (a) accepts the recommendations of Justice Kearney on the Jawoyn (Katherine Gorge) land claim;
 - (b) recognises the rights of the Jawoyn people to a form of title which will provide them with the security they desire;
 - (c) recognises the absolute imperative that Katherine Gorge National Park continue as a national park and the appropriateness of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory continuing to manage the park; and
- (2) this Assembly calls on the Northern Territory government to pursue negotiations with the Jawoyn people to effect a speedy and satisfactory resolution of these matters.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for making this statement. It was a matter that we had intended to debate during General Business Day on Thursday. I also congratulate the Chief Minister on his statement. I do so because it is clear that, if you scrape away the rhetoric and the jibes against opponents that governments feel it is necessary to make, the bottom line indicates a willingness to discuss the matter rationally and to negotiate with the interested parties to find a solution.

I want to make it clear that, although we do not accept the position that the Northern Territory government has adopted in the last 2 pages of the Chief Minister's statement, we congratulate the Chief Minister because it appears that he has won the contest which, whether he knew it or not, he was engaged in with the Deputy Chief Minister over the direction of this debate. If there is to be a rational debate and if the Northern Territory government is to adopt a position which will enable it to negotiate on a realistic basis with the Jawoyn people and the Northern Land Council, I am relieved. It would have been an impossible situation for everybody concerned if this government had adopted the same attitude as previous Chief Ministers and Cabinets have adopted on such matters.

No one in the Northern Territory wants a repeat of the Uluru exercise. Everyone wants to settle this matter amicably. We realise that there are strong opinions about how it can be settled, but such strong opinions are the essence of what a democratic community is all about. What is important is that those strong opinions be expressed but kept in check so that the ultimate result is reasonably satisfactory to everybody concerned. If we scrape away the Chief Minister's rhetoric, there is at least the basis for further discussions. I must repeat that the opposition does not accept the basis of the Northern Territory government's position, but we realise that it is a basis from which negotiations can proceed.

Mr Speaker, an analysis of the Chief Minister's statement shows that very little of it actually deals with the Jawoyn land claim. Most of it deals with problems that the Chief Minister sees in the operation and administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and problems that the Chief Minister perceives in terms of his government's dealings with land councils, particularly the Northern Land Council. From my perspective, the situation of mutual distrust between the Northern Territory government and the Northern Land Council is one of the major barriers to a satisfactory resolution of this matter. There is no doubt that, as a result of their encounters over the last few years, there is a large amount of distrust on both sides. I will not attempt to attribute blame in this debate. What we have to do is recognise that there is a problem of mutual distrust and try to work from there. If we do so, we may get somewhere.

I do not believe that the findings of Justice Kearney should be used in the ongoing debate about the future of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I believe it is appropriate that his findings be isolated from that ongoing debate and treated on their merits. At this stage, I want to make a suggestion to both the Northern Territory government and the Northern Land Council - that it may be appropriate for them to consider the use of a mediator or conciliator in their discussions on this matter, somebody who is experienced in these matters, has impeccable credentials and is acceptable to both sides. I am concerned that there is a communication block which makes it difficult for the 2 groups to talk together on a meaningful basis. That is why I am suggesting the use of a mediator or a conciliator in these discussions. Of course, that person would certainly not be an arbitrator and would certainly have no power to impose a solution. The person's job, if this suggestion were taken up, would be to guide the negotiations and to help the parties to iron out problems that arise in the course of negotiations. I make this suggestion because it is very important that we keep these discussions and negotiations on track and not allow them to be derailed.

Before speaking to my amendment, I want to address some comments to particular parts of the Chief Minister's speech. He quotes with some pride the platform of the Country Liberal Party which says: 'The party accepts and endorses the concept of Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory and will continue to recognise the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land'.

As an aside, it was interesting to note that the member for Jingili, one of the most fervent anti-Aboriginal and anti-land rights members of this House, in the completely different environment of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, when he thought no one was listening, delivered a very positive statement in support of land rights. We will take great pleasure in reminding him of that statement and asking him to be consistent in his support for land rights in the months and years to follow.

The problem with the Country Liberal Party's platform is that the CLP does not really understand what it means. I will quote the last bit again: '... will continue to recognise the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land'. If you read Mr Justice Kearney, and I invite all honourable members opposite to do so, the only way that the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land can be expressed is through ownership of that land. The logical flaw in the Country Liberal Party's policy argument is that, whilst it is prepared to say that it accepts the fundamental affinity of Aborigines with their land, it is not prepared to recognise that in any meaningful way in this particular case. I invite members opposite, for their own edification, to read Kearney carefully so that they know what 'fundamental affinity' to land means and so that they can adjust their policies and thoughts accordingly.

In his statement, the Chief Minister said: 'The government regards the right to legislate for the administration for all lands in the Territory, including Aboriginal lands, as an integral part of statehood'. Everybody on this side of the House agrees with that. We cannot have statehood without the ability to legislate for the administration of all lands in the Northern Territory. This is borne out by what the member for Barkly has said and what the Deputy Chief Minister has said in a negative sense. The way that the Katherine Gorge land claim is handled will be a real test of this government's ability to push forward with statehood. I believe that underlying the Chief Minister's comments and approach to this particular issue is his concern for the future constitutional status of the Northern Territory, because I have no

doubt that it is high on his list of priorities. He would like to be the first premier of the Northern Territory. He realises, as do I, that, unless this matter is handled sensibly and unless the Northern Territory government is able to demonstrate that it can negotiate on this very important issue, on a meaningful basis, with a significant section of the population, statehood will be further away rather than closer.

Page 4 of the Chief Minister's statement included the remark: 'the ostensible reason for the land councils' opposition to giving the Territory any power of compulsory acquisition is, they say, that they do not trust the Territory'. Again, I think that is true. It is not only in that area that the Northern Land Council does not trust the Territory. It is in a whole range of areas where negotiations have taken place. I make the point again that, obviously, the Northern Territory government does not trust the Northern Land Council on many issues either. That, of course, has been made clear. I repeat that one of the major stumbling blocks to the satisfactory resolution of this dispute is the high level of mutual mistrust between those 2 groups, and it should be a high priority of both groups to try to reduce those levels of mistrust.

Referring to the comments of the Deputy Chief Minister, the major difference between the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister has been twofold. One is that the comments made by the Acting Chief Minister, as he was last week, made it clear that there would be no negotiations or discussion on this particular matter until the question of title had been resolved. I am pleased that the Chief Minister has retreated from that position and is prepared to enter into negotiations leading up to that point.

The second thing that was extremely unhelpful was the rhetoric used by the Deputy Chief Minister. Now that he has had a chance to think about it, I am sure that he does not particularly want to be reminded about that rhetoric and I do not want to spend much time on it, but I think it is important that it goes on the record.

He talked first about the failed policies of appeasement. I was interested enough to consult the dictionary to see what 'appeasement' means and it means 'to try to conciliate or bribe' - perhaps we should refer the whole matter to the Public Accounts Committee or the Auditor-General - 'potential aggressors by making concessions, frequently with the implication of the sacrifice of principles'. If the Deputy Chief Minister would like to spell out for us that the Northern Territory government has been engaged in a policy of appeasement, that it has been prepared to conciliate, has been prepared to bribe somebody whom it is prepared to describe as a potential aggressor and, in doing so, it is prepared to sacrifice its principles, then I think we have reached a new low in Territory politics. I would urge the Deputy Chief Minister to be more careful in his use of words in future.

The second piece of rhetoric that was not helpful for the resolution of this particular matter was a statement by the Deputy Chief Minister that land rights is a weeping sore to the detriment of all Territorians. Again, I say that I am pleased that the Chief Minister has taken carriage of this particular matter and will run with it on a more realistic basis.

The third comment of the Deputy Chief Minister is that the land will be locked up. Of course, that takes us to the core of what Justice Kearney was about. The land will be locked up. The Deputy Chief Minister said that Uluru has been locked up and Kakadu has been locked up and now, if Aboriginal title is granted over Katherine Gorge, it will similarly be locked up. All I can

say is that, if the number of tourists who flow through Katherine Gorge as a result of the grant of Aboriginal title is equivalent to the number who flow through Uluru and Kakadu, that is the sort of locking up that I enjoy and the sort of locking up that the people of the Northern Territory would be interested in too. Quite clearly, that statement is an absolute nonsense.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, in the last couple of pages of the statement, the Chief Minister has identified what everybody sees as the key point in the whole exercise and that is that the Katherine Gorge National Park should remain with the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. Certainly, that is a position that we on this side of the House have no problem in accepting. We believe it is appropriate for the Conservation Commission to continue to administer the park under whatever title arrangements are entered into. I must say that I am very pleased that that position has been adopted by the Chief Minister. It is a significant advance for the Northern Territory government over the position that it adopted on Uluru and I support the changed approach.

Mr Speaker, I now want to look specifically at the amendment that we have moved. Essentially, it contains 3 parts. The first part is to accept the recommendations of Justice Kearney on the claim over Katherine Gorge. Basically, Justice Kearney has found, on the evidence presented to him, that the Jawoyn people have demonstrated traditional ownership to the area. Again, I urge members opposite to read the report. It is an extremely comprehensive report which touches on all the issues concerned with traditional ownership and it indicates without doubt that the Jawoyn people have clearly demonstrated traditional ownership to the area that he has recommended to be granted. I point out that not all of the area claimed has been granted. In fact, I think it is about half. For that half, Justice Kearney quite clearly believed that the Jawoyn people had demonstrated their traditional ownership.

I want to highlight one significant matter which, I believe, is at the core of why so many people have problems coming to grips with concepts of traditional ownership and Aboriginal ownership of land. In his report, Justice Kearney makes it very clear that all the land is owned by all the Jawoyn. It is not possible, in other words, to divide the claim among various individual Jawoyn people. For example, on page 85, he says: 'Each and every adult male and female Jawoyn has the same affiliations and responsibilities to sites and land'. That is right and that is the basic difference between the Aboriginal approach to land ownership and use and the European approach. It is not universal but it is the basis on which traditional Aboriginal land ownership was based and is based and it has been recognised by Justice Kearney in the decision that he has handed down.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, Justice Kearney has quite clearly found that traditional ownership has been demonstrated and he has recommended a grant of land. Quite clearly, he has also been very conscious of arguments concerning detriment. Not only were those arguments thoroughly canvassed during the course of the claim itself but, as a result of the request of the Northern Territory government in January this year, the case was reopened specifically to enable the Northern Territory government and others to put forward further arguments concerning detriment. Justice Kearney addressed the issues of detriment and has found that there are possible areas of detriment that need to be sorted out before the title is granted. To use the words of the Chief Minister, perhaps what we are looking at is a conditional grant which recognises questions of detriment. Again, I have no problem with that.

Essentially, what Justice Kearney has said is that the land must remain as a national park, that the Katherine water supply must be protected now and in the future and that access to that national park must be protected now and in the future. In respect of those 3 major points that probably are at the heart of the debate, Justice Kearney stated clearly and unequivocally in a number of places that the Jawoyn people had given him unequivocal guarantees in evidence on a number of occasions that, if they were given title, it would remain a national park, that there would be no problem in guaranteeing the future of the Katherine water supply and that there would be no problem in guaranteeing continued access of all people to the Katherine Gorge National Park.

Mr Collins: What are we on about?

Mr SMITH: That is a good question.

Mr Speaker, I point out one other factor that is relevant. There have been concerns expressed by the government about restrictions placed on Uluru and Kakadu and I do not want to enter into that debate particularly. Those decisions were made by the management boards, not by traditional owners themselves. If the Katherine Gorge claim is handled correctly and if we return to the original Northern Land Council recommendation on the management board, the Conservation Commission probably will have the same number of board members as the traditional owners. It will be the Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the traditional owners, which will be able to set the terms and conditions of entry to the national park. I think that that needs to be remembered too.

Mr Speaker, I want to make it clear, in response to a particular argument advanced by the Deputy Chief Minister, that the original proposal of the Jawoyn people as advanced by the Northern Land Council was for the management of the park by the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. That was the position from early 1982 right through to end of 1983.

Mr Hatton: Why did it write to the ANPWS?

Mr SMITH: The reason it wrote to ANPWS was because of the continued abuse it was receiving from the Northern Territory government.

Let me take you back to 15 February 1983. On that date, the Northern Land Council telexed the then Chief Minister and offered to recommend Northern Territory title to the Jawoyn claimants and to withdraw the gorge from claim provided the Northern Territory could offer continued and unthreatened ownership to the claimants. On 16 February, the then Chief Minister rejected the offer. He then said that he was prepared to look at the offer but that the NLC had to sort it out with the traditional owners and come back with a conclusion in 4 days. I will read part of a letter from Jeffrey Sher QC, representing the Northern Land Council: 'Unless there were in fact people prepared to conclude an agreement with the government and to do so by Friday, the government would not negotiate with us and, furthermore, would not even tell us what their proposals were'.

In other words, the Northern Land Council put forward a proposition that it would recommend Territory title to the Jawoyn and withdraw its land claim, but the Northern Territory government rejected that. The Northern Land Council continued to try. On 18 May 1983, it submitted a draft memorandum of lease and a draft for a Jawoyn National Park Act, both specifying a Conservation Commission-Jawoyn joint management arrangement. That was also rejected by the Northern Territory government. It is interesting that, at

about that time, 25 May 1983, the then senior ranger, Mike Reed, acknowledged Aboriginal interest in claiming the Katherine Gorge National park as far back as 1974. On 7 May 1983, Mr Reed was unable to identify detriment to the Northern Territory or to the tourist industry. He said that he assumed that there would be detriment, but he was unable to produce any evidence.

No one has been able to produce any evidence to satisfy Justice Kearney, who went through this once in the hearing and again in January, that there would be any detriment if the claim were awarded. In fact, Justice Kearney comments that there is positive value in awarding the claim to the Jawoyn people. He states clearly that awarding the title to the Jawoyn people would have an economic advantage for them and also for the people at Katherine. That argument needs to be considered by the Northern Territory government.

The second part of our amendment recognises the right of the Jawoyn people to a form of title which would provide them with the security they desire. This relates to the basic core of the disagreement between the opposition and the government. We believe that the Jawoyn people have demonstrated traditional ownership and, under the provisions of the Land Rights Act as it stands, they should be given title to that particular area. We have also said that, in the first instance, discussions over title should be with the Northern Territory government with the prospect of the Jawoyn holding the land under Northern Territory title. That is something that we would want the Northern Territory government and the Jawoyn people to pursue vigorously.

I point out to the Northern Territory government that there is an effective time limit in relation to the determination of title. Our reading of the Land Rights Act is that, once the federal minister has made up his mind that a grant should be given, he has no option but to give a grant under the Commonwealth act: in other words, to provide Commonwealth title. I may be wrong, but that is certainly the way that I read the Aboriginal Land Rights Act as it stands. If the Northern Territory government is seriously prepared to enter into negotiation and - even if it is not prepared to say so publicly - is prepared to talk to the Jawoyn on a meaningful basis about Territory title, it certainly has to start those negotiations very quickly, before the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs comes to his own decision on the matter.

Mr Speaker, I have basically covered paragraph (c) of the amendment: 'recognises the absolute imperative that Katherine Gorge National Park continue as a national park and the appropriateness of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory continuing to manage the park'. As I have said, I believe that I have covered those matters appropriately. To conclude, we have an opportunity before us, and the Northern Territory government in particular has an opportunity before it, to show convincingly to the people of the Northern Territory and Australia that it is able to work out what is quite a complex matter and that it is able to do so in a manner that does not raise racial or other tensions in the community and that, as far as possible, will satisfy the legitimate interests of all those people concerned. As I have said, I welcome the comments of the Chief Minister, particularly those contained in the last 2 pages of his statement, because I believe they provide a basis for the government to start talking to people.

Mr Speaker, I assure members opposite that we are as interested as they in a proper and speedy resolution of this particular matter, a resolution which protects the interests of the Jawoyn people and furthers their interests as outlined by Justice Kearney but which, at the same time, protects the wider interests of people in the Northern Territory and Australia.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, in continuing the debate on the statement by the Chief Minister this morning, I wish to acknowledge that the Chief Minister has clearly outlined some of the ridiculous aspects of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, the discriminatory nature of the act as it applies to Territorians and the difficulties which Territorians have experienced in attempting to resolve the inequities of the act. He also outlined processes for negotiation with the Jawoyn people and a desire to accommodate the aspirations of their traditional lifestyle.

It is no secret that the majority of Territorians have consistently supported the Northern Territory government's opposition to land claims over public lands and parks. This has been indicated clearly in election results since self-government, which I believe have been heavily influenced by land claims and related issues. I would also like at this time to welcome the advice provided by the Leader of the Opposition regarding his change of attitude in relation to the report by Justice Kearney and that, if there is any grant of the national park, it should be under Northern Territory title.

It was interesting this morning to hear the Leader of the Opposition again assert that there would be no detriment to the people of Katherine if a land grant over the Katherine Gorge National Park were made. That matter is a rather sensitive one to the people of Katherine and which they have received very little support in respect of it from the Australian Labor Party, both federally and here in the Territory. I must say that they are growing a little bit tired of that lack of support.

The problem that the Leader of the Opposition has is that he seems unable to recognise the matters of principle involved in the issue. The people of Katherine have long stated their concerns and views on detriment and, for an equally long period, these have been ignored by the opposition. For the benefit of opposition members, I will repeat them, at least in part, in order that they may finally gain some appreciation of the view which is held by the majority of Territorians. The people of Katherine specifically claim that there would be detriment in respect of a number of matters. Firstly, the park is presently held under public ownership for use by all Territorians, and indeed all Australians. The people of Katherine seek to retain public ownership and protect their government's investment in the park, which now probably exceeds \$3m. There is also private investment of some \$2m in business ventures which have operated in the Katherine Gorge National Park for some 27 years and have provided long-term assistance to the development of the tourist industry in Katherine, the Top End and the Northern Territory as a whole. Coincidentally, Katherine people have no objection to the use of the park by the Jawoyn people for their traditional or more contemporary purposes and it is assumed that the Jawoyn people would be free to undertake those activities if a land grant were made under Territory title.

The question of detriment to Australians is well presented by Mr Michael Ward, counsel assisting the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, in his report on the claim. For the benefit of members, I shall read into the record comments made by Mr Ward in that report. On page 56 of his report, Mr Ward says:

All Australians are said to be owners of this park. To give the park from the present owners - that is, all Australians - to the claimants would be a detriment to the rest of Australians. In a sense, this is a philosophical objection and detriment. It is real in this sense that the lease-back offers or suggested arrangements for the park have a significant blank space in them - that is to say, the amount

to be paid by either the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service or the Northern Territory Conservation Commission to lease back the park from the claimants. This unknown amount comes from taxpayers' funds and is clearly a detriment.

Mr Speaker, I think that everyone would agree that Mr Ward is a well known and recognised person and quite capable of providing such information. He held a significant position as counsel assisting the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. It is this issue which is at the heart of the Katherine people's opposition to the grant of such a claim. As I said, the public accepts and appreciates the fact that the park is under public ownership and wants to see that ownership continue.

A second point of detriment is the control and management of water supplies which is based on well-established principles and individual rights. Water catchments and impoundment areas are protected throughout Australia through public ownership and control. The people of Katherine see no reason why they should not hold the same rights and security of tenure over their water supplies, both existing and proposed. I hope that, in resolving this Katherine area land claim question, these rights are recognised and duly protected. The people of Katherine have no desire to have to argue a case in defence of their water supplies due to the vagaries of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Whilst I do not doubt the honesty and integrity of the existing Jawoyn people, it is possible to perceive that, in future years, other forces could be brought to bear if the rights to water supplies of future Katherine people were not recognised and dealt with very clearly at the time of any land grant. It is most important that the Katherine people should seek to have their water impoundment and catchment areas excluded from the claim and any subsequent grant.

A further point of detriment, as perceived by the people of Katherine, is the granting of land under Commonwealth title and the fact that this effectively removes control of that land from the elected government of Territorians and places it under the influence of a non-elected authoritarian body, in this case the Northern Land Council. That fact is certainly considered detrimental by the people of Katherine.

These few examples serve to illustrate the matters of principle which the people of Katherine want to be attended to in resolving this land claim. They seek the same rights as Australians living in other territories and states: equality and public ownership of their parks, public lands and assets. It was interesting to note that the Premier of Western Australia on the 7.30 Report last night opposed, under any circumstances, relinquishment of control over public land and assets to any minority group. A Labor Premier is in complete accord with this CLP government and has a view which the opposition in this House would do well to recognise.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to a proposed Jawoyn National Park Act. It was a strange reference because, for the first time, we heard what many people have suspected: that the proposed act was a Northern Land Council recommendation. The Leader of the Opposition also said that the government does not trust the Northern Land Council. The government is not alone in that; many Aboriginal groups do not trust it either. The people of Katherine do not trust the Northern Land Council and, I venture to say, never will trust it to prepare legislation for passage through this parliament. They see that the responsibility for drafting and introducing legislation is solely that of the elected government. Legislation can be prepared in consultation with other bodies but never by non-elected authorities, as the proposed Jawoyn

National Park Act was. The government had no involvement in it and it is totally unacceptable to the people of the Northern Territory.

The people of the Northern Territory have some genuine concerns about the proposed act. For the benefit of members, I will just refer to some of those. Section 33Z(b)(v) of the proposed act relates to the contravention of bylaws relating to the landing, use or flying of aircraft. It proposes that the penalty for a breach of the bylaws be dealt with as follows: 'To pay the board, as an alternative to prosecution, a specified sum in lieu of the penalty by which a contravention of that provision is otherwise punishable'. It is common knowledge that, in most legislation, the penalties go to the government concerned and not to any particular board.

Section 33(9) of the proposed act reads: 'Prosecution for an offence against the bylaw shall not be commenced except with the written authority of the board or its chairman or the director of the commission'. Many people in Katherine see that as a further removal of the government's rights in the future management of the land which usurps the role of the Director of the Conservation Commission in relation to that bylaw. That is a situation which the people of the Northern Territory would not tolerate. We would not want to see that sort of legislation introduced through this Assembly.

I turn now, Mr Speaker, to some other issues which need to be placed on the public record. In the process of the Jawoyn Katherine land claim being heard, the opposition and the Northern Land Council conducted for some considerable period a program of vilification and denigration of the senior park ranger at Katherine Gorge, Mr Alex Wood. The campaign was a very bitter one and it is interesting to see that the Leader of the Opposition conveniently sidestepped this and many other issues in his speech this morning.

The senior ranger at the Katherine Gorge National Park, Mr Alex Wood, has served in the order of 20 years at Katherine Gorge and his service is well recognised. Indeed, His Honour Justice Kearney recognised quite significantly those activities and Mr Wood's commitment to the Conservation Commission and the Katherine National Park in his report. It is very convenient that the Leader of the Opposition should overlook that this was the case and forget the process of denigration that the opposition pursued at the time when Mr Wood was trying to assist most Territorians in simply exercising their normal democratic rights.

On page 127 of his report, Justice Kearney says:

Special mention should be made of the head ranger, Mr Alex Wood, whose dedicated work over many years in very considerable measure has led to the park's present and growing success. I should also record here that I am satisfied that Mr Wood's opposition to the claim was based upon a very genuine belief that the park was the common heritage of the people and should not be owned by a particular group. Mr Wood suffered considerably from his honesty and forthrightness. He is an admirable man and he deserved better.

Mr Speaker, I can only confirm that view put by Justice Kearney. It would be most appropriate if any opposition member who intends to speak in this debate should withdraw or at least offer an apology for the comments that the opposition has made over previous years in relation to this man.

Despite the rumours put about to the contrary, this has never been, is not and will never be made into a racial issue. It is not a fight with the Jawoyn people. It is a fight against an unjust act and a system which has been foisted on Territorians and has served to create more divisions between European and Aboriginal Territorians than any other action in recent times. It is a travesty that this act, which has created so much ill-feeling amongst Territorians, should be allowed to continue unamended or not be removed entirely.

Mr Speaker, I would like to correct a point that was made by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that Territory title was offered by the Northern Land Council. It is my understanding that the Northern Land Council never offered Territory title to the Northern Territory government in relation to overtures to resolve the Katherine Gorge land claim issue. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition was incorrect in making that statement. In its negotiations, the Northern Land Council has always insisted on Commonwealth title and that was frequently a stumbling block to any further negotiations.

I move now to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition to the Chief Minister's motion. It is interesting to note a few points in that amendment. Particularly, I point out paragraph (c) which reads: 'recognises the absolute imperative that Katherine Gorge National Park continue as a national park and the appropriateness of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory continuing to manage the park'. That is typical of the sort of statements that the Leader of the Opposition has been making in relation to this issue. He always leaves something out. I do not believe that the word 'appropriateness' is appropriate. I think that it would be much more satisfactory if we were able to firm up on that statement and insist on the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory continuing management of the park. It is appropriate but it is also more than that and we must insist on it. The government will later move to amend the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, thus signifying the government's position in relation to the matter.

I appreciate the opportunity to put before the Assembly today the views of the Katherine people and many other Territorians in relation to this matter. As I have said, it is not a racial issue. The people of Katherine do not oppose a grant of land in relation to this claim. They simply seek to retain public ownership over the national park and their water supply catchments and impoundment areas. The people of Katherine note today, as they did at the time of the hearing, in which many of them participated or followed the proceedings, that the traditional ties of the Jawoyn people are very significant in the area to the south of Katherine Gorge known as the Maranboy Commonage and the areas between the commonage and Eva Valley. I believe that there would be no opposition to a grant of land in that area. At least in my mind, the traditional ties to that country are significant and a claim is quite warranted.

The Land Commissioner noted in his report that, the further one moved north, the weaker the ties to the land became. It is significant to note that both the Northern Territory government and counsel assisting the Land Commissioner were in general agreement about that and, indeed, section 1090 of the original Katherine Gorge National Park, first gazetted in 1963, was not recommended for claim by either party and nor were the lands in the national park to the north of that area.

Another significant fact is that a land grant under the Commonwealth act over the areas recommended by Justice Kearney would set in place a divided

land management and ownership system over the Katherine Gorge National Park. Justice Kearney has not recommended that the northern parts of the Katherine Gorge National Park be claimed. This division would significantly complicate the future of the park and its management and lead to difficulties between the 2 bodies, which would not serve well the people of the Northern Territory or Australia. I believe there is only one resolution to the problem if any land grant is to be made: that the Katherine Gorge National Park be granted to the Jawoyn people under Territory title and that the Northern Territory Conservation Commission be retained as its manager.

I have alluded already to the area to the south of the Katherine Gorge National Park through to the Maranboy Commonage to which the Jawoyn people have been illustrated to have significant ties.

Mr Speaker, with those words, I end my comments on that matter. I hope that it is not too long before a resolution is found to this problem and that it is resolved to the benefit of all Territorians.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Katherine because, as we all know, he was directly involved from the Conservation Commission side during the hearing of the claim. His last point, his hope for a speedy resolution to the land claim, is one that is echoed by all Territorians. The fact that it has dragged on for 10 years has not been of assistance to any Territorian. It has not helped the Jawoyn people, it has not helped the town of Katherine, it has not helped conservation and it has not helped the tourist industry. I will indicate the reasons for much of that delay later in my speech. However, I would like to go back to the first few points raised by the previous speaker. He stated that he had 3 fundamental objections. The first was the necessity for the use of the national park by all Australians. I will be pointing out to the honourable member just how clearly and how repeatedly the traditional owners have echoed that view. That has been emphasised also by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner and myself and he can set his fears at rest. He need have no fears in that regard. It is a matter which is no longer in doubt or dispute. The Katherine Gorge land claim area will undoubtedly remain accessible to all Australians.

He continued with a philosophical discussion on public ownership. My only comment is that that is rather strange, given the way his government and the people on his side of political spectrum talk about privatisation of public assets and the great benefits that would accrue from that. It is strange that he has suddenly been converted to public ownership. The titles of pastoral properties in the Northern Territory are held under a form of public ownership with leasehold to the users. It is the intention of his government to hand over title to full private ownership under freehold. If and when that occurs, no doubt the member for Katherine will take a line that is consistent with the one he has run today. He will oppose that and urge us to oppose it. I see that the Chief Minister is shaking his head. He probably understands that the government's stance is based on something other than a philosophical concept of public ownership.

The honourable member went on to talk about the continued use of the facilities by the concessionaires. If he had carefully read the proposals from the traditional owners and the land council, he would know that the draft bill specifically stated that current arrangements for those people would continue for the life of their leases and they would then renegotiate them with the board. Once again, he raised something which is not an issue any longer.

The philosophical objection stated by Mr Ward was examined by Mr Justice Kearney and was not accepted. It is quite strange to hear the member for Katherine talk about detriment. It is amusing to hear that he finally has his act together. We all know that he appeared at the claim hearings on 7 September 1983. In evidence, the honourable member, who at that stage was a senior ranger with the Conservation Commission, was asked if he would be able to identify some detriment to the Northern Territory or the tourist industry. The then senior ranger and now honourable member said that he was unable to identify any detriment to the Northern Territory or to the tourist industry, but he assumed there would be detriment. That was the type of evidence that the honourable member was able to put to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. It is obvious that it has taken the honourable member some 4½ years of careful search and examination before he was able to find the supposed detriment - the detriment which does not exist.

He discussed problems in relation to Katherine's water supply, which is a very important issue and was very extensively canvassed during the land claim hearing. In fact, the judge has identified the various options which are available for Katherine. These are: the construction of a dam on Dorothy Creek or Macadam's Creek or both; the use of the Tindal limestone aquifer system; the use of the Jimduckin formation aquifer system; the use of the Colloo limestone aquifer system; and the shorter term measure of further developments of pools in the Katherine River. Of those, options 2, 3, 4 and 5 would not impinge upon the land claim area at all, if they were chosen. Only the first, the construction of a dam on Dorothy Creek or Macadam's or both, would impinge because they are within the land claim area. As members on this side of the House have stated, it is necessary that we keep all options open relating to the water supply for Katherine, and I am quite confident that the people of Katherine and the Jawoyn will also ensure in the negotiations that the matter is adequately dealt with and that a negotiated solution is found so that the town will have its options available.

I would like to turn now to the rhetoric of the Deputy Chief Minister, then Acting Chief Minister. I would like to try to work out just what it means. It is very difficult, when you go through it, to try to establish just what he was trying to get at. He talked about there being no more softly, softly approach to land rights. He was reported in the Sunday Territorian of 11 October as having lashed out at the failed policies of appeasement. He stated that 'all bets were off'. To me, that would indicate that he was saying that he would not negotiate any further, but we heard the Chief Minister say that that was not so, that he was referring to the Caulfield Cup or something.

He stated that Kings Canyon and Gosse Bluff would be the last attempts to reach a compromise with the land councils. Again, I thought that that meant that he would not negotiate any further, but I am glad that the Chief Minister has set our minds at rest about that. The Deputy Chief Minister made some ridiculous statements such as that land rights is 'a weeping sore to the detriment of Territorians'. That type of rhetoric, promulgated on a day-to-day basis, may get him some cheap brownie points, a headline in the paper or an interview on Territory Extra. It may confirm his reputation as the type of person that we all know he is, but it does not contribute in any way to the resolution of the matter, which is what we are all attempting to reach. He stated on Territory Extra that I called him a racist at one stage. I have never called the man a racist. If he were a racist, I would hope that there would be some chance of getting some light into his brain and of changing his attitudes. But, unfortunately, they are not born of ignorance; they are born out of a full knowledge of the situation and a decision that he

will pursue a line which he knows is to the detriment of the Northern Territory and its people but which he sees as being somehow to his short-term political advantage. It is disgusting and I think all honest Territorians are disgusted by it.

I spoke at the time about the need for a lease-back to the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. That was included in both my press releases on 8 October when this issue first blew up. On 11 October, immediately after the outrageous remarks were made by the Acting Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister - and hopefully, he will not last long there - I pointed out what a danger the man is to the growth and development of the Northern Territory. It is quite outrageous that remarks have been made to the effect that the last 6 months have somehow been a particularly black period for the Northern Territory in its negotiation with the land councils.

I am sure that one of the honourable members opposite will be able to get up and cite an instance in which the government disagreed with a land council and regarded its actions as being wrong and unreasonable. On the other hand, if we have a look at the achievements of the last couple of years, they have been very significant: the negotiation of the railway corridor, the negotiations for the gas pipeline and the pipeline from the Palm Valley field to Alice Springs and the vast increase in the numbers of tourists at Uluru this year. Those are all positive achievements. At this very moment, the land councils are both negotiating flat-out with mining companies. I believe that the Northern Land Council has something like 10 exploration licences in hand right now, and it is attempting to negotiate a similar number each month. I know that the Central Land Council is using every resource that it can lay its hands on in an attempt to finalise negotiations. The land councils have accepted the amendments to the Land Rights Act with good grace, and are attempting to make them work.

I heard with my own ears and I sat amazed when, at the opening of the Tanami goldmine, the Treasurer heaped praise on the land council for the positive work it had done there and at The Granites. A little bit of praise where praise is due is appropriate rather than the efforts of the Deputy Chief Minister, the minister in charge of conservation and tourism, to drum up fears. He has virtually ruled out the possibility of Northern Territory title. He has made negotiations far more difficult by stating that he would not hold any discussions until after the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had made his recommendations. Of course once the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs makes his recommendations, the matter will proceed to the Governor-General who will issue the title. It will be too late then to start talking about negotiating Territory title.

During the last 5 or 6 years, the Northern Territory government has had the chance to demonstrate its vision of the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land in the Northern Territory after statehood. That has been the possibility. But, the chronology of events shows time and time again that the government has set out to frustrate legitimate Aboriginal aspirations. I have a telex which I am quite prepared to table or show personally to the member for Katherine, who does not believe it. The Northern Land Council telexed Hon Paul Everingham, then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, stating that it was prepared to withdraw the claim to the gorge if some means could be found of guaranteeing continued and unthreatened ownership to the claimants. The telex was sent on 15 February 1983 and I am quite prepared to make a copy available to members opposite.

I take the Chief Minister at his word when he says that he is attempting to find a negotiated solution. I give him credit, as I always have, for his attempts to do that but the unfortunate thing is that he is not writing on a clean blackboard. The history of this matter is such that people have been bruised and hurt. It becomes more and more difficult every time a short-sighted politician decides that he has the chance to grab a few headlines. The possibility of a negotiated settlement is set back further and further.

The bottom line of access to the park and the water supply has been conceded by the traditional owners and there are absolutely no problems there. We prefer the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory to continue its historical relationship with the park, as the management body. The fact that the Deputy Chief Minister is the minister responsible for the Conservation Commission makes that far more difficult to achieve because there is a feeling abroad that he cannot be trusted not to throw the baby out with the bath water and that he will sacrifice the need for good management practices on the altar of his own ego and ambition. That is why I call on the Chief Minister to replace him. I believe that it will become necessary to do that if we are to have a long and fruitful relationship to the benefit of the parties involved.

I am particularly worried that, if the Minister for Conservation is involved in negotiating the lease-back arrangements, he will not be able to help himself and will make impossible propositions which will attempt to deny people the rights that they have gained over the many years of the land claim process. I am very concerned that he may attempt to drive people into the hands of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, seeing that as the only way that he can build up hatred, fear and frustration for his own ends.

I believe that it is now imperative for the Chief Minister to take the invitation which has been offered. Once again, the traditional owners have made the running. They have invited the Chief Minister to meet with them in Katherine at 10 am on Friday to discuss the issues involved. I hope that the Chief Minister will take up that offer and will freely and fairly negotiate the matters of detriment, not as an exercise in point-scoring but as a means of achieving a negotiated settlement which is fair for the Jawoyn and fair for all the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there is one quite extraordinary omission from the context of this debate today and that is the presence of the little chap with the poisonous words who ...

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

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw any unparliamentary reference I may have made to any member of this Assembly.

However, in order to clearly identify my target, I would like to refer to the Minister for Conservation who is deeply involved and whose Conservation Commission is deeply involved in the issues that pertain to the Chief Minister's statement and who has not bothered to be present to listen to the contributions made by members of this Assembly. However much I may disagree with the majority of the comments made by the member for Katherine, I would have expected his boss to sit here and listen to them in order to glean a little understanding of the views of members of this Assembly. Since he takes

such a keen interest in the presence or otherwise of people in the Assembly, I find his absence even more surprising. You will no doubt recall yourself, Sir, the comments he made about the member for Barkly and his presence or absence in this House and his desperate attempt to beat that up as an issue during the Barkly by-election. I have no doubt that, however unparliamentary it may be, the sobriquet bestowed upon him by the member for Barkly will be well known to you. I believe it goes by the decidedly parliamentary acronym of PD.

Mr Speaker, I will return to the comments of the Minister for Conservation shortly. The contribution I want to make on this particular statement relates to my experience with the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management and the arrangements that have pertained in that area since title was bestowed on the traditional owners. The handover of title occurred on 24 October 1985. It is very close to 2 years that Uluru Katatjuta National Park has been held under Aboriginal title.

It is instructive in a debate like this to point out that, contrary to the assertions of the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, contrary to the assertions that have been made by government members in this Assembly and contrary to the rabid assertions made by the member for Katherine today, Ayers Rock is still there. Not only is it still there, but people are coming to it in droves and they are spending squillions. I suppose that, if I wanted to stretch the argument, I could use the good old post hoc ergo propter hoc. I would suggest that there might even be some truth in it in this case. After the title was bestowed, the interest that Ayers Rock has for Australian and international visitors has increased not decreased.

I would suggest that the member for Katherine might like to talk about exactly that issue to the people who have invested private dollars in the gorge. I think the figure he gave earlier today was that \$2m of private risk capital had been spent in the gorge itself and, shock horror, this was at risk. I would not be doing my job as a member of this Assembly, representing an area such as my electorate, if I were not to spend a little time setting at rest the anxious heart, mind and breast of the member of Katherine. The fact of the matter is that, if you recognise Aboriginal traditional ownership, there are dollars in it. Forget about all the other issues: there are dollars in it. I know that is the sort of rhetoric that appeals to the people opposite and I hope they take it to heart.

I can talk about all the other reasons why I believe that Aboriginal traditional ownership ought to be recognised. One of them that has not been mentioned today is what the Northern Territory will look like in 50 or 100 years time. We have a responsibility to do whatever possible not to keep Aboriginal tradition as a museum piece but to respect it within all our institutions and not only the institutions that do not cost us money. In terms of gate fees or whatever, there is a cost. I will concede that. However, what will be a much greater cost in 50 or 100 years time will be the social and economic cost of the sort of dislocation that one sees in the towns of western New South Wales, in Redfern and in parts of every other state of the Commonwealth. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act is one of the most innovative pieces of legislation that has hit the statute books in our lifetime and it is one piece of legislation that has a chance of providing Aboriginal people here, contrary to the comments of the member for Katherine ...

Mr Manzie: Rubbish. It has half a dozen problems ...

Mr BELL: It has half a dozen problems. I have never said there have not been problems. Mr Justice Woodward suggested that, because it is so innovative, the act should be subject to review. To pick up the comments by the Chief Minister, I am not denying that there are problems with the act. I have never denied that. However, the little confidence trick that the Chief Minister tried to pull on us this morning was an illogicality: because there are problems with the act, the whole act is wrong.

Mr Hatton: I did not say that.

Mr BELL: You read your statement a little more carefully because that is the clear, logical implication. That was in contradistinction to the comments from the member for Katherine who, contrary to party policy, believes the act is not worth a knob of glue.

Mr Hatton: You did not listen to him either.

Mr BELL: Since the Chief Minister chooses to interject, let me refer him to his statement and to the comments made by his backbencher. His backbencher is not following party policy and I suggest that he might like to pull him into line. As you will recall, Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister, with hand on breast, said very proudly that the Country Liberal Party is a staunch supporter of land rights. Indeed, he said that he would quote from the platform of the Northern Territory Country Liberal party that 'the party accepts and endorses the concept of Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory and will continue to recognise the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land'.

Mr Speaker, I suggest to you that that is fundamentally in contradistinction to the rabid attack that was made by the member for Katherine on the concept of Aboriginal land rights. Surely the Chief Minister heard what he had to say. He was saying that the fundamental detriment to the people of Katherine, the people of the Northern Territory and the people of Australia was that something that was in public ownership would be moved out of public ownership into the ownership of a small group of people. If that is not in fundamental contradistinction to what the Chief Minister said in his statement this morning, I do not know what is. I suggest that, when he sums up at the end of this debate, the Chief Minister at least ought to refer to that point. I doubt that he will because I am quite convinced that he is seriously embarrassed by it.

I could comment further on the remarks of the member for Katherine but they have been quite adequately dispatched by the member for Stuart. However, one point that I wish to reiterate is to put paid to the assertion by the Chief Minister - and it really was cute, a classic case of 'methinks he doth protest too much'. He said: 'At the outset, I must put paid to the nonsensical diatribe being spewed forth from the opposition in the recent weeks of leadership challenges, policies of appeasement and the like. The Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon Ray Hanrahan was the Acting Chief Minister during my absence from the Territory and he effectively and efficiently managed the affairs of the government'. Let us look again at the comments by the Chief Minister and the Acting Chief Minister, as he then was, on 11 October. This is where the fundamental difference between the 2 men lies.

We had the Acting Chief Minister calling land rights 'a weeping sore to the detriment of Territorians'. In his statement this morning, the Chief Minister quoted the platform of the Country Liberal Party: 'The party accepts and endorses the concept of Aboriginal land rights'. If there is not a

fundamental illogicality in that, I do not know one. I presume that the Chief Minister will be seeking to have his deputy drummed out of the Country Liberal Party. There would be all hell to pay in the Labor Party if there were that sort of public dissent with stated, accepted policy platforms on a sensitive issue of this sort between a leader and his deputy. I am prepared to concede that I may be drawing a long bow when I suggest that the Deputy Chief Minister will be drummed out of the CLP.

I do not expect that to happen but I notice from the interjections of the Chief Minister and the member for Fannie Bay that they are at least a little ashamed of the distinction they hoped would not be picked up by honourable members. I draw their attention to it once more today. The Chief Minister might like to look again at the relevant section on page 2 of his statement. I am not sure which hotel in Nicosea he was staying in on Sunday 11 October but the other 169 999 Territorians who were here saw the bold headline: 'Time to get tough'. I think that there is a clear message there for the Chief Minister and I suggest that there is an alliance between the member for Katherine and the Deputy Chief Minister. I am afraid they are out to get the Chief Minister. The knives are out. I suggest that, when he sums up debate on this statement, the Chief Minister might attempt to rationalise his remarks with those his deputy has been making.

In conclusion, having had so much fun with the government, I simply reiterate the genuinely serious point I wanted to make in this debate: national parks held under Aboriginal title in the Northern Territory work very effectively, not just for the Aboriginal people involved but for all Territorians. They certainly work for private sector investment: Yulara has never looked so good and people are turning up at Ayers Rock in droves. At least to some extent, people who visit Ayers Rock both from interstate and overseas are fundamentally attracted by the Aboriginal associations of Ayers Rock. I believe that, if the Northern Territory government is prepared to pursue what is proposed in the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, not only will we have a more just society but we will also have a more prosperous one.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the Leader of the Opposition's amendment be amended as follows:

1. Proposed sub-paragraph (1)(a), omit the sub-paragraph and insert in its stead -

'(a) notes the recommendations of Justice Kearney on the Jawoyn (Katherine Gorge) land claim and reiterates its opposition to the grant of the national park areas as Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act'.

2. Proposed sub-paragraph 1(b), omit the sub-paragraph.

3. Proposed sub-paragraph 1(c), omit all words after 'as a national park' and insert in their stead - 'under Northern Territory legislation and under the management of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory'.

4. Insert after proposed sub-paragraph (1)(c) -

'(d) recognises the absolute imperative that any grant of Aboriginal land by the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs must be conditional upon issues of detriment being resolved'.

5. Proposed paragraph (2), omit all words after 'pursue negotiations with' and insert in their stead -

'all of the interested parties, including in particular the Jawoyn people, to determine a management regime and the resolution of all detriment issues to maximise the benefits to the Jawoyn people, the town of Katherine, the Northern Territory and to all Australians'.

6. At the end of the proposed amendment, add -

(3) That the terms of this resolution be forwarded to the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs forthwith.

Mr Speaker, these proposed amendments contain the essence of matters put forward in this debate and remove some of the vacillation in the terminology of the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. To say that this Assembly accepts the recommendations of Mr Justice Kearney in toto directly addresses the question of whether or not it is appropriate that the Katherine Gorge National Park or part of that national park - as the member for Katherine has outlined - would become Aboriginal land under some form of lease-back agreement. Should the recommendations of Mr Justice Kearney be accepted in toto and the recommendations, including detriment, in respect of the Katherine Gorge National Park, it would be proposed that that park would continue to operate as a national park. The recommendations of Mr Justice Kearney do not incorporate the entire area of the current Katherine Gorge National Park. As a consequence, there have been suggestions, even since the handing down of the decision, that there may be some outside possibility of negotiations being entered into with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. If that were to occur, the portion of the park which was Aboriginal land would be under the management of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service while the balance of the park would continue to be a Northern Territory park under the management of the Conservation Commission.

Conversely, there could be some other arrangement whereby a lease-back in respect of the proposed Aboriginal land would be a lease-back to the Northern Territory Conservation Commission under some terms and conditions and the park, under the management of the Conservation commission, would have 2 separate land tenure titles and 2 separate legislative bases surrounding the root title to the land. Quite obviously, there is some logic in the concept of having the titles to the land being incorporated as a single title.

It has been our view that title for that land should be under Northern Territory legislation. That is not a new position for our government, nor should it be seen in any way as a provocative position. It is a fact that our government has consistently maintained the view that national parks, areas set aside specifically for public purposes, should not be available for claim and, as a matter of principle, should not be granted as claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. That has been our consistent position from the beginning.

I refer honourable members to the statement I made this morning that has led to this debate. It is indicated in that statement that the federal government has ensured that any land set aside for public purposes under Commonwealth legislation shall not be available for claim. All we are suggesting for Northern Territory legislation is that we be granted exactly the same circumstances and position as the Commonwealth government grants to itself. That is not an unreasonable position to adopt, nor does it in any way threaten, deny or criticise the reality of a traditional association and

affinity or ownership of land by particular groups of Aboriginal people. It does not deny that at all. It merely says, as it is said everywhere in this country, that land set aside for national parks is land that is held, in title and in trust, by the government of the day for the benefit of all people. Particularly in the Northern Territory, it is possible to have joint management arrangements in national parks, whether they comprise Aboriginal land or not, which allow Aboriginal people to have the right to exercise their traditional responsibilities in respect of the land. That is not only possible but is being made a reality.

The member for MacDonnell has made the comment to me many times, as has the member for Stuart, that Aboriginal people do not take any notice of the bit of paper that says it is their land or somebody else's. They say they know who owns the land - it has been there for 50 000 years and they know who owns it. It is their land whether there is a bit of paper or not. The member for MacDonnell has made that point to me personally on a number of occasions. But I understand equally that Aboriginal people want a recognition of that title by the government and the community at large, and some protection of their rights associated with that land. I believe much of that can be dealt with through Northern Territory legislation and through a process of joint management with the Aboriginal people in respect of this particular park.

I might refer honourable members also to a number of the concerns and complications that arise as a consequence of an Aboriginal Land Rights Act that vests land under Commonwealth title, and the complications and difficulties that creates in respect of the application of the general laws of the Northern Territory. It is a problem of confusion. No one is saying that laws simply do not apply. It is a fact that there is continuing confusion as to exactly which laws do and do not apply and to what extent those laws apply. By arrangement with the Jawoyn people, under Northern Territory legislation, those issues would not continue to be areas of concern or confusion.

In respect of the other amendments, I note that the Leader of the Opposition, in his amendment, refers to 'appropriate title'. This is suggesting, in respect to the Katherine Gorge National Park, that appropriate title is under Northern Territory legislation. I stated in my statement this morning, and repeat again, that my government does not object to or oppose the recommendations in respect of other land covered by the Jawoyn land claim.

There is at least one other area which is involved in the water detriment question, and that is the reason that this amendment proposes that the detriment issues and the methods by which the matters of detriment would be resolved to the satisfaction of all people, be resolved and and incorporated conditionally in the nature of the title that would be granted to any Aboriginal land that is determined by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I was pleased to note that the Leader of the Opposition supported that concept in his address to the Assembly before lunch today.

It is quite possible that, if one - to use the words of the Leader of the Opposition - 'takes the rhetoric out of the argument' that members on both sides of this Assembly may well be able to reach a position where there is a basic agreement on the approach to the land claim process and, if there are differences, then perhaps those differences can be identified quite clearly and the areas of agreement can be identified quite clearly.

We have put our arguments forward in a clear and concise manner. We have outlined major areas of concern with the processes that would occur under the Land Rights Act, including the administrative complications of having a park

under 2 separate forms of legislative title or base, the other complications of the application of other laws and the tortuous procedures that would need to be gone through. We suggest that it would be far simpler and that many of these problems would not arise if the Northern Territory Land Rights Act was, in fact, an act of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

I am pleased to note equally that the Leader of the Opposition has finally come out unequivocally in support of the Land Rights Act being part of the Northern Territory at the grant of statehood. Perhaps we can take him one small step further forward to agree that that be transferred to the Northern Territory as part of the process of constitutional development even prior to statehood. If the Leader of the Opposition does not remember, I would refer him to the statements he made this morning in this debate.

Mr Smith: I don't remember.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I can assure him that he made those statements and I welcome that statement from the Opposition Leader. I trust that he can now recognise that we can reach appropriate agreements under Northern Territory legislation so far as the Katherine Gorge is concerned and not create this nightmare of legislative complications over the Land Rights Act.

Mr Speaker, I will raise this because I cannot let it go by. I have heard this argument so many times. The member for MacDonnell made much of the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management and the additional tourists at that park. It is true that there has been a substantial increase in the number of tourists in the area. In fact, any analysis of the statistics will show that there has been a dramatic jump in tourist visitations to that area since the opening of the Yulara tourist resort. That is the single catalytic force and I might say that the jump occurred for at least 12 months prior to the date on which the handover occurred to the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management. There was a jump of some 70% in the first year of the operations at Yulara, and it continues. I would be curious to know if the member for MacDonnell is promoting the view that it is the fact that it is under Aboriginal land title and under the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management ...

Mr Bell: Just floating it, Steve.

Mr HATTON: ... that has increased the flow of international tourists. I would be interested to know how many actual dollars that board of management is spending on international tourism marketing, and how much it is spending on tourism marketing for road travellers throughout Australia and for package tourists by air and coach throughout Australia.

Mr Bell: Johnny Brown is spending squillions.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the federal Minister for Tourism might be interested in looking at the Australian Tourist Commission's specific Ayers Rock promotion campaigns and how they are promoting tourism packages to Ayers Rock. I would equally like to know those of the board of management that have suddenly enticed all these extra tourists to go there. I would like him to explain how all that effort is creating all those tourists at Uluru and how none of the promotions undertaken by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission in promoting Yulara, Ayers Rock, central Australia, the Top End of the Territory and particular targeted markets of road tourists, international tourist offices promoting Ayers Rock and the Northern Territory in America, Europe and Asia, is having any effect on these extra numbers. I would be really curious to hear the argument.

Equally, when the member for MacDonnell says that the access is okay, I would be keen for him to ask, as a Legislative Assembly representative on the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management, when the federal Minister for the Environment and the Arts intends to respond to our nomination of the Minister for Tourism and Conservation as the Northern Territory government representative on the board. It was sent some 9 months ago, nominating the Minister for Tourism and Conservation to the board. Given the fuss that the opposition made about the need for this government to be represented on the board, when will the federal minister respond? At this stage, we are still waiting for an acknowledgement that the letter has been received. I refer that matter to the member for MacDonnell.

Perhaps he could advise this Assembly of the reasons for the decision of the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management to refuse to allow the Citroen Corporation to film a Citroen driving past Ayers Rock as part of a major international marketing program for the new Citroen to be released throughout the world, with obvious and major exposure for Ayers Rock. That refusal came through whilst I was in London last week. It came through our Tourist Commission office. I would be curious to know the reasons, given that that same organisation, with the same concept, was allowed into a Tibetan monastery and was allowed to film on the Great Wall of China. How is driving past Ayers Rock on a public road within a national park more sensitive and difficult than putting a Citroen inside a Tibetan monastery, with the monks actually being involved, or on the Great Wall of China in Communist China? I would be curious to understand how the board could reach that conclusion. I would be curious to obtain that answer. I do not have an opportunity to raise these issues in question time.

I reiterate the arguments in respect of the Land Rights Act itself. This is not a place to debate the pros and cons of the Land Rights Act per se, but it is appropriate, in the context of consideration of the Katherine Gorge National Park, to outline and clarify the difficulties associated with that piece of legislation in so far as it would have an effect on that national park. It was done by way of background to an explanation of the position being adopted by this government in respect of that national park. Neither the member for MacDonnell nor the member for Stuart can grasp the fundamental point, which is not that there should be no land rights act. We have said consistently that amendments are needed to correct many of the difficulties of the legislation and we have consistently maintained the view that, if the legislation is to apply only to the Northern Territory, it should be a law of this Assembly. If the federal government passes a law that applies right across the nation, we would accept that law under the same terms and conditions applying everywhere else in Australia. If it applies only in the Northern Territory, there is no logical or equitable argument why it should be anything other than a law of this Assembly.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate today on the Katherine Gorge National Park and the land claim for the Jawoyn people. Firstly, I would like to reply to some of the comments made by members opposite, especially the member for Katherine who is the member responsible for that area and who formerly was a head ranger in that area.

The Jawoyn people really do not want to argue; all they want is their land. That is all they are worried about. They are not worried about the politics of it all. They will feel secure once they get their land back. After that, I am sure they will negotiate with the government on any matters relating to the management of the park. We hear the Deputy Chief Minister talking about a no-nonsense approach which does not go softly-softly with the Aboriginal people or the land council.

I am sure the land council has the right to defend the Jawoyn people and their interests in their land. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem is that this matter dates back 10 years. The first claim was made in 1983 and we are still arguing today. I am sure the people in Katherine and the Jawoyn people would like to see this matter cleared up as soon as possible because, the longer it drags on, the more political it will become. The government is using the issue as its political weapon so that it can score points. The Jawoyn people and the Katherine people are not interested in that.

There are some 11 sacred sites in that area. There are the blue tongue, the brolga, the diver duck, the plain kangaroos, the dingo, the water goanna - they are all there and they mean something to the Jawoyn people. That is why they want to include the park in their claim. If they have these areas, they feel secure and safe; otherwise, they feel that something will happen to them. They do not want the matter to be politicised; all they want is their piece of land. I am sure they can negotiate with the government to hand the park back to the Conservation Commission.

The member for Katherine spoke about tourism and public ownership. The Jawoyn people are Territorians who have lived there for thousands of years, long before the white man ever set foot on that land. He talks about 'all Territorians'. Who are the Territorians? The Aboriginals make up 20% of this community. When he talks about 'all Territorians', who is he talking about? Is he including the Aboriginal people or only the non-Aboriginals? The point is that, when he talks about 'all Territorians', the honourable member seems to want to skip Aboriginal people. I am sure the Jawoyn people will not cut off water supplies.

I am sure the community of Katherine would like to work with the Jawoyn people who have lived there for so many years. I am sure that they would like to see the park being managed by the Territory government rather than the federal government. However, the sort of comments made by the Deputy Chief Minister could jeopardise the chances of the park being managed by the Territory government. We do not need those kind of remarks. I am sure the Jawoyn people will come to terms with anybody if the negotiations are good. I am sure that it will work out in the long term but the first claim was made 10 years ago and nothing has been done. What is going on? I am sure the Jawoyn people would like to see this matter settled and I am sure the community of Katherine would like to see it settled once and for all.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have listened to the debate with great interest and I have taken note of the Leader of the Opposition's quotations from Justice Kearney's report. I will not repeat them exactly because I could not write them down quickly enough but it seemed to me that Justice Kearney was saying that he had unequivocal assurances from the Jawoyn people that Katherine Gorge would remain a public park, which implies public ownership, and that the water supply would be guaranteed. That was clarified by the member for Stuart. There are a number of possible dam sites in the area and 2 within the park. If the area is to be a public park with guaranteed access to the dam sites, I have to ask again the same question I asked when the Leader of the Opposition finished speaking: what are we on about in this matter? Are we beating up something which is really not very important?

It should be easy to sort out. The question in my mind was: what does the Jawoyn people's ownership of the land really mean under these conditions? The comments of the member for Arafura helped to clarify this for me. He put it in terms of the Aboriginal people's feeling of security. I would like to

be corrected if I have it wrong but I believe that they feel that they have traditional responsibilities, particularly for sacred sites in the area. We white people might think of this as superstition, but it is real to Aboriginal people and we should give it some consideration and respect. They believe that bad things might happen if they do not look after their responsibilities in traditional terms. Perhaps, having listened to what I have said, the member for Arafura can give me some indication as to whether I am on the right track. I feel as though I understand something of the Jawoyn people's feelings about the meaning of ownership and obligation.

I think all honourable members could take those thoughts on board and put themselves in the position of the Jawoyn people so they can at least appreciate these matters. I have no idea of the significance of the 11 sacred sites or where they are located in the park, but I have been told today that the people of Katherine are pretty sick of the whole matter. All they want is the right to be able to visit the park, to take their friends there and enjoy the recreational facilities. The whole matter is becoming boring to them and they would like to see it resolved.

I cannot see any great problem if Justice Kearney has received assurances from the Jawoyn people through the Northern Land Council. It is a pity the traditional owners have to express their views through the land council and that the Land Rights Act has enshrined that necessity in legislation.

I tried to think of some of the advantages that the Jawoyn people might have if they were granted title. There would be a lease-back fee. I think the fee at Uluru is about \$100 000 a year which is not an impossible fee. It is no doubt a detriment to the taxpayers of Australia but governments waste money in much larger sums than that without a great deal of thought so I do not see it as a great problem. The Jawoyn would have the right to use the park for traditional purposes, as was outlined by the member for Arafura. There would be potential for the establishment of living areas, whether within the park or in the other land being claimed. That would no doubt be a matter for negotiation when, hopefully, a board is set up to run the park. I see no problem there.

In respect of development within the park, the Jawoyn may want to charge a rental to private enterprises which are running businesses there, which would be a matter for negotiation, or they may even want to monopolise ventures within the park. These matters would need to be settled. We would only be creating the possibility of further problems if they were not sorted out. Obviously, an important advantage to the Jawoyn, which I doubt anyone would object to, would be their input into the running of the park. I think that is accepted and reasonable. The Jawoyn need not have a majority on the board, but they should have good, strong representation so that their views are clearly heard.

The actual ownership of the land entails a mixed bag of consequences. It resembles ownership of pastoral leases where the pastoralist is in control of the land but Aboriginal people have the right to hunt on it using traditional methods. Those traditional methods have been described as a 4-wheel-drive vehicle and a .22 rifle and pastoralists are sometimes concerned about this and the possibility of cattle being disturbed or mistaken for kangaroos. That sort of problem may still occur even if guarantees are enshrined in legislation, as Justice Kearney suggests can happen, but it can be sorted out if there is give and take. The gorge area can remain a park with free access to the public except where negotiations identify sacred sites. I cannot see why the whole issue cannot be sorted out and settled very soon.

Yesterday, I heard a suggestion that a fee of \$20 per person might be charged for park entry. I hope that it was only made in jest because such a measure would only inflame the situation. I would like to think that that will not occur and that the people of Katherine can get this problem off their plate. It has been a nuisance for the last 10 years.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, parallels and comparisons have been made today between the Katherine Gorge and the Ayers Rock handover. I would like to say that I think there are some quite significant differences. The first is that the Aboriginal Land Commissioner never recommended that Ayers Rock be included in a grant of land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. It was, in fact, a political gift made by the federal government in order to salve the nation's conscience. The decision was made by a minister in another place and not by a minister in this place and the grant was made under federal title.

The Northern Territory government had no power to stop the Commonwealth from doing that, nor did it have any capacity to influence it. It therefore mounted a national campaign about the handover of Ayers Rock which was designed to make the Australian people aware of the issues. At the end of the day, that campaign was successful in that 82% of the Australian people felt that the Rock should not have been handed back to the Aboriginal community in the manner in which it was, and that it should have been maintained and managed as a national park. In spite of the campaign's success in that sense, it did not stop the federal government doing what it wanted to do which was to give the land away, under a federal act, to a group of Aboriginals and to have the park managed by ANPWS. The intention of the Commonwealth was quite plain from the start and it succeeded.

I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Katherine Gorge was lost the day Ayers Rock was lost. Once the federal government succeeded in getting away with its action in relation to Ayers Rock, Katherine Gorge became a political pushover. That is where we are today. However bitter we may find it, the reality is that there is nothing we can do about it. The hearing of the Katherine Gorge claim has been held over a period of 5 years. Sir William Kearney, as the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, has made his recommendations. Given the provisions of Sir William's recommendations in terms of detriment, water control and access to the park, it would be a very brave minister who moved away from granting the land as recommended by Sir William. The Northern Territory people and the parliament have no recourse whatsoever legally, whether we like it or not. It is a fact of life. Not only that, we do not have any political support in other parts of Australia for the cause that we espouse in trying to retain Katherine Gorge under Territory title to be managed under Territory management.

The Labor Party's position is quite clear, and it has been for many years, and it has been very dogmatic in pursuing its policy. The Liberal and National Parties? Would anybody in here like to take a bet that they would change anything if they had the opportunity and were given the mantle of office? There is no way that you would get them to make any changes because they do not have that little bit of intestinal fortitude necessary to stand up for the things they believe in.

I noticed with interest the Deputy Chief Minister calling on the federal member, Warren Snowdon, and the Leader of the Opposition, Terry Smith, to declare their stance on the granting of Katherine Gorge. If the Leader of the Opposition had been on his feet, he would have asked the CLP to get John Howard and Ian Sinclair to make a statement on the gorge. That would

have been interesting reading or listening, because they would not move far away from Sir William Kearney's recommendation.

The reality is that the changes that have been made to the Land Rights Act, after a prolonged period of gestation, are really complete and there will not be many more changes. The present act is what we have and it is now a matter of making the most of it. Whether we like the fact that a federal minister or 2 federal ministers have control of 50% of the Northern Territory from another parliament, regrettably they are the facts and we just have to live with them. I am the first to say to members of the House, the land councils and Aboriginals, that there are many shortcomings in the act as it stands. It is still dreadful to administer and it still causes a great deal of difficulty and hardship in the community and, if you do not believe it, just come to my own electorate where the Warumungu land claim rumbles on through its third year. I have constituents who have been in the town for 20 years who are packing their bags and leaving because their rights are prejudiced and they do not want to be bothered with it any more. People are sick to death of it.

The control of waters under the Land Rights Act just leaves me speechless, and perhaps I am a little more sensitive to it than other members because I have grown up in an area where water was so precious that the concept of allowing any group of Territorians - black, white, miners, farmers, tourists, whatever you like - to control water in the Northern Territory to the possible detriment of others is simply not acceptable, whether it is under the Land Rights Act or the Control of Waters Act. The provisions for access to land are still unacceptable to Aboriginals as well as white people. The controversy that continues over mining and exploration on Aboriginal land is a matter of record and the management of our parks, particularly the major parks such as Kakadu, Uluru and the Katherine Gorge, will always be a matter of interest and concern to Territorians because they are parks we believe that we should manage for ourselves - and why do we need a federal organisation to do that? In the main, they were run well by Territorians.

The consultation processes provided for under the act leave a great deal to be desired, whether you are negotiating a mining exploration tenement or simply access to land. Mr Speaker, I will tell you something about consultation which I thought was interesting. I was in Katherine for a few days last week and, quite by chance, I was introduced to a Mr Peter Jatbula, who is allegedly the head of the Jawoyn people who are the claimants to the land concerned. I was in a group of people, and one of them said to him: 'Peter what do you think about the judge's report and the control of the gorge?' He said, 'Nobody has talked to me about it', and his wife said, 'No, and none of those fellows have been out to our camp either'. Here is a man who would be pretty heavily concerned about what the judge might have to say about the future of the land and his own involvement with it, and no one - and I say 'no one' because he said 'no one' - has been anywhere near him to raise the matter. I would have thought that, if the judge's report was coming down, it would be in the interests of ourselves, the Northern Land Council or whoever was involved, to go out and say hello, leave him a complimentary copy and at least discuss with him what had been handed down so that he did not hear it first on the radio.

The reality is that we cannot change any of these things and it is unlikely that we will ever get to change them while the act is controlled by Canberra. We can bite, scratch and scream ad nauseam, and we can continue to use the Aboriginal land rights issue, whether it relates to a claim on the gorge, a mining tenement or whatever, as good political capital to be dragged

out at any old time to try to make people aware of the issues of the day and perhaps attract a few votes. But, if we wish to do that, it is an option that is open to us all, whatever organisation we are in, whether it is in this House, the mining or pastoral industry, a land council or just as individual landowners. If we wish to maintain a position of conflict over Aboriginal land rights, then we have to accept that other things, such as statehood, are as dead as the tail on a coonskin cap.

Mr Speaker, one cannot wander around the Northern Territory selling statehood - and we all do that as we promote it in our own way - whilst on the other hand mounting a campaign of conflict over issues related to land rights. If we want to achieve statehood at some time, the Northern Territory Aboriginal community will have to support it and the land councils happen to have an enormous amount of influence in that community. I am not saying that we should take it lamely and lie down every time something happens that we do not like in relation to land rights, but I do think that, if we are to embark on an open policy of conflict and confrontation as the new government direction, then that should be given a bit of airing and discussion. The Chief Minister has established, by his actions and the statements he has made, that he wishes to see a process of discussion, conciliation, negotiation or whatever in solving Aboriginal land issues and he goes about that policy quite sincerely. Whether that is to any avail or not is a matter of judgment. But, when the Acting Chief Minister stands up one morning after reading a report that no one else has seen and says that the failed policies of appeasement are over, that all bets are off and head-kicking is back in fashion, we have to accept that statehood and other important issues are lost causes.

It is a matter for the government to decide which role it wants to play but it will need to be consistent, and we will all need to be consistent. I would like to place on record that I do not agree at all with the concept of Northern Territory land being held under a title granted from another parliament. I do not agree with Northern Territory land being managed by people other than Territorians, and I refer there to public land. I believe that, if we wish to get on with the broader issue of bringing statehood to the Northern Territory, then it is incumbent on us all to try to come to grips with the problems in the Land Rights Act, and that means that Aboriginal people have to give as much ground as us: it has to be a 2-way street.

The actions of Aboriginal people in the last 10 years indicate that they are pretty adamant that they want certain things to happen on their land and that there are other things that they do not want to happen. Mining is an example. Some may wish to have mining on their land but not all of them want it. The point that I would make to the land councils and some of the traditional owners is that we all, as Australians generally, have not only a right but a responsibility to develop those resources that will bring wealth and opportunity to the community. From time to time, Aboriginal people can be great consumers of the community's wealth and opportunities, and so they should. But, if they have an opportunity to develop something on their land that will bring wealth, growth, development and opportunity to themselves as well as others, then I believe they have an equal responsibility to ensure that mining or development takes place, albeit they might find it repugnant. There are many pastoralists who have mining operations on their land and some of them would prefer that those were not there. Generally, they say that it is for the good of everybody in the long run and they agree to it, however inconvenient they may find it.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say that the last amendment circulated by the Chief Minister is one that I would have no trouble in supporting. I think the

Chief Minister's statement and the Opposition Leader's amendment were an exercise in political marksmanship with each attempting to outsmart the other. The final wording that has just been circulated has my full support.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to say a few words but I will not bore honourable members with a full 20-minute speech on this occasion. In fact, I had not proposed to speak but, as honourable members are aware, the matter has rolled on to an amendment to the amendment. In addition, we have a summary document that gives the wording of the motion if the government's amendments to the Leader of the Opposition's amendment are agreed to.

The Land Rights Act has been described on a number of occasions in this Assembly as a racially divisive act. I believe that it is and it would be hard for people to argue that it is not, given the history of land rights in the Northern Territory and the history of debates on the issue in this Assembly. We have debated the matter successively over the years. Various parties have changed in this Assembly but the subject of land rights in the Territory has been the subject of more than a dozen major debates and, despite all that debate, not a great deal of real progress has been made in changing each other's minds.

Over the years, the government's position with regard to the role of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in the Northern Territory has been somewhat misrepresented and probably misinterpreted on a number of occasions. As was pointed out today by the Chief Minister in his excellent statement, it was the Commonwealth government that established a process of finding out whether Aborigines have a sufficient strength of attachment to land that it should be granted to them. The Commonwealth chose to implement an adversary system for that process. The commissioner is required to have a range of information placed before him or he is required to seek out a range of information before making his report to the federal minister. In that process, the government has found itself in the role of presenting the arguments concerning detriment.

I am not sure who would present arguments relating to detriment if the government did not do so. Certainly, many Territorians would like to go before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to present arguments on detriment in relation to a claim but they do not have the time and they certainly do not have the money to engage lawyers to argue their case. Naturally enough, they would be subjected to cross-examination on their bona fides and their own interests in putting their case. That sort of role is pretty daunting for the average citizen and we can understand why they do not go before the Commissioner in droves.

However, droves of Territorians, Aborigines and non-Aborigines, are affected by land claims and the case for detriment has to be placed before the commissioner. As a government, we have always seen that role as falling to us and therefore we have been before Aboriginal Land Commissioners on many occasions and have highlighted the ramifications of certain land being granted. We are also required to place matters of fact before the commissioner. The government has access to all the files relating to the history of administration in the Northern Territory since European settlement. It has an enormous body of information which would be useful to the commissioner in coming to his decision. Thus, one of our roles before the commissioner is the presentation of facts. Nevertheless, we are told so often that our presence before an Aboriginal Land Commissioner is merely to oppose land claims. As the Chief Minister pointed out in his statement, that is not true.

What I have observed today is something that is new in the whole debate. With the amendment to the amendment, we appear to be closer to being of one mind on an issue as contentious as a land claim as we have ever been in my recollection in this Assembly. When I say that, I refer to the opposition and the government. Other parties, however, are involved. There are the Northern Land Council and the traditional Aboriginal claimants to the Katherine land claim. All the same, the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition and the amendment to the amendment moved by the Chief Minister demonstrate a closeness which is somewhat unprecedented.

I think it is heartening that this situation has transpired. Perhaps it has transpired with a degree of frustration in various parties' minds, a degree of frustration at the inevitability of the system and the extent of land claims in the Northern Territory. A great deal of disruption has occurred as a result of those claims but, as has been stated by a number of speakers, there is a certain inevitability about them and people are coming to realise that this Commonwealth act will not go away. Unfortunately, it appears that it is not even to be amended substantially. Even those amendments that are supported by all parties, it seems, face enormous difficulties in being realised and I refer in that context to the problems experienced by traditional owners in claiming land owned by Aboriginal people. They do not have the same access as they would have if the land were owned by non-Aboriginals.

Mr Ede: It has been fixed.

Mr PERRON: I stand corrected by the member for Stuart. That particular matter was picked up perhaps in the last batch of amendments to the federal Land Rights Act, and I am pleased with that because I thought it that was a particularly insidious aspect of the act which rebounded on Aboriginals themselves.

I am very pleased to see that we have come a little closer than we were before on this matter with the very particular words in the Leader of the Opposition's amendment, indicating that the ALP was open in its mind as to the form of title which it sees as being appropriate in the Jawoyn situation. His suggestion that the Territory government should pursue negotiations with the Jawoyn people with a view to obtaining a speedy resolution is very encouraging as well. The ALP could have taken the attitude that it is a federal matter, under a federal act, and that the Territory government has no role at all and should simply leave it to the federal minister to make his assessment and decision in due course.

The Chief Minister has proposed a very sensible amendment which really directs this Assembly's attention to the need to be quite specific about its attitude towards the grant of a national park as Aboriginal land under federal title and to oppose that proposition, as I believe we should. Surely it is not asking too much of the ALP to accept that particular stance because, in this motion, it refers to the Katherine Gorge land claim. I would think that the opposition would not have too much difficulty with the other aspects of the Chief Minister's amendment at all because, in fact, it is very close to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I commend the amendment to the amendment to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, before the member for Fannie Bay gets too carried away, I would like to place on record my views on the amendment that has been circulated by the Chief Minister.

Unlike many government members, I come from an electorate that is entirely within the boundary of a land claim. Unlike many other members, I have a day-to-day working knowledge of the Land Rights Act, its implications for and application to a modern, cosmopolitan, affluent European community and its effects on traditional Aboriginal people. I doubt that any member in this House that could say that the Land Rights Act in its application to Nhulunbuy has been to the detriment of that community. It may have been to the physical and financial detriment of some aspects of that community but racial relationships in Nhulunbuy surpass anything that can be experienced in a similar community anywhere in the Northern Territory. I would defy any member of this House to say otherwise.

As to the suggestion or accusation that land rights has divided the community or that it is a divisive instrument, I would ask honourable members to visit other parts of Australia where there is no land rights act. Go to western New South Wales, go to western Queensland, go to Western Australia, go to north-western Victoria and tell me how divided the communities are there, and then make those statements. I believe that the Land Rights Act has been of great service to my community. People may feel differently in Darwin where the effects of the act are not so obvious, but in the community I come from, it has lent dignity and purpose to both black and white citizens. Before people start saying that the Land Rights Act is divisive, I would suggest that they test that assertion in the historical context of the European experience in Australia, because I do not think that it stands up.

I do not want to spend too much time on the Land Rights Act. As the member for Fannie Bay has said, it has been chewed over in this House on many occasions. My observation on this whole debate is that it has focused on the considerations of the Conservation Commission, the Northern Land Council, the federal minister and, indeed, almost everyone else in Australia except the Jawoyn people who, for a decade, have used the only instrument at their disposal, the Lands Right Act, to pursue what they have always seen as their rightful claim: the right to live on their own land. They have used whatever mechanism and whatever advice or assistance was available to them. They have confronted the Northern Territory government and various other interest groups to achieve a recommendation from the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. After 10 years of financing opposition to the Jawoyn claim, for whatever the reasons, to test the law or whatever, the best that this government is prepared to do is note the recommendations of Justice Kearney - not accept it with good or even with bad grace, but just note it.

I do not care what my colleagues do, I will not be supporting the Chief Minister's amendment to clause 1(a) of the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. After 10 years of legal dispute, of personal hardship and moral degradation for the Jawoyn people, I think it behoves this government to accept the recommendations of Justice Kearney because, if this government and this Assembly do not accept the recommendations of a proper judicial hearing, then we are not about the business of legislation.

The rest of the amendment is pulp. It is nonsense. The original amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition expresses the good faith of this Assembly to those people who have used their only avenue, their only mechanism, to achieve what they have always assumed was theirs. For any member of this Assembly to propose or to even suppose that that legal dispute should be carried beyond the hearings, beyond all that has occurred, is to reduce us to nothing, to dust. We are the people's representatives yet we will not even recognise law. One either accept law or does not accept it. The judiciary, in its wisdom or otherwise, has come up with a recommendation

in favour of those people. As a Legislative Assembly, we should accept that or we should not be part of the process of law. Those people deserve better from us.

I believe that the Katherine Gorge and the present national park should be administered by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission but I believe that, in the final analysis, the right to determine that should lie with the Jawoyn people whose land it is and who have always felt it was their land. Those are the people who should determine that matter. If people opposite intend to pass amendments which amount to no more than pulp, in some frustrated effort to overcome their impotence, it is absolutely useless to continue to propound the notion that we are a body of people who are determined to seek justice for all of our citizens. I would ask the Chief Minister to consider that. His amendments amount to nothing. They contribute nothing to what lies before us and they certainly lend no credit to his espoused views in relation to people who have used whatever facilities were at their disposal to obtain the right to their land.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I spoke to the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. Since that time, the Chief Minister has proposed another amendment which I wish to speak to.

Clause 1(a) of the Chief Minister's amendment to the amendment is that this Assembly 'notes the recommendations of Justice Kearney on the Jawoyn (Katherine Gorge) land claim and reiterates its opposition to the grant of national park areas as Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act'. Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot and will not support that position. For a start, I think the word 'reiterate' is a completely wrong word to use because it specifically means to say or do again. That is not an accurate reading of matters that have come before this House.

I would prefer that the Northern Territory government negotiate title under its own legislation so that we in the Territory could be proud of the fact that we were finally coming to grips with the whole matter of Aboriginal land, Aboriginal tenure, Aboriginal ownership and Aboriginal involvement in national parks. I would be proud to be able to stand up as a Northern Territorian before the rest of Australia to demonstrate that we had finally come of age, that we had finally shown that we were able to negotiate these items and that we were able to deal with the 25% of our population who are Aboriginals with a measure of dignity, evenhandedness and trust. I would be proud to be able to show that at least we were able to accept the different cultural view of land which the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory have and that we were willing to provide them with a security of tenure which they themselves saw as satisfactory.

That was the basis of the amendment which the Leader of the Opposition moved this morning. The amendment indicated that we sought a form of title under which the Jawoyn people would be able to find security. We had hoped that the Northern Territory government would be able to provide that form of title. We are not prepared, however, to take away from the Jawoyn people the right to be granted the land should the Northern Territory government be unable to fulfil their requirement of security. We are not prepared to take away the safety net from the Jawoyn people. We are saying that negotiations should continue but we are mindful of the dirty blackboard on which the Chief Minister is working.

Is it necessary for me to go through the chronology of the land claim in more detail? It seems obvious to me that the Chief Minister, or at least the

other members on his side of the Assembly, do not understand what has been going on. The claim was first lodged on 31 March 1978. On 9 September 1982, the Northern Land Council approached the Conservation Commission over joint management proposals - over 5 years ago. At that stage, the Conservation Commission replied, stating that the then Chief Minister, Hon Paul Everingham, had indicated that the possibility of a lease or joint management arrangement could be considered. Discussions were offered on matters including the continuation of the national park, lease-back and other arrangements for the continuation for the period of lease or renewal.

In December 1982, the Northern Land Council wrote to the Conservation Commission stating that the preferred arrangement was for a lease of the park and reserve areas to the Conservation Commission with the areas to be managed by a board of management that included some Aboriginal members. That was not a radical proposal, not a proposal which one would have thought would have culminated in the troubles that we had later in 1983. The Conservation Commission wrote back referring to any final agreement or proposal involving the Northern Territory government and the NLC and talked of Northern Territory freehold title.

The traditional owners stated that their preference was for title under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1976 but reiterated that they wished to have a lease-back to the Conservation Commission. At that stage, the Conservation Commission stated that it was willing to negotiate Aboriginal freehold title. In January 1983, the NLC stated that it was prepared to give exclusive occupancy to the Northern Territory government and its authority, the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, subject to verification that the government would consider a lease-back arrangement. It felt that there was agreement on that issue, at least in principle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier I spoke of the telex which the Northern Land Council sent to Paul Everingham in February 1983. I will quote from it.

The Northern Land Council is prepared to recommend to the claimants that your government's offer of Territory title over the gorge be accepted, provided that the terms of such title provide sufficient warranty for the claimants for continued and unthreatened ownership and, further, provided that some of the unsatisfactory and unresolved issues of management are mutually resolved. If the Jawoyn people accept our recommendations, the Katherine Gorge section of the Katherine land claim could be withdrawn.

That was the position of the Northern Land Council. What happened? Paul Everingham, the then Chief Minister, decided that it was time to play politics. He rejected the offer and, on 22 February 1983, allowed 4 days for a resolution. He stated that, if the matter was not resolved within 4 days, the whole thing would go down the drain. The NLC then had no option but to go ahead with the land claim and attempt to achieve title through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

If, after having put the Jawoyn people through that, members of the government really believe that they can ask the Jawoyn people to relinquish consideration of federal title and leave themselves completely open to what the Territory government offers, they have rocks in their heads. The Jawoyn people want secure title. If the Chief Minister can convince the Jawoyn people that he is able to offer them a degree of security which is more appropriate to their needs than that which the federal government can provide, they would quite probably agree to it. But, there is no way that they will take an

inferior title when they have a superior title available to them now. There was a possibility that they may have taken a bird in the hand rather than 2 in the bush 6 months ago, before the recommendations of Justice Kearney were brought down. At that stage, however, the Northern Territory government did not want to negotiate.

It lost a golden opportunity. It still has some chance because the formal decision has not been made by the federal minister and I would hope that the Chief Minister will take this opportunity, on the clear understanding that he must offer the Jawoyn people something better than what is definitely available under the federal act. That is why I cannot accept sub-paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b) of the Chief Minister's amendment. His sub-paragraph 1(b) would have us recognise: 'the absolute imperative that the Katherine Gorge National Park continue as a national park under the Northern Territory legislation and under the management of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory'. The opposition has said repeatedly that it believes that the management of the park should be carried out by the Conservation Commission. However, we do not control the negotiations, which is why phrases like 'absolute imperative' are inappropriate.

Unfortunately, the Chief Minister has given no clear and unequivocal statement that he will not allow his deputy, who is supposed to sit on his left in this House, anywhere near Katherine for the next 12 months. Every time he opens his mouth on this issue, every time he writes a letter, every time he puts pen to paper or gets anywhere near a microphone, he puts us back 6 months. If we are going to achieve what we all want from this negotiation, which is management of the park by the Conservation Commission, I believe that it will be necessary to remove the Deputy Chief Minister from the conservation portfolio. He has clearly demonstrated that he is incapable of dealing with an issue as sensitive and as complex as this without putting his foot in it, attempting to make short-term political gains to assist his attempts to knife the Chief Minister in the back and denigrating the attempts of the land council and the Jawoyn people to resolve the matter.

We have seen how the Deputy Chief Minister went about beating up the 1984 letters. All he had to do was to look at his files to see how what he has called 'secret negotiations' were written up in banner headlines in national newspapers. A headline in The West Australian of Tuesday 6 March 1984 reads: 'NT Aborigines Seeking Gorge Park'. I dare say that, if the Northern Land Council wished to keep something quiet, it probably would not have allowed it to appear on the front page of The West Australian. That newspaper's story stated clearly that the 'Darwin-based Northern Land Council has been instructed by people in the Katherine region to negotiate with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service'. There was no secrecy about that in 1984.

Everybody knew that was happening in January 1984 and even honourable members opposite know that it followed the events of December 1983 when the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, was dividing this community as it had never been divided before, in the most racially divisive election that has ever been fought in the Northern Territory. That election was fought on the issue of Uluru. After hearing what the Chief Minister had to say in that election campaign, how could the Jawoyn people be expected to believe that he offered them security and comfort? Obviously, they could not. Being determined that the Katherine Gorge would remain as a national park, they had to find another option. The only other option available to them was the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. They made those proposals at that time and I believe that it has not gone much further than that. I

personally hope that the Jawoyn will not be driven into the arms of the ANPWS but this government's failure to negotiate in a fair and equitable manner is the reason why I find it impossible to support the second sub-paragraph of the Chief Minister's amendment.

I have no problems in recognising the absolute imperative that conditions of detriment be resolved. Of course they must be resolved. They have been addressed in Justice Kearney's report and I am confident that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Hand, will examine those issues in great detail. He has stated already that he will meet with the Northern Territory government to discuss those matters. He is a man of great honour, who has demonstrated his deep commitment to Aboriginal people over many years. He is not a Johnny-come-lately. He has had many more years of in-depth experience of working with Aboriginal people than the vast majority of members opposite. I know that he will treat the matters of detriment with sensitivity and with great wisdom and I am certain that they will be resolved.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, I hope that negotiations will continue, but I cannot be seen to be supporting something which takes away the security of the Jawoyn people. For that reason, I will be opposing the amendment proposed by the Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I want to speak very briefly to the amendment.

Firstly, I want to pick up the peripheral issue of tourism and tourist promotion which was raised by the Chief Minister. It is commonly accepted in the tourist industry that the most effective way of promoting regional tourism is to promote national tourism. It is less than generous of the Chief Minister not to pay credit to the efforts of the federal Labor government, particularly its Minister for Tourism, John Brown, to promote Australia overseas. One also has to accept that the free advertisement for Australia which Paul Hogan provided in 'Crocodile Dundee' has had an enormous impact overseas. It has done a great deal to promote Australia and it is in the context of efforts like that, that organisations like the Northern Territory Tourist Commission are able to sell their product. I think it is only fair that the Chief Minister should recognise the contribution of the federal government in establishing the overall climate for tourism in this country.

Mr Hatton: My question was directed to the Uluru board, actually.

Mr SMITH: If I could respond to the interjection, he was making the point that, single-handedly, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has brought hundreds of thousands of people to Uluru. I am trying to put the kybosh on that particular comment.

As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has said, the opposition is not in a position to support the amendments proposed by the government to the initial amendment proposed by myself. To put it simply, and to shear the rhetoric away from it once again, what we have in the amendments is the basis of the fundamental difference between the government's approach to this particular matter and the opposition's approach. The opposition accepts that, in a very thorough report, Justice Kearney has assessed that the traditional owners have demonstrated their traditional ownership of the proportion of the claim that he has said should be granted. We believe that it follows that traditional owners should be recognised in the granting of title. Of course, that is what the Chief Minister's amendments 1 and 2 refer to: the taking away of the provision to grant title over that particular piece of land.

I think Senator Collins, in one of his public comments, has made the point that what we are talking about is in fact symbolic title. I do not think anyone can deny that. What we are saying to the traditional Jawoyn owners and what they are saying to us in fact happened in respect of Uluru. In return for this symbolic gesture of provision of title, the Aboriginal people are prepared to hand back to the people of Australia or, hopefully, the people of the Northern Territory in the case of Katherine Gorge, management of this valuable asset that we all enjoy. I think it is important that we recognise that we are talking about a symbolic act to recognise the prior existence of Aboriginal people in the Katherine Gorge area, and in the area of the Jawoyn land claim, for a period of somewhere between 25 000 and 40 000 years before the white man came to the Northern Territory in the last 130 to 140 years. Essentially, that is what it is about and that is where the Labor Party says that, after the claim has been demonstrated under the white man's system of law, Aboriginal title should be granted.

The member for Stuart has commented on part 3 of the proposed amendment and I do not have anything to add there. In terms of parts 4 and 5, the opposition can support those amendments because it is clear in terms of part 4, in particular, that Justice Kearney said that the grant was conditional on issues of detriment being resolved. In our view, he has identified potential areas of detriment that need to be resolved and we would hope that steps will be taken to do so as quickly as possible. However, we do not see it as an opportunity for the Northern Territory government, or anybody else, to argue a new case for detriment in other areas. I am glad the Chief Minister agrees with that because there have been 2 very adequate opportunities for the questions of detriment to be resolved before Justice Kearney and I think he has done that.

Mr Speaker, in terms of part 5, quite clearly it is only common sense that all parties be involved in the discussions and I accept that as an improvement on the wording that I proposed. I have no problems with that. In closing, in his absence, I should congratulate the member for Sadadeen on his comments. I never thought I would find myself standing up in this parliament and agreeing with comments made by him on sensitive issues like land rights. It just shows what freedom from the CLP yoke can do for a person; he starts to think for himself.

I think that today's debate has been a breakthrough in terms of rational discussion on sensitive matters relating to land rights in the Northern Territory. I remarked to my colleagues over lunch that, if this debate had taken place 2 or 3 years ago, emotions would have run much higher and the debate would have been far less sensible and far more emotional. It says something positive about the course of the Aboriginal land rights debate over the last 2 or 3 years and the maturity of members of this parliament that what we have engaged in today has been, on the whole, a rational debate. We have disagreed and we will continue to disagree on important points of principle, but I think it is encouraging that the debate was conducted in a rational manner and I hope that what has happened today can be a precursor of a satisfactory resolution of this sensitive matter in the weeks and months to come.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to address briefly some comments made in the debate. I would like to agree with the comments of the

Leader of the Opposition about the way in which this debate has proceeded generally. It is true that, from time to time, this very sensitive issue in the Northern Territory tends to raise the emotional temperature quite dramatically, particularly in this Chamber. The manner in which we have dealt with the debate today is a considerable improvement.

I would like to address the comments made by the member for Nhulunbuy in relation to parts 1(a) and 1(b) of the amendment. The reason the amendment refers to the noting of the recommendation is because, quite obviously, there are some aspects of the recommendations that are outside the scope of this debate. To say simply that we accept the recommendations means to accept in its entirety everything that is written and proposed in the context of the recommendations. In fact, legally it is a matter for the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to accept, reject or amend the recommendations of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. I would remind the member for Nhulunbuy that it is not a matter for this Assembly to accept or reject. We have no position of authority in so far as the determination of that particular claim is concerned; it is a matter that is determined through federal legislation by the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. That, in itself, is a point of some considerable contention, and is an issue that will very easily raise the temperature of the emotions in this House if it arises for debate. That is the reason for the use of the word 'notes'. If there are some aspects of the recommendations on which there is not total unanimity, that does not suggest that we oppose the recommendations of the commissioner. I would suggest that 'notes' is an appropriate resolution for this House.

Members opposite have referred to the opposition to the grant of the national park as Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Lands Rights (Northern Territory) Act. It has been suggested that a lease-back arrangement would be a 'symbolic recognition' of ownership of the land for practical purposes. However, on both occasions that I have spoken today, I have sought to raise the unintended consequences in terms of administrative and other legal complications in respect of the way in which land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is required by law to be administered. If any title were under Territory legislation, all of those unintended consequences would cease to exist because they would fit into the fabric of the law of the Northern Territory. That could provide for that 'symbolic recognition', to use the Leader of the Opposition's terminology, a recognition by the government of the day of the historic and traditional ownership and association with the land. Whether or not our parks are Aboriginal land, our government stands by its policy of entering into joint management agreements with the traditional Aboriginal people in those areas which give the recognition to the right of those people to exercise their traditional responsibilities in respect of that land.

The first steps that we have taken as a government have been in respect of Kings Canyon. There are negotiations proceeding in respect of Gosse Bluff. In the Top End, negotiations are proceeding with the Northern Land Council in relation to the Keep River park, the proposed Gregory National Park and the Litchfield Park, none of which is even under land claim. In relation to all of those, we are having discussions with the Northern Land Council about joint management agreements. There is no conflict of opinion about the recognition of the Aboriginal people's historical involvement with the land and their participation in the management of that land in conjunction with the Northern Territory government, but under Northern Territory laws.

We have referred consistently to the role of the Land Rights Act. A grant under the Land Rights Act would leave this park divided under 2 separate

pieces of legislation in respect of land tenure because not all of the Katherine Gorge National Park is proposed to be granted as Aboriginal land. The titles would be separated.

In respect of 1(b), the opposition has recognised the imperative that the park continue to be under the management of the Conservation Commission. We welcome that. The reference to 'continue as a national park under Northern Territory legislation' refers to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act which is the management regime for managing Northern Territory national parks. It is not a reference to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act which does not make any reference to the management of national parks, and neither it should. If the opposition supports the view that Katherine Gorge should be managed by the Conservation Commission, why would it oppose its being managed in accordance with the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, which is the legislative base of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory for its operations in respect of parks.

Mr Speaker, I do not think the monsters that have been alleged to fly in relation to 1(a) are there. I think members of the opposition could support that amendment, in particular the noting of the recommendations. It does not offend their sensibilities. If they are insistent on prolonging legislative and bureaucratic problems by continuing to insist on a grant under the Land Rights Act and it is possible to find mechanisms under the Northern Territory law, there may be some possibility that matters could be resolved through discussions. In discussions that we will be holding with the Jawoyn people, those issues will inevitably be raised.

Mr Speaker, in case honourable members are not aware, I advise the House that we have had discussions with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and he has agreed to meet me at the earliest opportunity. I do not think the opportunity will arise until after these Assembly sittings. However, I will be seeking to meet with Mr Hand at the earliest opportunity. It will probably be in Canberra because of the sittings of the federal parliament over the next 3 weeks. I can also advise that we have been approached by the chairman of the Jawoyn Association and there is a strong probability that we will be holding discussions with the Jawoyn Association towards the end of this week or over the weekend.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88
(Serial 58)

Continued from 24 September 1987.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in rising today to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill presented by the Treasurer. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Treasurer and those who have put this budget together on being able to maintain a very high level of service to the Territory people, particularly in this time of economic constraint.

There are 4 major points that I would like to cover in this debate. Most of the issues have been well canvassed by the ministers and other members of this Assembly. The first area that I wish to comment on relates to goals, assessment and cost-benefit analysis. My second point relates to major developments in my electorate. My third point relates to respite and residential care and my final point relates to tourism and the need to promote a good image.

The Leader of the Opposition raised the matter of goals, methods of assessment, achievement and cost-benefit analysis. I believe that the Chief Minister covered those issues well in his comments in this debate. He indicated that the government indeed has plans in respect of its directions in all portfolio responsibility areas. The Opposition Leader and some of his colleagues are a bit out of touch when they continue to say that the government does not have any goals, does not know where it is going and is unable to assess its achievements.

Previously, I had had responsibility for education. Honourable members would be aware that there is a document called 'Direction for the Eighties'. That document spelt out very clearly where the government was heading in relation to education. Honourable members would be aware also, if they have read that particular document, that most of the aims that were set out in that document have been achieved by this particular government.

Mr Speaker, we were ahead of most Australian states in relation to forward planning and, indeed, many of them were taking on board some of the education initiatives of this government. It is acknowledged that there is a need to promote the method whereby we will assess whether or not we reach those goals. I believe that that is the intention of this government and, in fact, we have moved in that direction. I know that the Public Accounts Committee also is concerned about some of these issues and the need to ensure that there are goals and that we are able to attain them. However, quite frankly, I am surprised that the opposition continues to attack the document 'Towards the 90s' because the opposition itself has been calling out for us to set in place plans for where we are heading and what we are doing and then, in the next breath, it says that it does not agree.

The Leader of the Opposition referred specifically to the good work that was being carried out in Victoria. Might I suggest that, if ever there were a state that needed to look seriously at its direction and where it is heading, it is Victoria. I am sure all members can recall the disasters that occurred in that state in relation to health and education. I am just saying that perhaps he should look more closely at what those particular states are achieving in these areas.

The matter of cost-benefit analysis is a problem. The Leader of the Opposition raised this. I guess one of the problems that we have is that we all have different ideas about where we should be heading. The major problem, of course, comes back to the Aboriginal scene, and it is an area where both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments have had problems over the years. I am sure that many of us can recall the forestry programs that were put in place by the federal government - and it does not matter which political persuasion it was - and over \$60m was involved in that particular exercise. Money was also wasted in relation to Amoonguna and I have commented on that on a previous occasion. Without going into any great detail, I believe money was voted for those particular projects, and no one came to the Territory to assess whether the money was being spent wisely and if it was producing the benefits that the government of the day hoped would result from the projects. That was a major concern and someone should have checked on those projects.

Of course, that would create another problem. If it were decided that those projects were not moving in the direction that the government wanted, and it was decided that money was to be withdrawn from those particular areas, again there would be a public outcry, particularly from those communities, that the funding should continue.

Another example of whether or not funds were being used effectively related to Yirara College. I can remember that, when I was the Minister for Education, there was a great deal of concern that the purpose of Yirara College, and the direction that we were heading in there, was not meeting the needs or the requirements of the government. The government was hoping that Aboriginal children attending Yirara College would be able to reach the upper primary level and then move on to high school. The government looked at this whole exercise, realised that it was not reaching the goals that it had set itself at that particular school and decided to make changes. Again, the opposition knocked that direction.

I believe that, for a long time, we have had realistic goals in place. We have been able to assess whether or not we have been successful in reaching those goals, and I think there are many examples where we have been successful. The government does have goals and it is nonsense for the opposition to continue to propound the view that it does not. That matter needs to be cleared up. We are able to assess whether or not we are heading in the right direction as far as our plans are concerned, but we do acknowledge, and I think the Chief Minister has made this clear, that there is a need to improve promotion in relation to our direction and the means by which we are able to assess whether or not we are successful in reaching the goals that we have set ourselves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to my own electorate of Port Darwin, might I first of all say that I am very pleased to note that the section of Tiger Brennan Drive between Reichhardt Road and Hook Road is being sealed. Since it was constructed, Tiger Brennan Drive has been of tremendous benefit to people coming into the main central business area and for those people leaving their workplace to return home, and the improved access will provide even more benefit. In the Port Darwin area, major developments are still occurring. The developments in my electorate mentioned in the budget brought down by the Treasurer will total some \$73m over the next couple of years. It is this type of activity that injects life into the economy, and we must continue to pursue these types of projects. The spin-offs to the community are considerable and I would refer honourable members to the contribution to this debate made by the Minister for Industries and Development. He pointed out very clearly the multiplier effects that million dollar projects have in the economy of any community where they occur.

However, there is a need to watch carefully where we are heading with the various types of development. I want to make it quite clear that I am not advocating interference. I am a great believer in market forces playing their role, but we have to remember that it should be the market forces that cause us to expand and develop. Members would be aware that there is an oversupply of office accommodation in the Darwin city area at present and a number of local companies are concerned. I am not talking about the smaller companies; I am talking about large companies which have spent millions of dollars in the Northern Territory over a number of years. Of course, their fear is that, once these new developments are completed, tenants will move from existing buildings and they will be left with empty buildings. The same thing could apply in Alice Springs, and I am sure that many property owners and small businesses there are very much aware that this could occur.

Some of the companies that I am talking about have been in the Territory for some time. They have had a great deal of faith in the Territory. They have put their money where their mouth is, if I could put it that way, and they are fearful for their future. I believe that it is only natural that that view be put forward. I know that the planned office accommodation that

is being constructed in the central business district of Darwin is in a different bracket to existing office accommodation. It is up-market, and I want to make it very clear that it must remain up-market, otherwise there will be very serious problems indeed. However, I believe that we still need to be aware that an oversupply may be detrimental to our cause and care must be taken to ensure that that does not occur.

There are other developments such as the one I raised in question time this morning, the Cullen Bay marina, which will greatly benefit the community. We should be looking out for projects like that. There is concern about the supply of office space, as I am sure honourable members would be aware. We need to ensure that future developments occur as a response to definite needs and that market forces dictate which projects are proceeded with.

The third point that I wish to raise relates to respite care and residential care for disabled adolescents and adults, and socially incompatible people in our community. I am particularly pleased that the government has committed funds to meet the needs of these people. It is an area of government activity which is not considered to be a great vote catcher and I am a little surprised that neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the member for Nhulunbuy has supported the government in its move to address the needs of people who are handicapped in some way. I am surprised at that because they gave me a hard time on this issue when I was Minister for Health. The government should be congratulated for its commitment.

The cost of providing services for severely physically and intellectually disabled people and the provision of adequate mental health services is high. We all know that the government must provide them and, whilst I support the government's thrust and was actively involved in establishing services at their current level, I am concerned that the services that we provide should assist Territorians. Let me explain. Members would be aware that many states have difficulty in providing services and residential care for these unfortunate people. It costs millions and millions of dollars and it is natural for people who have children who are handicapped in some way to look for the best available care and relief services. It is natural for parents to move to places where their children will receive the best possible care.

We are facing our responsibilities in the Northern Territory. We have provided or begun to provide residential and respite care, while some of the states are not able to provide that care. My concern is that people from the states who are not receiving adequate assistance may move to the Northern Territory, putting at risk the services provided to Territory people. I am not sure how it would be done, but I ask the minister responsible to monitor the services which are being provided. Otherwise, the situation could quickly get out of hand and the very people whom we are hoping to assist at present, our physically and intellectually disabled people, will miss out. We have limited resources and I am sure all members are aware that we must ensure that they are used to benefit Territorians.

My final point, which was also referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, relates to complaints received from tourists about some of our facilities. There is no doubt that word of mouth is one of the best forms of publicity. We must, therefore, ensure that our visitors are well satisfied and that, when they return home, they are able to say pleasant things about the Northern Territory. It only takes one bad comment to destroy much of the good promotional work that has been carried out.

Every dry season, visitors come to my office to air their concerns about people who frequent the Mall. I have taken up this issue with the Lord Mayor of Darwin and the Darwin City Council and I hope that the problems will be addressed. I might say that Alice Springs has similar problems which need to be monitored. Wherever there is an attraction or where people congregate, we must ensure that they leave with good thoughts in their minds and do not start to spread the bad word. The tourist industry is a dynamic one and we must make sure that our image is good.

The future of the Territory is still bright despite the doom and gloom that so frequently emanates from the opposition in relation to the government's direction. There has been phenomenal growth in the number of industries in the Northern Territory since self-government. Ministers and other members have spoken about industrial growth in the course of this debate and I will not add to their comments. In closing, I again congratulate the Treasurer and all those people who have contributed to this responsible budget. As I have indicated, I hope that the ministers who are responsible for the areas that I have commented on in this speech will note my comments. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, soon after the budget was brought down, the Institute of Public Affairs gave some fairly strong praise to the Treasurer, calling it a responsible budget and saying that the Territory was living within its means. These comments were reported in The Australian. I have a great deal of time for the level of scholarship of the Institute of Public Affairs and I believe that the Treasurer can take its comments as very high praise.

There was, however, one criticism: that the detail of the budget is hard to follow. This morning, I received a letter from the Treasurer, as I assume other members did, suggesting that, if we have particular problems or questions in relation to the budget, we could put them in writing so that he could answer them fully as we proceed through the committee stage of the bill. If the budget papers had provided more information initially, which would certainly have involved some extra effort, we would not need that. I am sure that members of the community who bother to read budgets would have a much better impression if the government was a little more open with the details of the budget. I well recall how, at Giles House, Mrs Daff used to say that she welcomed anybody who wanted to visit and have a look around. She was happy for people to arrive unannounced to see what was happening. That created a very open atmosphere. I believe that, if the government was a little more open with the detail of the budget, it would create a better impression.

I can tell the Treasurer that people out in the community are groaning and moaning about water charges. I point out that we do not pay the full cost of providing it and therefore they do not get much support from me and I dare say they will have to tighten their belts in other areas and live with the increased cost.

I note that many projects mentioned in the budget papers are carry-overs from last year's budget. I suppose the government is doing what every private individual has to do: plan for certain things and, if the money is not there, adjust the time scale. That is understood, although it is somewhat unfortunate and, no doubt, some of the things mentioned in this budget will not be completed until next year.

One of the problems of the shortfall in money which came the government's way this year was that government payments seemed to be delayed. I picked up

this message in Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, The government has tended to become a slow payer of bills. I dare say that is an unavoidable consequence of money being tighter. Everybody wants to get the job done. There is pressure on government to get it done, but the money has not come in and payment has been delayed for various reasons.

One gets the impression behind the scenes that the reality of the matter is that the money cannot be paid out until it has come into the coffers. The government had a very good reputation for its payments in Alice Springs until the last 3 to 4 months. I had not had a complaint from anybody about the government being slow in its payments since the sub-Treasury was established, and that is something which I have praised in the past. I do not know what the government will do about it.

Pressure will be exerted both ways because a thing that has concerned me recently is a report that tenders for the drilling, equipping and commissioning of new bores in the Mereenie field, which supplies Alice Springs with its water, have been delayed and there is some fear in the community that our water supplies may not be adequate to meet demands in the coming summer. Those are the sort of pressures that the government will be under. It may well be holding off the tenders and delaying them, but the community will scream loud and long if the water supply is not maintained. That is a pressure on government in tight times.

I am also aware of concern in the community that the Alice Springs Hospital's maintenance program is not being kept up to scratch. It seems that it is being skimped on and there have been cutbacks on maintenance. I dare say you can go a certain way with cutbacks in this area, but I trust that common sense will prevail and that, where health services in particular are concerned, there will be no skimping on maintenance to keep the hospital in good running order. I am aware, as you are, Sir, that bed numbers in Alice Springs Hospital have been reduced considerably over the last couple of years to reduce maintenance costs.

I dare say one of the key problems with a budget in tight times is the fact that there are so many fixed costs relating to salaries, rents, equipment and so forth, which there is no choice but to pay. A consequence of that is that there is very little flexibility to fund new works. That is pretty obvious in this budget and it is a consequence of the tight times. Of course, new works are the key to sound development in many ways and are activities which the government can display and thus keep itself popular with the people. There is not much money around for such projects at the moment. I trust that the government will examine ways in which services can be provided by the private sector and encourage people in the public service, who have the courage to do so, to move to the private sector. That old word 'privatisation' was damned a while ago, but seems to be coming back into vogue. It is a bit like my dad's double-breasted suit which has been in and out of fashion about 25 times in his lifetime. It is becoming a word to be debated.

I have often said before that the private sector in Alice Springs has been making a considerable contribution to the economy of the town. One has only to look at the new developments there. The central business district has been transformed over the last 2 years and one can be grateful for that. That has been done with private money by people who were confident in Alice Springs and the Centre. Building seems to be coming to an end down there, and one can expect that there will be a downturn in the building industry. That is the impression I gain from the people down there and that is a matter of concern for those employed in the private sector.

One ray of hope on the horizon was mentioned the other day in the Centralian Advocate. It was announced that, out at White Range prospect area, at Arltunga, which had been noted as a gold area, a particular compound called alunite had been discovered in a very high grade quality. Alunite is the ore from which the element yttrium is obtained. It is a rare earth, apparently selling at the moment at about \$70 per kilo which would make it 2.5 times more valuable than uranium. I am not sure that the market is very large at this stage, but the article said that yttrium may well prove to be a valuable component in producing superconductors, which have been in the news. Superconductors are substances which, at low temperatures, virtually lose their electrical resistance and, as a result, there are no losses in power in the transmission of electricity via a superconductor. By this means, a magnet can be produced of sufficient strength to be capable of levitating even trains weighing many thousands of tonnes. The problem is that the temperature at which superconductivity occurs is still very low; the absolute minimum temperature, about minus 273°C, 0°K.

In the early days, and superconductivity was known over 100 years ago, it was only about 4°. New compounds have raised that to around the 60° to 70°K mark but it is still way down. What is needed is for superconductors to be able to operate at room temperature so that cooling is not needed, and it will certainly transform the world we live in if this is possible. I read a statement the other day saying that computers and the silicon chip, which we all rave about as having revolutionised so much, would be things of the past. Superconductors would replace them. It is an interesting area.

I will be asking the Minister for Mines and Energy to keep a very close eye on what is happening with the alunite and the yttrium there. We need a broader base to our economy. The Top End seems to have most of the mines. It is good that this discovery has been made in the Centre and that it has some potential. I will be asking the Minister for Mines and Energy to do all he possibly can to encourage the refining of the alunite, the production of yttrium and even to go to a stage, maybe with CSIRO and private investor help, of becoming involved with superconductors. It is something I would like to see reserved for Australian investors for a change. I have no objection to Japanese or other investors in the coal industry because coal is available all over the world. According to the article that I read, apart from China, this seems to be the only source at this stage of this particular element. For Australia's sake, we should do all we can to reap the full benefit of it. If I could put in a plug for central Australia, I urge that any work that can be possibly done in that area should be done.

I was pleased to note that there is to be further upgrading of the Stuart Highway. One project that was provided for in last year's budget is being done only now. It is good to see it going ahead but I am concerned at the speed at which the job is being done. It may be simply that the money is only available at a slow rate and the contractor is deliberately extending the job to cater for a smaller work force. In the meantime, the detour road is being used more than is necessary. There may be technical problems. I know that considerable compacting has to occur if you are to provide a decent base for your road. The road trains create ripples on the road and give the motorist the sensation of travelling across a ploughed paddock. Therefore, it is important that the base be made as firm as possible.

Only the other day, there was a head-on collision of 2 vehicles on that section of the detour road after rain and 5 people ended up in hospital. I had the dubious pleasure of travelling along it myself after it had been

raining lightly for a few hours. I found it extremely slippery and my windscreen wipers decided not to work. I had a petrol tanker behind me and I had no desire to stop in case he could not see me. I was hanging out the window until I was off the detour and able to rectify the fault. I was told by a man who was working on the road that they had spent all afternoon watering the road down with the intention of grading it to a better surface. Then, the rain came and he was in a bit of a quandary because he was concerned about safety, as well he might have been because, later on that evening or early next morning, the head-on accident occurred. However, it will be good when the road is completed. It would be good if the upgrading could occur a little more speedily so that motorists do not have to travel on detour roads for months.

One of the things that the government has to examine when it is framing a budget in tight times is how it can obtain maximum value for its money. I would commend an example to honourable members. One of the proposals of 'Towards the 90s' was the devolution of certain monetary powers and responsibilities to school councils. Last Christmas, one school council in my area was given \$20 000 towards carpeting of the school. I had the pleasure of handing the money over. It also took responsibility for some \$70 000 for the painting of the school. It invested the money and collected the interest on it. It is an old school which has been open for some 25 years. Most of the other schools have carpets. After a tentative start, the school council chased up quotes and had the rooms carpeted for \$22 000. The extra \$2000 came from interest.

With the help of Transport and Works officers, it set about the job of having the school painted. It rejected the lowest tender of \$38 000 because, after checking, it found that the tenderer had never been able to complete a job. If I recall correctly, it accepted a tender around \$50 000. That was considerably lower than the original estimate. Transport and Works officers helped supervise the project and worked in cooperation with the school council. Little jobs which were not considered to be satisfactory have been rectified, the school has been painted and everybody seems very happy.

However, there was some money left over. The school basketball court badly required resurfacing. It had a very good foundation except that there were little bits of gravel sticking out of it. A slide on the basketball court could well result in deep wounds rather than a simple graze. The school council had long been concerned about this. The Department of Transport and Works estimated that it would cost \$20 000 to resurface the court. To cut the story short, the council had the job done for \$6000 with a hot mix. It is a very smooth surface now which is far safer for the kids. That project was about 45th on the department's program and the school would have had little hope of having it done next year or even the year after. The job was done with the extra money.

The car parks at the school had only had patching done on them in the 25 years and the foundation was starting to deteriorate badly. It gave a poor impression of the school. As I recall, the council had a quote of \$16 600 from the hot mix people for the 2 car park areas, the basketball court and a couple of footpaths. Hopefully, the decision will be made to have these areas resurfaced. It is an excellent school but these improvements will make it just so much better. That is value for money.

That is one example of devolution to a school council. At first, it was a bit dubious about taking it on. I thank the Minister for Education who came down twice last year to talk to the council about the problems. He could not

give it any definitive answers on how it would save but the outcome has been excellent. Value for money has been obtained, good cooperation has been had with the Department of Transport and Works and this particular school has been upgraded 2 or 3 years earlier than it would have been under the normal program.

In other words, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is fat in the system. The estimates which have been given for getting the jobs done are pretty high. Maybe this is because the people in the departments want to ensure that a top class job is done. It has been demonstrated to me very clearly in this case that the money can be made to go further. I certainly would commend to any school council that it have the courage to try to make the money which is available to education go further, as this council has done.

The government has said that it wants the private sector to lead the recovery. I believe that is imperative. The level of taxation is a big problem although it is mainly a federal government matter. Nevertheless, the Territory government also taxes business although to a lesser degree. Tax is a real killer. It is a burden which is hurting and suppressing the private sector.

I noted with some pleasure the other day that the federal Labor government is considering a drop in the highest rate of taxation from 49% - remember it reduced it from 60% down to 49% - to around 40%. I sometimes think that the Labor act is to listen to what John Howard says, down him hell, left and crooked and, 6 months later, put into effect what he suggested. He must find a certain amount of satisfaction in the fact that this has been discussed within the federal Labor Party. It will not be governments that will save the country; it will be the people. It is within the power of governments, however, to adjust affairs so that people are encouraged to go into business, to employ other people and create the wealth that this country so badly needs to get itself out of the huge debt that we have, something like \$115 000m. It is very frightening.

In some ways, this is a pretty tough budget. The government has been cut short on the funds that it would have liked to have had. I believe it has acted fairly responsibly in the circumstances though I am sure that there are government departments which are short on money which would say they could do a far better job if there were more money. I hope that the size of our public service can be cut back, on a voluntary basis, and that people within the public sector can be persuaded and encouraged to move into the private sector and provide the services that the community needs in that way. That would allow more money to be put into the major operation which the government no doubt wishes to have in the community for the development of the Territory. With those few remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker, I conclude my address.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I heard with interest the remarks of the member for Port Darwin who told us the government has goals and plans. My only request is that the government lets us and the people of the Territory in on the secret because what I continue to see from the government are kites flown, pulled down, refurbished and flown off again. The problem with flying kites and pretending that they are plans or goals is ...

Mr Harris: What was 'Direction for the Eighties'?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member is 10 years out of date 'Directions for the 90s' is what ...

Mr Harris: I was asking about 'Direction for the Eighties'.

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

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, plummeting 'Towards the 90s' was brought in and enjoyed a brief burst of publicity before the minister had the grace to see the error of his ways and to realise what a massive rejection the document received from Territorians. I hope that is not taken as an example of the Territory's goals and plans. I hope, rather, that it would be classified as a kite-flying exercise and that goals and planning will become the order of the day for this government.

There were some points that I would like to discuss in the very short budget speech which the Minister for Education made. I recall that he had a sore throat and obviously that was the reason why he said so little rather than the fact that he had very little to say. A couple of points need to be addressed. There was one matter that he did not address in his speech but nibbled around the edges of. Things have become clearer since. I refer to his news today that there have been substantial cuts in proposed allocations from the federal government for training of Aboriginal teachers and the annexe in Alice Springs.

I have said before that if he wishes me to assist him, and provides me with the information, I will approach the federal government. I regret that he chose to go public before letting me know, but I will let him off this time. He has now given me a commitment that he will give me full details of both sides of that argument so that I have something to go to Mr Dawkins with. So far I have only received a copy of his telexed press release, and I hope that he does not expect me to attempt to fly on the basis of a press release and that he will give me some hard data and not just political rhetoric. Hopefully that will come and we will be able to work together to ensure that the very excellent program is maintained and, in fact, is accelerated as it should be.

He spoke about another matter that worried me and that was the reduction in funding for equipment and supplies to schools - a \$749 000 reduction to Schools North and an \$118 000 reduction to Schools South. He argued that it was effectively offset by a \$500 000 increase in the matching funds and the increase to \$6000 of the ceiling for schools. However, he went on to make what I thought was a rather bizarre observation which indicated his lack of knowledge of economics or of the situation in the poorer schools. He said that, because Aboriginal schools had a good record of raising that money, the measure would create no problems in those communities. Of course, this was in response to the argument that I put that dollar-for-dollar funding was not regressive. In fact, it allows the potential for increased fund-raising from the richer schools and puts an added burden on the poorer schools.

If we look at the school, not in isolation but in terms of the economy of the community in which it exists, it should be easy to see that if a community with an average per capita income of \$45 per week is expected to raise the same level of funds as a community where the average per capita income is \$320 per week - while it is an unfortunate fact that the first community may give comparatively more because it recognises the need to change its current situation - there is a far greater burden placed on the members of that community. The amount of money that community members lose bites far more deeply into that which they require to maintain their existence. It is not an amount which can be traded off against the forgone pleasure of seeing a show

or some entertainment which they can do without. Those people are existing on the borderline and the money that they raise cuts into that borderline. We end up paying for it in other ways through increased hospitalisation rates and through antisocial behaviour as people find that they cannot progress up the economic ladder. I believe that the government should have another look at the dollar-for-dollar system. I know that it is one of the hallmarks of 'Towards the 90s' and it is unfortunate that, even though that particular document has gone out the window, there are still elements in this budget which show evidence of its approach.

Territorians are becoming extremely worried about the education of their children. It is something which all parents feel most strongly about. The reaction to 'Towards the 90s' has shown that Territorians are not willing simply to turn a blind eye and trust the government. They want to look at the underlying philosophy. They wish to ensure that, while they live in the Northern Territory, they have access to an education system which is the equal of any other. They are worried by the fact that retention rates in the Northern Territory are only 35.7% which is the second-lowest rate in Australia and compares with a national average rate of almost 50%. The figure of 35.7% is a substantial increase on figures a few years ago and is a direct result of the move to senior and junior high schools, which I supported.

Mr Harris: Tell us about it.

Mr EDE: The honourable ex-minister will recall that I spoke quite strongly on the subject when I was president of the Sadadeen High School Council and was quite involved in negotiations at that time. I can certainly trace my support back over many years.

Unfortunately, bottlenecks are developing in the system. I refer particularly to Casuarina Secondary College. When we initially discussed the concept, we worked on the basis that senior high schools would not have more than 1000 students. I believe that the number at Casuarina now exceeds 1300 and that there is a real need for another senior high school in that area. You cannot continue to expand the numbers in a school without stretching the principal's span of control beyond breaking point. Other options may need to be considered such as the 2 schools in 1 concept, where 2 separate schools share various facilities. These may have to be looked at to determine which is the most cost-effective operation to allow the continued development of the senior high school system.

The minister's claim that he has reduced administrative costs simply does not hold up when one has an in-depth look at the budget. The allocation for the executive has increased by \$38 000, facilities and administration has increased by \$1.698m, personnel has increased by \$657 000 and the policy secretariat has increased by \$168 000 whereas all school-related allocations have been reduced. The minister achieves a global reduction in administrative costs by cutting those departmental functions which provide direct support to teachers, such as the Curriculum Development Branch. Those areas at headquarters level have taken the brunt of the reductions and they have offset the major increases in other administration areas which I have just read out.

Another example of the same process occurs at the Darwin Institute of Technology. Teaching functions in that institution have been reduced by \$277 000 this year whereas the non-teaching function was increased by \$665 000. This shows a lack of commitment, at least in that institution, towards ensuring that administrative costs are kept down and that resources available for teaching are increased.

Unfortunately, as we heard this morning, students at DIT are apparently expected to bear the brunt of a new fee or administrative charge, or whatever the minister wishes to call it. I notice that, when he answered the question this morning, he called it a fee when he was referring to Alice Springs. By the time he had moved 1600 km up the track to Darwin, he was calling it a charge. Obviously, he realised that the levying of fees for TAFE is illegal under our agreements with the federal government. He may be able to find some way of classifying it as a charge or something else, but it is illegal as a fee. He was not able to tell us which courses will have to bear the brunt of these charges. I do not know whether it is true but I have heard stories that it will be about \$260 for apprentice courses, bridging courses and others which improve basic skills whereas it will only be \$40 for courses which upgrade the skills of people who are generally in the work force already. If that is actually what will happen, it seems rather incongruous.

I have spoken in another debate about the classification creep that has occurred amongst senior executive staff in the department. I spoke of a particular person who received a salary increase of \$9548 per annum whilst another 2 received increases of \$4774 per annum. Unfortunately, that has not been explained so far and I continue to wait for the minister to justify increases of that nature, which were not associated with any wage case but were, as I understand it, cases of classification creep which was achieved outside normal promotional guidelines.

Bush schools are suffering because of the cutbacks in stores. I hope that the member for Port Darwin will understand the point that I am about to make because he made a real attempt to visit bush schools. The government stores, vehicles and personnel were the lifeline for those small schools. The staff understood what facilities were already in place, the brand of refrigerator, the type of stove and so on. They had the practical knowledge, on a day-to-day basis, of the situation in each school and were able to act as agents for the schools when dealing with the central stores section. It may be that some minimal savings are being achieved through the centralising of the stores in Darwin. I suspect that the savings are basically one-off and are being achieved by the sale of the stores and ceasing to lease some of the stores buildings down the track. There may therefore appear to be savings at present but I believe that we will not save in the long term because we are losing the essential contact with the schools themselves. The teachers no longer have the same lifeline and they are not getting the degree of support that they felt they had before. That is damaging their morale and their ability to educate students.

The argument about secondary education in the bush will continue. We were all agog with the idea that we would move into a new system based on community education centres. Somehow it has all been put on the back-burner and will not happen. If you happen to need that particular type of education next year, it is too bad. Of course, I am happy that Willowra in my electorate will get one of those centres this year and I certainly hope that the cash follows the commitment, but I feel particularly sorry for those Aboriginal students around the Territory who have been told: 'We are sorry about this year but we just do not have the funds. You will just have to miss out because you happened to be born in a particular year. Maybe your younger brothers will be able to benefit later'. It is a most unfortunate omission by the government. It can certainly argue that it did not have the funds available, but if we do not provide something in the way of secondary education for students coming out of primary school, we will triple future problems. We need to equip those students with skills in order to come to grips with the problems in those places.

There are continual stories relating to immense internal problems at DIT. We repeatedly hear about low staff morale and courses which receive insufficient funds to continue. Those are not the only problems. I have previously asked the minister to give me details of the number of Territorians studying in local tertiary institutions. I have asked him to tell me how many Territorians are undertaking full-time study at the University College. I keep hearing global figures which encompass part-time students, full-time students, overseas students and interstate students. It is clear that we are subsidising the education of students at the Northern Territory University College. I will go along with that for Territorians, but I have some problems when my taxes are used to subsidise students from interstate. I would like the minister to tell me exactly what level of subsidisation we provide for those students and I will be raising the matter in much more detail in the committee stage.

It is clear that, in relation to education for the tourist industry, the Northern Territory is about to suffer from the government's commitment to a strategy which has not been properly planned. This matter was raised in Townsville recently at a seminar on tourism which I attended with some of the leading people in the industry. It is something that the opposition raised in the last Territory elections and something that we will have to continue to raise. Time and again, I have called for this government to work in consultation with the industry to plan for the growth and development of tourism.

There are 5 steps which need to be taken. Firstly, we need to identify potential attractions. When we have done that, we need to conduct environmental impact studies so that we can minimise the impact of tourism in terms of degradation. There are finite limits to the number of people who can visit any natural attraction within a specified time. If, for example, you wish to visit the Grand Canyon in the United States, you must book 2 years in advance. I can imagine the outcry which would erupt from the government if there were a booking system for Uluru and people had to book 3 days in advance because the numbers were so substantial. We can ensure that we never reach that situation by increasing the number and variety of our tourist attractions. It seems to me that government members do not seem to understand just what a wealth of tourist attractions we have in central Australia. For example, just to take our particular patch, we have the East MacDonnells, the George Gill Ranges, the Napperby Lakes - and I could go on and on. There are beauty spots out there that have not even been looked at.

Anybody who is involved in financing tourist ventures will tell you that what normally happens is that somebody comes along and says that he has a block of land and wants to get into the tourist industry. That is completely the wrong approach. You do not have a block of land and then bring the industry to the land. Resorts do not make tourist destinations; hotels do not make tourist destinations. There is an attraction and resorts are created around that particular attraction ...

Mr Perron: How long did it take you to work this out, Brian? Has this taken 43 years to surface?

Mr EDE: I am not that old.

Mr Coulter: Has anybody handed him Roger Steele's 1979 tourist marketing report?

Mr EDE: It is necessary for the government to start to take some action in this regard. Members opposite can interject as much as they like and say that they were at this position 4 or 5 years ago. Why haven't they done anything about it? Where is the research going on into those areas in the East MacDonnells? Where is the research into the George Gill Ranges? Where are the people looking at how they can open up these areas? Where is the identification of market sectors, which is the next planning step required? Where is the coordination to ensure that the development is appropriate to the actual market?

Mr Speaker, you then have to start identifying your infrastructure requirements so that the government works out what infrastructure is necessary to fit in with the input from the tourist operators and developers. The training of personnel has to come in very early. We have to ensure that, as part of an integrated plan for the development of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory, we are training Territorians to work within it. We have to stop this idea of looking at our youth as hewers of wood and porters of water, as drink waiters and as chambermaids. We must start training them for the higher echelons, and that is not to say that we should stop training at the lower level either, because that is an entry point into the industry.

I was really browned off when I saw the way the government cut the drink waiters' course in Alice Springs. It tried to give the impression that a course still exists but is attracting insufficient numbers. The course that was cut was conducted at night and it was replaced by a course in the middle of the day when nobody could attend. I know about that course. My nephew managed to enrol for the last one. As a result, for the first time, he has a chance of getting a job in Alice Springs. It was a good course which provided good entry points into the industry. Instead, the government is providing all this money, I believe, for a baking kitchen and a bakery course. None of the bakeries in town will accept that as being relevant to their needs because they are not into that type of baking. They are into the normal, high volume bread production, and that does not fit in with the requirements of the tourist sector either. Large amounts of money are being pumped into that because somebody saw it as a brilliant idea.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government's problems in Aboriginal affairs were really brought home to me by a letter I received from the Yuendumu outstation council. It was sent to the Director of the Office of Local Government, Alice Springs, with a copy to myself. It states:

Dear Sir,

As it has been difficult to contact people and to know what department is in charge of what, could you please supply us with a list of names and phone numbers, and what departments they are - that is, who is in charge of drilling new bores, who is in charge of upgrading roads etc. As your department has been reorganised, it leaves us quite confused, and we think that it is your responsibility to notify us of any changes as it can make it difficult for us out here.

That says it all, because I recall that this point was raised at the land council meeting near Papunya. The Chief Minister spoke at that meeting, which I also attended. He stated then that he would commit the government to providing a simple booklet which would indicate where people are in government departments and who one should see if one is looking for particular types of grants or funding. It is most unfortunate that, a couple of years later, the

Chief Minister has not taken that matter up because the recent changes have left everybody completely confused.

It amazed me when I heard that essential services virtually disappeared from the budget process at one stage and nobody noticed it had gone because everybody thought someone else was looking after it. If I had not heard about that from a very senior public servant, I would have said that such a thing was impossible but, in fact, it happened. The government then scrounged around and attempted to find a few dollars here and a few dollars there to see if it could put it back together again. However, I have been advised by organisations involved, for example, in the building of housing, that there are insufficient funds for connections this year and therefore we will have houses but no connections.

Talking about housing, it was a great disappointment to me that the government, knowing what a backlog there is in Aboriginal housing out bush and knowing the social impact of that, having decided that it would cut back on its expenditure on housing in urban areas because of diminished demand, did not look at the rural areas, where the rate of housing provision is not even keeping up with the natural increase in the numbers of people requiring housing. It is most unfortunate that, while the amounts of funding have increased, we still have not achieved that level; we are actually falling behind. Even though we are falling behind there, we find that the Northern Territory government has taken 10% off the top of the money that it receives under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement. It takes that money for itself, puts the other 90% into the construction of housing, but cannot bring itself to put any funding from its own sources into the program for housing out bush. In years gone by, when there was strong growth in demand in urban areas, we knew that the government would not do much about rural housing. However, this year, with the drop in demand in urban areas, the government should have taken the opportunity to try to catch up with some of the demand that has existed out bush for years.

There are many other areas that I would like to cover but, as usual, time does not permit. However, I would like to slip one across for the Minister for Transport and Works who is doing his act over there. I would refer him to last year and the year before when I was told that there would be some further development on the Tanami Road. Since then, a couple more goldmines have opened in the area, many more tourists pass through and many more transports use the road to carry cattle. However, there is still no extension of the bitumen. As I think every honourable member who has been Minister for Transport and Works remembers, I have raised this particular problem on previous occasions but to no avail.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, with the possible exception of the member for Stuart, I think we are all aware that it is not easy for government to maintain high levels and quality of service to the public and, at the same time, provide an impetus for private development when faced with reductions in budgetary allocations in the order of 10% in real terms. I will not be pursuing a diatribe of doom and gloom, the likes of which we have just heard from the member for Stuart. My view of the budget is rather more enlightened and appreciative than his.

As far as the electorate of Katherine is concerned, the level and quality of services provided by government is very pertinent, given that the population of Katherine has increased from about 3000 in 1978 to more than double that number today. Katherine is the fastest-growing regional centre in the Territory and, indeed, one of the fastest growing centres in Australia.

Predicting growth of this magnitude and meeting the demands of an expanding community which, coincidental to expansion is also experiencing significant social restructuring, is not easy for government or its departments or agencies. Fortunately, however, the Northern Territory government's initiative in many areas has assisted in meeting this challenge, one example being the commissioning of a social planning report in Katherine last year. This will identify any specific areas of concern in the provision of human services caused by this rapid expansion, thus providing government with the opportunity to respond further in the future. Another example of this initiative is that both the present and previous CLP governments have demonstrated a responsible attitude to the needs of the Katherine region and committed considerable financial resources to the area, thus ensuring that the level and quality of services available to the community has been sustained.

Significant development of government infrastructure has taken place in Katherine in recent years and this has included a considerable number of housing units, road works, expansion of town water supply and reticulation, sewerage reticulation, upgrading and extension of the electricity reticulation system, both in and around Katherine and to the communities of Pine Creek, Beswick, Barunga, Mataranka and Larrimah, and the construction of a new gas-fired power station recently completed at a cost of some \$33m. There have been other major developments and, as one would expect in a rapidly expanding community, there are outstanding needs. I shall refer to those shortly.

The government has not been alone in meeting the needs of our expanding community or responding to change. The private sector has responded very positively and undertaken considerable development over a broad spectrum of business activities in both Katherine and Mataranka in recent years. These developments, I believe, have greatly improved the private sector facilities and services available to consumers and, whilst in general terms business opportunities have been enhanced, some sectors, such as the retail traders, are experiencing some difficulties. Whilst increased competition amongst retail traders has been of great benefit to consumers, many traders are experiencing current downturns in trade and some are faced with the need to restructure their business radically if they are to remain viable. Unfortunately, such circumstances, which result largely from market forces, are normally experienced when dramatic changes occur in communities. This has certainly been the case in Katherine in recent years and particularly this year. A fine example of that is that the retail trading floor space has increased from something in the order of 2000 m² to 8000 m² in the Katherine shopping precincts since June this year.

I am not suggesting that government should interfere with what is essentially a commercial situation, nor do I suggest that further business opportunities do not exist in Katherine. Indeed, it is fair to say that they will continue to emerge as the town grows. I simply wish to illustrate to the business people considering establishing businesses in Katherine that they should fully assess perceived opportunities before moving into the area.

I would like now to deal specifically with some matters arising from the budget and some of the needs I referred to earlier. I thought it very responsible of the budget to provide this financial year something in the order of \$7.6m for the provision of a revised structure for the nursing service in the Northern Territory and I believe that this is a very responsible approach and that it will enhance the nursing service in the Northern Territory to the benefit of our community and of all Territorians.

It was unfortunate that, leading up to the Territory budget, the opposition and others saw fit to mount a scaremongering campaign which indicated that there would be widespread removal of nurses from the community areas. The community nursing sister is well known and the nurses and the services they provide are well respected throughout the Northern Territory. It was unbecoming of the opposition to act in that way. It created considerable unrest and uncertainty in the rural communities. I know that, in Katherine, I received many complaints and inquiries in relation to this. It was very pleasing to see that the government's policy on this matter was exactly the opposite to those rumours that were put about by the opposition. That clearly illustrates the irresponsible way in which it operates from time to time.

As far as health services in Katherine are concerned, this year has seen the opening of a 32-bed ward which will cater for hospital services in Katherine for some time and expand the opportunities for hospitalisation in Katherine. The ward is of very high quality and provides a high level of service. Whilst it is not fully operational at the moment, it will no doubt become so as the town further expands. It is pleasing to see that we have the ability to expand in that regard as the services are needed.

In regard to services at the Katherine Hospital, I would like to flag the need for a new obstetric ward and operating theatre. Whilst the current services are commendable, we must look to the future. I think that it is appropriate to indicate the need for additional services and indeed I believe that the provision of an obstetric ward and operating theatre in the coming years in Katherine will further enhance the services available to the people of the community and that development would also make existing ward areas available for other services at the hospital.

I had the pleasure last weekend, on behalf of the Minister for Health and Community Services, to open the sporting complex in Katherine that is operated by the YMCA. The Northern Territory government provided a contribution in 1986-87 of \$140 000 as an establishment grant to meet leasing costs for this facility. It has been operating for some months and I am pleased to say that it has been very well patronised and is providing a service to a broad section of the Katherine community. Indeed, this facility provides services not only to youth but to pensioners who are already using it for their functions. The services provided include aerobics, a gymnasium, roller skating, meeting areas, the spa and other leisure facilities for youth. I believe that this facility will provide an ideal opportunity for the youth of Katherine to spend their leisure time pursuing productive activities whereas otherwise they might be attracted to other less productive areas. The youth of the town will be tomorrow's senior citizens and it is incumbent on us to provide services such as this. I congratulate the minister for the assistance that he has provided.

Another side benefit is that the services of the YMCA will flow on across the community. There is a need to upgrade other sporting facilities in town. I do not see this as a responsibility that lies solely on the shoulders of government. The Katherine Town Council will need to play a significant part, but it is another area that we must at least investigate as we consider the requirements for expanded services as the town continues to grow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, turning to matters of education, a new primary school was opened at Katherine East at the beginning of this year. It is a well-appointed school. I know that the members of its teaching staff are very happy and I receive good reports on a regular basis from the parents of

children who attend the school. They are very satisfied with the quality of service that their children receive. It was again my pleasure a few weeks ago, on behalf of the Minister for Education, to name this school the MacFarlane Primary School in honour of the well-known MacFarlane family. Indeed, Les MacFarlane is a name well-known to all honourable members. He served in this Assembly for many years and held the office of Speaker for 10 years.

The new Katherine High School is presently under construction, at a cost of \$11m this financial year. It is due for completion in 1988 and is situated at Katherine East, adjacent to the MacFarlane Primary School. This facility will replace the existing high school at the end of Warburton Street, which has outlived its usefulness in terms of the services that are now required in an expanding community. It is pleasing to see that this new facility is being provided. It will offer services beyond those we normally expect in an educational institution and will be of great benefit right across the community. The existing high school will become vacant and its land and facilities will no doubt be used to benefit the community and meet its needs.

In respect of lands and housing, it is significant to note that, despite the overall decrease in the Housing Commission's construction program this year, Katherine received a significant percentage of the Housing Commission's construction program. This further reflects the government's commitment to development in Katherine. A further 42 flats and 22 houses will be constructed this financial year and that will assist considerably in the provision of housing as the town expands. In addition to this construction program for new housing units, there is a redevelopment program to upgrade 10 houses and 20 flats, and 71 residential allotments will be purchased in Katherine East to provide for the Housing Commission's building program. I understand that some of these allotments will also be sold to the RAAF for construction of homes for defence personnel.

I turn now to police services in Katherine. I notice that \$760 000 has been committed this year to provide for 27 new police positions in the Northern Territory. There are currently 45 officers and 4 police aides in the Katherine region. 31 officers are based in Katherine itself, which is an increase of 3 since 1979. As I have indicated, the population of Katherine has more than doubled in that time and we are indeed fortunate that the quality of police services in the Northern Territory - and Katherine is no exception - has been excellent, a fact which has been appreciated by constituents in my electorate. Despite the excellent efforts of the police force so far, I believe there is a need for an increase in the number of police in Katherine. Court records bear this out. A cursory glance indicates a much greater volume of cases and I hope that we can look forward to the allocation of some of those 27 new positions within the coming 12 months.

I would also like to acknowledge the construction of a new combined complex for police, fire and emergency services. It will be located on the Stuart Highway in Katherine East at a cost of \$3.5m. Parts of the existing police station are 30 years old and are totally inadequate to meet present demands for services to the people of Katherine and a suitable working venue for police in the town. It is commendable that the Northern Territory government has provided this amount of money to build this new complex. In addition, I hope that an increase in police strength will greatly enhance the level of police services in Katherine.

Other budget allocations of a more minor nature are nonetheless significant. These include the floodplain mapping program which the Power and

Water Authority will undertake in the Katherine and Daly River system. Katherine is located on a floodbank, partially within the floodplain of the Katherine River, and is very prone to flooding. It is significant that the floodplain mapping program will be expanded and will no doubt provide an opportunity for greater utilisation of lands in the Katherine-Daly basin. It could lead to improved flood protection for the township of Katherine and other centres along the river system.

Earlier this year, the Northern Territory Tourist Bureau expanded its services to Katherine, taking over the operations of the Katherine Tourist Promotion Association which formerly operated the tourist information centre in Katherine. Whilst the Katherine Tourist Promotion Association provided a good service in the interim, the demand clearly outstretched its ability to continue to do so and it is pleasing to see an allocation in this year's budget for the Tourist Commission to operate in Katherine. It has for some months been providing a very valuable service to the tourist industry in Katherine. Many operators in Katherine hope that the service will be extended to provide a full range of Northern Territory Tourist Bureau services, including the sale of tour tickets, forward motel bookings and the like, thus providing tourists with the total range of services which they can now obtain from the bureau offices in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Related to tourism development in Katherine is the expenditure of some \$750 000 on roads, water, sewerage and other improvements to public areas at the Katherine Gorge National Park. The park, as we have all heard in an earlier debate today, plays a significant role in the tourist industry in Katherine. The developments provided for in this year's budget will greatly enhance the services that are available to tourists and local people who use the park.

This year will also see the private development, at a total cost of \$5.5m, of a Northern Territory government complex. It is intended that the first stage of this complex will be operational by July next year and will house some Northern Territory government departments. During ensuing years, additional office space accommodation will be provided and other departments will move into the centre, creating a one-stop shop for people seeking the services of the Northern Territory government. It will also locate many public servants, who are currently spread all around the town, in the CBD, thus providing additional opportunities for central business district traders to avail themselves of business opportunities and to expand their business operations. This development, together with the Katherine High School and the Housing Commission program will of course provide expanded economic and employment opportunities in Katherine.

I believe that moves to distance the Territory economy from a position of dependence on public-sector activity to one of enhanced private-sector activity and development have been welcomed by the business sector. I can, for example, indicate that small construction companies in Katherine are very appreciative of the Housing Commission's progressive move from its current position as a general supplier of housing to that of a more welfare-oriented authority. This will enable the private construction industry to play a more significant role in housing construction.

Whilst it was necessary to increase some service charges in the budget, I believe it is significant that the Treasurer was able to avoid the introduction of new taxes. Most significantly, the Territory's unique record in bringing down balanced budgets has been maintained for the tenth successive year. Significant development of our oil, gas and mineral resources, together

with expanding tourism and defence activities will, I am sure, assist in the Territory's march towards greater economic development and independence.

I cannot condone the comments made by opposition members regarding the government's lack of planning. We have seen the member for Stuart fail even to recognise the plans that have been pointed out to him this afternoon. It seems that the opposition is totally determined not to recognise the planning which has taken place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the positive implications of the Appropriation Bill for the Katherine area and to indicate some additional areas of need to ensure continued growth and stability and the provision and level of services commensurate with the expanding needs of the region in keeping indeed with this government's established record. It is my pleasure to congratulate the Treasurer on the preparation of the budget and to support the bill.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak in the debate on the Appropriation Bill, I would like firstly to commend the Treasurer for bringing down a balanced budget despite the present financial constraints. In addressing the issues for which I have shadow responsibility, especially areas relating to the Department of Health and Community Services, I would like to say that I was very pleased to learn that the allocation for that department has increased this financial year to about \$194.5m. This is very significant because the Northern Territory has depended on services which other states are very fortunate to have.

It is pleasing to see that the department and the minister concerned has taken into account the concerns of the Nurses Federation in the Northern Territory and, over a period, has structured a nursing career which meets the requirements of the people who provide those services to us. Mr Deputy Speaker, you may be aware that this side of the House has been calling for such a structure for some time. It is pleasing to see that the government has now taken that advice on board. I commend the former Minister for Health, the member for Port Darwin, for taking our advice on board.

In relation to developments in areas such as Katherine, it is pleasing to note that the Katherine Hospital is undergoing upgrading to be able to cope with the increased numbers as a result of the development of the Tindal Air Base. As the member for Katherine has indicated, services will certainly increase within the area. For example, the provision of buses and other infrastructure will have to be considered. I believe that the upgrading of the Katherine Hospital is a welcome sign.

I was very pleased also to note that the Minister for Health and Community Services indicated that funds would be forthcoming for the physically handicapped in the Northern Territory. At times, we have stood up in this Assembly to express our concerns in respect of physically-handicapped people.

It is also pleasing to note that the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments will jointly fund further child-care centres in the Northern Territory to the tune of about \$400 000. I only hope that those child-care centres do not operate only in centres such as Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin because there are people in isolated communities such as Nhulunbuy and Alyangula who sometimes require such services. I have many people come to me, especially at Alyangula through the Women's Advisory Council, seeking funds for child-care facilities at times when husbands or wives are on shift work, mainly with the Groote Eylandt Mining Company. I

would certainly urge that such services should be provided at places outside the major centres.

It was pleasing to note that there seems to be an increase in the funding of psychiatric services and that is something that we have been pursuing in this Assembly for a long period. The new renal dialysis service is certainly welcome news in Alice Springs. I mention again that that is one of the needs that we have been stressing for some time.

I was very pleased to hear that the Borroloola community will receive a new health centre. The town seems to be growing very fast. A new town council was established there recently and numbers of tourists are starting to come from Queensland and from Alice Springs. The new health centre will certainly serve a need in that area.

The Minister for Health and Community Services indicated further funding in relation to combating AIDS in the Northern Territory. He also indicated that additional funds are being sought from the Commonwealth government. I would indicate that the opposition supports him in his quest for funding from our federal counterparts in relation to this most dangerous sickness that is encroaching on our community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in turning to my other portfolio responsibilities, I will now speak on matters relating to correctional services in the Northern Territory. The minister responsible for correctional services has recently spoken in this House concerning the wilderness camps which have been set up by the Northern Territory government to combat the overcrowding in our jails. I certainly support that initiative. In relation to the establishment of such camps, Arnhem Land would be an area which this government ought to consider because of the vastness of the country. Many people from Groote Eylandt and communities such as Numbulwar, Roper River and Nhulunbuy are brought here to serve sentences and sometimes the jails have been overcrowded.

I remember visiting Darwin Prison when the matter of overcrowding was given some publicity. I also visited the Beatrice Hill camp to observe the operations there. I thought it was very remarkable and I thank the minister for allowing me to visit. Once again, I stress that I support the wilderness camp idea and I believe that the Northern Territory government should continue to use these as a means of rehabilitating minor offenders.

I was very pleased to hear that the detention centres at Malak House in Darwin and Giles House in Alice Springs will receive staffing support. This is great news because of the number of juvenile offenders in the Northern Territory, especially in Alice Springs. A detention centre will have to be considered for Katherine in the near future because of the size of the township. I am sure that the member for Katherine would welcome that. After all, earlier he stated that Katherine is clearly expanding and a recent case would have indicated to us that the more people there are within a township, the greater the need to provide that township with police, fire, health and other services. Let us not forget that children are involved when a town is young and growing. I believe Katherine is one of the places where the minister should consider setting up another establishment like Giles House for the detention of juveniles.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to hear what the minister said in general terms about the Department of Health's major proposals for 1987-88 in terms of structuring community services. I hope that the government will not only look at the needs of people in the main townships but also the needs of people in the remote communities.

I would like to touch on matters of interest to me within my constituency and to matters of general interest to the Northern Territory. The Deputy Chief Minister announced that housing in Aboriginal communities will increase as a result of a survey conducted in 1985, which indicated that there was a shortfall of 4176 dwellings in the Northern Territory. That was very good news because members who represent remote communities have often stressed the need for the provision of adequate housing in those communities. This lack of housing applies particularly in my electorate and in the electorates of Stuart and MacDonnell. People are still living in sheds and shacks. In fact, a survey was done on Milingimbi the other day and one house had about 35 people living in it. I stress that point again. The Aboriginal housing program and the establishment of an Aboriginal Housing Advisory Council outlined by the the Minister for Lands and Housing is welcomed and I hope that the government will continue to pursue those initiatives.

He also indicated that he was pleased to announce some projects in respect of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. The minister indicated that the authority was in the process of preparing pamphlets and brochures for tourists. These will advise that areas they visit may contain a site of significance or a site that may be of interest to them. This is being done in cooperation with the Department of Lands and Housing and the Department of Transport and Works. I believe that that initiative will certainly attract more tourists to the Northern Territory and enable them to understand something about the country that they are travelling through. However, I stress to the minister that I would like to see his department and the government practise what they preach because, so often, ministers speak in budget debates and indicate that they will follow a certain policy. Later, they forget about that policy even though it may be of importance to the people of the Territory and, in this case, particularly those who are trying to attract tourists to the Territory. I believe that Aboriginal culture is one of the main drawcards for encouraging tourists to come to the Northern Territory.

During the debate on a statement which the Minister for Industries and Development made on the fishing industry in the Northern Territory, I stressed to him that 60% of the Northern Territory is owned by Aboriginal people or is in the process of becoming Aboriginal land. Once again, I stress the fact that the minister ought to start taking advice by approaching the Northern Land Council and any other organisation that is willing to develop industries, whether they be on a very small scale or very large. I am sure that people in Arnhem Land would be willing to cooperate with the honourable minister and his department. I am aware that he has already taken the initiative to discuss such issues with the Northern Land Council. The people at Groote Eylandt are in the process of negotiating with Kailis Fisheries to expand its operations at Bartalumba Bay and I hope that that will eventuate in the very near future. In fact, when I spoke with the people at Bartalumba Bay, I was advised that Kailis Fisheries is offering them a joint venture and some form of equity in the fishing industry on Groote Eylandt. Certainly, I would like something like that to flourish in the Northern Territory, especially in areas where fish are abundant, as is the case at Groote Eylandt.

On tourism generally, we have heard much talk today about Katherine Gorge, Ayers Rock and Kakadu, and I believe we always will. The announcement by the Northern Territory's Treasurer that, in future, he will look forward to having Aboriginal people involved in the tourism industry is certainly something that I look forward to. We have often stressed that fact. I would only hope that it begins to be evidenced in areas other than Darwin and Alice Springs because we have a great deal of land to exploit that will benefit the Northern Territory - not only my people, but all Northern Territorians.

Mining is one of the biggest money spinners for the Northern Territory and I believe the next big step will be our involvement in negotiations and discussion on ELOs and having some sort of participation in the actual ventures. As the member for Stuart said, the land councils are in the process of having 10 meetings each month on ELOs throughout Arnhem Land. In fact, I was at a meeting in Arnhem Land, over a period of 2 days, at which some 400 or 500 people were involved. It concerned a large area of land near Cape Wilberforce where CRA has an interest. I have no idea what CRA is looking for but we sat there for 2 days. It was interesting to see that the local people decided to let CRA explore after a period of time. Where traditional owners have some rights, the consultation process can work. I hope that the mining industry takes into account the social aspects of their activities in relation to my people, especially in Arnhem Land where the people are tribally oriented. They are not like the people from down south; they like to continue to live within their own cultures on outstations and in similar environments. Some would like to venture further into activities such as fish farms and prawn farms so long as the management of the project allows them to have total participation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, another matter I would like to raise concerns the placement of a policeman on Groote Eylandt. There are 12 police officers based on the island at present and I have been approached by a number of people to ask the Chief Minister to consider the placement of a policeman there. I believe that the Aboriginal Task Force is examining the matter and hopefully that request will be met. There is also a great need for a social welfare officer on the island. Gemco provides liaison services but, especially in mining townships, the services of a trained social worker are appreciated. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

During the adjournment debate this evening, I would like to comment on some remarks that were made both in question time and debate today by the member for Stuart in relation to TAFE administration charges and the possibility that they may apply. I have been advised that the TAFE Advisory Council, TAFEAC, is discussing the matter at present. It is considering a proposal for a charge for diploma courses in line with advanced education courses and a similar fee of about \$250. It is also considering charging a variety of fees, from \$10 to \$50, for a range of other courses. However, I can assure honourable members that there is definitely no proposal to charge fees of \$250 for apprenticeship and similar courses and any such claims are totally ridiculous. They are aimed at creating panic amongst younger members of our community. When TAFEAC has completed its discussions and advised me, I will certainly be in a position to pass that advice on.

Some rather harsh comments have been made this afternoon about the Territory's education system and where it is heading. I find it rather amazing that we have the best-staffed and resourced system in Australia and yet we still hear all this doom and gloom from the opposition spokesperson on education. We have increased our retention rates by more than any other system in Australia and there is no doubt of our pre-eminent position in terms of staffing and resources. The member for Stuart's performance is certainly an embarrassment both to his party and this Assembly. He continues to take an

extremely negative attitude regarding education and also to paint a picture which bears no relation to the facts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I would like to discuss the appointment of Mr Justice Brian Martin to the bench of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. Honourable members would be aware of His Honour's long and distinguished service to the Northern Territory and it is a great pleasure to see such an eminent Territorian appointed to our Supreme Court. His Honour was first admitted to practice in New South Wales in 1959. He moved to Alice Springs in 1963 where he commenced practice as a barrister and solicitor and established a successful legal practice which still bears his name. His Honour soon became deeply involved in the Alice Springs community. He was a member of and later the Chairman of the Alice Springs Town Management Board for about 3 years prior to July 1971, when he was elected an alderman and Deputy Mayor of the first Alice Springs Town Council. His time in the council culminated in his service as Mayor of Alice Springs from 1972 to his retirement from the council in 1975. In 1978, His Honour chaired a committee established by the Legislative Assembly to inquire into the welfare needs of the Northern Territory. Two years later, he was appointed by the then Minister for Lands to chair a committee of inquiry to investigate the question of pastoral land tenure in the Northern Territory.

His Honour moved from Alice Springs to Darwin to take up the position of Solicitor General and Secretary of the Department of Law in 1981. In 1982, he was appointed a Queen's Counsel and, in the same year, he became a Member of the Order of the British Empire for services to the community. I point out to honourable members that His Honour's service to the Northern Territory community is continuing through his work as a director of the Australian Bicentennial Authority and chairman of its Northern Territory council, posts which he has held since 1980. His Honour was also a member of the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee from 1981 until he moved to the bench. Honourable members will appreciate that, as one of the most eminent lawyers in the Territory, His Honour brings a wealth of legal experience to the bench of the Supreme Court.

As Solicitor General, he was responsible for examining and advising this government on diverse issues, including constitutional development, constitutional matters generally, criminal, civil and commercial law. He also played a major role in restructuring the office of the Solicitor General to make it consistent with the position in other jurisdictions. I am indeed pleased that a Territorian of such calibre has accepted this appointment to the bench and I am sure that the Northern Territory will continue to receive the benefits of his service for many years to come.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the last few days, there has been considerable publicity about St John Ambulance and I must say that I am pleased that, as a result of that publicity and the suspicion that some things have gone seriously wrong with that organisation, St John Ambulance announced that Mr Tom Pauling QC will chair an inquiry into its operations. I certainly welcome this. I am pleased that the inquiry will be both open and closed in the sense that submissions are invited from anybody and that those submissions will then be kept confidential to the inquiry. That is only right and proper. I would hope that another essential element of the inquiry will be that its findings are made public.

Politicians need to be very careful in commenting on organisations like St John. It has a well-recognised, world-wide reputation for providing good and efficient service in a wide variety of situations. Certainly, in the

Northern Territory, St John has provided a very high level of service indeed and I want to make it clear before I proceed with my comments that I recognise that role. I want to put on record my appreciation of the work done over the years by both the full-time and volunteer staff of St John in the Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the last few weeks, a number of people inside and outside St John have brought to my attention serious reservations about its operation. I think it only appropriate, particularly now that the inquiry has been announced, that I place on the public record my concerns about the operation of St John. I certainly intend to follow this up and communicate my comments to Mr Tom Pauling QC. The thing that concerns me most in the comments which have been made to me is that the St John Ambulance service has been jeopardised as a result of an overstaffed and poorly-organised administrative structure which has interfered with the operational and training functions of the brigade. Richard Wickens, the ambulance officer who appeared on the 7.30 Report last night, put it very well. He said that there now remain 12 on-road ambulance officers to serve the whole of Darwin and that, on average, they have 17 months experience. The fact that there are only 12 on-road ambulance officers stretches rostering to the limit at each of the 3 centres which are located at Palmerston, Ross Smith Avenue and Casuarina. Effectively, it means that Palmerston is usually not staffed although the rosters may show that is it in theory.

It is particularly concerning that there has been a turnover of 44% in trained ambulance staff during the last 12 months. In other words, nearly half of the total number of ambulance officers have left in the last 12 months. These were not simply people from outside the Territory who might be expected to come to the Territory for 2 or 3 years and then move on. If one looks at the salary rates of St John Ambulance officers, it is not surprising that they move on, and I will come to that point in a minute. There are, however, a significant number of people who have been trained by St John in the Territory and who have left the service because of their dissatisfaction with the way it is operating. That dissatisfaction will be expressed to the inquiry.

Salary levels have not been the main issue in comments made to me, but I will briefly refer to them. A grade 3 ambulance officer in the Northern Territory receives \$21 408 which is not very much money at all. In Victoria, the base salary is \$25 000. I am advised that a senior student ambulance officer in Victoria receives more than a senior ambulance officer in the Northern Territory. That is something which Tom Pauling QC will have to examine.

The concerns of the ambulance officers are my concerns because they are at the pointed end of the stick, providing the service that you and I may well need on our way home tonight if something goes astray. Their concerns are that the resources of St John have been misallocated into the administrative area rather than into the operational side of the organisation. They are concerned, for example, that the administrative and support section of St John is so large compared to the overall staffing levels.

In fact, we have a situation where a conservative estimate of the number of administrative support staff indicates that it is almost one-third of the total staff. There is a problem in counting who is in administration and support and who is in operations because, for example, there is an argument for saying that supervisors, communications officers and mechanics could be included in the administrative and support area. But, for the purpose of this exercise, they have been counted in operations. Even then, close to one-third

of the total staff is in the administrative area. Ambulance officers have complained to me about poor managerial behaviour, including the use of threatening and derogatory memoranda, and I have some of those which I intend to give to the chairman of the inquiry.

Mr Hatton: Do you want to read them out?

Mr SMITH: No, I do not want to read them out. One threatened to sacrifice the brigade training as a result of the high rate of resignation of officers. In other words, it said that, if officers continued to resign, St John Ambulance would have no option but to pull people out from training positions and put them on the road. I would have thought that that would do little for morale and that an appropriate response from management, if it were concerned about the number of people resigning, would be to tackle the reasons why they were resigning rather than take people from other essential areas and attempt to fill the gaps. I think that is a very important factor which goes towards explaining the low morale of the people involved.

There have been a number of complaints, and some of them have been aired, about what might well be called the 'administrators' perks club', concerning the use or a possible abuse of travel warrants, accommodation expenses, alcohol purchases, the outfitting of the General Manager's house and, in 1 particular case, there is a possible matter of fraud. I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about that.

It has been alleged to me - and I have confirmed this with 2 or 3 separate people involved with St John - that an odometer of a St John Ambulance vehicle was tampered with. The car, a Ford Falcon, was traded with Darwin Nissan for a smaller car. After the trade-in had taken place, but before the handover, a senior administration member took the car on an extensive, private touring holiday. By the time he returned, he had put on the odometer more than 10 000 km in excess of what had been agreed to at the time of the trade-in. This senior administration member then attempted to have mechanics alter the odometer, but was refused and advised that the process was illegal. He then removed the odometer and altered it, after which the handover took place. This is the funny bit. The vehicle was returned by the used car yard because, instead of changing the reading on the odometer back to 42 000 km, 420 000 km showed on the clock. When it was returned, an attempt was again made to have St John mechanics alter the odometer and this again was refused. The person who is alleged to have done this then effected the changes and the trade was finalised. Mr Speaker, that is a very serious allegation indeed, and I do not make it lightly. It has been checked and rechecked by myself with a number of different people and I am certainly convinced that it happened. I intend to bring that to the attention of the chairman of the inquiry.

I have another example of what is happening at St John. A Falcon utility, outfitted with breakdown equipment, was formerly used on call by St John mechanics. It was taken from the mechanics and made available for the private use of administrative staff for such purposes as taking refuse to the tip on weekends. As a result, mechanics, who receive \$21 500 a year and who were performing call-out duties on an unpaid basis, ceased the practice because of the heavy financial load of out-of-hours travel in their own vehicles. We now have a situation where the Royal Automobile Association performs call-out duties - obviously for a fee. Another matter which concerns the operators, the people at the pointy end, is that there are 9 staff cars for administrative staff which frequently are unused during daylight hours.

Then, we come to some of the matters that impinge directly on operational areas. The first-aid rooms at ambulance centres have been scrapped. At one centre, Casuarina, the first-aid room has been turned into a tearoom for the administrative staff at that centre. A child with a broken arm received treatment on the steps of the centre, as a result of the closure of the first-aid room, because there was nowhere else available. At another centre, Palmerston, a child with a badly gashed foot was treated on the draining board of a sink in the tearoom clean-up area. I think that is one of the most damning indictments I have heard of the operations of senior St John management.

There are also concerns about ambulance officer training. The Northern Territory Associate Diploma in Emergency Care is a basic ambulance officer qualification. In Victoria, a trainee officer receives, over a 3-year period, 50 weeks of full-time residential school training. In the Northern Territory, it is only 15 weeks and, quite clearly, that is something that needs to be looked at by Tom Pauling QC as well.

I have already mentioned the difference in salary levels between ambulance officers in the Northern Territory and those elsewhere in Australia. Obviously, that is a matter of concern, but I must stress again that, in the matters raised with me by a number of present and past ambulance staff, it has not been high on their list. They are more concerned about the efficient operation of the service and about the effect that low morale and the consequent high rate of resignation is having on the operations of the service.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by joining with you - and I am pleased that you are back in the Chair - in expressing my concern at the way St John has been operating. As I have said, the organisation has an extremely high reputation and it appears that there is considerable evidence that somehow things have gone wrong in the Northern Territory. I am pleased that St John has bitten the bullet - despite the initial attempts by the President, Dr Charles Gurd, to sweep things under the carpet in his TV interview - and has ordered an inquiry into its operations. I am confident that, if that inquiry is open and encourages submissions from anybody who is interested in presenting one, deals with them honestly and openly, and presents its findings in the open, the result will be a strengthened St John Ambulance Brigade which will be able to provide the high level of service to the people of the Northern Territory that it has provided in the past.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are a number of issues I want to mention briefly in this evening's adjournment debate. The first relates to the much-discussed and vexed question of the road from Ayers Rock to the Olgas. It is a dreadful shame that the Minister for Transport and Works is no longer here. Although we managed a full house at question time, in the adjournment, when humble backbenchers such as myself have the opportunity to provide the minister with important local background on these crucial questions, he is unable to be present. At the outset, let me reassure the 3 government ministers opposite and, hopefully, the now absent minister who may be able to read my pearls of wisdom in tomorrow's Hansard that, in keeping with the role of the hard-working backbencher I describe myself as in all modesty, I have carried out extensive representations on behalf of all my constituents with respect to the Olgas road. Although it may not necessarily be obvious in terms of Commonwealth expenditure, representations from the opposition in this Assembly and from our much-maligned member for the Northern Territory, Mr Snowdon, have resulted in this project being given considerably higher priority in the Commonwealth's extensive capital works program. I expect amelioration in that regard.

Mr Speaker, let me just place on record my deep sympathy for operators, particularly bus operators who have expended considerable amounts of money in purchasing coaches to run on what is now a bitumen road between Alice Springs and Yulara. The buses available about 10 or 15 years ago were none too flash but the coaches now available to travellers between Ayers Rocks and Alice Springs are of a high quality. Unfortunately, considerable concern has been expressed to me by the Bus Proprietors Association and by people like Mr Keith Castle of Central Australian Tours Association that the coaches are suffering considerable damage on that road. The Northern Territory government has endeavoured to make an adversary issue of this, suggesting that members of this Assembly such as myself have not endeavoured to improve the situation. Suffice it to say that I have been able to use the services of my colleagues in Canberra, and other means, to draw attention to the difficulties suffered by those operators.

Therefore, it was rather risible to hear the lovely little Dorothy Dixier from the member for Araluen this morning when he asked the Minister for Transport and Works basically to beat the Commonwealth government around the head once again in relation to a lapse in its capital works program. It reflects no credit on this Assembly when ministers such as the Minister for Transport and Works say that they have to cut back on this or that item of public works because the federal government has not provided the funds. It is never their own fault. The people who prepare the budget in the Territory never accept the responsibility for saying that times are tough and they have to pull back. They always project the blame on to the federal government. It is about time people like the Minister for Transport and Works indulged in that activity a little less.

In question time this morning, I was pleased that the member for Arnhem, the shadow minister for health and community services, was able to raise exactly such an example. I have referred to it before. Whilst, on the one hand, the Minister for Transport and Works says that the Commonwealth is not spending money on this or that, on the other hand we have the example of the member for Flynn. He was reported in the local paper as saying that there would be an ambulance service at Yulara. I have already referred to the need in that regard and he made a specific election promise. The members opposite were elected and the ambulance service did not eventuate.

The crucial difference is that the federal government did not promise to fix the Olgas road but the Territory government promised to provide the ambulance service. If ministers in this Assembly take the moral high ground on issues like that, I suggest they carry out a little more self-examination. I suggest that they reflect on the contradiction between the stances they adopt in 2 such circumstances where there are demands for public money.

Mr Coulter: Would you like to see a bitumen road there now?

Mr BELL: Of course I would. I think it is an important public works objective that bus operators and the people whom they carry to the Territory be able to travel across a sealed road from one beautiful corner of my electorate to another equally beautiful and equally important corner of my electorate.

I might say parenthetically that one of the privileges of representing an electorate like mine was to travel out to the Olgas with 2 men who would be in their 60s now and who have lived in that country since they were born. They would say: 'We have to keep people out of there because that is such and such a totem business. We are delighted with this area here and the young blokes

have built this car park here. We have this dome walk'. You head west from the Rock to the Olgas and the dome walk is where the ring road comes in from the north. I recommend it.

I could dilate on the joys of that corner of my electorate but, to confirm the concerns of the Treasurer, I want to see the road bituminised. I believe that this is an important public works objective. However, I point out to the Treasurer and to his absent counterpart, the Minister for Transport and Works, that there is a much greater obligation on his government to provide the ambulance services that it promised for Yulara than there is on the Commonwealth government to seal that particular road when it has so many demands on public works. It has never promised to seal that road but this government has promised ambulance services at Yulara. Do I make myself clear?

I trust that the relative cost will also be taken into consideration. I am delighted to see the Minister for Transport and Works come in. He might even have picked up some of this over the loudspeaker and he can answer it if he dares. The cost of bituminising the road from Ayers Rock to Mt Olga; any guesses?

Mr Finch: Our route or your route?

Mr BELL: Your route.

Mr Finch: \$4m.

Mr BELL: Only \$4m! How much would a decent ambulance at Yulara cost? I reckon that, for \$4m, you would buy a fleet of ambulances for Yulara. Here we have these blokes complaining that the federal government cannot find such-and-such an amount of money. There is a degree of dishonesty in the issues that these people choose to pick up or not pick up that I think should be a matter of concern to you, Mr Speaker, as it is a matter of concern to me.

In the time remaining to me, Mr Speaker ...

Mr Coulter: Would you prefer our route to your route if it is only going to cost \$4m instead of \$6m?

Mr BELL: I am quite happy to pick up that little comment from across the Chamber. The question of the route through the sand dunes is a fairly vexed one. I know there are some concerns about resiting it. I know that the work the minister refers to was done several years ago. On the basis of the information that is available to me, I carry no brief for either route. So be it.

Mr Speaker, in the time remaining to me, I want to make reference to an old lady who passed away in August this year. I was hoping to mention this in the previous sittings but, unfortunately, other issues intervened and I was unable to do so. I am a little reluctant to mention her name because it may give offence to some of her family. Nellie Wirrika was a wonderful woman. When she died in August, she was 65 or 70 years old. She was born in South Australia, in the vicinity of Calca and she lived in many of the places out west from Calca and Ernabella. I first met her when I was school teaching at Areyonga. Nellie was irrepressible. She was a great hunter and gatherer. We make frequent reference in this Assembly to people who achieve great things in European spheres of endeavour. I think that, just once in a while, it is worth pointing out that there are great people who have come out of the western desert and I think one of the best accolades that I have heard about

Nellie Wirrika came from my wife who said that, if ever she were caught anywhere out in the western desert, without food or water - and the country is still tough out there, and that still happens to people and people still worry about it - she would want to be with Nellie because Nellie was a person who would survive. She was a great survivor.

In spite of the social and cultural changes that she and her family had been subjected to in her lifetime, she retained a sense of humour, a grace and a self-respect that, given the sheer differences that were involved, can only serve as an example to everybody. I regard it as a privilege to be able to place on the record of this Assembly my appreciation of having known her. I see that my time has run out, Mr Speaker, but I trust that honourable members will not think it ill of me that I place on the record of the Assembly my appreciation of her life and what it means in the context of the Northern Territory and in the context of the country as a whole.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I am delighted to speak in tonight's adjournment debate on 2 matters. The second reflects on another shift in federal government policy that directly and adversely affects Territorians but, firstly, let me not grant the member for MacDonnell too much credibility by responding at any great length, other than to correct him for his folly.

Mr Bell: Oh! You have never done that, Fred.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I recall how earlier today the member for MacDonnell berated the Minister for Tourism for his non-attendance in the Chamber. The Minister for Tourism is missing for good reason but I found it fairly ironical that, immediately afterwards, the member for MacDonnell, as is his wont, vacated the Chamber to go on his merry rounds of the town. I also find it very difficult to accept that, while I was missing for about the second 10-minute period in today's entire sitting, I heard the member for MacDonnell bleating that I was missing. That was ironical and hypocritical in the extreme.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw those words.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw those words.

Mr Bell: I not sure that you can be both ironical and hypocritical anyway.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell suggests that one cannot be 2 things at once, but he does that with no difficulty at all. Let me move on to the substance of his comments.

Firstly, let me say clearly that nowhere in this morning's answer to his question did I reflect on who should or should not pay for the road to the Olgas. However, because it is in an ANPWS park, one would assume that it would be the responsibility of the ANPWS or the federal government. Nevertheless, I did not reflect on that at all. What I was suggesting was that, after 7 years, it was about time that the ANPWS made a decision about the location and the approval, in principle, of upgrading to a bitumen-seal status the road between the Yulara turnoff to the Rock and the Olgas - a road which is extremely dangerous. In fact, I sought the cooperation of members opposite in taking that matter forward to their federal counterparts.

It is also ironic that today the Minister for the Environment and the Arts issued a joint press release with the member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, regarding road improvements in Yulara. Their communication, it would seem, is somewhat lax.

Mr Bell: Not in Yulara, Freddie, in the national parks.

Mr FINCH: If the honourable member would care to sit there quietly for a moment, he might become educated. Mr Speaker, as the old saying goes, noisy mouths prohibit reception of information. If the member would care to read tomorrow's Hansard, he might learn something.

The Minister for the Environment and the Arts was making a big noise about spending \$300 000 to upgrade the bitumen road around Ayers Rock. The minister went on to mention the representation from the federal member, Warren Snowdon, who was strongly supporting upgrading of the road out to the Olgas. In fact, he was suggesting that the alignment had already been determined. I find it rather amusing that a member of the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management has absolutely no knowledge of that or declines to share his knowledge with this House. It indicates to me that perhaps the member for MacDonnell is not really participating in his role as a member of the board. He is vacating this House now. He has spent his 10 minutes here and is off to his second job.

Mr Speaker, I also find it very disturbing to read that the federal Minister for the Environment and the Arts is bleating about \$1.5m being spent in Uluru National Park. In 15 years, a lousy \$1.5m and a bit of road work is certainly minute when compared with the Northern Territory government's expenditure on such projects as the Petermann Road and the road works to and from the airport and around the village itself. It is chickenfeed compared to the Northern Territory government's commitment on projects in that area. I can, however, understand the embarrassment of both the member for MacDonnell and the federal member in relation to the Olgas road. It is no wonder that he is so sensitive that he has left the House again. He is probably squirming at the thought of that road and the potential for serious injury not only to his constituents but, as I mentioned earlier, to tourists.

Earlier today, I was not in the least embarrassed about giving credit where credit is due. I am more than pleased to be supportive where that is justified but, by the same token, I am not at all shy about throwing the metaphorical right hook and, when it comes to people like the member for MacDonnell, I am tempted to contemplate even more than that.

I really wonder about the selected alignment. It has been suggested that some resolution has already been reached in relation to the alignment in the survey for the new road. If it is to include the proposal for a road directly from the Rock to the Olgas, that would entail an additional expenditure of at least \$2m and put the project further behind. I am not trying to be in the least bit cheeky but could I suggest to members opposite, particularly the member who holds a position on the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management, that they put it to the federal minister that, although the \$300 000 may well be required for resealing an existing bitumen road, it might be put to better use - as suggested by the NT government some 3½ years ago - in upgrading the most dangerous section of the Olgas road itself. That would be a more constructive direction for the energies of the member for MacDonnell instead of going off half-cocked every time somebody has the audacity to challenge him or his colleagues in Canberra or has the audacity to raise any matter that reflects on his performance as a local member, in this case as a

representative on the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management. He can wear my criticisms because he richly deserves them.

The second matter that I would like to discuss relates to another impost on the Territory. As is always my way, I seek the cooperation of members of the opposition in communicating to their colleagues in Canberra a serious concern that has now been a matter of debate for as long as I have been in this House. As I remember, it was first taken up with the federal minister, then Peter Morris, about 7 or 8 years ago. It relates to the amount of design work that is done within the Northern Territory for Northern Territory projects undertaken by the federal government. Since Cyclone Tracy, the major proportion of works carried out by the South Australian-Northern Territory region of the federal department has been in the Northern Territory. This year, of course, is no different. Over the years, concerns have been raised by the ACEA, which is the consulting engineers' organisation, and the APEA, which is the association representing engineering employees. Both groups have been concerned that the Darwin office has always been simply a construction office without capacity for design functions and therefore without the capacity to oversee local designs. Given that the majority of that department's projects in the appropriate region are in the Northern Territory, that seems unfair. I believe that most of the design and supervision should be done locally.

It was previously a policy of the federal Labor government that at least 50% of design work should be carried out locally. It has now reneged on that. Some 3 years ago, I remember listening to John Reeves on the car radio as I drove to the Assembly. He was bleating about how he had brought about the upgrading of the Darwin office of the Department of Housing and Construction so that, as he quite correctly put it, Territorians would have access to their fair share of the work. I said hoo-ha then and I say hoo-ha now, because I have just had word from the APEA that the department intends to downgrade its Northern Territory office. The position of Associate Director has been abolished, according to the note I have, and the office is to be headed by a Controller of Works. Presumably that means that it will once again become purely a construction office.

When one sees in this year's program that the federal government intends to spend \$50.8m in the Northern Territory, excluding Tindal, and realises the extent of the army establishment to arrive in a few years' time, one can see that there will continue to be a great deal of work in the Northern Territory. I find it unacceptable that the local office of the federal department is to be downgraded in such a fashion. It will mean that, once again, designs will be done by the Adelaide office for the region. Not only is it unfair but, more pertinently, it is less efficient and more expensive. Generally speaking, the designs from Adelaide are substandard or excessively costed. I know of some classic examples over the years. For example, some accommodation units at the RAAF Base were designed in Adelaide with you-beaut materials that were not available in the Territory and construction techniques not normally used in the Territory. In fact, the successful tenderer ended up doing an alternative design for which he had to pay. In spite of that, he was some \$0.75m below the next-lowest tenderer. That is a classic example of how local is better.

Local engineers, local architects and local people involved in design and construction are better able to take into account the special conditions that exist here in respect of cyclonic design, heat, humidity and so forth. Local design is more appropriate and, despite his provocation, I seek the member for MacDonnell's support and that of his colleagues, in making what should be a

very sensible approach to the federal government to change this most unacceptable situation. It should be changed, both for the sake of the federal government's budget and for the sake of local consultants, local contractors and local builders who will otherwise end up tearing their hair out about inappropriate designs coming out of Adelaide. I seek the cooperation of members opposite in approaching the federal government to rectify this situation.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, on 5 August 1987, the Leader of the Opposition agreed on talkback radio that he had made the statement that he could sell Mack trucks if he could get the ALP's nominated candidate elected to the House of Representatives. The people of the Northern Territory now realise they would be better off if the Leader of the Opposition and the ALP member of the House of Representatives were both selling trucks.

Yesterday morning, I listened with some amusement to the member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, on ABC radio. The interviewer really put him on the spot but, try as he might, he could not get the member to make a statement about where he stood on the question of Pine Gap. The member said it was a matter of grave concern to him. He also said: 'What I did today, as the federal member of parliament, was to go and observe. Firstly, to observe the demonstration and, secondly, to demonstrate my concern about peace and nuclear disarmament'. In the NT News of 17 October, the federal member is reported as conceding that the base is essential to the verification of superpower arms limitation treaties. On the ABC news the day before, he said that, while he does not condone law-breaking, it is important to recognise the peace movement's tradition of civil disobedience. There is no such thing as civil disobedience. It means breaking the law. I feel sorry for the Labor member of the House of Representatives. Apparently, he finds that he is in a position of supporting the federal government's policy: the continuation of the joint facilities base at Pine Gap. He was asked by the media whether that meant that he had to abandon principles which he once believed were very important. 'No, not at all', he replied. He has learnt a lot in the short time he has been in politics.

Despite the fact that he still has not said where he personally stands in relation to Pine Gap, he has highlighted the differences between the Territory ALP and the federal ALP policies. He describes the policy of the ALP in the Northern Territory as one that promotes the phasing-out of the base. I find it all very amusing. The July ALP conference of the Northern Territory branch of the ALP called on the federal government to pursue non-renewal of all agreements relating to Pine Gap. Senator Bob Collins said the debate was misguided and the former President of Northern Territory branch of the ALP, John Reeves, said the resolution was arrogant and futile. The party secretary, Peter Tullgren, said that was a load of frog's droppings.

It is apparent that the ALP, with its many factions, has many different versions of its policy on Pine Gap. The member for MacDonnell stated on the 8DN news on 4 July last year that he hoped the base would close and that he was sympathetic to the wishes of the Alice Springs peace group. He reiterated this in the peace and nuclear disarmament debate in this House on 12 November 1986. However, the member for Stuart is reported in the Centralian Advocate on 7 August this year as saying that his position was that the Americans should not be thrown out of Pine Gap, but that Australia should be moving towards full control while maintaining the American involvement. One only needs to look at the member for Stuart's colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, to further muddy the ALP waters on its Pine Gap policy. He supports the federal government's policy - at least, he did on talkback on

5 August this year. No wonder the ALP performs as it does in Territory elections! The federal member is not quite sure whether he agrees with the NT federal branch policy or his own policy which he often stated before his election when he demonstrated publicly against Pine Gap.

I believe the federal member for the Northern Territory has his numbers mixed up. At least 80% of the people of Alice Springs, time and time again, have demonstrated their support for the joint defence facility at Pine Gap. They are fed up with the disruption, the rudeness, the inconvenience and the cost of anti-base demonstrations. The cost of annual demonstrations is astronomical. They disfigure our road signs, take up the time of our courts, cause inconvenience to the Northern Territory Police and the Federal Police and the Australian Protective Services at Pine Gap. I hope the ALP federal member takes the hint and persuades his friends, who disrupt our lives and demonstrate in Alice Springs, to move back into their own backyards because we do not feel that they are needed in Alice Springs. Some of these demonstrators described themselves as 'cockroaches', survivors of a nuclear explosion. The people of Alice Springs think it is time to call in the Flick man and get rid of the pests.

As for Senator Vallentine from Western Australia, what a hide she has to come to the Northern Territory and suggest on radio that she represents all Australians while she is breaking the law in Alice Springs. I think that she should pick up the message stick and take it back to Western Australia and do her demonstrating over there.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I heartily endorse the words of the member for Araluen. We have had a tummy full of these people who come up and try to show us in Alice Springs what they reckon is good for us regarding the Pine Gap base. I think that 80% of the people would be a very low estimate of those who support the base in Alice Springs. I feel that our federal government might consider the possibility of telling the Australian people more about what goes on there. I think that information from a reliable source would confirm the support of the people of Alice Springs for the base.

It is time for some of the secrecy to be dropped and for people to be told rather than be fed half-stories around the traps. People in the know occasionally paint scenarios of the function of the base without letting anything slip unnecessarily. If you are reasonably intelligent, they give a fairly clear idea. If the truth were told about the base by the Australian government, it would find that it had tremendous support for the bases from the people of Alice Springs. I wish it would consider that because innuendo and rumours stir up these peace people and they try to stir up the people of Alice Springs.

For example, our dear old ABC, bless its cotton-picking socks, had a talkback program which included Senator Vallentine. I asked her under what circumstances she would see Pine Gap and other bases in central Australia as a target. She had the gall to suggest that it might be used for the purpose of dropping a few nuclear bombs as warning shots for Australians to behave themselves. I suggested to the good lady that it would be far more likely that, if one such nuclear device were used against such a target, it would be the start of an all-out conflict which could not be stopped. She came to agree with that point. In a dangerous way, the fear of reprisal guarantees that nobody would fire the first shot.

One of the primary functions of the base is to take signals from satellites and monitor where Soviet Union nuclear strike forces are being kept

so they can be counted. It is important that our side knows what it is doing just as it is important that it knows what the west is doing. When each can monitor the other, sanity dictates that neither would be stupid enough to make the first strike. It puts us into a situation where nuclear weapons are out of the question because neither side would win. In an ironic way, it contributes far more to world peace and freedom than otherwise.

The so-called peace groups do not have any monopoly on peace. I am as keen on peace as the next person but my peace has to be peace with freedom, and peace without freedom is not peace. They came to the opening of the mall last Wednesday and were intent on disrupting the function. They mingled with the crowd. It was interesting to see some of the people there. My Labor party opponent was there all dressed up to the nines and trying to act like she was a proper lady but she was glancing around all the time. The left-wing element of the Labor party branch was dotted in amongst the crowd. Their demonstration was particularly weak because they got the very clear message from the people there that they would not tolerate any nonsense. They went off like a wet fizzer and, fortunately, did not spoil the opening.

Over the last fortnight, there has been a visitor to Alice Springs who brought information which would be of considerable interest to many people, particularly people in the central Australian region. The gentleman's name was Professor Wayne Sherman from the University of Florida in the United States. He is an expert in low-chill peaches and nectarines. I will explain what is meant by 'low-chill'. A particular variety of peach will require a certain number of hours, generally hundreds, during which the temperature is below a certain level. I cannot tell you what that particular temperature is: it is one pertinent fact that I forgot to ask the gentlemen. Until it has had that experience, the tree will not bear fruit properly. The advantage of having developed low-chill varieties means that a lesser number of hours is required below this particular temperature before the tree will fruit properly. He has been the developer of many thousands of crosses of different varieties. He said that he starts off with 5000 and, after a couple of years, he selects about 20 from those and expects that perhaps 4 will be acceptable to growers and will be given names.

That is of interest to me personally, but it should also be of interest to many people in central Australia. If we can obtain these varieties, we will be able to produce high-quality peaches and nectarines. Professor Sherman told us about a couple of low-chill varieties of apples which he believed were equivalent to some of the best apples that can be bought down south. There are also plums and pears, and the Israelis have developed low-chill almonds which he has seen growing very successfully in Mexico which has a fairly warm climate. I think people on the stations, Aboriginal communities and outstations should be interested in this. In fact, it was good to see that some of the people associated with Aboriginal interests in Alice Springs attended the meeting at the Arid Zone Farm and showed considerable interest in these particular fruits and nuts.

Professor Sherman is a very interesting fellow. He came from a farming background himself. The typical American, in Australian eyes, tends to be someone who never shuts up. He would have made a very good Australian, apart from his accent. He did not say much but, when he did say something, it was worth listening to. After having seen the Arid Zone Farm trees that had been under Frank McAllister's care for some time, he advised that we would need nematode-resistant root stocks because nematodes were greatly reducing the capacity of the trees there to produce good quality fruit.

Many of the varieties which he has developed are in quarantine at the Wright Company Nursery at Lismore in New South Wales. That is a private nursery and more stocks have yet to arrive. One thing that I found fascinating was the professor's comment that the fruits on the trees should be at least 6 inches apart and preferably 8 inches. It is a management task to remove a large number of small fruit when the fruit first forms and leave the remaining fruit 8 inches apart. He said that the total weight of fruit produced will remain constant but they will be fewer in number and of very good quality.

He told us also about something that was new to him and something that could not happen in Florida because, apparently, snow can occur there. He said that, when he was in Queensland about 3 weeks ago, he had actually eaten peaches and, I think, nectarines too. The manner in which this occurred is rather interesting. The farmers had deliberately defoliated their trees, made the leaves fall in the autumn, and there was enough warmth around for buds to come into flower and pollinate and small fruit to be formed. The winter came through while they remained small but in the springtime another crop of flowers came in to produce the normal fruit. The leaves regrew and provided the sugar and whatever is required to make the peach grow and produce an out-of-season crop.

He held the conference at the Arid Zone Farm and he also visited my little property and Dahlenberg's property where the department has several varieties of low-chill fruit trees under trial. It was certainly very interesting to have him around and hear his advice on which varieties he considered would be ideal to plant. Unfortunately, on 1 July, I planted 125 nectarine trees of a variety called Sun Red. He told me that the only problem with that variety is that it is 10 years out of date. It produces beautifully flavoured fruit. I know because I have one that is 2 years old and I had fruit from it last year. The interesting thing is that these trees will be producing fruit within the next fortnight even though they were planted only on 1 July. They are quite fascinating.

Honourable members may not be aware that, generally, most fruit trees take 2 and 3 years before they first start to fruit. With the low-chill varieties, it appears that you can obtain fruit the year that you plant them out. He said they will only be about 70 g at the best. There are new varieties that are equally good, equally as early, and that will produce fruit of 100 g to 120 g, which is about 4 oz each.

This is interesting area on which information needs to be examined. The Department of Industries and Development should obtain information on this. I am sure that it would be very newsworthy and advantageous for the health of people in remote areas. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, good peaches or nectarines, sometimes called peacharines, can cost \$1 each. It is very satisfying to be able to produce your own and, of course, the real advantage is that you can pick it when the fruit is ripe. It does not have to be picked early, as is the case if it has to be transported any distance. Fruit that is picked early never has the same flavour as fruit that has naturally ripened on the tree. I hope the department will obtain information on this and assist in obtaining almonds from Israel so that they may be made available to potential growers in central Australia.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought I would rise this evening and speak about the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference but, before I launch myself into that, I would like to express my disappointment at the remarks the Leader of the Opposition made earlier about

St John Ambulance. I thought that they were totally inappropriate because it has been announced by the management of St John that an inquiry into its operation will take place. Indeed, I understand that it has appointed Mr Tom Pauling QC to head that particular inquiry. He is a highly-qualified person and the announcement was made today by Mr Richard Morris, the Chairman of the St John Council in the Northern Territory.

It is my belief that it is inappropriate for this House to discuss that matter because of the announcement of the inquiry headed by Mr Pauling. It is a matter for the inquiry. Doubtless, it will proceed down that line over the next few weeks and report to the St John Council at the appropriate time. It is not for a member of this House to try to score a few political points, on the basis of what is mainly hearsay, in an effort to get his name in the media. He made totally unsubstantiated remarks here this evening. I repeat that it is totally inappropriate for a member of this House to undertake such a barrage as we heard this evening on a matter which is already the hands of the appropriate and proper authorities. Unfortunately, that is typical of the member who spoke this evening.

Nevertheless, I would like to move on now to the subject of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference. As you are well aware, that conference was held here a week or so ago in this very Chamber. It was attended by representatives from all of the Australian states, the Commonwealth, New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu, Western Samoa and Norfolk Island. We also had official observers from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore and it was very pleasing to see them here. It was also good to see Ms Turnbull from the CPA headquarters in London. I know that the member for Sadadeen has called at the CPA headquarters and met Ms Turnbull previously. I had the opportunity of having a short chat to her and a delightful lass she is as well. We also had Mr Kieran Schneemann and Ms Bronwyn Allan from the CPA Secretariat in Canberra. I would like to thank all of those people for attending the conference in Darwin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I could not let this opportunity go by without paying particular tribute to Mr Guy Smith, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and the Deputy Clerk, Mr Ian McNeill, and to all the staff of the Assembly, including Hansard and the ladies in the library. They all worked very hard for long hours during that week and in the preceding weeks. I particularly want to compliment Mr McNeill, whose dedication to his task during that particular week far exceeded that which might normally be expected in the course of looking after delegates. I know of the long hours he worked and the midnight oil that he burned fulfilling that role.

The staff of the Assembly did a wonderful job; there is no question about that. I did not hear one adverse comment regarding the organisation of the conference. It was an enormous task to look after all those folk, who arrived and departed at various intervals, to organise their tours to various places, to look after their wives, to ensure their accommodation was attended to, and to arrange the social functions and transportation. The staff did that very well. I would like to place on record, on behalf of all my fellow members, our appreciation for a job well done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought I would turn my attention to the agenda for a few moments. Quite a number of very interesting papers were presented, which related to a whole range of issues and were particularly relevant to the small states of the Pacific. I was privileged to be one of the delegates. I was very disappointed and at times a little embarrassed by the fact that my fellow delegate was unable to attend for other than a short period. Nevertheless, the conference went off very well from the Territory's point of view.

On behalf of the Territory branch, I had the privilege of presenting 2 papers. The first was entitled 'The movement Towards Statehood by the Northern Territory' and the second 'Options for Assistance by Australia and New Zealand to Small Parliaments in the Australasian and Pacific Region'. I will expand on those a little later if time allows. Both were very well received.

The second paper on the agenda was interesting. It related to the participation of women in the CPA and was presented by New Zealand. I thought it was particularly interesting because the New Zealand delegate, who was a woman, put forward a motion suggesting that every second delegate to future CPA conferences should be a woman. That really stirred up quite a lot of debate. Actually, that delegate put 2 motions. The other motion proposed that the various branches of the CPA in this region report back to the next seminar on their approach to that particular matter and how they address the issue of involving women in their branch activities. That motion resulted in considerable enlightened debate. I will not tell you what I said.

Mr Collins: We will read it.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, you can.

I would like to refer to the first paper that I presented, which related to statehood for the Northern Territory. As I said earlier, it was very well received. I was disappointed, however, that the government representative from the Commonwealth expressed some comments which I thought were a little unflattering towards the Northern Territory. I do not know whether it is appropriate that I quote them. However, I will go ahead and wait until somebody pulls me into line. They say that the best means of defence is attack.

The delegate from the Commonwealth, Mr Mildren, responded to my comments about statehood. He said: 'While I know that it is probably one of those things I should say as I am getting on the plane, it is not something that I am terribly wrapped in anyway' - of course, referring to statehood - 'because there are very many reasons why, at this stage, I do not even believe that statehood is really in the interests of the people of the Northern Territory'. In my closing remarks, I took Mr Mildren to task over those comments.

A very disappointing event occurred in relation to my response to Mr Mildren's comments about land matters in the Northern Territory. I made a comment, which I will not quote verbatim here, to the effect that it was the Northern Territory government's policy to support land rights. We have debated this matter at another time and the CLP's policy is quite clear. It was very disappointing that, during the media hype concerning the Jawoyn land claim about a week ago, the Leader of the Opposition chose to circulate to the media an extract of the conference Hansard containing my comments on the CLP policy on land rights. He was attempting to drive a wedge between the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister and he sought to use my comments at the CPA conference to do just that. He failed miserably. Regrettably, one radio station ran the story on its midday news broadcast but nobody else ran it. I spoke to various media people and explained the CLP policy and they all recognised the Leader of the Opposition's action for the nonsense that it was. I thought that the attempt to use my remarks in that way was quite despicable.

A number of other issues were discussed at the conference, including immigration laws as they apply to nations in our region. It was suggested that the South Pacific nations, New Zealand and Australia should free up their

immigration laws so that people from these nations could travel in the region with very little restriction.

Queensland submitted a paper on the feasibility of a western Pacific common market and the role Commonwealth countries, especially the smaller island nations, could play in it. There was considerable discussion about economic matters and trade because there is no question that nations in the region, particularly the smaller Pacific nations, face considerable economic problems. Their economies are very narrowly based. They have only a very limited range of primary produce, including fish, to develop for export markets. Even fishing is primarily limited to local consumption. I expressed my concern at the conference that it is beholden on Australia and New Zealand to get right behind these small countries and to assist them in every possible way to develop their economies. We have already seen evidence in the last few years that, if we do not do that, other powers which are totally unwelcome in this region will come in to fill the void. There is no question about that at all.

Other interesting subjects were discussed, such as the development of party politics in Western Samoa. I found that quite fascinating. Tourism in the South Pacific was also covered and I was privileged to be able to make a contribution to that particular debate. I saw a parallel between the development of tourism here and what is happening in the South Pacific where there is a need to develop programs which will build up tourist numbers. The vast distances and the cost of transportation pose enormous problems. It was a very fruitful conference and I would like to thank the NT branch of the CPA for the opportunity of attending as one of its representatives.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Information Resources Management

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose, under standing order No 94, that this Assembly discuss this morning as a definite matter of public importance the following - the failure of the government to put in place an information resources management system which: (1) provides for the efficient storage and retrieval of information; (2) establishes uniform guidelines for all departments; (3) provides adequate safeguards and controls over access to and distribution of information; (4) provides an effective information base for future government planning needs; and (5) protects the right of individuals.

Mr Smith,
Leader of the Opposition,
21 October 1987.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, with your concurrence, I will not read out the motion again because it has been read very capably by yourself. I must say that it is hardly a riveting matter that we have before us as a matter of public importance this morning, but certainly it is a matter that goes towards good government and the management of government in the Northern Territory. Although it is completely unassociated, it has particular relevance to the report of the Auditor-General that was tabled yesterday. We had planned this debate in advance of the Auditor-General's Report, but certainly that report and the findings of the Auditor-General quite clearly indicate that he has serious concerns in respect of financial reporting. I want to make some specific comments about that later in this debate.

In his book, 'Megatrends', John Naisbitt describes our age as the 'information society'. He regards information as 'the strategic resource' and, to put that in words that politicians understand, it means that information is power. Anyone who undertakes study or research will quickly realise the value of information in our society. He will also see the need to manage that information, which will become a very powerful tool and, if it is not properly managed, can become a very powerful weapon.

In his book 'Sleepers Awake', Hon Barry Jones says that the 'economy is increasingly based on information and more people are engaged in collecting, processing, storing and retrieving data than are employed in agriculture and manufacturing', and the figures are quite staggering. The percentage increase in the number of people employed in collecting, processing, storing and retrieving data is increasing at a rate between 5000 and 7000 times greater than the increase in the agricultural industry, for example. To survive in a rapidly changing world we need knowledge. However, knowledge is now based on information and not skill.

In this world, where the decisions of industry and government will be effective in direct proportion to the quality and timeliness of the

information we can access, it is critical that we consider how we will manage this vital resource. Successful people have always acknowledged this fact. For example, when Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, Rothschild was informed by means of carrier pigeon. He was then able to work the London Stock Exchange and that provided the basis of his fortune. It made him, and his family since, some of the richest people in the world. Of course, if the carrier pigeon had brought the news that Napoleon had won at Waterloo, he would have worked the Paris Stock Exchange, but the result would have been the same. The point is that he had information and was able to use it.

We are also living in a world where the volume of information generated and available is not only increasing at an extraordinary rate, but where the speed of its communication is not only almost simultaneous but also global. When President Lincoln was shot, the news took 5 days to reach London. When President Reagan was shot, an editor in London saw the incident on television before his USA-based journalist, who was only a block away from Reagan, knew about the attempt. The news took less than 5 minutes to reach London. The point of this is that, if we are to be efficient and effective, we must set in place controls to manage our information and we must ensure that there is no exploitation or misuse of this resource. Unfortunately, in the Northern Territory government at present, neither requirement is being addressed in a uniform way. This leads to the possibilities of misuse and mismanagement.

As we all know, the information collected by government is stored either in hard copy - in the form of files, books, magazines or reports that are paper-based - or as data on computers or word processors that are electronically based. There is no doubt that the government has not understood the need for effective management of, and adequate controls over, both those areas and, particularly, the need to interlock those 2 areas. For example, each department has a registry. I am advised that some have more than one. All the written communications that the departments receive or distribute should go through those registries. I would ask the ministers present how confident they are that at least 1 copy of every document, letter, memorandum or report that is produced finds its way on to the proper file in their departments. How many departments ensure that a system is in place that makes sure that that happens because, if it does not happen - and I am sure it does not always happen, and I am sure that all ministers here are aware of instances where it has not happened - how do ministers know what decisions are being made, what advice has been given and how their directions are being followed?

The advent of word processors has meant that record keeping is not as easily controlled as it was. Registry people can only control what is passed to them for filing. In other words, the normal methodology of systematic collection has been impacted upon by this electronic technology. This has been further compounded by the lack of training of operators who do not see their role as custodians of information. There has been middle management awareness of the need for the integration of new technologies with the traditional, paper-based systems. If we assume that there are systems whereby that registry is a repository, what filing controls are in place? No uniform practice is common to all departments. Little or no training is provided to registry staff in basic information management principles. There is no manual that standardises practices across departments and, of course, that became clear in the case of files on the footpath outside the Supreme Court where I thought the Attorney-General made a very significant point which gets to the bottom line of this debate. He said that it was up to the Supreme Court to put in place its own filing and security system. I am saying that that is not good enough. What is needed are general government guidelines on a filing and

information system in general. If departments find that those general guidelines are not secure enough for them, they can extend on those guidelines and put in place their own provisions. Unless general guidelines are set - minimum standards, in other words - we will have a higgledy-piggledy system and the possibility that things will go astray.

There are inadequate security systems governing who can see what file, and files are not stored in such a way as to prevent random and unauthorised access by the curious or mischievous. There are departments in the Northern Territory where staff wander in and out and help themselves to whatever they want on the files. Such a slack approach to records management is not acceptable. People are unreliable and undependable repositories of information. Not only are they highly mobile, but the human memory is an inadequate reference for departmental activity. It is a large risk to rely on individuals as a source of information. We need the systematic and orderly collection and management of information.

When files are lost or left on the footpath or sent to archives or destroyed, with no record kept of where they have gone, when letters disappear and never find their way on to files, when items are posted with no duplicates kept and supposedly confidential files are waved around in this House, these instances are all indicative of an inadequate system. To give you a personal example, Mr Speaker, I have recently employed a personal private secretary who has come from a government department. On 1 or 2 occasions, she has been called back to hunt around to provide information that was not easily accessible and available on file in that particular department.

If we cannot even manage our paper systems, what sort of risk is there among our computer systems? These systems provide decision-support and carry out specific tasks. They contain significant information on Territory citizens, not just once but again and again in many databases held by many departments and accessed by many people. I am not questioning the need to collect and store information on individuals: it is a necessary evil of our modern society. What I will question is why we need so many systems storing similar information and what controls there are for security. Mr Speaker, I will tell you a story later about a 13-year-old who managed to get into the central computer system.

The professionals at NCOM build in system security to avoid unauthorised access but the departments have a right to set their own security levels. There is no one in the government with overall responsibility for privacy protection or for overall security. In my view, the specifying of systems at departmental level needs to be changed to a more centralised responsibility and, similarly, corporate data needs to be held centrally.

I understand that, a couple of years ago, an audit of NCOM undertaken by a major firm of consultants expressed a major concern about security. But nothing, as I understand it, happened as a result of that audit. Users are issued with ID and codes so that they can access systems. When they move to another department who, for example, ensures that the proper protocols are followed to ensure that they do not take the ID user codes and access passwords with them and that they do not continue to access systems for which they have no legitimate need? There are no procedures in place, as I understand it, to ensure that that control is in place on a uniform basis. I am not denying that it may happen in departments that have proper systems in place but the point is there is no system-wide procedure that all departments are required to adopt to ensure that even that simple step is taken.

NCOM has work practices that provide security but there is no overall interdepartmental policy that ensures minimum standards and monitors practices. This whole area has inadequate status and resources at present. Any computer expert will tell you that this is elementary in protecting the integrity and use of files. In a corporate environment, such a cavalier attitude to protecting the integrity and use of files would be unthinkable.

The issue, of course, is not merely one of unauthorised access - although that is a major concern - it is also one of overall management. From time to time, we all fill out forms. Very often, we might wonder whether or not the information sought is really pertinent to the organisation requiring it or to the function of the form. We should question the relevance of the information sought. We might also ask how the data is to be used and for how long, and who will be able to use it. We should be able to have a justification for the record and a guarantee that it will be restricted in its application.

The government does not have any controls relating to information demanded from people and the manner in which it is used. To ask a simple question, has anyone ever sat down on a system-wide basis in departments of the Northern Territory and gone through all the forms and asked why the information sought is necessary? Do we really need that information? What will it be used for? How is it useful? That is called an audit of information and information requirement. It has never been done in the Northern Territory government on a regular, scheduled, cross-department basis.

How many people would know that the police have access to at least 4 databases available through government departments which give personal details about individuals? I do not have a particular problem about police being able to identify or seek out individuals within defined limits. NTEC also has access to pensioner concession records. This is fairly innocuous also but it raises the question about how many other cross-department users there are. It also makes a mockery of the assurances given by the Chief Minister on radio that the sharing of information across departments does not happen. Quite clearly, it does. The possibility of the invasion of data for illegal, malicious or, indeed, political purposes is a real danger. We have all heard of computer fraud.

Mr Hatton: We heard your call.

Mr SMITH: That is right and we heard yours too.

Most of us have an instinctive fear of the system of Big Brother keeping an eye on us and most of us are correct in that. However, it is not the collection or storage of information that is a problem, but the use to which it is put. It is a question of who accesses it and why. The point is that, if a proper system is put in place, the question of unauthorised people obtaining access to information and giving it to politicians and others becomes much less important. It makes it much harder for information to be accessed improperly. Perhaps, for that reason alone, the government might like to consider instituting proper controls and proper procedures.

Computer security, not simply ensuring there are backup systems and disaster controls, but privacy protection and abuse prevention, is justifiably the basis of a thriving industry. In commercial areas, the fear is of fraud and industrial espionage. In the defence industry, there are highly sophisticated protection systems to safeguard the national security. At state level, governments have been very conscious of their responsibilities in relation to the security of personal information stored about individuals as

evidenced by privacy committees and freedom of information legislation - but not so in the Northern Territory. We have no protection or access legislation. We have no overall information management policy or responsibility. We have no central security system. We have no data protection agency. We have no uniform records management system. What we do have is an ongoing gathering and storing of data on individuals with no planning, no coordination and no controls.

We are not only concerned about security. We are concerned about the lack of understanding of the value of properly organised information and its use as a tool in effective and efficient management. The Auditor-General's Annual Report makes several points about information management. He raises an urgent concern about the quality of financial reports and the delay in producing them which means that 'the information has lost much of its relevance by the time it becomes available as well as adding significantly to the accounting and audit costs'.

I agree with another statement in the report which mirrors something I said earlier about decision-making being linked to information: 'The quality of decision-making depends heavily on the quality of information available in respect of whatever matter is being decided. Better information does not necessarily mean better decisions but better decisions are not possible without better information'. He goes on to say that you cannot pursue efficiency and effectiveness without information as to where the shortcomings are. That is not new; people have been making that point for years both in the Northern Territory and elsewhere

A major function of management is planning, setting up programs and then evaluating the effectiveness of those programs. The Auditor-General supports our view that you cannot run the Northern Territory by the seat of your pants. You need to monitor what is happening and review your ability to deal with it. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. The government has been adventurous and forthcoming in its attitude to computer technology. The Northern Territory is seen as being advanced in its thinking in that area. However, we had advantages that other administrations did not have. We could virtually start from scratch, we had the reconstruction opportunity, we were relatively small and isolated and, to a degree, novices and therefore we were not always fully aware of the risks that we were taking. All those factors helped us into the lead in the sprint for technology.

However, what we have done is let the tail wag the dog. The computer system has grown like topsy and it is now seen to be the whole system whereas, in fact, it should be the device, the mechanism or the tool we use to automate some processes. It has distinct advantages over manual systems of processing data but it does not drive the system of information. The computer is a powerful and reliable information manager if it is used properly. At some time, someone must have had an inkling of the problem because, in 1983, an office systems study report was produced which looked at information-sharing in integrated systems. This report was canned because it was politically sensitive. Nevertheless, the push by the experts continued and, in 1985, a steering committee was looking at computerised records management. This would have allowed all departments to use a database system to index, control, track and reference files in registries in departments.

I ask the government what has happened to the steering committee? Why has it stopped meeting? Why hasn't it continued with its good work which would have been a major boost to the government when making decisions by allowing it access to all information that is available? You cannot plan without

information. To plan adequately, you need to estimate the future. You need statistics, trends and access to other plans. You need to anticipate and forecast tomorrow, based on available current and past patterns and experience, and you need an effective information retrieval and storage system to do that. In other words, you need reliable information, not instinct or wishes. If you do not have sound, timely, relevant, reliable information at each and every step of the planning process, you are doomed to disaster after disaster or, at the best, stop-go, ad hoc, knee-jerk reactive management that takes you nowhere and wastes resources.

There is no more powerful tool in the modern economy than information and the challenge is to ensure that we manage it properly. It is becoming a more vital challenge every day because the world is on information overload. Between 6000 and 7000 scientific articles are being written each day. Scientific and technical information now increases by 30% each year which means it doubles every 5.5 years. According to some reports, this could increase to 40% each year quite soon.

To sum up, Mr Speaker, we need a complete review of what we are doing and where we are going. Within this review, certain specific areas need to be addressed. First, we need a complete audit of systems, both electronic and paper-based, so that we know exactly what we have, where it is and whom it serves. Secondly, we need to look at records management. We need a generic records management system with computer-aided controls that is designed to interface with existing technology and lead to conversion to the paperless office which is not too far away. Thirdly, we need to look at integration of systems and technology to allow controlled information-sharing and transfer of data and communication between different types of machines such as telex, facsimile and computer. We need to look at security in the light of privacy protection management responsibilities, and standards in filing integrity.

We need to look at future planning. We need objectives and a strategy to keep us in step with technological developments and information management principles so that we can maximise the use of our information resource. We need to identify what skills we need to manage our information and to evaluate the status of this role and identify concordant responsibility and authority to keep development on track. If we do all those things in a coordinated manner, we will have a system that improves the information available to government and therefore improves its decision-making capacity and, at the same time, puts in place adequate protections for individuals in the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I read the notice relating to the MPI this morning with some interest because, during the last sittings, I heard the Leader of the Opposition attempt desperately to defend his federal colleagues no matter what they did. No matter what the federal government does to the Northern Territory, members opposite are incapable of looking at it from a Northern Territory perspective. Members opposite always leap to the defence of the federal government. In the debate on the Australia Card, their defence was to attempt to totally avoid the argument about the Australia Card and seek to deflect attention across to some trumped up allegations about problems with privacy of information in the Northern Territory.

In the course of debate in the Assembly at the last sittings, in press statements that have continually been issued by the Leader of the Opposition and yet again today, there has not been one piece of evidence that suggests that the Northern Territory has a problem. Again, the Leader of the Opposition has made great play of files that had come from the office of the

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He said that this was evidence of a failure in proper control and records management by the government.

One of the Opposition Leader's great problems, apart from desperately trying to find some issue to talk about that deflects attention from his own inadequacies, is the fact that he does not recognise that the courts and the court records are not, and should not be, under the control or direction of government. The judiciary is an independent body, divorced from government. It would be inappropriate for government to be able to tell courts what records they can keep or what they cannot keep or to tell judges what they can or cannot do with their records. It is a matter of responsibility for the judge ...

Mr Smith: You are missing the point.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am not missing any point. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to address the issue of government records and government information, why does he refer continually to some documentation from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? Those are separate and distinct things, and even the Attorney-General has no right to tell a judge what information he can keep or what he can do with his own personal court files or those of his predecessor, once removed, as it happened to be in this particular instance.

But let me get back to the particular issues here. I have been trying to take some notes. I had hoped to be able to pick up some points that the Leader of the Opposition made. What we heard for 20 minutes was a series of unsubstantiated, broad allegations or assertions with no evidence to support a single word. He said that we do not have this, we do not have that and we do not have something else. The Leader of the Opposition raised this issue as a matter of definite public importance. He has an obligation, an onus, to put the case before this House, but all he has done is put a series of unsubstantiated, broad-brush allegations and assertions without one shred of evidence to support any of his statements. My notes read: 'Where is the evidence? No evidence'. He has referred to court files, not government files. There was nothing.

Mr Speaker, I will address what the government is doing on information systems. We know that the Leader of the Opposition is doing little more than baying at the moon and trying to find some reason to grab a headline. He has nothing to run with in these sittings. There are no major problems with government and therefore he is trying to find a side issue to beat up. If members of the opposition are absolutely genuine in this debate, particularly given the last part of the Leader of the Opposition's statement, I expect that one of his colleagues will congratulate our government on its excellent record management and the actions that have been taken - since the last Assembly sittings, because of issues that were raised then - by myself, and actions that are currently in train to meet the very matters that the Leader of the Opposition has raised.

The Leader of the Opposition wrote to me on 1 October, and put a series of very complex questions, and they are being addressed and responded to. If he wanted a detailed response, he would wait for that response and he would not have made a fool of himself this morning.

Mr Speaker, records are either in a written form or in computer form, as has been outlined. The issues of privacy and security of files need to be addressed in 2 separate exercises. The first is the controls on and security of authorised access to files and authorised release of information from files

and the second is security against and control over unauthorised access to files. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition is on very dicey ground in this particular exercise because he is on public record in this Chamber as encouraging people to break their terms and conditions of employment. He is actively encouraging people to provide unauthorised public release of confidential government information in the interests of his own personal political ploys.

I refer to Hansard for 28 July when, during another of his failed censure motions, the Leader of the Opposition said:

Another unparalleled feature of the last 8 weeks has been the number of government public servants who have been prepared to provide information on government incompetence and waste. I think that is positive. It was revealed in this very useful publication 'Northern Territory Blues'. I would have to say that the public servant who leaked that information has performed a very real public service.

Now he stands in this Chamber saying that this government must prevent information from getting out, that it must protect the privacy and security of information whereas, in July of this year, he said that he wanted public servants to leak information as a public service. Mr Speaker, he cannot stand on both of those statements. It reveals him for what he is, and I understand that the appropriate terminology has been ruled to be unparliamentary, but it starts with 'h':

Mr Smith: Happy?

Mr HATTON: Hypocrisy, and I withdraw the remark.

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with the systems and data security of government computer systems that we do have. I may wish to seek a slight extension of time if it becomes necessary in order to be able adequately to provide the wide range of information that we have available on what the government is doing.

I refer to this particular document. Rapid advances in technology and the development of sophisticated computer networks within and across organisations now provide greater opportunity to penetrate systems due to the relatively low cost of the technology required and the ready access to knowledge of the necessary communications techniques now available. This ability has increased at a rapid rate and presents a considerable challenge to prevent unauthorised access. It should be noted that there are many other exposures and risks which pose greater threats to the integrity of data systems in an environment such as that found in the Northern Territory government. These are being addressed as part of ongoing programs. A paper relating to suggested policy on a number of relevant issues, concerning security generally, was previously considered by the Information Technology Policy Committee and received ministerial approval in December 1986 - if the Leader of the Opposition would care to listen.

On the current position in respect of Northern Territory government systems, the following comments are relevant to general system security. A security review was undertaken, in July 1985, by the Auditor-General who reported on areas directly concerned with data security, such as access control to the database and the on-line terminal network. He noted that, overall, the ADP facility was well managed and controlled in this regard. Several points were noted for attention to improve effectiveness and these

have been addressed subsequently or are under review. System security continues to receive regular attention by the Auditor-General. In May 1985, a detailed internal security review was conducted by an expert security analyst provided by the government's major supplier, IBM Australia. That analyst reported that the operations of the government's primary security systems compared favourably with other installations.

NCOM has a sophisticated and well-developed data level access control system, known as the Resource Access Control Facility, which provides a secure and comprehensive management function to control users both authorised and unauthorised. This system is particularly well advanced in the Northern Territory and is understood across all government areas. This installation is regarded by IBM as one of the premier examples of effective corporate organisation of this data security system. Investigation into the need for enhanced security of key applications such as police, hospitals etc by the installation of full data and encryption facilities to protect communications interfaces is planned. Without encryption at the appropriate level, with the equipment now available and knowledge of the appropriate communications techniques, it is not difficult to tap computer data lines and read data being transmitted. This is similar to the concept of telephone tapping and is undetectable. However, it should be emphasised that, whilst this would permit ready access to data, it would not easily permit unauthorised amendment. This could only be undertaken by a highly-expert communications technician with specialised equipment. Even under this scenario, access is restricted to the databases controlled by the specific user being penetrated and, as such, is restricted.

The concept of encrypting all government communications to overcome this contingency is a possibility and is yet to be addressed from a cost-risk-benefit viewpoint. This is programmed for review as soon as sufficient resources are available. It is possible to elevate physical computer security to a higher level, however costs and operational considerations are substantial and are likely to prove disproportionate to the potential benefits. To the best of our knowledge, such measures have not been adopted by any similar public-sector operation. The program is now under way to develop a suitably secure system to permit authorised public access to selected government databases. This development will address in further detail general access security from remote sources as well as classification and privacy issues.

A number of areas of concern are emerging, particularly in relation to facilities now available which enable departments to establish unsecured dial-in facilities at will. This is a price to be paid in permitting distributed processing, as central integrity cannot be maintained effectively or monitored except from a policy viewpoint. This issue also needs further consideration to determine an appropriate position.

In regard to specific data security, the government has a policy of data ownership by individual government agencies. Global security control to industry standards is available through NCOM and operated by individual agencies. Access levels are controlled by data owners. Cross-utilisation of systems is confined to specific data elements, as agreed between user agencies. Cross-utilisation of data is effected by agreement between agencies. No common keys are established between applications used by different agencies for linking of data elements. Of course, that was a matter that we raised in the debate on the Australia Card where the famous 10-digit number was to be the key link. Although much government data is of a public nature such as land information, licences and Hansard, all government systems

are under positive-access security control. Where data is deemed to be of a highly sensitive or confidential nature, such as crime intelligence information, additional levels of security are imposed.

Data held on computer systems is a reflection of what would otherwise be held manually to carry out the functions of government. Whilst current measures taken to protect government data held on computer systems are of a high standard, control systems are only as good as the human elements involved. In terms of data privacy, it is considered that there is a greater risk of exposure through the human factor than through the physical data systems used to process and store information. That is exactly the problem we have when someone like the Leader of the Opposition calls on people to misuse their positions, breach public service regulations and guidelines, and leak information.

Mr Smith: You have given them a fine example. They can break the law and follow their consciences.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the government already has some privacy legislation in place. However, in response to the concerns now being raised, further enhancement may be warranted. These could include, for example, specific preventive measures to preclude cross-linking of data without appropriate disclosure provisions.

Specific reference has been made to the NT government-Westpac link but those concerned about this facility should note that: only a dedicated line for one-way transmission of NT government financial data is used; data transfer is effected by file transfer only once daily; the line is owned by Westpac and communications encryption is used for maximum communications security; the link is established as a system-to-system facility only, with no terminal definitions to permit individual access in either direction; technical restrictions in the network interface inhibit access from either organisation past the communications software; and standard system security is also applied to further inhibit any attempt to access lower levels of government data.

The Northern Territory government is currently well-protected in relation to unauthorised access to computer data. The types of systems used and the protections already in place are designed to inhibit penetration sufficiently to reduce any material damage to core systems. The most likely cause of significant damage or unauthorised usage would come from internal sources. Procedures and policies in place, as part of routine operations, are designed to limit exposure from this area. With technology now available, it is generally possible to access the system at the primary level and this will continue to be so, as computers must exist within the public communications domain.

The government's data security system is layered to provide subsidiary levels of control to inhibit access to both core data banks and operating systems. Whilst these controls exist, the overall integrity of the system ultimately depends on the human element which is normally the weakest link in the process. Programs are run continually to emphasise the need for care in the management of passwords and terminal security to limit exposure in this area. These programs are under the direct control of departmental management.

I repeat that there is no evidence of information leakage. We know of 2 cases of unauthorised access to the Northern Territory computer. One occurred when the son of a policeman got the personal key number out of his

father's wallet by rifling through it at home. He used that number to access a file. The attempt to obtain access was identified by NCOM, the system closed down, the code number closed down, and it was traced back to the source. The matter was solved, to the embarrassment of the policeman and his son. Another incident occurred when a student on work experience looked over the shoulder of a public servant and noted the key-in number. It does not show on the screen but can be picked up as the numbers are punched in on the keyboard. Subsequently, the student used those numbers on another computer terminal. That was promptly identified by NCOM and the number was closed down while investigations took place to identify the source. The matter was resolved. Those are the only 2 instances this government is aware of and, on both occasions, the NCOM backup and control systems identified the unauthorised access and moved promptly to correct the problem. The fact that we can find only 2 examples of unauthorised access in the most computerised government system in Australia, and that we have demonstrated the effectiveness of the control systems that are in place, clearly shows that our controls on unauthorised access are adequate.

I have dealt with the issues of access to files and cross-referencing. I might add that, following the last sittings, I issued instructions through the Chief Minister's Department for the Coordination Committee to completely review the guidelines on information collection, management and control by government agencies. That matter was referred to the Coordination Committee on 7 October of this year. It was considered appropriate to investigate the collection and management of information by NT government agencies and whether the policy guidelines currently in existence are adequate to properly ensure that data held is not subject to abuse. All Chief Executive Officers were requested to prepare a briefing paper on these matters as they relate to their respective areas of responsibility. All briefing papers were received by my department and all relevant information has been consolidated into a single document. That process was completed on 16 October. It took only 9 days to collect and collate that information. That process is not evidence of any problem. It is evidence that, after the issue was raised by the Leader of the Opposition I moved, as a responsible Chief Minister, to have an audit across the system which would identify all base data currently held on information systems in the context of existing policy guidelines relating to security.

The Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the Archival Review Committee. I can advise him that that committee was not closed down. It was suspended earlier this year because the senior archivist had resigned. It took some time to fill the vacancy and a new archivist has taken up the position this week. The committee is now being reinstated. A total review is under way of all records management and allocation of material to archives or for destruction.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it was unfortunate that the Chief Minister wasted the first 7 minutes of his speech waffling on. Had he not done so, he would have found that he had enough time to cover fully the meatier matters which he came to towards the end. At the beginning, he stated that there was no problem. He then went on to detail some of the problems which do exist.

Obviously, the Chief Minister has not realised how easy it is to get the access codes from various departments and clearly he has not realised the problem which is created every time a person transfers from one department to another and takes with him the knowledge of his former department's access code. It was very interesting to hear the Chief Minister's description of the

security systems which are in place because I realised, as some other honourable members also would have realised, that it was a word-for-word reading of a document which was presented to the Public Accounts Committee by NCOM. Whilst I would hesitate to suggest that the Chief Minister is plagiarising or to wish upon him the terrible fate which befell various candidates in the current campaign for the American presidency, I find it interesting that he has covered matters which the PAC has considered very carefully and I am able to put the lie to some of his statements about security.

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! There may be an issue of confidentiality in relation to the Public Accounts Committee. The member for Stuart is a member of the Public Accounts Committee and he has access to information that other members of this House would not have access to.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am canvassing the contents of the speech which the Chief Minister just made.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Stuart may continue, provided he refers only to the comments made by the Chief Minister. I would remind all honourable members that no comment must be made pertaining to committees of which they are members unless a committee report is being debated.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the security measures described by the Chief Minister in his speech a few moments ago relate primarily to the physical security of the installation and the security of the data itself. The measures do not relate to privacy. As he stated himself, it is designed to protect the core systems. It is not designed primarily to prevent unauthorised primary level data access and it is at that primary level that we have the problem with privacy.

It is also interesting to note that he spoke of the 2 instances where, to his knowledge, people obtained access. He stated that, because they identified those 2 attempts, somehow those were the only 2 instances. Again, that shows his ignorance of the system with which he is dealing. Both those attempts were picked up at the point from which the person made his entry into the computer. In each instance, if the person had used the code from an installation where it was normally used, he would not have been detected. The entry by the son of the police officer was not made from Berrimah where the father works but from the basement of the Chan Building. Even the computer said, 'Hang on, there is something a bit wrong here'.

There is absolutely nothing in what the Chief Minister has said which goes against what the Leader of the Opposition stated. We are continuously being advised by public servants that access codes are readily available within the work place, that people carry codes from department to department and find later that the codes have not been changed on their departure. That gives people the opportunity to access that primary data.

It is important to understand the proposal that we are making today. We believe it is important for the Northern Territory to have privacy legislation which will regulate the collection, handling and use by Northern Territory departments and agencies of information about Territorians. We must provide Territorians with a level of privacy and protection consistent with efficient government administration. The proposals we are making were canvassed at the federal level in the debate on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Act of 1986 ...

Mr Coulter: And the ID Card.

Mr EDE: Indeed, on the ID Card.

We believe that it is essential that the Northern Territory have privacy legislation which will establish a comprehensive set of rules and principles to regulate dealings in personal information and provide an effective means of monitoring compliance with those rules. The rules would mesh with and avoid overlapping with any existing legislation and common law rights which protect privacy.

Mr Speaker, I mentioned common law but I must point out that, under common law, there is no enforceable right to privacy as such. There are, of course, some existing legal rights that protect some aspects of what is generally acknowledged as the privacy of individuals. I refer to the existing laws of defamation, breach of confidence, copyright etc. All of these, in some circumstances, can be used to prevent the unauthorised circulation of personal information.

As we all know, in recent times, there have been enormous developments in technology for processing information and these have provided immense opportunities for building up, using and abusing information on individuals. On this side of the House, we are not arguing against the ever-extending range of computerisation that is occurring in relation to Territorians. We understand that, hand in hand with the greater range of services being provided by government will go the accumulation of personal information, but we also understand that, with the capacity of modern computers to search and process that information, there is an enormous potential for invasion of personal privacy. The greater the accumulation of personal information, the greater the possibility of inaccurate material being included amongst such information. On this side of the Assembly, we are aware of the danger of decisions being made based on wrong information which could be oppressive to the individual concerned or simply hinder efficient administration. The legislation we are proposing is not radical in the national context. However, it will put us in the forefront in Australia and I know that the Chief Minister and various members opposite would like to see us taking our place at the forefront in that matter as we are at the forefront in computerisation.

Internationally, legislation protecting personal privacy in the processing of information has been developed by the Council of Europe and by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, of which Australia is a member. In fact, most European countries, the United States of America and Canada have enacted privacy protection legislation. In December 1984, Australia formally signified its intention to introduce legislation, following the OECD guidelines, for the protection of privacy and transport of flows of personal data. In Australia, the Law Reform Commission, following a reference in 1976, completed in December 1983 a very detailed report and recommendations which included draft legislation drawing from the OECD guidelines. The Law Reform Commission proposed a bill which enunciated a series of rules called 'Information Privacy Principles' in its draft legislation.

At the federal level, proposals have been made to apply those principles to Commonwealth departments and agencies, and it is now time for us in the Northern Territory to ensure that we give Territorians the same degree of protection they may soon achieve federally and that has already been achieved in other countries. The principles we are proposing would require government departments to have a lawful purpose for collecting personal information, ensuring that the purpose relates to the functions or the activities of the

collector. We believe that any agency collecting personal information must ensure that the individual from whom it is collecting that information is generally aware of such things as the purpose for which the information is being collected and the fact that the collection is authorised or required by law. Our principles require agencies, both when collecting and retaining information, to see that it is relevant to the purpose of collection, that it is up to date and that it is complete. We intend to ensure that, before that information is used, collectors check on the accuracy of the information.

The legislation we are proposing would include principles which would require agencies to store information records securely against loss or misuse. We require that, if asked, they provide information about the type of personal information they hold. Of course, there would be exemptions along the lines of those included in the freedom of information legislation to provide some limitations on the ability to access information. The essential principle is to ensure that the information is correct as far as accuracy, relevance and completeness is entailed. Subject to specific exemptions, notably law enforcement and the preservation of life, information that has been sought from an individual may not be used for a purpose or disclosed to another person other than with the agreement of the person who provided the information. We would require Territory departments and agencies to comply with those principles.

If a breach of those principles were established, it would be deemed to be an invasion of privacy. If an invasion of privacy were found, first we would attempt to resolve the allegation by conciliation and, failing that, report to the minister if it were found that interference had occurred. We are proposing a privacy committee which would undertake this function. That privacy committee would not be a full-time body; it would not be a new bureaucracy. In fact, it would comprise current members of the public service who would have the additional function of meeting on a regular basis, say once a week, to investigate complaints by Territorians in this area. However, it would not investigate on the basis of complaint only. It would have an ability in its own right to investigate where it saw weakness in the system which could lead to sloppiness in the protection of the privacy of Territorians.

We will provide for remedies, such as injunctions, to be able to be sought against interference with privacy. At this stage, we are not proposing that damages for interference with privacy by agencies be able to be claimed. This would not be a right in the courts because we recognise that the process has to develop. However, we would see it as something which could be introduced in a couple of years after the development of the system has taken place. We would propose that, when reporting a finding that an interference with privacy had occurred, our privacy committee would be able to make recommendations for compensation to an individual affected by the interference. That would allow us to remedy a problem where a grotesque invasion of privacy had occurred which had obviously materially affected an individual. It would allow people to receive some monetary compensation without making it a legal right in court.

We would also propose that our privacy committee be able to give advisory opinions. It would be able to issue guidelines and examine proposed enactments for privacy implications. We believe that an agency of the Northern Territory government, which believes that a current or a proposed practice may breach the principles that I have spoken of earlier, should be able to seek a determination from the privacy commission which would allow it either to continue with the practice because it had been able to establish the

practice was necessary for the continued operation of its service - as could be the case with some types of police information - or to cease it.

Agencies should be able to gain advice from the privacy commission on how they can change their own systems in such a way that they are able to fit in with the principles that I have mentioned earlier. An agency would only be able to override the principles of privacy if it were able to establish before the committee that to do so was substantially more in the public interest than not to.

For clarity, I would like to outline quickly again the essential principles behind the need for legislation to enact the safeguards that we see as being necessary to protect privacy: a Territory agency must have a lawful purpose for collecting personal information; the purpose must be related to the functions or the activities of the Territory agency; an agency collecting personal information on a Territorian must ensure that the Territorian is aware of the purpose for which it is being collected and the use to which it will be put; agencies collecting and retaining information must ensure that it is relevant to the purpose of collection; and agencies collecting and retaining information must be required to ensure that it is relevant to the purpose of collection, that it is up to date and that it is complete. It is required that, before using any of the information, it be checked for its accuracy. The principles would require agencies to store information records securely against loss or misuse and, subject to specific exemptions such as law enforcement or the preservation of life, to make information available to the person from whom it has been collected. It must not be made available to any other person or for any purpose other than with the agreement of the person who provided the information.

I hope that the next speaker will not continue in a manner similar to that adopted by the Chief Minister. I hope he will recognise that we have raised a matter of real public importance - something which we are asking members opposite to debate and examine - and for the government to prepare draft privacy legislation, which we can discuss in a bipartisan manner, so that the rights of Territorians are safeguarded.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I intend initially to concentrate on my ministerial responsibilities for government computing services which provide the basis for development of major information resource management systems. This matter of public importance was raised by the opposition today. I hope that opposition members read Hansard because it will remind them that they did not bother to be present in the Chamber to listen to government speakers. I think it is an absolute disgrace and it is typical of the way in which the Leader of the Opposition raises frivolous matters of public importance in this Chamber and then fails to be present. It is an insult to and contempt of this Chamber. I hope that members opposite are reminded of that from time to time by those members who are present here today.

The Northern Territory government has not failed to put in place effective information resource management systems. In fact, it has developed a most comprehensive information systems process and there are examples, such as the Motor Vehicle Registry System and the Lands Information System, where the Northern Territory government is recognised as the clear leader in implementation of effective information management systems in the public sector.

In so far as computing matters are concerned, the following specific comments can be made and I am referring here to the 5 points which the Leader

of the Opposition pointed out to us today even though he has failed to return to the Chamber to hear the response from the government this afternoon. The first point was to provide for efficient storage and retrieval of information. The Northern Territory government has recognised the need for an efficient data information storage system and, over a number of years, has established common data storage systems. These systems are structured under a well-defined concept of departmental ownership of data with procedures in place to ensure only authorised personnel have access to such data. Each owner of data is able to control who has access to data under his control and from which terminal devices access will be permitted.

The second point was to establish uniform guidelines for all departments. The Northern Territory government has established formal planning and control policies across all departments and authorities and these are regularly reviewed and updated. Some of these major reviews have been conducted by external experts to ensure that the procedures in place are appropriate to the Northern Territory. These guidelines require each department and authority to develop and maintain detailed information management plans. Major projects resulting from these detailed plans are regularly reviewed. Approval of major applications require a detailed cost-benefit study to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration as part of the management process.

The third point was to provide adequate safeguards and controls over access to the distribution of information. A policy of total security of individual data elements has been in place for many years. The Northern Territory government is noted for its effective implementation of data security controls. These controls are regularly reviewed by external auditors to ensure adherence to the standards. The controls permit the owner of the data to have complete control over who has access to that data.

The fourth point was to provide an effective information base for future government planning needs. The Northern Territory government has the most coordinated data planning base of any state government in Australia as a result of strict development policies which have been in place for many years. This policy has minimised data storage. A good example of this policy is the Government Planning Information System which is widely used at all levels of government.

The final point was to protect the rights of individuals. The Security Management System, which is used by all departments and authorities using government computer systems, provides a very high level of physical security for data relevant to individuals.

The Leader of the Opposition's comments this morning were shallow in the extreme, inconsistent, and contained superficial allegations of procedural breakdowns. He expressed specific concern about duplication of data in government records. What he omitted to say was that the most effective means of avoiding duplication in different systems is to accumulate all data in a single system. This is the very thing which could turn his fears about confidentiality into reality because a single inquiry could then produce a wide range of information on a person. In fact, that would be a Territory Card system.

An obvious and basic point, which the Leader of the Opposition also missed, is that the act of ensuring lack of duplication in, say, 2 discrete systems necessitates the controller of each knowing what is on the other, unless they use a third party to carry out the checks. Shared use of information by different areas of government is necessary for the efficient

running of government but is strictly controlled on a need-to-know basis. As far as pensioner concession records are concerned, it is quite reasonable and sensible, to all but those who refuse to see, that there should be an appropriate exchange of data.

The opposition also mentioned the problem of employees transferring between departments and keeping the same access codes. There are clear procedures for terminating the access of departed employees and these are strictly monitored. No system is infallible however. If, for example, one of the opposition's own staff members had mischievous intent and decided to abuse information held in his office, no amount of procedures would be likely to stop at least the first transgression. Those other issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition have been known to the government for years and have been addressed on an ongoing basis in numerous forums.

When the member for Stuart spoke, I was somewhat taken aback and wondered if, in fact, we were involved in the same debate. Having noted the lack of substance in his leader's contribution, and the telling points made by the Chief Minister, the member for Stuart finally decided to come to the real purpose of raising this whole issue as an alleged matter of public importance. I draw to honourable members' attention that we are now blessed with the presence of the Leader of the Opposition for this afternoon's session.

It quickly became evident that this should have been described as a privacy debate and as a promulgation of socialist philosophies by the establishment of intrusive commissions into the life of the community. Honourable members present will remember the dying words of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he started talking about a 'privacy commission'. The development of this theme was patently transparent and concerned the initial establishment of a proposed privacy committee, which would start off on a part-time basis and progress inevitably to another full-time quango with eventual development of even more legislation ostensibly to protect us but which, in practical terms, would hang another millstone around our necks. I thought it most pertinent that the member for Stuart inadvertently used the word 'commission' in the closing minutes of his speech.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory government has, and will continue to have, a responsible attitude to the collection and use of information necessary to carry on its business. I have yet to see any evidence of genuine concern about the misuse of such data and do not propose to bog down the machinery of government, through the commitment of valuable resources to the creation of additional bureaucracies which would have no useful purpose and which seem to be the brainchild of those members opposite in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, if you go to some of the people who are the recipients of leaked information which is obtained in the part of Australia that we live in, they will tell you. As I said, as we were getting up to leave for the lunch break in this Assembly today, you can start off with a clean-desk policy, which is a big start if you want security in any particular establishment, and I remind honourable members that they might like even to consider that in this Assembly. Mr Speaker, that is not a reflection on your security measures and they have been considerably stepped up and increased recently. However, information is available and can be obtained quite simply from desk tops and that is how much of that material is obtained.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition seem paranoid about computers, the computer base data mechanisms and the safety controls which are available in that area. It is to the credit of the Leader

of the Opposition that he mentioned books and materials in a letter sent to the Chief Minister on 20 September. He wrote about security in offices and the need to have various types of information, not only computer information, secured in office blocks. However, there is any amount of material that would be available and there are any number of basic steps that can be taken by departmental heads to preserve the integrity and the confidentiality of the material in their possession.

In terms of security, I have many documents before me. I am worried about the security of all these documents that I have been handed today, talking about security. There are documents from the police department, the Public Service Commissioner, the Ombudsman and many other departments, outlining security. A wealth of information is available and it goes back over a number of years. I have a memorandum from the Public Service Commissioner dated 24 September 1979. It is memorandum 1979/62, addressed to departmental heads and or Chief Executive Officers and prescribed authorities and is headed: 'Security of confidential documents in government departments'. This is not a new phenomenon. People have been aware of security and confidentiality over a large number of years, although it is interesting that that memorandum was prepared just a year after self-government so perhaps that awareness did come to us after the Commonwealth had left. There is nothing new about security measures. As I say, they can start with basic security, such as having a clean-desk policy in many offices.

The first 5 to 10 minutes of this speech took place without the presence of those people who raised this matter of public importance. The matter is really all about the establishment of a privacy commission, and that was definitely developed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He let that slip just as he was about to sit down to go to lunch. His shield dropped and he exposed himself for what he really is: a perpetrator of public commissions, or any commission for that matter, dealing with anything. It has to do with the expansion of the bureaucracy and the expansion of socialist policies. Opposition members are not speaking about protecting information and the rights of individuals. Everybody has to wear grey and be nice in socialist terms, and that is what they are trying to perpetrate on the people of the Northern Territory today. The Leader of the Opposition wants a central bureau where everything can be in one little pile and you can get access to everything, but we will have good control on that access. That is what he has told us he would like to see. As I have demonstrated to honourable members today, the system we have at the moment has many safeguards. Each department has its own facility, and is responsible for the data which is pertinent to its particular functions.

Plenty of safeguards are in place in spite of the flood of so-called leaks that have occurred recently and in spite of the Leader of the Opposition being an advocate for public servants leaking that type of material and making it generally available to anybody. Where was his concern then for confidentiality or the rights of individuals? The Leader of the Opposition promoted the concept that any information would be made freely available.

Mr Speaker, this MPI is a nonsense which is only paralleled by the opposition's censure motions and the telegrams which the Leader of the Opposition sends to the Chief Minister asking him to sack his deputy. The Northern Territory government is addressing the issue of confidentiality and I believe that the importance of this matter of public importance has been indicated by the members of the opposition themselves. They failed to turn up for the recommencement of the debate after the luncheon adjournment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I have 2 matters to explain. The first is that I was late for the afternoon session, for which I apologise, because of a television commitment. In my own defence, I must say that it is quite possible to hear the Treasurer outside, even without the aid of a loudspeaker. He was not making much sense but I certainly heard him.

The second and more serious matter relates to a reference I made in my speech this morning to a member of my staff. To be kind to him, the response of the Treasurer suggested that he may have misunderstood my comment and, for my staff member's sake, I want to make perfectly clear what I said. I said that, after she came across to my office, she was invited back to her previous place of employment at least once, and possibly twice, to help to find information that was supposedly on file but was not where it was thought to be. I want to state that again because I thought there was a possible implication in the Chief Minister's comments that perhaps she had misused information gained in her previous position whilst in my employ. That certainly should be straightened out.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in case the Leader of the Opposition did not hear what I said about his staff member or perhaps may have misconstrued it, I said 'even if' one of the opposition's staff members had mischievous intent. I did not say that she had mischievous intent. I would like it recorded in Hansard that I was not accusing her.

SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 71)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the main purpose of this legislation is to provide for the inclusion of members of the police force in the Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme - the NTGPASS. As members will be aware, the government's superannuation policy is to have 1 Territory superannuation scheme covering the full range of Territory public sector employment. The Superannuation Act, which was passed in the August 1986 sittings of the Assembly, largely implemented this policy. The police, however, were excluded from the NTGPASS because insufficient time was available to finalise the necessary consultation process with representatives of the Police Association, the Police Commissioned Officers Association and the police administration.

Following further discussions with the 2 police associations, agreement has now been reached on the inclusion of the police in the main Territory scheme. Consequently, it is proposed that, as from 1 January 1988, new recruits to the police force will be covered by the NTGPASS while existing members of the force will have a period of 6 months in which to choose between either remaining with their current superannuation arrangements or transferring to the Territory scheme. The transitional arrangements to be offered to existing police officers are the same as those provided to other public servants who elected to transfer to the NTGPASS over the last 12 months.

The framework of the NTGPASS has been modified, where necessary, to reflect the special employment conditions applying to members of the police force. These modifications include provision for a nominee of the Police Association to participate as a member of the Superannuation Review Board where the board is hearing an appeal lodged by a police officer or the board is considering a rule change of particular significance to police officers as a group of employees.

Contribution and benefit salaries for police officers are to be standardised at the rate of 130% of the actual annual salary payable plus Northern Territory allowances at the rate received. The standardisation overcomes the need to take into account the wide range of allowances paid to the police which would otherwise be separately incorporated into the superannuation salaries. The standardisation of salaries also includes a loading to compensate police for their earlier maximum retirement age of 60 years and for the loss of the Police Supplementary Benefits Scheme which had been set up to address the reduced level of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme benefits payable at this earlier maximum retirement age.

The government is confident that the new arrangements will provide for a better distribution of superannuation benefits among all police officers, especially for those officers not able or wishing to devote their full work career to the police force. Benefits will be paid in the form of a lump sum and, on resignation, will include an employer-financed component after 5 years service. Lump sum benefits are generally preferred by employees since this type of payment allows the employees concerned to determine individually the best use to which their retirement benefits can be put. An assessment provided by the Australian Government Actuary also indicates that the payment of lump sums rather than pensions will result in a reduction in the existing long-term costs to the Territory of providing superannuation for the police.

Mr Speaker, I would like to mention briefly the other provisions of the Superannuation Amendment Bill which do not directly concern the police. The Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme has now been in operation for 12 months during which time there has been sufficient operational experience for the administrative provisions of the legislation to be reviewed. This review has brought to light the need for several amendments to the legislation to promote administrative efficiency in the day-to-day application of the act.

These amendments concern the following aspects of the scheme: the payment of all benefits in the scheme from the Employees Fund with complementary provisions for the Territory to reimburse the Employees Fund for the cost of the employer-financed component of any benefit; the clarification of the financial reporting requirements of the Investment Board; the payment of an advanced partial benefit to alleviate immediate financial hardship among dependants in the event of the death of a member without the administrators of the scheme having to await probate of the will or letters of administration; and, lastly, the recognition of de facto marriages and Aboriginal marriages for the purpose of assessing the level of death benefits payable where there are surviving dependants. I commend the bill to all members of the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

SHIRE OF LITCHFIELD (VALIDATION OF RATES) BILL
(Serial 72)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill represents the ongoing fulfilment by the Northern Territory government of a commitment it gave to the people of the Shire of Litchfield during negotiations for the introduction of local government in that area. The Assembly enacted the Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Act during the November 1986 sittings of the Legislative Assembly. This put in place the 3 elements of the government's commitment: firstly, rates would not exceed \$105 per year in respect of each parcel of land in the Howard Springs, Knuckeyes Lagoon and Humpty Doo and Bees Creek Wards and \$55 for each parcel of land in the Noonamah, Acacia Hills, Berry Springs and Darwin River wards of the shire; secondly, these rate levels would be maintained for 3 years; and, thirdly, the rates would be assessed not on land value but on a fixed or flat system based on the geographical location of land.

Additionally, section 5 of the act brought an amount payable under the council's declaration of rates in the preceding September under the new act. Very recently, a court ruling in New South Wales on this matter has come to hand. It cast doubt on the validity of the council's declaration of its rate for 1986-87 which had preceded the enactment of the new legislation. To put the matter beyond doubt and to minimise further costs and time delays to the public sector, the government believes it is desirable to validate the Litchfield 1986-87 rate. This will remove any queries about the council's capacity to recover the rate from landowners and, in due course, will similarly remove any doubt from its power to sell land for unpaid rates after the 5-year period provided in the Local Government Act should such action be relevant.

The government honoured its commitment to the people of Litchfield in respect of rates when it passed the act in November last year. The government continues to honour its commitment and displays that support by introducing this bill to put a currently doubtful matter beyond all doubt. The bill is simple in its effect. It specifically validates the rates declared by the council on 24 September 1986. Additionally, as section 5 of the Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Act is no longer relevant, it repeals that section. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88
(Serial 58)

Continued from 20 October 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are various comments I want to make in speaking to the Appropriation Bill. Quite obviously, in money terms, it is the most important piece of legislation that comes before the Assembly in any given year and the attention that it attracts is no less important and, arguably, more important in my electorate than elsewhere. In addition to comments I wish to make with respect to the impact of the budget on my own electorate, I also wish to make comments about its impact on the portfolio areas for which I have responsibility in the opposition. These include lands and housing, transport and works, communications and the Attorney-General's portfolio.

Mr Speaker, in talking about the impact of this bill on my electorate, I should commence in much the same way as the Treasurer did and give an overview

of economic activities in my electorate. The carefully prepared second-reading speech delivered by the Treasurer was characterised by a very aggressive description of the positive effects of everything the Northern Territory government does and an equally fulsome description of the hopelessly negative effects of everything the Commonwealth government does. That grates with me because it is quite dishonest.

To make that clear, we need do no more than consider Budget Paper No 2. As the Leader of the Opposition and shadow Treasurer pointed out, contrary to the complaints of the Northern Territory government and the Treasurer in particular, Commonwealth payments to the Territory have held fairly steady. In 1986-87, actual payments to the Northern Territory totalled \$965m while the estimated figure for 1987-88 is \$967m. The decreases in Northern Territory revenue arise basically from estimated decreases in revenue to be collected within the Territory. I was rather surprised, given the rhetoric we are continually lambasted with, to find that that was the case when I looked at Budget Paper No 2.

Many of us have occasion to criticise the Commonwealth government from time to time. I do so myself, along with other members of this opposition. Our constructive criticisms, however, are very difficult to sustain in the context of the outrageous, unreasonable and subjective criticisms of the Commonwealth government's performance which come from members opposite. The plain fact of the matter is that things are looking crook in the Territory. Instead of blaming its problems on taxpayers in the rest of Australia and the government they have elected in Canberra, the government of the Northern Territory should take a slightly more objective view. The Northern Territory is part of this country and any consideration of the way money is raised and spent here needs to be taken in the context of the whole country and factors affecting it.

I must admit that I find it quite surprising that, in the day and a half that these sittings have been in progress, not one government member has taken the trouble to mention that a crisis in western capitalism, the likes of which we have have not seen for 50 years, is reverberating throughout the financial capitals of the world. Whilst we have challenges to face here, and a responsibility to use our resources to the best benefit of our people, we should be cognisant of our decisions not only in an Australian context but also, once in a while, in a world context. Nowhere and at no time has it become more clear that that is necessary than in the last day or so.

Mr Perron: That is why we should mine our uranium.

Mr BELL: If the member for Fannie Bay wants to interject with a specific example, I suggest that he is flying in the face of exactly the point I am trying to make. To suggest that increased uranium mining in the Northern Territory is somehow a panacea for Australia's economic ills, let alone the world's economic ills, is the sort of myopic attitude that does government in the Northern Territory no good whatsoever.

Mr Perron: Is that the best you can do to put me down?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, that is as much as I want to say about the wider context. I want to concentrate on my electorate for a minute. The electorate of MacDonnell contains within it the excision of Alice Springs, an important growth centre in the Territory, the fringes of which have the good fortune to be in the electorate of MacDonnell, and to look at the various economic activities there.

I look at the economic activities and I look at the people who live in my electorate. Tourism is booming. The pastoral industry has its problems, but it is not in too bad a shape. The Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign continues to be a concern. Equally, the development of export markets for beef continues to be a concern for the pastoral industry but, by and large, it continues to be viable. Mining activity in my electorate continues to go ahead at Palm Valley and Mereenie and, of course, exploration is being conducted in other parts of my electorate. The majority of my electorate is Aboriginal communities, traditionally-oriented Aboriginal communities, and the serious economic problems that confront them are in stark contrast to the sort of growth that is occurring and has occurred elsewhere.

It is a matter of concern to me that there are continuing high levels of unemployment and, with the increasing amount of employment at a place like Yulara, it bothers me that not one black face is employed there. I am not in the business of apportioning blame in that regard. I am not saying it is the government's fault. I am not saying it is the Yulara Corporation's fault or the fault of the federal Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, or the Department of Education or the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. I am not interested.

Mr Perron: You have not mentioned any Aboriginals in that group of people, in governments and developments. Was that deliberate - the absence of Aboriginals in that list of organisations you just gave?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Fannie Bay because, basically, I do not understand what he is getting at.

Mr Perron: Neither do we understand what you are getting at. You listed groups of people to whom you would not apportion blame for there not being Aboriginal employment, but you missed out Aboriginals in that list. I asked if that was deliberate.

Mr BELL: I will pick that up. I am quite happy to discuss that. It is a reasonable interjection. It is a sad sort of interjection because it reveals a Territorian who does not really understand the Northern Territory beyond the confines of the towns and cities. It is the sort of interjection that comes from somebody like the member for Fannie Bay because he does not know the bush.

Mr Perron: Are you going to answer it?

Mr BELL: I am answering the member for Fannie Bay, Mr Speaker. The plain fact of the matter is that, by the sheer nature of his interjection, the member for Fannie Bay indicates his clear inability to understand the sort of barriers that can confront young Aboriginals about going to a prospective employer and saying: 'I want a job'. I can do it, my kids can do it. I am sure the member for Fannie Bay could do it and I would be surprised if his kids could not as well. However, I do not believe that that is a good enough reason for saying that everybody ought to be able to do it. As far as I am concerned, some people have advantages in the labour market and some people do not have advantages but have serious disadvantages.

Mr Collins: It is an unequal world.

Mr BELL: If you want to talk about the economics of it, a persistent hunter-gatherer economy still applies in my electorate in the same way as it does in parts of New Guinea and in many other areas in the world. The way ...

Mr Coulter: He is talking about camel farming at Docker River.

Mr Perron: You missed my point.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if the member for Fannie Bay wants to make a serious contribution to a discussion of this sort, I suggest that he reflect and perhaps discusses a question I will put to him. In what way does he expect a traditional hunter-gatherer economy, still alive in many parts of the Northern Territory, to interface with a western economy, with the sort of economic pursuits that we discussed? As I said, I am not seeking to apportion blame for that, but what I am suggesting is the fact ...

Mr Coulter: And how would they go about negotiating film rights, for example - these hunter-gatherers?

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection too, just to say how absolutely puerile it is. I have asked my question, and I will not deal with it any further. I suggest the Treasurer take it seriously and try to answer it. I have serious concerns that it is beyond the scope of his imagination as it may be beyond the scope of the imagination of the member for Fannie Bay. However, it is a serious question because, as I have said on countless occasions in this Assembly, the epidemic unemployment rates in my electorate are a serious cause of dislocation. I point out incidentally that, particularly those young men and women, no longer fit easily into that traditional hunter-gatherer economy, as they do not fit easily into the growth activities of pastoralism, tourism and mining either. Probably they fit a little better into pastoral activities and I think it is instructive to ask in this sort of debate, for example, why those people fit fairly easily into the pastoral industry and not into the tourist industry. The member for Fannie Bay and the Treasurer may choose to say that it is because they are lazy and they simply won't do it.

Mr Perron: You missed the point of my interjection, in saying that.

Mr BELL: I will be interested to hear the member for Fannie Bay's contribution but I do suggest that, until this Assembly shows itself capable of addressing those questions, we are not a mature polity, as I have said in statehood debates in this Assembly. I am rapidly running out of time, Mr Speaker.

The other issue I wanted particularly to raise in relation to my electorate was the capital works program. As a conscientious local member, I like to be aware of the capital works that are in progress and the new works that are proposed for my electorate, and I like to keep my ear to the ground in that respect. In the context of this debate, I would like to pass on my thanks to the Minister for Transport and Works for the briefing I was able to receive about the Kinhill Stearns Report which is basically an assessment of infrastructural needs in Aboriginal communities. I will be interested to see what ends up in the capital works program and how that squares off with the findings of that report and the thinking of the minister's department. It is very difficult for a backbencher, particularly an opposition backbencher, to be convinced that capital works funds are disbursed by the government equitably and that the government does not give in to the temptation to indulge in pork-barrelling.

Obviously, reports of that nature are crucial in ordering the capital works priorities of the government. As I said, perhaps I am overlooking some information, but I would like to be assured that capital works funding and funding for other services are allocated equitably. With the way the figures

are presented, it is not easy to be certain that that is the case. I would appreciate the Treasurer taking up this point at some stage in his response.

In the time that remains, I would like to raise a few matters in the portfolios I cover. The Minister for Lands and Housing made various comments about the housing market in the Northern Territory. Many of them were accurate and his department is to be congratulated for that. It is worth pointing out that the housing industry has its problems at the moment and I suggest that, at some stage in this debate or in some other forum, the Minister for Lands and Housing might like to discuss at greater length the problems that he did not raise in his speech in this debate. Although he referred to increasing vacancy rates, he did not refer to a matter which is of concern to many people in the real estate and housing industries: the large number of mortgagee auctions which are occurring and the effect of these, not only on the unfortunate individuals who probably end up losing money, but also through the implication it has for the wider housing market in terms of new starts, availability of money and so on. I would like the minister to address that matter.

In his contribution to debate on the Appropriation Bill, the Minister for Lands and Housing referred to a working party which is investigating options for a shared-equity home ownership scheme which would allow prospective home buyers to purchase an affordable share of a dwelling, using private-sector finance. Some honourable members would be aware that, with the partial deregulation of housing interest rates, public housing authorities right around the country have been concerned about obtaining adequate housing funds and have been seeking various means of doing so. I was able to convene, at the Master Builder's Association, an interesting forum of people involved in the housing industry. It included people from private lending institutions like Westpac, from the building industry, the Real Estate Institute and from various housing interest groups in the community. One of the issues raised in that forum was the question of capital-indexed loans. That made me particularly interested in the comments of the Minister for Lands and Housing.

I do, however, feel some need to draw the minister's attention to the rather breathless promise that was made by his government during the election campaign in March. I draw honourable members' attention to this document, 'The Housing Plan', which was put forward by the government during the campaign. I believe the member for Sanderson was Minister for Housing at the time and therefore he is probably responsible for the deathless prose in this particular document. It starts off: 'The Territory's Country Liberal Party government has overcome the housing shortage in the Northern Territory ...'. And so it goes on. I could have a lot of fun with that but I will not. I will simply direct the minister's attention to one of the plans to meet the new challenges. In the document, the then minister said that his government would provide new directions in housing policy which would include 'an exciting new shared-equity strategy to help middle-income families out of the federal government's interest rate trap'. On the following page, the document went on to say: 'Discussions on this strategy have already commenced with private enterprise and these will be pursued as a matter of urgency in the early weeks of the next Hatton CLP government'.

I am not sure how the honourable minister measures a week but many weeks have elapsed since the Territory election and I suggest that the government has been dragging the chain. The fact of the matter is that it is about time home buyers and the housing industry heard something about the government's strategies. As I said a little earlier, the opposition presented an innovative housing policy to the electorate.

Housing policies tend not to be big vote grabbers, but I was considerably reassured to hear from industry sources that, quite clearly, the opposition's policy in this respect was superior to that of the government. At least, we frightened it into presenting something and rest assured, Mr Deputy Speaker, that my representations in this Assembly will be exerted in such a way as to ensure the government sticks to its promises.

Members will be aware of my long-term interest, as shadow minister for Lands, not only in the promises and the dealings but also in the figures that the government presents to us. I wish to give fair warning to the Minister for Lands and Housing that I intend to seek some fairly specific information. Incidentally, I have from the honourable minister a letter, dated 20 October, in which he advised that the government intended that the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill be dealt with this week and sought prior notification of questions in the way that was done last year. Regrettably, I advise the minister that I am not in a position to provide prior notification of questions. However, I give him an undertaking to keep the temperature down in the committee stage and I will endeavour to ensure that we can use the committee stage, if not necessarily for seeking answers to some of the questions, at least for placing them on the agenda.

One of the questions I wish to place on the agenda right now, apart from the extraordinary position of the Northern Territory Land Corporation which will be a subject of debate tomorrow, is the question of revenue raised from land sales. No doubt, the Minister for Lands and Housing will be aware that the estimate in 1986-87 for land sales was \$27m, a 25% increase on the actual revenue for 1985-86. Mr Deputy Speaker, I see the minister's predecessor shaking his head at me but let me assure you that the estimated figure for 1986-87 was \$27m and the actual figure for 1985-86 was \$20.82m, and that is roughly a 25% increase.

Unfortunately, the estimated revenue for 1986-87 did not eventuate. That is what it amounts to and I would very much like to know why. The estimate for 1986-87 was \$27m but the figure realised for 1986-87 was \$21m. The actual revenue for 1986-87 was pretty much the same as the actual revenue for 1985-86. Why were the estimates wrong? Why is the estimate for 1987-88 right down to \$9.5m? There may be innocent explanations for these changes. On the basis of some of the land dealings that we have raised questions about, I have serious doubts about that, but I look forward to the comments from the Treasurer.

I know the member for Ludmilla intends to speak on this later but, in the communications area, there are 2 issues that I would like to be picked up at some stage. The first is the Northern Territory government's communications network that was talked about, and the scandalous backdown on arrangements with Telecom. The second issue is the matter of commercial television for the bush and the backdowns that the Northern Territory government is responsible for in that respect.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, in responding to my interjection, the member for MacDonnell seemed to indicate that he felt that I was somehow casting aspersions on the Aboriginal group at Yulara for not finding employment at Yulara. He went on to outline some of the difficulties facing Aboriginals in remote areas in embracing western

values and practices in employment. The only point I was making was that, in a list of organisations that he said he was not blaming for not having Aboriginals among those employed at Yulara, he omitted Aboriginals themselves. My interjection was a genuine one to seek his reaction on whether it was simply an oversight on his part in not putting them in the list because I thought he would have done so in order to be fair to all parties involved.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, my interjection to the member for MacDonnell was in a similar vein to that of the Minister for Industries and Development. One of the problems in the Northern Territory economy relates to economies which operate in electorates like that which the member for MacDonnell represents. I can assure him that both the Minister for Industries and Development and the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services have addressed this particular problem on a number of occasions, particularly in relation to Aboriginal employment. The important thing about the list which the member for MacDonnell was reciting was a particular omission, which may have been an oversight. His attention was brought to it by way of interjection. It was that employers who have the greatest potential to employ Aboriginal people were left out of his list. Those employers are the Aboriginal organisations.

The demography of the Northern Territory indicates a very grave problem which we must face. In 2 years time, the number of people of school-leaving age, the 16-17 year bracket, will be at a peak. That applies in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Finding employment for those teenagers, many of them highly mobile, will be a major challenge. Perhaps the Aboriginals will stay with the hunter-gatherer lifestyle that they have become accustomed to. It may be acceptable to them. My point related to the question of whether we fight those people who are trying to keep Aboriginal people under the social welfare umbrella or look for meaningful full-time or any other type of employment which is known to the western world. What do we do?

Mr Bell: They are not mutually exclusive, are they?

Mr COULTER: But you did not mention Aboriginal organisations in your list. You did not see them as large employers. I mentioned the camel gathering project at Docker River. When I went out to Docker River, one of the suggestions made as a possible project for people under community service orders was to build yards for the catching of camels. Is that the sort of project this government should be supporting in terms of job opportunities? What is the direction should we take?

I also interjected that people in those areas seem to be fairly good at negotiating film rights. Maybe the areas of land that they own can capture the imagination of film makers or, quite possibly, miners.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is certainly stretching the indulgence of the House in his personal explanation and I would ask that he conclude it as soon as possible.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I think those examples are appropriate in the context of a debate on the Appropriation Bill. They relate to the Territory economy and its relationship to the economy of the member for MacDonnell's electorate. Feedback about employment prospects in areas like that is important to me as Treasurer and Minister for Mines and Energy, and

also to the Minister for Industries and Development and the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. We are continually looking at avenues which can develop job opportunities and meaningful full-time or part-time employment.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, in delivering the tenth Northern Territory budget, the Treasurer outlined a program of constraint and reduction in public sector expenditure, continued economic growth and stronger export development to achieve a higher profile for industry and the private sector.

In the past, we have had the benefit of sufficient revenue to allow the promotion of large-scale and, in many cases, innovative schemes to support the accelerated growth patterns which followed self-government. Had sufficient additional revenue been available to us, I have no doubt that we would have continued to foster large-scale creative ventures. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case, more is the pity, as the Territory has been well in front of the founding states in generating export income on a per capita basis.

The Northern Territory and federal budgets were brought down on the same day this year and much was made of the federal Treasurer's balanced budget, a balance which was achieved in part through a one-off windfall from the Reserve Bank and which relied heavily on the sale of some of Australia's assets. In the Territory, we have brought in a balanced budget for the tenth time in succession without similar windfalls and with constraint in spending. As business is now recognising, after being all too willing to trot along behind the federal Labor government, it was quite mistaken in believing that all was well because the federal budget balanced on paper. All is certainly not well.

As any prudent housewife knows, it is not only necessary to pay the weekly outgoings but, to survive, one must also pay off one's borrowings and save for contingencies. Successive Labor governments have been so generous in giving away taxpayers' money and in borrowing additional funds, that we have now reached a situation of crisis in relation to our ability even to meet interest debts on overseas borrowings. The repayment of our long-term overseas debts should be the primary aim of the federal Treasurer. The only way to do that is to increase exports and reduce imports and public-sector expenditure, particularly through the public service. The policies of the federal Labor Party, whilst long on rhetoric, are short on practical solutions. We are exhorted on all occasions to export and grow, yet we see all areas of potential massive wealth in the mining and timber industries being progressively closed forever to appease the conservation lobby group, a group to whom the word 'conserve' means lock away and do not touch or use, not 'conserve' meaning manage to the best advantage and to ensure the least detriment or 'conserve' meaning to husband your resources.

The manufacturing industry in Australia has been progressively debilitated by reductions in incentive taxation allowances or penalised by increasing taxation provisions. The incentive for research and development in industry has all but disappeared and the golden geese of mining, pastoral and manufacturing industries are now beginning to look like plucked chooks. The federal Labor government's taxes on capital gains, superannuation and fringe benefits, and the removal of negative gearing - even though this is now to be removed - have all been the hallmarks of a rapacious government hell-bent on collecting ever-increasing amounts of money to satisfy its urge to redistribute wealth. Now we are about to have an inquiry and, I believe, the inevitable introduction of a wealth tax to satisfy the left wing, all based on the misguided premiss that the capitalists have ripped off the system to the detriment of other Australians.

Mr Speaker, that is a load of rubbish! What the federal Labor government has done is to successfully break down the incentives which applied for all families and businesses in Australia, incentives which are necessary to ensure that all mature Australians strive for advancement, strive to better their financial arrangements and provide for their families and their children in the future and do not expect the government to hand out money continually like a drunken sailor home on shore leave.

It was interesting the other day to read the Bulletin of 6 October. I would like to quote from an article about the report of the International Monetary Fund Committee's visit to Australia last year. The article was written by David Barnett and makes some very telling points. Normally, this International Monetary Fund report never sees the light of day. There is normally only a brief press release issued by the Treasurer. Unfortunately, at the Perth Branch of the Society of Labor Lawyers, Mr Walsh let it slip that this report was available and he made some comments about it. He said: 'If there is another commodity price slide, the International Monetary Fund will be knocking on the door again'.

The article went on to say: 'The IMF team agreed during the discussions that the government had tightened monetary policy, but did not consider it had been tightened sufficiently. The Australians acknowledged that business investment had been held back because of uncertainty about wages developments and whether recent gains in competitiveness could be maintained'. The article went on to say:

The report is particularly bleak when it surveys balance of payments prospects, as much because of the views which it quotes of our own Australian officials as because of its own conclusions. The Australians told them, for instance, that current account deficits above a sustainable level would continue to persist for several years and that the external debt, which was one third of the gross domestic product in 1986, would become even larger, rising to some 43% at best by 1992 and, on a worst-case scenario, never stabilising.

The IMF went on to say it expects the annual deficit on the current account to start rising next year and to be back to \$13 600m by 1992 when it will total about \$160 000m or twice the present level:

To stabilise the overseas debt at 40% of gross domestic product would require either a sustained improvement in terms of trade or early forceful action, namely keeping domestic demands flat. According to the 1987-88 budget, the terms of trade have improved but domestic demand is forecast to rise by 1.5%. Since the report was discussed at the IMF executive board, the Hawke government has balanced the budget albeit by increasing taxation rather than by reducing the number of government programs, otherwise not much has changed.

Unfortunately, since Mr David Barnett's article, a great deal has changed around the world in respect of the stock market collapse, a massive redeployment of funds world-wide and a reduction in the investment potential in Australia by overseas companies who are rapidly trying to shore up their own difficult positions overseas at the moment. I suspect that we will have some further problems. The points I made earlier in respect of providing incentives for people to export and incentive for families to save and the necessity for the federal government to cut back on its spending programs, particularly in the public service sector, are even more accentuated now than they were several weeks ago.

Turning to the Northern Territory, we have tightened our belts to get the best value for the taxpayer's dollar and to provide a framework for the private sector to step in and take the lead in development throughout the Territory. We have been progressively reducing our public service. Also, we have been holding our taxes down and we are freeing up the red tape for the private sector. I acknowledge that there are still areas of concern, but these concerns are being addressed as they come to light and the new issues that are identified are being addressed. We will continue to do that.

Mr Speaker, we have many people of vision actively investing their lives and their capital in the Northern Territory and these people must be encouraged to continue. We need to attract more new people and investors to cross our borders. The Territory CLP government is pursuing this theme actively with business and industry promotions, overseas trade development promotions and our mining seminars, one of which is being held in Darwin at this very moment. But we also need additional people in the Northern Territory, and there are several ways this could be helped by the federal government.

The encouragement for population growth could be greatly assisted by an increase in the Commonwealth government's immigration scheme, with additional points being granted for migration to designated growth areas, such as the Northern Territory and other outback parts of Australia. Whilst our population is still low compared to those of the founding states, we are growing at a faster rate than the Australian average and this will continue due to the fact that we have the youngest population in Australia with an average age of 26.5 compared to the Australian average of 33.8. We have the highest natural increase in Australia. This growth is important to the future potential of the Northern Territory and it should be accelerated by means of these 2 principles: the increased population coming from immigration under the point system that I propose, and a return to the incentive zone allowance which used to apply some years ago, the zone A and zone B taxation allowances. This was an allowance for families that was removed some time ago and I believe the reintroduction of a scheme of this type would assist in promoting further migration to the outback and rural parts of Australia.

We are burying our heads in the ground if we do not recognise that the majority of Australians these days are becoming soft and retreating from outback Australia to the coastal strips. It is very difficult to hold children particularly, and certainly some families, in areas that are remote, when there is the lure of the beaches, a softer lifestyle, an attractive night life and a more benign climate. All these are providing incentives, particularly for the younger generation, to take the soft option of heading to these areas where the majority become workers in paper-pushing or service-related industries. What incentives are there for families to remain in the bush on our pastoral properties, mining leases or at outback service centres? There is not much. A tax regime that recognised this would help. I do not think it would necessarily be an enormous financial attraction, but it would provide a recognition of the sort of difficulties that people have in outback areas and, to some extent, I believe it would go a long way to helping to solve the problem that I have identified.

The original case for zone allowances was argued on grounds of cost disparities. I always felt that that was the wrong argument and I still do. There is no way to quantify the lack of facilities, the isolation and, in many cases, the enormous travel times to even minor centres let alone the costs, both financial and in time, to visit relations in southern states or just to go away on holidays from the outback and rural areas.

I would like to turn briefly to my electorate with respect to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr Dale: You are going to be parochial, eh?

Mr FIRMIN: I have to be parochial, yes. I have had some very good news in the budget for my electorate and I think I would like to highlight that. Several major projects are either under way or about to commence in my electorate and I would like to highlight a couple of them. It was very pleasing for me, and I am sure it was pleasing also to Kormilda College, to find the generous repair and maintenance item in the budget this year to allow the substantial external maintenance that is required to enable the college to open next year as both a day school and a residential Christian college. I was also very pleased to see that the Darwin waste water treatment plant in Dick Ward Drive was to receive a well-deserved cleanup and paint, probably the first since it was built some 9 or 10 years ago.

However, probably the most significant budget items concerning my electorate this year are in the transport and works area. I say that because they are not of benefit to my electorate only but will be of great benefit to the whole of Darwin and certainly the Territory in the long term. I refer to the continuation of construction on what I like to refer to as the Palmerston freeway which correctly is titled Tiger Brennan Drive. There were 2 items in the Department of Transport and Works capital works budget this year. The major additional extension work to be completed with a \$1m pave and seal is the extension of Tiger Brennan Drive between Reichhardt Road and Bowen Street sections, and a \$4.552m contract to complete the pave and seal from Bowen Street to Hook Road, Berrimah.

I must admit I have asked a question in this Assembly once before about this and it was answered by the minister. However, I would highlight once again, in the context of this debate, that inherent in the design and the completion of this section is the preservation of access to the Royal Agricultural Society stables, which was raised also by the member for Fannie Bay. Access will be protected to those stables, which are at the rear of the showgrounds and I reiterate this point following representations from the member for Port Darwin and members of the Royal Agricultural Society.

Several other significant expenditure items in my electorate need highlighting. One refers to the Hudson Creek terminal installation of the No 3, 132 KVA transformer at a cost in excess of \$2m. Whilst I suppose one might be drawing a long bow in describing the Hudson Creek transformer as a parochial issue, it happens to reside in my electorate. Nonetheless, it is a very important part of the electrical reticulation system and it benefits the whole of Darwin. For those who do not know where the Hudson Creek terminal is located, it is off the East Arm Road to the south-west, approximately half a mile from the road. It is probably the most modern and sophisticated electrical supply switching station in Australia. It would have to be one of the most attractive and well kept sites that I have ever seen, so much so that I nominated it for an award in the Territory Tidy Towns Competition this year. I hope that it may be the recipient of an award when they are announced in a few days time.

The other major item in my area this year is the \$700 000 sewer rehabilitation in the Coconut Grove region. This has been required for some considerable time. There have been many representations from my office to the minister and the department over some years for this rehabilitation program. There have been some problems with the upstream traffic flow on that sewer

line in the Coconut Grove region. Members who use Dick Ward Drive at the moment will notice that the work has commenced and, in fact, is very close to being completed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those few words on the Appropriation Bill, I would like to congratulate the Treasurer on this year's budget and hope it may be the first of many.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on the Appropriation Bill presented by the Treasurer. Firstly, I would like to outline some of the problems that I would like to see resolved in the next 10 years or so in my electorate. Education, housing and local government are the 3 main areas that I would like to concentrate on today.

In my electorate, there is a very poor standard of education and much more work needs to be done on education in Aboriginal communities. The education system is of a low standard there compared with other areas of the Territory and interstate. Education is the key to our success in everything that we would like to do in the future. With the assistance of the government, we have established the bilingual education program which will do much for Aboriginal communities such as mine at Bathurst Island. It is the only one in my electorate. It is very good and I would like to introduce it to the other communities in my electorate. It gives a better understanding of culture. By teaching students in their own language, they come to understand ways of teaching in English. When the 2 methods are brought together, the result is a better understanding in Aboriginal communities.

Housing is very much a problem in my electorate. There is also a necessity for the local people to be educated in how to look after their houses. We require assistance from the Territory government and the federal government. Most Aboriginals do not know how to look after their houses. They need to be taught about the use of electricity and water services.

In many Aboriginal communities, there is inadequate housing. Many Aboriginals like to live out in the bush, especially in the outstations. For example, Maningrida in my electorate has about 50 outstations and 30 of them are used all year round. I would like to ask the government for help here. Even though funding has been cut for the outstation movement, I believe there is a need to look at this matter of living out bush. Many people, especially the elders, prefer to live out bush rather than in town because there is increasing unemployment in the Aboriginal communities.

Education is the key and, if more funds were provided for education programs, perhaps some of our problems could be solved. Nevertheless, we will struggle on. We will get there. It is just a matter of time before we solve some of the problems.

Local government is an area that I was involved in for 2 years as chairman of a local council in my electorate. Local governments in Aboriginal communities provide water, sewerage and power to their communities. Some communities are growing every year. I have enjoyed working in local government and I am sure many Aboriginal communities in my electorate will look at the local government scheme and perhaps form local government councils. There are 4 community government councils in my electorate: Nguin on Bathurst Island, Pularumpi and Milikapiti on Melville Island and Jabiru on the mainland.

Jabiru is another growing area. It has a housing problem and there are some difficulties with the mining company. The government might be able to help by looking into housing development there because the town is growing fast. Whilst many facilities for the tourist are being developed, housing is in short supply.

I turn now to the first of my 2 portfolio responsibilities: the police, fire and emergency services. The police have the general responsibility of maintaining public safety and preventing and detecting crime. They also protect life and property, control traffic, assist the aged and the young and keep the peace generally throughout the Northern Territory. We need more police throughout the Territory especially in the main centres of Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Darwin. We need more police in the streets rather than inside buildings and we also need more police out in the bush areas. The crime rate in the Territory is very high and we need to consider it very seriously.

Fire services cover fire fighting, fire prevention and fire safety. We need more volunteer fire brigades, especially in the smaller communities in the bush. The volunteers need more training and equipment and there is a requirement for better plans, procedures and information to increase the safety of the community as a whole. Public education and training need more attention also so that people will be more aware of fire safety throughout the Territory, to stop fires in town areas and also out in the bush.

Cyclone Tracy made us particularly aware of the need to maintain an effective emergency service. Cyclones are a very real danger in the Top End. The administration and operation of our counter-disaster organisation were established under the Disasters Act. There is a need for greater awareness of emergency procedures and training programs throughout the Territory, especially in coastal communities.

Among matters affecting my electorate, tourism stands out. It is booming in Kakadu and I am proud to represent an electorate where people are doing so much to develop tourism. I believe visitors to Kakadu now number about 200 000 per year, and that is a great thing for the Territory. Many Aboriginal communities are initiating their own tourism ventures. Putjamirra on Melville Island was set up with the help of the Northern Territory government and the Barra Base on Bathurst Island is a joint venture involving local people. These ventures are generating revenue in the Tiwi islands. I am proud of the industries which have been developed in my community of Nguiu. Tiwi Designs and Tiwi Pottery are well-known throughout Australia. Maybe we can introduce similar ideas to other communities so that they can raise more of their own revenue. I am certainly prepared to help in that area.

There is considerable debate about mining, but I believe we can open up more land in my electorate, especially near Jabiru and around the Kakadu area. I believe that this would be a great thing for the Territory as a whole and I am sure that, with the right approach to the Northern Land Council and the traditional owners, we will get somewhere. Ranger is providing a healthy income to the local people there but it is not generating enough to provide for the whole of the Territory.

My other shadow portfolio is conservation. I was amazed to see that funds for the Executive Secretariat Unit were increased by \$1.25m above last year's amount. Rather than spending on office functions, I think funds should be spent throughout the Territory in places like Katherine, Alice Springs and so on. Perhaps the minister responsible can explain that increase to me next week.

Finally, I want to refer again to the need for more police to deal with crime in the Territory, especially out in the bush. There is a definite need for more police in Aboriginal communities. My own community of Nguju has a population of 1200 and we have no police officer, although we have 2 police aides. Generally, such numbers are not sufficient. The powers of police aides need to be looked at more seriously. At the moment, they have only limited powers to act. Maybe the government could employ more police aides in Aboriginal communities and provide them with more power to act. Perhaps we could look at that matter as well.

Aside from the matters I have raised, the Appropriation Bill presented by the Treasurer is pretty good and I commend it to all members.

Debate adjourned.

FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 56)

Continued from 16 September 1987.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the bill. The bill will not affect people in the town areas but, in the Aboriginal communities, it will create a problem because the family shares one firearm. I think in the bill it says that the shooter must own the firearm and he must be authorised to use it. In this case, perhaps we can look at that part of the bill because it is a bit dicey with regard to a person using another person's firearm. That is the only area I am concerned about.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory has the most responsible gun laws that exist in Australia and I believe this amendment goes to ...

Mr Bell: Best in the western world, Fred.

Mr FINCH: I stand corrected by the member for MacDonnell. I would believe that the Northern Territory gun laws are certainly amongst the best and most responsible in the western world.

Having said that, let me speak specifically about the amendment. It makes a number of provisions. It allows for those who wish to surrender possession of their firearms and permits for shooting etc, on a voluntary basis, where they may be undergoing some personal stress or whatever, perhaps some family trouble where they might believe that, for their own safety and that of their family, they need to be sure that they have taken appropriate measures. The same applies for those who have actually been charged with an offence involving a firearm and are waiting for the hearing. It provides for the suspension of the permit and removal of the firearm as well.

The other area that I would like to comment on is one on which I have had significant representation from my electorate and members of the community. I refer to the situation whereby the holder of a licence may be suffering some medical or, more particularly, mental condition where it can be quite clearly seen that the possession of a firearm is considered to be a substantial or significant threat to that person or to the community generally. I feel that this amendment provides an appropriate safety measure to ensure that the general community is not left exposed to the threat of misuse of a firearm. In cases where people make false declarations when applying for a licence, the amendment provides for intervention and once again immediate action is available.

Events such as the recent mass killing of a family in Sydney and the Clifton Hill mass murder in Great Britain have highlighted the need for greater control over firearms. Very sadly, there was a recent occurrence in the Northern Territory and Western Australia where misuse of a firearm was a matter of great community concern and, in fact, fear. It interfered with our tourism and the comfort and safety of our residents in those remote areas.

Although I suppose the Territory has not experienced any world-shattering events - and one would hope it never will - such as those in England and in Sydney, there have been a number of shootings within the Northern Territory where it has been clearly identified that the killer suffered severe and, in some cases, quite noticeable medical or mental difficulties, indicating the potential for crime involving the use of a firearm. Obviously, people suffering such conditions should not be allowed access to firearms and, whilst some may consider it draconian, personally I would have no hesitation in advocating and hoping that this amendment provides for intervention with those persons who clearly demonstrate irrational or violent behaviour including, possibly, threats to use a firearm or threats to kill where the person is known to possess a firearm. I would suggest that that, in itself, would warrant intervention. I believe those persons quite clearly fall in the category of a potential danger not only to those in the community but possibly even to themselves.

While some may consider such moves to be draconian, as a precautionary measure the suspension of those licences, with possible review later, is a sensible move. It is better to be safe than sorry. That is not to say that those people should have their access to firearms suspended permanently. There may well be causes for weapons to be removed until the person regains emotional stability or the situation has been defused or whatever.

The existing legislation was a matter of all or nothing. A person shown to be in an unfit state was liable to have his firearm licence revoked after the appropriate steps and procedures had been followed. The amendments to the act provide for the immediate suspension of a person's licence if that person is considered to be unfit etc. Of course, the amendments provide also for the removal of weapons in appropriate cases, the beauty being the immediate removal of the firearm from the person under consideration. The police have been hindered in effective pursuit of their duty in this area because section 73 of the act, as it stands, allows up to 28 days for an appeal to be lodged while section 74 provides that, only after an appeal has been lodged must appellants deliver their firearms to police for safekeeping. Obviously, 28 days is far too long. There is a need for immediate action in some cases and it is sad that it can be clearly illustrated that there is cause for concern in that area.

The overall effect of this amendment is to reinforce our gun laws and protect members of the general community from possibly life-threatening situations and that people in an unstable condition would be protected from themselves. I support the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is pleasing to note that the member for Leanyer and I have much more in common than our electorate boundaries because I take on board a number of the comments that he made and I support his sentiments regarding the need for a closer look to be taken at our gun laws. While I agree with him that probably we have better gun laws in the Northern Territory than anywhere else in Australia, it is my personal opinion that they need to be much tighter than they are. I really do not see any justification at all for allowing people to keep weapons at home unless they

have a legitimate reason to do so; for example, that they are members of the police force or some other security-type organisation or members of a legitimate sporting club, such as a rifle or gun club or whatever. Apart from that, I really do not see any reason why people would need to keep weapons at home. The member for Sadadeen might argue that people need weapons at home so that they can defend themselves against an intruder.

I dare not comment on the rural area. That is quite a minefield so I will not fall into the same trap that one of my colleagues fell into a week or 2 ago. I am purely an urban dweller and I will ensure that my remarks refer only to the urban area. There have been many instances over the last 12 months or so when a mental problem or a family dispute has triggered an offence and people have been gunned down for no apparent reason. Most murders have been perpetrated by the use of firearms. In most cases, the people who used a firearm to commit a murder did not have a legitimate reason to keep a firearm at home. Personally, I will not have a firearm in my house at all.

Having made those few comments, Mr Speaker, I would now like to speak to the bill. There is little that one can say about the bill other than running through the several minor and important amendments that are proposed. The bill reclassifies several statutory offences as regulatory offences. The Criminal Code Act defines a 'regulatory offence' as an absolute offence. My interpretation of that is that the person charged is assumed to have committed the offence and the onus is then on that person to prove his or her defence. That is slightly different to the normal situation. It is interesting that, in this particular case, the complainant does not have to prove that the offender is guilty of intent to commit the offence which is normally the case when a person is charged with an offence. The element of intent is no longer a factor under these amendments. It does not mean that the person charged is automatically convicted. He certainly has the right to defend the matter before the court.

The second amendment relates to section 18(1). It deletes 'authorised' and replaces it with the word 'licensed'. That is an interesting amendment because it is the government's policy and clear intention that all firearms and indeed all shooters be licensed. There has been some confusion in the past whereby people who registered a weapon thought that that entitled them to be a shooter. That is not the case at all; they need to hold a shooter's licence.

The third amendment provides penalties for some offences where none previously existed. I find it rather quaint that one could commit an offence without having a penalty. For several offences, the amendment provides a penalty of \$400 and, for another 2 offences, the penalty is \$1000. With those few words, I support the bill.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a comment related to some remarks made by the member for Jingili rather than the bill itself. It is interesting to note the different attitudes in Australia as compared to those in the United States towards guns and gun laws. I do not have any doubt that the member for Jingili is a conservative politician. If he were a politician in the United States, he would be part of the gun lobby and he would be arguing the right of the people in the United States of America to have guns to protect their families and to maintain the first amendment, or whatever it is, as part of the American way of life and the natural right of Americans to have guns.

Mr Setter: That is absolute nonsense.

Mr SMITH: I do not think there is any doubt about that whatsoever. I am not making any reflection at all on the member for Jingili. I am pointing out that it is a fairly evident truth that conservative politicians in America basically defend very strongly the right of Americans to bear arms.

What I am saying is that it is pleasing that, in Australia, we have a completely different attitude to the question of guns and the access of ordinary citizens to weapons of any description. It has enabled Australia to take a completely different course over the question of gun control to that course that the Americans have adopted. We see that expressed in the extreme difference in the homicide rates in the 2 countries. I do not have the precise figures but I know that America has a horrific homicide rate. The Australian homicide rate is lower in general and certainly much lower in respect of homicide involving firearms. By far the great majority of homicides in America are perpetrated by people who know their victim and, in some cases, know the victim very well indeed. I think that is a reflection of the lax gun laws in America. Perhaps we have fewer crimes of passion in Australia because we make the weapons normally associated with crimes of passion much harder to obtain. I think that is good and positive.

Mr Speaker, having said that, I share the sentiments of the members opposite that there is always a need to keep our gun laws under review. There is always a need to ensure that unscrupulous people are not obtaining access to firearms. It is in the light of that that the opposition supports the bill. We believe it is a useful step in tightening up what are already quite tight gun laws in the Northern Territory.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SETTER (Jingili)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I would like to clarify to the House and to the Leader of the Opposition that I am a conservative politician in the Northern Territory of Australia, the best country in the world. I have no relationship to any conservative politician in America or any other place. Indeed, I certainly do not share the view of conservative politicians in America in relation to firearms.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I think we kid ourselves; I really do. I am certain that, if someone is determined to get hold of a weapon and go berserk, the legislation that we pass today will not do a damn thing to prevent it. All we are really doing is imposing a tougher set of rules upon those law-abiding citizens who use weapons. If we think that we have some panacea with which to prevent somebody doing as that fellow did at Hungerford in England, shooting 16-odd people ...

Mr Hatton: They gave him a licence a week earlier.

Mr COLLINS: The Minister for Transport and Works suggested that we should keep an eye on those people whose mental stability might not be too good, but I reckon we are really kidding ourselves if we reckon we can keep a tab on those people. I think it is far more important for us to try to remove the incentives for violence in our community. I am thinking of some of the videos available that people play over and over whilst they live in a fantasy world. That seems to be the trigger for some of these people to go out and commit some of these acts which horrify us all. We can pass laws here to our hearts' content but, if someone is determined, he will obtain a weapon and use it.

I am interested in the change from statutory to regulatory offences. In my term in politics, this is the only occasion on which firearms legislation

has been introduced. I have had approaches from a particular farmer, well known to the member for Koolpinyah, who had a farm in the old farm area of Alice Springs. As the years have rolled by, the town has encroached on that particular area. He had goats and cattle, and often dogs came on his property and created a nuisance. They killed his stock. He had a high-powered rifle which he used with care. He checked to see which way he was shooting. He had the MacDonnell Ranges behind him, and I have no doubt the gun was registered and that he was licensed too. In this case, if he had shot a dog and the dog had crawled back through the fence to where it came from, then he would have had to defend his action. I have no doubt that he could do it and do it fairly well. He was protecting his property and his livestock from attack from outside. Fortunately, that whole area has changed. He has been able to move his farm and sell off the land at some considerable profit. He now has a new piece of dirt which, hopefully, will give him some peace for some time.

We require the weapons to be registered and the shooters to be licensed. We have heard hard cases put here. I do not think the Territory government has the same intentions as Germany's Fuhrer, but one of the things that the Fuhrer did in the early 1930s was make sure that all weapons were registered. When he had his register, he went around and collected up all the weapons and the ordinary people of Germany had no way of defending themselves from the excesses which he then indulged in until he dominated that country. That was a hard case and I will suggest that the Chief Minister does not have that in mind.

These changes in the legislation will be most effective for those honest people who obey the law anyway and it will not do a great deal to prevent anybody who wants to go off his nut and shoot at people, and we kid ourselves if we think otherwise.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I will address some of the issues raised by honourable members in this debate. The member for Arafura asked - if I can paraphrase it and get it right - for an assurance that in a situation where a person went out hunting with his mate and they had one rifle between them, it would be legal for him to borrow the weapon. The answer is simple. A precondition is that the weapon be registered. In this context, a shooter's licence is something akin to a driver's licence. You can borrow your friend's car provided you are licensed to drive a vehicle, and provided the car is registered. The same situation would apply with respect to a registered firearm and a licensed shooter. I do not think the honourable member need have any real concern about that.

In response to comments by the member for Sadadeen, I will deal first with the question of whether a person can obtain a weapon anyway. Mr Speaker, I support the view that, if a person is absolutely determined to obtain a weapon, is prepared to pay the right price and act illegally to obtain a weapon ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Go to Queensland.

Mr HATTON: Yes, at the moment, unfortunately, people can go to Queensland. Hopefully, the work being done through the Police Ministers Council in the development of uniform gun laws will overcome that particular problem. It significantly contributed to the tragedy that the Northern Territory and Western Australia suffered earlier this year which was a major example of how loose gun laws can provide opportunities for people to create havoc in the community. I thank the member for Koolpinyah for giving me an excellent and current example of where tighter gun laws might have assisted in

preventing a tragedy caused by a person who obviously had gone right round the twist.

Most offences committed with firearms, in terms of injury to other people, occur on the spur of the moment. They have been referred to as being similar to crimes of passion and easy access to weapons and ready accessibility at those particular moments will increase the potential use of those weapons and the injury or death that can be caused by them. That will not stop a person who cold-bloodedly plans to obtain a weapon and use it illegally, but it can reduce the incidence of injury and death from firearms by restricting the availability of firearms to average citizens. That is the purpose of the registration of weapons and the other amendments designed to tighten up the gun laws. The intention is to avoid a situation where citizens are walking around - as the Americans refer to it - with their Friday night special shoved in their back pocket and, when they get into an argument, they pull it out to resolve the argument. That is where many of the problems arise. I do not accept the argument, in any shape or form, that tightening up on gun laws does not reduce the potential for injury or death from the use of firearms. Quite clearly, it does.

These amendments remove some of the spurious defences. I get a bit frustrated by having to explain to members of the Assembly who have been in this Chamber for quite a number of years that, after all, this is a law-making Assembly. Members of this Assembly are responsible for the making of laws. They should understand the basic concepts of the laws they are making. It seems that people continue to misunderstand what a regulatory offence is. I will use a traffic analogy. If somebody is picked up by a policeman for exceeding the speed limit, he is charged with speeding and there is an appropriate fine provided for that. The onus is not on the policeman to prove that the person intended to speed, it is only to prove that the person was actually speeding. That is a regulatory offence.

The difference between a regulatory offence and a statutory offence, as this law provides for before this amending legislation is passed, is that, in the event that a breach of firearms legislation occurs, it is not sufficient for the police to demonstrate that the person actually committed the offence, they must prove the intent to commit an offence. In some circumstances - for example, if a person is found carrying an unregistered firearm - a classic story is used: 'I have only just arrived in the Northern Territory and I have not had time to find out about the local laws and have it registered'. The onus is then on the police to prove that the person had had the firearm for a lengthy period of time and had been in the Northern Territory for an extended period. By making it a regulatory offence, the onus is on the person using that excuse to demonstrate its validity. If the person can demonstrate that he has not been in the Northern Territory for a significant period of time or that he has only recently purchased the firearm, there is no offence. The onus, however, is not on the police to disprove any such story and that is the intent of this legislation in creating a regulatory offence.

I fully support the change and I outlined my reasons in detail in my second-reading speech. I refer honourable members to that in case they either did not listen to it or did not read it prior to commenting on the legislation. I strongly commend this logical step in terms of penalties for offences. It is not logical to create an offence under legislation and to have no penalty for breaching the regulation. You may as well not have the law to start with. I know at least one member of this Chamber who might think that there should be no offences at all in society and that government should ignore its responsibilities to provide for the public safety of citizens, but that is not the view of this government. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 49)

Continued from 16 September 1987.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as outlined in the Treasurer's second-reading speech, the principal effect of this amendment will be to bring the Northern Territory Teaching Service under the requirements of the Northern Territory's Financial Administration and Audit Act. The opposition has no difficulty with that proposition. We believe that the original concept of an independent teaching service has long disappeared and that it is only correct that the administration of its finances be included with the rest of the public service. Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the legislation.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, this is hardly the most exciting piece of legislation that has been presented to this House and on which I have spoken. As pointed out by the minister in his second-reading speech and by the member for Nhulunbuy, it brings the teaching service into line with the rest of the public service in terms of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. That is probably overdue but it is nevertheless very important in relation to the presentation of government accounts to this Assembly and to the public at large. These accounts should be kept in a consistent form, and at least be easily intelligible to the average person in this House or the average man in the street. It is essential that that be the case. Mr Speaker, with those few words, I support the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as a former member of the Commonwealth Teaching Service and as a former member of the Northern Territory Teaching Service, I feel that it is incumbent on me to make some comments on this bill. As the member for Nhulunbuy has quite correctly pointed out, this sounds the death knell of the independent teaching service. It is a subject dear to my heart because I came to the Northern Territory as a recruit or, some might have said, a refugee, from the Victorian Department of Education. At that stage, in 1974, under the Bolte, Hamer, Thompson regimen, that department was Victorian in every sense of the word. I came to the Northern Territory to be a member of the Commonwealth Teaching Service. That service, set up by the Whitlam Labor government, was progressive in a very important respect: its independence.

Although I am happy to say that some aspects of public administration in the Northern Territory have improved dramatically since self-government, it is my view that morale in the teaching service in the Northern Territory has plummeted during that period. I would be the last person to defend every practice in public education in the Northern Territory and I could talk about that for some considerable time. I will not do so now. I want to concentrate on this particular bill and its implications because I believe that we are stepping back from the progressive nature of the teaching service as it was originally constituted. I would like the Minister for Education to address that in this debate because I believe it is apposite.

I do not pretend to be completely au fait with all the matters covered by the Financial Administration and Audit Act. It is not a piece of legislation which comes within any of the portfolios areas for which I am responsible.

Mr Coulter: Yes, it is.

Mr BELL: To pick up the Treasurer's interjection, the Financial Administration and Audit Act impinges indirectly on all portfolios in the Northern Territory. There is a clear relationship between the accounting practices implied by that act and the policy decisions which come about as a result of amendments such as the one we are now debating.

I believe that the amendment further detracts from the independent nature of the teaching service which was a particular attraction for me in 1974 when I came to the Northern Territory as a school teacher. The reason it was attractive was not because it meant that teachers would not be accountable. The processes for accountability implicit in the structure of the Commonwealth Teaching Service, which later became the Northern Territory Teaching Service, were progressive. Those processes had come about through reforms to procedures set up 100 years ago when pupil teachers were common in the Australian state education systems. From 1870 onwards, one could become a pupil teacher at the age of 15 or 16. Under those circumstances, in a society where literacy levels were not as high as they are today, rigidly bureaucratic inspection systems were important.

To inject another theme, many of us may sometimes wish that we lived in a time when there was a clarity about educational aims which, with the benefit of hindsight, seems to have characterised educational practice in those days. That sort of certainty does not prevail today. We have already had an example in these sittings of concerns about a lack of bipartisan support for particular educational aims. That, of course, is a hallmark of the 1970s and 1980s.

Mr Speaker, I suppose I am digressing but, to sum up my concerns about this bill, I do not believe that the government's intention with this sort of legislation is other than to reduce morale in the teaching service. That is a matter of concern to me. I believe it should be a matter of concern to the government and all Territorians with kids in school that this has come to pass. I do not believe that this government's attacks on the teaching service do it any credit whatsoever. The quality of the education which our schools are able to provide is seriously compromised by the attacks that this government has mounted on public education. The government seeks to promote various conservative, free-market shibboleths and to promote private education. It seems to feel that it is not doing its job if education is not being privatised. I suggest that, rather than the privatisation of public education, the issue should be ...

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! There is a statement paper relating to education and I believe these matters should be canvassed in the debate on that statement.

Mr BELL: Quite clearly, Mr Speaker, the attack on the independence of the teaching service is germane to this piece of legislation. It is clearly a policy decision of this government that I believe it is quite appropriate to debate in the context of this second-reading debate.

Mr SPEAKER: I remind the honourable member that he is ranging fairly widely in his debate and he should confine his remarks to the bill before the House.

Mr BELL: Certainly, Mr Speaker. I will not take up any more of the Assembly's time. I think I have made my point. Even though the opposition is prepared to accept the bill, I believe that the policy implications of this legislation are selling Territorians short.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, I must rise in response to comments from the member for MacDonnell. It is good to hear him discuss matters of education because it is obvious to all of us in this House that he speaks from the heart. Even though he still has problems with facts, he speaks with true feeling for the subject. I hope the Leader of the Opposition reads through Hansard and notes how well the member for MacDonnell performs in relation to education matters.

However, I think it is worth while picking up a few points and correcting him. He talked about the independence of the Northern Territory Teaching Service. I agree that it is most important that we have an independent teaching service. We do have one, Mr Speaker, and it is controlled by its own act. Recently, we saw the retirement of the last Territory Teaching Commissioner, Mrs Eda Ots, who has done an excellent job in relation to the teaching service.

We certainly have a problem with the honourable member's interpretation of this particular legislation. In fact, this amendment has been introduced for one reason only. After a particular problem with a possible misuse of funds in a certain area, we found that our financial legislation did not apply to members of the teaching service. I think the honourable member would agree that that is something that should be rectified. Our legal advisers indicated that the particular problem could not be rectified in the legal sense. This amendment resulted from that. It is certainly not an attempt to do away with the independence of the teaching service.

I was rather interested in his comments about pupil teachers and I do not know whether he is suggesting that we revert back to the practice or not. The honourable member might like to enlarge on that subject. I think we are going back a fair way in history when we look at that concept and I, for one, would not advocate it, let alone raise it in relation to a debate on the teaching service.

One other thing is the honourable member's fixation over and accusation that we are looking down the privatisation alley. I would like to point out to the honourable member that no such thing is occurring. In fact, with only 16% of its education available from the private sector, the Territory is certainly a long way from the Australian average where 25% of education is provided by the private sector. Victoria has 40% of its education provided in non-government schools. We certainly have a long way to go before we provide the same opportunities as the rest of Australia has. I must remind all honourable members that the education dollar, for some reason or another, certainly goes much further when it is spent in the private area. With those few words, I welcome the honourable member's contribution to the debate and it is good to hear him speak again on education matters.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. One would have to be a magician to predict which pieces of legislation will excite members to debate and which will pass almost unnoticed. I asked the Leader of the Opposition if he had any difficulties with this legislation and I was told that he would be supporting the bill and that the opposition had no other speakers on the subject. Then, we were subjected to the member for MacDonnell's 15-minute rant.

This bill arises simply from a necessity to impose accountability on a sector of government employees who manage government funds but who technically could have been deemed non-accountable. That is what we are talking about. Accountability applies right across the public service, the police and the statutory bodies but there was 1 particular sector of the public service that had escaped the catch-all phrases in the legislation. This legislation simply makes that sector accountable in the same way that every other public service office in the Northern Territory is accountable.

Mr Speaker, I am being urged by this side of the House simply to commend the bill. However, I want to point out to the disunity that is becoming increasingly more apparent among honourable members opposite. They do not seem to be able to get their act together. I wonder if I should take back everything that I said after I returned from the luncheon adjournment. For the sake of good government, perhaps it would be better that the benches opposite remain vacant for a much longer period than they were immediately after the luncheon adjournment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Treasurer cast aspersions on the unity of the opposition and suggested that my comments were somehow indicative of some difference of opinion. From my comments, it was quite clear that I was prepared to support the legislation but the policy decision behind it, relating to threats to the independence of the teaching service, was a matter of concern to me and I believe that I addressed it appropriately.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clause 3.

Clause 3 should not proceed in its present form because the wording places an impossible time constraint on the Auditor-General in undertaking an audit.

Clause 3 negatived.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

JABIRU TOWN DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 54)

Continued from 16 September 1987.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the amendment. I believe there has been thorough consultation with the people concerned at Jabiru and also with the mining company. The amendment will bring about increased flexibility by streamlining sections of the act which will enable the council greater administrative powers.

I notice that clause 8 of the bill provides for the members present at a council meeting to elect one of their number to preside at the meeting in the absence of both the Deputy Chairman and the Chairman. That clause also allows 5 members to form a quorum at a council meeting instead of the present 10. Also, the bill removes the requirement that an appointed member be in attendance. Clause 9 is necessary to give the council the flexibility to vary its approved annual estimates of income according to the requirements of the council. The opposition supports those measures and supports the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this particular bill, I would like to go briefly over some history.

Following the initial development of the Ranger Uranium mine and the Jabiru township, the Jabiru Town Development Act was implemented. It created a council with responsibility for most local government matters as set out in that particular act. That council has operated since July 1984. Its responsibilities excluded the power to declare the municipal rate and to establish conditions for council staff. However, the council has certainly looked after all other local government matters.

The situation at Jabiru is complex because of the number of parties involved. For example, Jabiru falls within Kakadu National Park and is encompassed by the plan of that particular park. The Kakadu National Park has been administered for several years now by the ANPWS. The interests of the mining company, ERA, also have to be protected. In spite of these complexities, the Jabiru Town Council has been operating successfully since 1984. However, in the course of its evolution, it has become obvious that some minor review is now necessary.

This legislation is the next step in the devolution of responsibility to the Jabiru Town Council. It gives the council greater autonomy, which is in accordance with government policy. A number of local councils have been established throughout the Northern Territory including the Palmerston Town Council and the Litchfield Shire Council. Community government councils have been created in a number of Aboriginal communities, and the Jabiru Town Council has been operating for about 3 years.

Mr Speaker, I had intended to comment on various clauses contained in the legislation, but I do not want to go over the ground that has been covered by the member for Arnhem. I had a concern about clause 5, which refers to the election of members, but I took it up with departmental officers who were able to clarify it for me. I am now quite satisfied with that clause. In the context of persons eligible to vote in a council election, it refers to persons 'who are residing within 10 km of the police station at Jabiru at the date of the election'. The reason for this particular clause is to ensure that persons residing in the Jabiru East area, which encompasses Mudginberri, are eligible to vote. Most members are aware that Jabiru East was the original construction township and that the present Jabiru town was constructed subsequently several kilometres to the west. A number of people still live in Jabiru East and others reside at Mudginberri Station. It is reasonable and appropriate that all of those people be entitled to vote in council elections for the township of Jabiru because they all use the facilities at Jabiru. With those few comments, Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. We all seem to have been involved with local government at some time or other in our lives and sometimes we think of it in

terms of dog control, rubbish bins or paying rates. Local government, however, is much more complicated and meaningful than that. Where there is taxation without representation, people do not have commitment to the third tier of government known as local government. That is not the case at Jabiru, which is a magnificent town.

Jabiru has many sporting facilities and is fast developing a character of its own. I believe it now has a synthetic bowling green. It has football teams, swimming teams and many facilities which are well-utilised. Its schools are excellent and the local community itself is very tightly knit. The amendments contained in this bill will strengthen the local council's role at Jabiru which, as the member for Jingili has pointed out, will take in Jabiru East, where the construction camp was located, and the Mudginberri cattle station which is not far away. With that, I thank honourable members for their contributions and I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 50)

Continued from 16 September 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the Statute Law Revision Bill is a wondrous farrago. At the outset, I would like to thank the Attorney-General for his reference to my obsession with parenthetic commas. Various issues rise from this particular bill but, to start with the most important, let me just advise the Attorney-General that I was completely ignorant as to what a parenthetic comma was. That will no doubt disappoint him considerably. I had to seek superior grammatical advice and I can now advise that I am able to explain exactly what a parenthetic comma is.

Parenthesis, of course, is brackets. There are 2 sorts of commas, ordinary commas and parenthetic commas. If I had a blackboard this would be far simpler but I will just rely on my voice, viva voce. Consider this sentence: 'If the member for Sadadeen were speaking, I would be inclined to leave'. The comma after 'speaking' would be a simple non-parenthetic comma. Now, consider this sentence: 'If the member for Sadadeen, who lives in Burke Street, were speaking, I would be inclined to leave'. The 2 commas on either side of the clause 'who lives in Burke Street' would be referred to as parenthetic commas. I sincerely trust that, in future, there will be no doubts in the Assembly should the phrase 'parenthetic comma' be used again.

Suffice it to say there is a real problem with this lack of a parenthetic comma, and let me briefly explain why. I am not sure whether any other members of this Assembly have kept bread in the mouths of their family by plying taxi cabs around the towns and cities of this great nation, but I am one such member of this Assembly. Thus, when this Statute Law Revision Bill mentions the Motor Vehicles (Hire Car) Regulations, I take what I think I can reasonably refer to as a professional interest.

Mr Speaker, there are 3 ways in which you can be hired as a taxi driver. You can be hailed when you are driving along a street, booked over the radio

and collect the fare or you can stand in a designated taxi rank. It is this third means of being hired that is of concern to us. Quite clearly, we have designated taxi ranks for obvious reasons. It would be a matter of concern for people controlling traffic if taxis were allowed to form ranks whenever and wherever they chose. The intent of this particular regulation was to prevent taxis stopping by the kerb for more than 30 minutes in order to gain business. However, I will read the subsection containing the phrase which requires this amendment: 'the driver of a taxi shall permit the taxi to stand at a place upon a public street' other than at a taxi rank for a period of not more than 30 minutes, except ...'.

Mr Speaker, as I am sure you are only too well aware, the problem there is that the lack of the parenthetic comma following 'taxi rank' means that we have the noun phrase 'a taxi rank for a period of not more than 30 minutes'. As a result, our current form of the Motor Vehicles (Hire Car) Regulations refers to this extraordinary anomaly that frankly does not occur anywhere in the Northern Territory and, I am sure, does not occur anywhere in Australia, where you have a particular section of a public street that is a taxi rank, but a particular sort of taxi rank that cannot be a taxi rank for more than 30 minutes!

Mr Speaker, I understand there is a human story behind this. In fact, our constabulary have expressed some concern that there have been taxis plying for trade, simply standing kerbside for more than 30 minutes, in breach of this regulation, but they are unable to pursue the issue due to the simple fact that there is no parenthetic comma after 'taxi rank'. I am sure that honourable members will be able to sleep easily tonight in the knowledge that, by voting for this Statute Law Revision Bill, they will have inserted a parenthetic comma that will make life more orderly for Territorians.

Mr Hatton: You have just guaranteed you will never get another mention in a second-reading debate, I can tell you that.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, to refer to some of the other interesting parts of this bill, and there are 7 or 8, the bulk of the changes in the bill are related to the establishment of the Power and Water Authority, as the minister mentioned. For example, there are changes from NTEC to the Power and Water Authority and so on that are consequent on that change. The other amendments relate to what appear to be drafting errors in some of the bills, and change references to subsection (1) to subsection (2) and so on.

The amendment to the Juries Act, and I would like the honourable minister to take this one on board, deletes the sixth schedule to the act which refers to the various oaths to be taken by jurors and constables and so on. I do not believe he did so in his second-reading speech, but perhaps the minister may be able to enlighten us about the reason for that amendment. There is another piece of legislation before the Assembly during these sittings where forms of that sort have been incorporated elsewhere, but there does not seem to be any reference anywhere to what is to replace that sixth schedule.

On the change to the Magistrates Act, I draw the minister's attention to the reference to section 4(1)(a). I believe that that should be a reference to section 4(1)(b) because section 4(1)(b) refers to 'determines' and not section 4(1)(a). Will that cause a problem? Unfortunately, I am doing this fairly much as I speak. I have a copy of the principal act here as well as the amendment. A zealous member of the opposition staff picked that up, and I will not claim authorship of it.

I have 2 further questions with respect to this legislation. The first concerns the changes to the Unit Titles Act. I note the 'subdivision or consolidation' reference being changed to 'subdivision, consolidation or conversion'. That particular change to section 21D refers to a plan illustrating a proposed subdivision and, presently, to unit plans for subdivision and consolidation. I presume the provisions of that section are to include some sort of change, where somebody is converting unit titles, and that certainly is acceptable.

My final point relates to the deletion of schedule 1 of the Territory Wildlife Regulations. Schedule 1 of the Territory Wildlife Regulations lists the specific periods of the year during which ducks and geese are unprotected. I am concerned what that may mean. I appreciate that it is outside the bailiwick of the Attorney-General, and the explanation there indeed may be innocent. He may be able to explain to me whether or not this indicates some sort of policy change or not. With those comments, I commend the otherwise unremarkable Statute Law Revision Bill to honourable members.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I will direct my remarks to some of the amendments that have been put before us today. I refer particularly to the amendment to the Food Act. As I see it, the amendments proposed to the Food Act will leave us in a state of confusion in relation to the standards adopted by the Minister for Health and Community Services. Section 56(3) of the Food Act states: 'The regulations may adopt, wholly or partly or by reference, the standards, rules, codes, specifications or methods specified in the regulations that are recommended and adopted by the Standards Association of Australia or prescribed or published under a corresponding bill relating to the matter dealt with by the regulations'.

The amendment before us today will add, as well as the Standards Association, those determined by the National Health and Medical Research Council and approved by the National Food Standards Council as published in the Commonwealth Gazette. It seems to be all over the place like a mad woman's custard. However, I hope that putting that loose collection of standards before us gives the Minister for Health and Community Services some latitude. All legislation that comes before us should take cognisance of how it will apply in the Northern Territory and how it will be accepted by the people in the Northern Territory.

I agree with the first part of the existing section 56(3) of the Food Act. Therefore, I cannot understand why we still have to be controlled by standards determined by the Standards Association of Australia, by the National Health and Medical Research Council and by the National Food Standards Council. As stated in the first part of section 56(3), the minister has discretion to adopt wholly or partly or even by reference any standards rules or codes implemented by those 3 organisations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my interest in this amendment has been prompted by my interest in the sale of pasteurised versus unpasteurised goat milk. I have written to a couple of Ministers of Health regarding the implementation of a ruling on this matter. The latest reply from the minister was rather prompt unlike replies from some other ministers for which I waited some time. The minister said that the pasteurisation of goat milk would not apply to goat milk sold at the farm gate.

I believe his reply was correct because goat milk is sold in the Northern Territory at the farm gate. However, his reasoning was incorrect. If one is

to contract a disease, one will contract it from the sale of a small amount of milk as easily as from a large amount of milk. If it is okay to sell unpasteurised goat milk, which is what I agree with and which is what most of the goat milk drinking public want anyway, it would be okay to sell it in large quantities when goat herds have increased in the Northern Territory.

Since the minister has the discretion under our own legislation to declare the standards at which the milk should be sold, I will be writing to him asking him to consider the local situation in the Northern Territory and to accept the assertion of the sellers of goat milk that they are prepared to accept any inspection by competent inspectors from the Department of Industries and Development of their buildings, their husbandry and the product they produce. With those remarks, I support the legislation.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to draw honourable members' attention to the fact that the Northern Territory's second Mango Festival will be held next month, from memory, on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 13, 14 and 15 November. Last year was the first time this festival was held. It was held at the Humpty Doo Primary School and, as far as the organisation, events and activities went, it was a success. I am connected with the Mango Festival in the rural area and, to demonstrate our bipartisanship in the rural area, my ALP opponent in the last election is the chairman and I am the vice-chairman of the committee. We work together in the rural area, and put politics aside for the good of the area. I think this event is quite unique, not only in the Northern Territory but in Australia.

Mr Bell: Not quite unique, Noel. Either it is unique or it is not.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will accept the grammatical correction from the honourable member. It is unique, not only in the Northern Territory but in Australia, because I do not believe there are any festivals like this held in northern Queensland or the north-west of Western Australia. The weekend is well worth the patronage of honourable members and their constituents. We will be holding our Mango Games again this year. They were quite a hilarious event. I believe that mango water races or yacht races will be held on the lake. This will all take place at Freds Pass. An energetic supply of mango wine will be available. There will be competitive sections and billy cart races, and there could be visits to mango orchards. There will be an opening breakfast. The festival is held to publicise our mango industry. We are working in conjunction with the horticultural interests in this and I believe that, again, it will be a great success.

There is another matter on which I would like to speak. Due to the exigencies of distance in my electorate, I have not been able to get the actual notices that have been given to the people, but I have been told about them verbally. I refer to visits paid to outlying parts of my electorate, some time back, by building inspectors. These building inspectors were supposed to carry identification. They may have carried it, but I know for a fact they did not show it to all the people involved. I was very concerned that the results of this survey would be to the detriment of my constituents and, in their interests, I wrote to the Building Controller expressing my

concern which was that, if the people's homes were not built to the code, they would receive notices to bring them up to code or they would receive notices that the buildings had to be demolished. I was assured by the Building Controller that the aims of the survey were, and I am quoting from his letter: '... to ensure that an adequate standard of construction is present in the rural areas in the interest of public safety, to serve as a reminder to residents that any future building work will require Building Branch approval, and to update Building Branch records'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the mention of updating Building Branch records is an artificial reason for coming out our way. If one of the main reasons for coming out our way is to update Building Branch records, I think the building inspectors would be better employed in other places where their work is needed and appreciated. The areas visited were in the outlying parts of my electorate where, even if a cyclone with the strength of Tracy struck, it is unlikely that heavy wind damage would occur. These people live on 20-acre blocks, that is an RL2 area, and most have a lot of bush on their blocks - very few have cleared their blocks extensively. When these factors are taken together, even if another Cyclone Tracy came, it would be highly unlikely that buildings would be damaged by windblown debris from a neighbour's block. If a person builds a house, an accommodation unit or a donga, call it what you like, and it is not up to code, I believe how it is built is his business and the business of his family. The final paragraph of the letter says: 'I hope that the above information alleviates your concerns'. It closed by saying that, if I had any further queries, I should not hesitate to contact the gentleman concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you might say that that was a nice letter and that the Building Controller replied promptly and everything should be fine. He assuaged my concerns. However, I had no sooner returned from a conference in Bundaberg than I received calls from worried constituents who had received notices, and I must admit I do not have these notices to hand. These notices said something like: 'Your building is not up to code. You have to produce plans to bring this building up to code within 14 days'. That means, bring it up to code within 14 days or else. It might be said that they should bring their homes up to code, and they should all be law-abiding citizens. But the facts of the matter are that the people who are living on the outskirts of the rural area went out there because land was a little bit cheaper than it was closer into town. They went out there because they may not have very deep pockets and they may be living in straitened circumstances. This could also be the reason why they have built their houses themselves, perhaps not up to code, but sufficient for their own family standards.

To ask these people to produce plans, which necessitates a visit to a structural engineer which would cost them several hundred dollars, is outside the bounds of possibility for them. They cannot afford to pay that money. If they do not produce these plans to upgrade their homes, they will invite a court appearance and a fine which, I believe, would be in the order of something like \$100 a day, and again that is something these people cannot afford. I would hope that, in view of what the Building Controller wrote to me, these notices are not as heavy-handed as I have been led to believe. If they are, the people they are directed at will not be able to afford to put building plans in. They will not be able to pay the subsequent fines when they are placed on them for not putting the plans in. I suggest to the minister who has responsibility for custodial services that he had better enlarge the accommodation at Gunn Point or at Beatrice Hill because that is where these people will be going. One has gone already because he couldn't afford to pay the fines.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think it is a shocking situation if something like occurs because somebody has not built his home to code. The people are happy with their homes and nobody else is complaining. Why should the government interfere? Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that, after all, this is the Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is one matter I wish to raise briefly in this evening's adjournment. It refers to something that comes within the purview of the Minister for Lands and Housing. It concerns the capacity of his department and its predecessor, the Housing Commission, to pursue its debts or not.

I have a letter sent to friends of mine who now live in New South Wales. They have not lived in the Northern Territory for some considerable time and therefore they were rather bemused when they went to their mailbox and saw an envelope bearing the unmistakable imprimatur of the Northern Territory Housing Commission. The letter was dated 15 June 1987, and they presumably received it some time after that date. It advised them that, on completion of their tenancy, \$147.21 was owed to the Northern Territory Housing Commission. Under ordinary circumstances, one would regard it as particularly zealous of the Housing Commission to correspond with somebody in New South Wales to recover a debt of \$147. However, what makes this particular debt collection exercise more amazing is that the tenancy was completed in March 1984. My friends were, therefore, somewhat bemused. They feel that they continue to have strong ties with the Northern Territory and certainly do not wish to be regarded as bad debtors either by individuals or public authorities. It was a matter of some concern to them to receive this particular letter.

I would like the minister to pursue some questions in relation to this incident. Firstly, why did it take well over 3 years for the commission to pursue the matter? I should say in my friends' defence that they staunchly maintain that they made their last payment and believed themselves to have acquitted their debts before they vacated the commission's premises. This letter, 3 years after the event, is the first they have heard of any payment outstanding. One wonders how many other people have received such letters if there is backlog which goes back as far as 3 years.

I note in passing that there is a question of revenue involved in this. One wonders how much revenue is involved. We debated the Appropriation Bill today, and casting my eyes over the revenue figures for the Housing Commission, my recollection is that the amount collected by way of rent, sales and so on was about \$90m. That amount, of course, is vitally important and is additional to the funds which come to the Housing Commission through the Commonwealth and States Housing Agreement. I must admit that I expect a rather more zealous pursuit of debtors than following them up 3 years after the event. I really wonder whether there is a question of forgone revenue and I certainly trust that the minister will clarify this. I am quite happy to provide him with the details of the account number. I do not see that there is much to gain by drawing attention to the particular individuals involved but I will certainly provide the account number.

I would like the minister to provide information to this Assembly on exactly how many people have debts with the Housing Commission that take 3 years to follow up. I frequently receive representations from people who move between centres in the Territory and are often unable to obtain Housing Commission tenancies until they have made good progress in clearing up previous debts and therefore I wonder what exactly is at the bottom of this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the time that remains to me I would like to make a few comments about the role of Telecom in the Northern Territory.

Mr Tuxworth: You do not have enough time.

Mr BELL: I certainly do not have enough time to say all that I would like to say. I do not want to be contentious, but I would like to open up debate so that the best possible service will be provided for people in the Territory. People like the member for Barkly will be aware that there has been an explosion in communication services available to Territorians since self-government. The Chief Minister may very well choose to pursue the post hoc ergo propter hoc proposition in that context but I can remember living in the bush where the only communication with the outside world was telegrams on 2-way radio, and they were not a great improvement on pedal radios.

I remember when we got our first radio telephone. We thought that was Christmas until we had to sit in front of it and wait for the red light to go off for an hour or 2. We went back to telegrams for a while. When I first became a member of this Assembly, there would not have been a dial telephone anywhere in my electorate beyond the farm area of Alice Springs. We now have microwave links down the railway line, the microwave link across to Yulara and the development of the digital radio concentrator system. The money for these developments does not grow on trees and, as we all know, these are difficult times. I mention these things because I am concerned about the free market-philosophy espoused by this government, its Chief Minister and, in its more rabid form, by the Treasurer.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What is wrong with a free market?

Mr BELL: If the member for Koolpinyah will bear with me I will explain the problems to her, particularly as they relate to telecommunications. The fact of the matter is that, if user-pays prices applied to our telecommunications services, we would not have telephones in the Territory.

Mr Manzie: Why is it only 10¢ a call?

Mr BELL: I am glad that the Attorney-General asked that question. The fact is that, if we were to pay Telecom or a private organisation for the actual cost of a call, it would cost considerably more than 10¢. It is worth raising this subject in an adjournment debate because it is my understanding that Telecom is considering changing charging zones in the Northern Territory, which will push up the cost of telephone calls.

It is about time the government started to adopt the sensible approach that the opposition continually puts forward in this Assembly: that public enterprise and private enterprise both have roles. It is an important national objective that telecommunication services be available at affordable prices to Australians, wherever they live. That is the axiom we should all start with. If we pursue a rabid program of privatisation, as continually advocated by government members, particularly the Treasurer and the Deputy Chief Minister, we will have enormous problems. The Chief Minister sometimes appears to have a more sensible approach and he is to be congratulated on that. I suggest, however, that during one of the government's party meetings or Cabinet meetings, members opposite give some consideration to the actual implications of a radical privatisation program for the cost of telecommunications in the Territory.

I suggest that the Minister for Industries and Development could pursue this matter and perhaps introduce a statement to this Assembly so we can look at it in broad policy terms and encourage rational debate about pursuing our broad objectives. I have heard the minister speak about affordable telecommunications services in the Territory and I know it is a subject dear to his heart. I suggest that it would be appropriate to take a more conciliatory and level-headed approach to the respective roles of private and public enterprise in the communications area, even if government is not capable of it in other areas.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I want to take a few short moments tonight to commend some people in the Northern Territory tourist industry. Their part in the story I am about to relate could qualify them for a tourism award next year. Unfortunately, some other people in the story could receive the tourism wooden spoon award.

At the beginning of last week, a gentleman rang a tourist establishment in Alice Springs and said: 'I am up in a roadhouse. I had lunch at your establishment and I think I left my wallet there. I am stuck with no money, no petrol and no food'. The lady who took the call checked in the restaurant and, sure enough, found the wallet. She went back and said: 'I will see what I can do about getting the wallet put on a coach'. She rang 2 or 3 coach companies and eventually spoke to somebody at Deluxe Coaches who certainly deserves a mention. That person said: 'We have a coach leaving in 3 or 4 minutes. If you can get the wallet over to us, even though we do not call into that particular roadhouse, we will tell the driver to stop there and drop off the wallet'.

The lady took the wallet to Deluxe and gave the wallet to the coach driver, then went back to her establishment and phoned the roadhouse at Barrow Creek. She spoke to Patrick Cremorne, the owner of the wallet and said: 'Your wallet is on the bus but it will not arrive until about 10 pm'. This was at about 6 pm. She told him to watch out for the bus because it did not normally stop there. She said that the driver might forget and go straight past and that Mr Cremorne should wait by the highway so the driver would remember to stop and pass over the wallet. He was extremely grateful and he said: 'If I have any problems, I will give you a call later on'. Nothing more was heard and the lady concerned went to sleep forgetting about the incident. On Friday, a card turned up from Canberra saying thanks for the royal treatment:

Dear So and so,

Just a short note to say how grateful I am for the effort you made to ensure my wallet was returned to me as soon as possible. It is difficult to convey the feeling of shock when one finds himself in the middle of nowhere without money for food or petrol. It certainly was a relief to see the bus pull into Barrow Creek, believe me. Unfortunately, the manager of the roadhouse had refused to advance me so much as a pie even though I had assured him that the wallet would be arriving on the next coach. His exact words were, 'You'll just have to go hungry for a couple of hours'. Not exactly country hospitality but, once again, thanks for all your help.

That is really an example of what is wrong with some people in the tourist industry. On the one hand, we have the proprietor of a roadhouse. On the other hand, a bus company went to a considerable trouble to do the right thing by somebody which will probably be worth a couple of thousand dollars when the

gentleman returned to Canberra spreading the good oil about what nice people we are in the industry in the Northern Territory. It is a great pity to see the whole exercise ruined by somebody who really did not want to give away a pie that cost about \$1.50. It is time that that sort of incident stopped in the Northern Territory because we had a good reputation for hospitality and it would be nice to see some of the good old days of country hospitality come back in the industry.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think everyone listened with great interest to what the member for Araluen had to say. Certainly, it is true that there has been a dramatic increase in standards in the hospitality industry and I have referred to them on a couple of occasions, both inside this House and in my column in the Sunday Territorian. I think it is becoming clear that one of the major problems that we have in the hospitality industry is the roadside inns up and down the track. I have said before that the government really must start taking an interest in some of those roadside inns. The standard of service that they offer is far below what is satisfactory and the facilities that they offer are not good enough. It is time that the government moved in and heavied them. Let us not forget that road travellers will become an increasingly large segment of the tourist population to the Northern Territory and they gain an impression from the places that they visit along the highway.

Mr Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes talking about the Territory Enterprise Awards which were given 2 or 3 weeks ago. The Territory Enterprise Awards were set in place 8 years ago by the government and the Confederation of Industry to recognise excellence in the business community in the Northern Territory. Unlike the Chief Minister, I have not been to all of them over the last 8 years but I have certainly been to the majority of them. It has been pleasing to see the improvement in the standard of the entries over that period. I should note also the improvement in the presentation ceremony over that period as well. This year, probably for the first time, I thought we had reached a national and even an international standard in the presentation. It was certainly an excellent presentation and the company was quite outstanding. Congratulations should go to everybody who was involved.

Mr Speaker, I was disappointed that there were fewer entries from outside Darwin than in previous years. I was particularly disappointed that there was only 1 entry in the primary industry category. I hope that both of those areas will improve next time.

What the awards demonstrate quite clearly is that industry can and will develop in the Northern Territory without government assistance. All that most private businesses in the Northern Territory require is a minimum of government interference. What we saw at the Territory Enterprise Awards night was the cream of Territory business getting its due recognition. I think it needs to be said that the best Territory operators are as good if not better than anywhere else in Australia. They are entrepreneurial, they are aware of market opportunities, they provide a very high standard of product and, equally importantly, they provide backup services for the products that they sell. I do not think one can ask anything more of anybody.

The feature that I found most significant was that, without exception, the award winners made a point of congratulating the staff that had helped them win the award. I thought that was extremely significant and indicated probably one of the main reasons why they won the award: they had managed to establish a team of people who were supportive of what they were trying to do and obviously took pride in their work.

The actual award winners in each of the categories constitute almost a complete span of Territory industries from very large enterprises such as Besser Industries through to the Darwin Academy of Modelling, Deportment and Beauty, to a Barr Wollard Cawrse Advertising, Bunnings, Biogenesis, PK Kitchens, Territory Resources Limited, Permaline, Glen Helen Lodge, Spinifex Tours and Presentations Pty Ltd. That list is perhaps a microcosm of what industry in the Territory is all about.

Particular congratulations should go to PK Kitchens who pulled off the major award for the year. In the last 12 months, I have been fortunate enough to have had regular contact with PK Kitchens over numerous issues. It is clear that Bob Hine, Steve Russell and the other people out there are running an outfit that could stand tall in any company, either in Australia or overseas. They take pride in their product, in delivering the product, in providing the service after the product is delivered and in pouring money back into the company and, of course, that means into the Northern Territory. I think their award was extremely well received and well deserved.

The Territory Enterprise Award can only become bigger and better like the Tourism Awards which were presented earlier this year. It is quite clear that, although times are tough in the Northern Territory - and as a result of the last couple of days' activities overseas and within Australia, times might become even tougher - good businesses will survive and flourish. It is good to know that, if we are looking at having to pull our belts in tight over the next few months and perhaps the next couple of years, we have in the Northern Territory a core of businesses that are well managed and that will survive in our environment. On that core, I think that we can build a future for ourselves in the Northern Territory in the months and years to come.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I would just like to mention a couple of people who have died recently. Bill Cain died recently in Pine Creek. Bill came to the Territory in 1927, following the tragic death of his wife and daughter in a fire in Queensland. He was involved in the ownership of the Mary River Station and he drove cattle throughout the Territory and Queensland. His other notable exploits included bull-catching and riding a horseback mail run between McArthur River and Borroloola. When he retired to Pine Creek, he continued to display his love of the ways of the outback by helping in the formation of the Pine Creek Race Club which is noted for its bush race meetings. He had his own horses which he trained personally for the meetings. However, he was unable to continue this in recent years because of illness.

Bill was cared for in his last years largely by a neighbour, Pat Smith. An indication of the impact Bill made on the people could be gauged from his funeral where leading Top End station and racing identities, such as Noel Buntine, Mary and Joe Groves and Richard Sallis turned up to pay their final respects. Bill was always delighted to have a yarn and he entertained many, including myself, with his stories. Bill's death is the passing of yet another wonderful old Territory character. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend his funeral but my condolences go to his daughter, Shirley, his grand-daughter and his many friends.

I would also like to mention this evening the death of a very young person, Chris Bright. Chris, the son of April and Robert Bright of Batchelor, died recently following the roll-over of a road train that he was driving on the Jindare Road near Pine Creek. Chris was only 21 years of age. He was one of the most cheerful and outgoing personalities one could wish to meet. He was hardworking and fun loving and extremely popular in his hometown and

beyond. Chris attended school at Batchelor and was known and loved by all. An indication of his popularity was very much in evidence on the day of his funeral. The cortege was the largest I have seen in Darwin, and friends and relatives travelled from interstate and, in fact, from the US to be there. My sympathy goes out to Chris' very close-knit family and his numerous friends. In his very short life, Chris built many friendships and is sadly missed.

While speaking on that matter, I should commend the many people who were involved in the attempt to rescue Chris from the wreckage of that vehicle. The support of the police, the nursing staff and the Pine Creek goldfields, who sent a crane out to lift the truck, as well as many others who assisted, was very much appreciated by the family. The family also asked me to express their gratitude to the police who were able to control the traffic on the way out to the cemetery on the day of Chris' funeral, which allowed that very long procession of vehicles to move freely and so not hold up the service.

In talking about the services of police, nursing staff and ambulance services in the bush, I would like to say that, from time to time, the word goes around that those services are likely to be attacked in the bush first. Certainly, in recent times, concern was very strong in Pine Creek that nursing staff might be taken away from that community and from a number of other small communities in the Top End. I knew at the time that that was not true, but these things come up from time to time. I would like to reiterate the importance of having those services in remote areas. Without the quick attendance of police, nurses, and ambulances at accidents in bush areas, many more people would die on the roads.

In speaking of roads, I would like to mention the work that has been done on the Litchfield Park access road and the internal roads within the park. I believe that the work that has been done within Litchfield Park is to be commended. It was done on a shoestring budget, but it has improved access to the park and the many points of interest throughout the park to a great extent. It is now possible to drive into Litchfield Park from Batchelor in a conventional vehicle and to be at Florence Falls in about 40 minutes, on a very good road. In fact, you can now drive right through the park and out through Berry Springs in a conventional vehicle, although I understand the link on the top has not yet been opened officially to traffic. I believe that the link is there although I did not travel the whole length of the road. A couple of weeks ago, when I was in there, I was told that it has been finalised.

Litchfield Park will undoubtedly be a venue for many people from Darwin and, indeed, people from many other places. It is not so very far from Katherine. It will be imperative that ranger services and the developments within the park maintain pace with increased visitation. The numbers of people who have been at the waterfalls in recent times while I have been there has been quite phenomenal. Unless we continue the development of facilities within that park to keep pace with that, there will be problems of deterioration in certain areas, because certainly some traffic does get out of control and moves into places where it should not be. In fact, a number of very fine trees and plants in the area are being damaged because of that.

Currently, 1 ranger is based in Batchelor and another at the jump-up near Bamboo Creek on the northern side. They are doing a great job, but it is a big area of land and they do not have the ability to cover it all of the time, although I have seen their presence in the park on the last 2 occasions that I have been there. I understand that a further house for the Bamboo Creek area is on the design list, and I think that will be advantageous. However, there will be a need for others in the not-too-distant future.

That brings me to another point to do with parks. In my view, the Gregory National Park, on the western side of my electorate, is potentially the best park and will be the most visited park in the Northern Territory, given time to develop. The beauty of that particular area of the Northern Territory is unbounded. I do not believe it will ever be matched by the Kakadus of the Territory or, dare I say, the Uluru National Park. Uluru will always have a fascination because it is such a big stone but, in fact, there are some magnificent areas in the Gregory National Park and the Keep River National Park, and the development of those parks is essential given that we now have a bitumen road all the way to the west. The traffic moving through that area is becoming heavier every year. The parks will require development and some controls will be necessary to ensure that the beauty of those places is maintained.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise a couple of issues this afternoon, and I will be brief. The first point is in relation to the staffing and additional accommodation units that are required at the new Tennant Creek High School. I direct my remarks particularly to the Minister for Education, as I have done before, and tonight to the Chief Minister, who happens to be here and who was involved in the recent discussions to see that additional staffing was made available at the high school and that accommodation would be made available at the school because it is necessary.

The Chief Minister would remember that, during the recent election, he went to a great deal of trouble to explain to the people of Barkly why it would be important for the people to support him and his government, and he promised them that certain things would happen straight after the election. Some of those things were to happen in the event that the government won and other things were to happen anyway because they were necessary.

On 2 occasions, both the Minister for Education and the Chief Minister met with the principal and staff of the high school and the school parents' committee. They listened to the arguments as to why additional teachers were needed at the school because it is very difficult in Tennant to get part-time teachers to undertake relief teaching for a couple of hours or a day when people are sick. They also examined the need for additional accommodation because the council and the teachers are concerned about overcrowding and they agreed that, forthwith, 2 additional classrooms would be made available because of the need.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise the matter today and I jogged the Minister for Education's mind on a previous occasion about it. I think it is important that I do that because all the representations that have been made by the school councillors, as a result of the visit by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education, have not received any attention at all. In fact, callers to the Minister for Education's office have received the response: 'Don't call us, we'll call you. You have misunderstood what the minister said. He said that he would take the matter to Cabinet and we cannot make any promises about anything'.

I know that there are 2 sorts of promises, election promises and other promises, but I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the promises were made on behalf of the government to many people in front of many people, and with no strings attached. The people have not forgotten and they will never forget. I would ask the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education to move the mountains which have to be moved from time to time so that the promises made during the course of the election, to satisfy accommodation and staffing needs at the Tennant Creek High School, are fulfilled.

The second point that I wish to mention arises as a result of questions asked in this House during the last couple of days in relation to outstanding applications to the Department of Mines and Energy for exploration licences. Anybody who has his ear to the ground knows that the mining industry is beside itself trying to get titles from the department. The industry has been saying for at least 9 months that it has a cash-box situation. It has money to spend and it wants access to land so that it can spend. It cannot get that access. The bottom line is that excuses do not count. There are always reasons why titles cannot be issued fast enough, but those reasons do not count. If the titles are not issued, explorers cannot spend. This situation has not arisen in the last 2 or 3 months; it has been going on for the best part of a year and the industry has been complaining openly about the fact that it has to wait for 9 months to obtain exploration licences.

I would heartily endorse any proposal that the government has to buy the arms and legs to process the paperwork because the capacity of the industry is directly related to the market. We have seen what can happen in the market and that is not new. We have seen it before. Several years ago, when we were very keen to release blocks to the north of our coast to stimulate exploration in oil and gas, we had extreme difficulty with the Commonwealth in getting blocks released. It was worried about RRT and all its other problems and could not see its way clear to release the blocks. The Commonwealth believed it would make a bonanza out of all of the leases when it let them go. As a result of all that greed and anticipation, we got zilch. The companies that had been climbing over one another to get blocks in the Jabiru offshore area and were willing to spend any amount of money on exploration, vanished overnight when the price of oil dropped markedly. We then had to go into the market, cap in hand, in an attempt to attract industry into the area.

The same will happen with gold or any other mineral if we sit around and rest on our own laurels and take our time to process the paperwork. The time to issue exploration licences is when the market wants them and when the explorers are hot. If we have too many days like yesterday, we will find ourselves advertising for people who might like to come and try their luck on one of our blocks. Therefore, I implore the government to employ however many people it needs to get through the backlog of applications in the department and get the titles into the hands of the explorers so they can spend their dough. If we do not do that, other states will make land available, exploration capital will be spent elsewhere and the resulting development will benefit those states.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate to make some comments about a press release issued a couple of weeks ago by the Leader of the Opposition. I did not bother to respond at that time because I felt that the media would probably not give me much coverage on the issue, but I do feel it should go on the record. The Leader of the Opposition issued a press release in response to my attendance at an Australian Agricultural Council meeting in Melbourne on 2 October. Honourable members would be aware that the Australian Agricultural Council comprises the state ministers for agriculture and the relevant Commonwealth minister. I will deal with each paragraph of the Leader of the Opposition's short statement in turn.

The release was issued on 2 October 1987, which seems to be the same day as the meeting was held. I quote:

Primary production minister, Marshall Perron, has guaranteed a continuing debt for the Territory's 2 dairymen through incompetence, Labor Leader Terry Smith said today. Mr Smith was commenting on

Mr Perron's failure to vote down the dairy export levy at today's national Agricultural Council meeting.

I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition knew, along with most members who followed the milk levy issue closely, that no vote was taken at the Australian Agricultural Council meeting, so his comment about my 'failure to vote down the levy' really takes some liberty with the truth. There simply was no vote. The press release continues:

Mr Smith said that Victorian and South Australian dairymen, who benefit significantly from the dairy export levy, had offered to pay the Territory producers levies in exchange for support at the Agricultural Council.

Some people have described the offer to pay Northern Territory dairymen's levies in harsher terms than any used by Mr Smith. In some quarters, it has even been described as bribery. For the benefit of honourable members, I can state that there was an attempt by a group of Victorian dairy farmers to influence my vote at the meeting in relation to the continuance or otherwise of the dairy levy. That group approached the Territory's dairy farmers suggesting it would pay their levies in exchange for Northern Territory support for the continuation of the national levy. This was supposed to have been done somewhat secretly. I was not supposed to know that the offer had been made. The local dairymen were to indicate to me that they no longer opposed the national levy and, on that basis, presumably I would have accepted their advice and, had a vote been taken at the minister's meeting, would have voted for its continuance.

It came to my attention that such an offer had been made to the Territory dairy farmers. I received some legal advice which was that, upon meeting my ministerial colleagues in Canberra, I should forthwith declare that I was aware that this action had taken place and that in no way would it influence my decision should a vote be taken on the Australian dairy levy. I was told that it was very important that I should make this declaration so that it could not be argued at some future time, when the information became available, that I was somehow influenced by the action of the Victorian dairy farmers. Those are the facts of the situation which was alluded to in the Leader of the Opposition's press release.

The Leader of the Opposition was condemning me in his press release for not acceding to the pressure which that group attempted to apply to me: 'However, Mr Perron had rejected the offer, Mr Smith said, leaving the 2 Territory dairies with an annual bill of at least \$100 000'. He is wrong again. The annual bill at present for our Territory dairy farmers is much less than \$100 000. To date, there has been a 15-month period since the levy was introduced and there is an accumulated debt of about \$47 000. In some years time, if the Territory dairies continue to grow rapidly, the figure may reach \$100 000, but the Leader of the Opposition was certainly very wrong in his press release in saying that my action or inaction had left our dairy farmers with an annual bill of \$100 000.

His press release continued: 'Mr Perron then backed the Queensland Primary Industries Minister, Mr Harper, to ensure that a vote on the dairy levy did not go ahead'. I did not join with the Queensland minister to stop the vote going ahead. The person who was forcing the Agricultural Council to vote on the dairy levy was the New South Wales minister who, under the terms of the federal act, can force the vote to attempt to discontinue the national levy. Before the vote was put at the conference, as has been well reported

around the nation, the New South Wales minister withdrew his notice, as he was entitled to do, and thereupon the matter could not be put to a vote. According to the Leader of the Opposition's press release, I and the Queensland minister stopped the vote. He is very wrong. I note his mention of the Queensland minister as being another state minister who may choose to have this dairy levy scheme cancelled. In fact, there were Labor state ministers who were somewhat of the same mind that the levy perhaps should be cancelled. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition picked the Queensland government to comment about rather than another government of his own political persuasion.

I return to his press release: 'Mr Perron has again proven that the Country Liberal government cannot be expected to protect Territory interests, Mr Smith said'. It is interesting to note the Leader of the Opposition's strong distaste for what is called the 'Kerin Plan' which is the national dairy levy system. It is a plan that has operated with mixed success in the past in an attempt to resolve some of the issues nationally in the dairy industry. It is certainly very strongly supported by the federal Labor government and the Victorian, New South Wales, South Australian and Tasmanian governments. However, the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to cast it all aside even though, clearly, he knows very little about it.

The press release continued: 'Today could have seen an end to the levy ...'. It could not have seen an end to the levy at all because the New South Wales Minister withdrew his motion and no vote was taken. It continues: '... or the payment of the Territory levy by financially-secure Victorian and South Australian dairymen. Neither happened, and Mr Perron is the cause'.

I should be somewhat flattered that the Leader of the Opposition attributes to me the power to control this nation's dairy industry. I might point out to him that, in fact, there are 18 730 dairy farmers in this country and 10 000 of them are in Victoria. Persons who rely on that dairy industry for their living would be the people grossly affected by a dairy price war which was predicted to erupt if the dairy levy was abolished.

I point out to honourable members that 3459 million litres of milk is produced in Australia every year which goes into the manufacturing industry to produce dairy products. That milk is flowing into the manufacturing industry rather than into the domestic milk consumption industry in Australia because it is subsidised. Those dairy products have to compete with subsidised dairy products internationally. The dairy milk levy across Australia supports the subsidies available to the milk manufacturing sector.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Australian Dairy Industry Corporation and a committee established to examine this matter all predicted terrible results if the dairy levy were stopped. It would mean that most of this milk for manufacturing dairy products would start to flow into the domestic sector in Australia, prices would fall apart right across the country and thousands of dairy farmers would be forced out of the business. That scenario was considered not to be helpful to anyone in the industry. However, one could say it certainly would be helpful to the milk consumer who would buy milk at a fraction of the present price, at least for a period.

The primary motivation for maintaining the dairy levy was to avoid chaos in the dairy industry across this nation. For that reason, there was enormous pressure on the Victorian and the New South Wales ministers to find a resolution to their border problem, which is causing concern at present, and to avoid a total collapse of the industry. The Northern Territory was

certainly a very interested observer in this matter. In the end, we did not have to cast a vote on the subject of whether the levy should be retained or not. I guess there is no need for me to tell honourable members what I would have done had a vote been taken. Certainly, it had very severe ramifications for the whole of the Australian dairy industry which could well have impacted on the Northern Territory.

Information from organisations like the Bureau of Agricultural Economics indicates that, in Victoria, which is Australia's biggest dairy state by far, an efficient farmer can produce milk for 12c a litre at the farm gate, and survive. The corresponding figure in the Northern Territory is probably in the vicinity of 45c to 50c a litre. Milk could be transported across this country for something like 30c a litre. It is clear, and the Territory dairy farmers are aware of this, that if the worst came to the worst and a national price war broke out in the dairy industry, there is every possibility that Victorian milk could flow into the Northern Territory at prices very substantially below that which is required to keep our local industry in business.

Most of the players in the dairy industry, at least those at government level, recognise that the fact that the levy system is upholding consumer prices for milk is somewhat unsatisfactory. What they all want is a method by which to work their way out of the current system of subsidies, but in a structured and carefully planned way. What is not required is overnight decisions which cause chaos. At the moment, there is a temporary truce, one might say, with New South Wales agreeing to allow 5%, I think, of its milk market to go to Victorian dairy milk producers. That will ease the situation very significantly. They cannot stop it completely. The Australian Constitution provides that milk can flow across the borders without government intervention, but this temporary truce has been reached with a view to trying to bring in a structured regime of change in the dairy industry and that is considered to be in the interests of Australia as a whole.

My main reason for speaking this evening was to be critical of the Leader of the Opposition and the press release that he issued on the day of the conference in a very irresponsible way. He had his facts all wrong. As a matter of fact, the only thing he had right was the plot by the Victorian farmers group that approached the local Territory dairy farmers. That was the only thing he had right - the plot. Every other statistic given and every statement he made, particularly about my attitude and situation there as the responsible Northern Territory minister, was wrong and I trust that someone will bring this matter to his attention as he did not have the courtesy as usual to stay here and listen.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I will not take up the House's time for very long this evening but I want to respond to some comments made by the member for Barkly about the Tennant Creek High School. It is true that, prior to the Barkly by-election, I visited Tennant Creek and I was shown over the Tennant Creek High School. As most members would know, it is a reasonably modern high school and aesthetically it is probably one of the best-looking high schools in the Territory, probably second only to the Sanderson High School. It houses students ranging from Year 7 right through to Year 12, in contrast to other high schools in the Territory which commence at Year 8.

I went over the school and I was very pleased to see that facilities in relation to the arts, the manual arts, sewing, cookery and the library were all excellent and serviced the students of Tennant Creek very well. A surprising thing was a noticeable lack of normal classroom space. For a new

high school, I found that to be rather disturbing but what was probably more disturbing was that, having been Minister for Education during the time when the member for Barkly was Chief Minister and now, the matter had never been raised with me by the member for Barkly. That indicated to me that he had shown very little interest in the development of the high school and its situation after it had been built.

I am very pleased to say that, as a result of my visit, the Department of Education is taking steps to ensure that there will be adequate space for the students and, hopefully next year, we will have a situation where students will not be required to undertake their lessons in very small studies and reading rooms off the library and other similar storeroom-sized places, and that they will be able to enjoy the same space as other people in Tennant Creek do.

I find it amusing that the member for Barkly is now indicating that there is a serious problem. Possibly it would have been better to have addressed it in the days when aluminium running rails were being installed on the racetrack in Tennant Creek. Possibly it would have been more productive to spend rather more time looking at education facilities and relying on the race club to make do with the facilities that other race clubs have in the Territory instead of having something that is bigger and better than anywhere else. I am sure that the students of Tennant Creek would have appreciated that. I find it slightly hypocritical that the member for Barkly has suddenly discovered a problem and is now waving a big stick at the government.

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

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that reference.

As I said, Mr Speaker, now that we have been informed of the problem we are in a position to do something about it, and that shall be done.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
His Excellency Mr Joris Vos

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Mr Joris Vos, Ambassador of the Netherlands. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to our distinguished visitor a warm welcome and hope that his visit to the Territory is both informative and enjoyable.

Members: Hear, hear!

TABLED PAPER
Ombudsman's Ninth Report

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the Ninth Report of the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory, 1986-87, and I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Debate adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during question time this morning, in a very lengthy debate about the role of the federal Department of Administrative Services, the Minister for Transport and Works made allusion to his approaches to me in order to obtain bipartisan support for his approaches to the federal government. He referred to my having scoffed at such approaches by him. I want to place on the record of the Assembly that no action on my part can possibly be construed by the minister as scoffing at his proposal, either actually or metaphorically. Further, as a result of the conversations I had with the minister about the Cameron Report into road funding, I have made inquiries concerning the Alice Springs Airport, the Darwin Airport and a variety of other matters we discussed in relation to infrastructure. I very much appreciated the opportunity to discuss those issues with the minister and I would like to place on the record that, far from scoffing at a bipartisan approach to such infrastructure projects, I am only too happy to do whatever I can within the scope of the time and resources available to me.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 74)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, I am sure all members are aware of the circumstances which prompted us to propose this bill. Section 21(1)(a) of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act makes holders of paid public office ineligible to nominate for election to the Legislative Assembly. This means that local government councillors must resign from their council positions prior to

nomination for election to the Assembly. While holders of other paid public office are also required to resign prior to nominating, we have decided to raise only the issue of local government councillors for 3 reasons: the provision affects a large number of potential candidates, resultant by-elections at a local government level are costly and we believe ease of movement of people between these 2 levels of government should not be discouraged.

The situation we are moving to rectify was first made public in the Territory election earlier this year. Six sitting local government councillors had to resign from their councils in order to nominate for the Legislative Assembly. The subsequent council by-elections cost ratepayers in the vicinity of \$100 000. Furthermore, it came to light that the members for Wanguri and Ludmilla were invalidly elected in 1983 for the same reason.

Mr Speaker, in other parts of Australia, local government councillors are able to nominate for state seats and all councillors are eligible for nomination to federal seats. In fact, an average of 25 to 30 members of each federal parliament have previously served the community at local government level. I would like to emphasise that point 'served the community'. Those people who are prepared to give their time and effort to represent the community at a local government level are also likely to be interested in representing a constituency at a higher level of government. Not only are they likely to be interested in other levels of government, they also have valuable experience in public office which can benefit the community.

Mr Speaker, the opposition considered 2 courses of action: firstly, seeking to encourage the federal government to amend the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act and, secondly, taking action to resolve one of the difficulties by amending the Local Government Act. Obviously, the problem can only be solved completely by the first course of action. It is to be hoped that the federal government can be persuaded to amend the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act but this may take some time. It is, however, within the competence of this Assembly to amend the Local Government Act so that at least some of these difficulties can be resolved. For this reason, the opposition has introduced this bill.

I would like to turn now to specific clauses of this bill. The bill provides for a new section 23A to be inserted in the Local Government Act. Basically, the new section provides that a councillor nominating for election to the Legislative Assembly ceases to be entitled to any remuneration or allowance other than reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred. The period runs from the day before nomination for the Assembly to the declaration of the poll if the candidate is unsuccessful or, if the candidate is successful, to the time when he or she ceases to be a member of the Legislative Assembly. In addition, if the candidate withdraws his nomination or ceases to be qualified for the election, he would once more be entitled to remuneration from his council. The removal of councillors' entitlements to remuneration or allowances during the above-mentioned periods means that they are no longer ineligible to nominate for the Legislative Assembly under the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act.

This is a straightforward amendment to rectify what I believe to be an unintended consequence of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. I do not see that it will be particularly contentious and I trust that honourable members opposite will support it. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Annual Report of the Auditor-General 1986-87

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly, having noted the Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1987, is of the opinion that the Northern Territory government should implement the recommendations contained therein as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, I think it needs to be said at the start that what the Auditor-General has said in his annual report for 1986-87 is very serious indeed. It is no overstatement to say that the report is a damning indictment of the operations of the Northern Territory government. It is not good enough for the Treasurer to go on television and say, as he did last night, that it is constructive criticism which the government will take on board. The reason why the Auditor-General has come out in such a positive manner about shortcomings in Northern Territory government accounting methods is that he has been putting across a message for at least the last 12 months and has been obtaining no response at all. I refer honourable members to the previous Annual Report of the Auditor-General, section 3.1.20:

In respect of the year ended 30 June 1985, some reports under section 22 of the Public Service Act incorporated detailed financial data relating to activities whilst, in others, minimal financial information was provided. There is no consistent approach across all units of administration in respect of the nature and extent of financial information provided. As a consequence, there is an absence of meaningful and comparative financial information that would enable activities and operations to be assessed in terms of their associated costs.

That is the essence of the much stronger sentiments expressed by the Auditor-General in his report this year. Twelve months ago, he formally expressed similar concerns and nothing happened. I know that, over the last year, the Auditor-General has been expressing similar concerns informally to the individual departments and to the government. Nevertheless, the best that the Treasurer could do in his TV interview last night was to express some surprise and say that it is constructive criticism which will be taken on board.

It is certainly constructive criticism but it is an indictment on the operations of the government. It is probably one of the most damning reports that any Auditor-General has made, anywhere in Australia, on the operations of government. I know that, in the past, there have been damning reports on individual departments and on particular activities undertaken by governments. However, I have no knowledge or memory of such a comprehensively damning report of the whole basis of the government's finance and accounting system. That is what we are talking about and the report says, in terms of the Treasurer's annual financial statements that there is '... not enough to give a clear picture of government operations and the financial position overall'. It is staggering stuff.

He then comments on the public accounts: '... there is generally a lack of meaningful financial information. In short, the financial information which is presently available in respect of departments does not satisfy the objective of general purpose financial reports; namely to disclose information ...'. That is the key point of the whole exercise. The purpose of general-purpose financial statements is to disclose information which, as the Auditor-General says, is for 2 purposes: to assist in making economic

decisions and to satisfy accountability. The Auditor-General's words are harsh. They mean that the government is operating in the dark. The Auditor-General is saying that the government does not have enough financial information to form a clear picture of its own operations and financial position. Equally importantly, the Auditor-General is saying that the government is keeping us in the dark. Of course, that is no news at all. The member for Nhulunbuy and I have consistently argued during the last 2 or 3 years that the Northern Territory government is keeping the taxpayers of the Northern Territory in the dark. What staggers me about this report is that the government is keeping itself in the dark as well. That really adds an extra dimension to the debate.

To use a colloquial expression that everybody understands, the government has treated the people of the Northern Territory as a 'mushroom club'. It has kept them in the dark and fed them financial pap. What is even more staggering is that the mushroom club extends to the Cabinet itself. The Cabinet, through its failure to establish proper financial provisions, has kept itself in the dark. That is probably the most concerning aspect of this whole report.

The first page of the Auditor-General's report sets out the aims of his office. I will quote them because they are important:

To promote improvement in the public sector financial reporting and accounting in the Northern Territory and to establish a recognised resource for the promotion of improvement in the operational efficiency of Northern Territory public administration.

He makes 2 general comments on the first page. Firstly: 'Urgent attention needs to be given to the quality of financial reports ...'. Secondly: 'Delays are occurring in the production of financial reports which often means that the information has lost much of its relevance by the time it becomes available as well as adding significantly to the accounting and audit costs'.

There is a consistent message right through the Auditor-General's report that the government, by failing so far to put in place proper financial and accounting procedures, is not only selling the people of the Northern Territory short directly but selling the people of the Northern Territory short indirectly. This is because it is incurring costs through its failure to have the financial information that it should have, information which governments at the Commonwealth and state level take for granted in making their decisions. And as I have said, that makes us unique in the history of Australia. The task should be easier in the Northern Territory because we have the smallest public service, the smallest government budget and one of the best computer systems. Quite clearly, however, the Auditor-General has said that the government has failed to provide the standard of information that is expected from governments in Australia and, equally, has failed to provide the standard of information that is acceptable in the commercial world. I have no doubt that if this government were a private company and presented the type of financial information it presents, it would be laughed out of court and told to do it again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Auditor-General's comments are made within the framework of the statement of accounting concepts objectives of financial reporting by public service entities. The Auditor-General has shown us the courtesy of providing that framework as an appendix to his report. That framework was provided by the Public Sector Accounting Standards Board of the

Australian Accounting Research Foundation and is based essentially on the principle that, if financial reports are to disclose information which is useful, it is necessary to identify potential users and the purpose for which they require the disclosure of that financial information. Three broad groups of users are identified, which overlap to some extent: the providers of resources, essentially the government; the recipients of services or benefits, essentially the people of the Northern Territory; and, the parties performing a review service of relevance to all, the most important of which is probably this parliament. The staggering thing about the Auditor-General's statements is that the government is not providing financial information which meets the needs of any of those groups. It really is quite extraordinary. The government is not even providing itself with the information it needs, to use the Auditor-General's exact phrase: 'to be useful in making economic decisions'.

Mr Manzie: We still balance our books.

Mr SMITH: I will pick up that remark. The fact that we still balance the books is an indication of the problem. Anyone can balance the books; it is a simple task. The problem for governments, particularly in these tight economic times, is to make sure that their funds are used wisely and provide a proper return for the people of the state or territory.

The Auditor-General is quite clearly saying that the government of the Northern Territory does not have a clue whether it is getting value for the money it puts into any particular project, because it has no way of measuring whether it is getting value for money. As I understand it, that is something that the Public Accounts Committee has already picked up and made recommendations on and I am sure the member for Nhulunbuy will pursue it.

Mr Manzie: That is the concept of 'Towards the 90s'.

Mr SMITH: The Minister for Education is correct. I accept that 'Towards the 90s' was a step in the right direction in terms of pointing out where the government wanted to go and how it was going to get there. I have said that consistently whenever I have spoken about 'Towards the 90s'. I have disagreed with the direction that the government wants to take but it has certainly been a positive step in trying to meet the objectives that the Auditor-General identifies in terms of planning and measurement of progress towards objectives. Unfortunately, that is not happening in too many other areas of government in the Northern Territory.

Of course, this failure of the government to provide itself with the financial information it needs has made the Northern Territory a carpetbagger's heaven in terms of negotiations with private enterprise. Mr Speaker, I will give you one example that is relevant at the moment. It was mentioned yesterday in a question from the member for MacDonnell. How can any government go into an operation like the one pursued at Oolloo, where the government asked a contractor to provide a quote for the removal of cattle from the property, not on a per-head basis, as any sensible organisation would do, but as an overall quote? That contractor gained a windfall profit of at least \$400 000 because he quoted \$60 000 to remove the cattle. His quote was based on the government's estimate of the number of cattle on the property. The actual number of cattle was 4 or 5 times that, as the property owner told him. The property owner also told the government, but it did not take any notice and that is why the contractor made a windfall profit. That sort of thing is part of the problem, Mr Speaker.

As has been said by this side of the House on many occasions, the government is commercially illiterate. It does not know how to negotiate in the real world. It sits in its little ivory tower across the road and makes decisions in all sorts of areas, almost on a daily basis, which cost the taxpayers of the Northern Territory hundreds if not thousands of dollars. The Oolloo example is just the latest of many.

The 2 main assessments that the Auditor-General makes are of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements and the public accounts. This is what he has to say about the Treasurer's financial statements: 'There is no doubt that the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements in their present form provide for all of the information required by the letter of the law ...'. I certainly am not disputing that the Territory government's accounts meet the legal requirements. The Auditor-General continued:

... yet, in my opinion in this day and age that alone is not enough to give a clear picture of government operations and financial position overall. In order to be truly meaningful such information needs to be properly organised and presented; important aspects of financial position and results need to be disclosed; and the voluminous underlying data needs to be summarised into a limited number of financial statement captions and supporting notes. I am of the firm opinion that the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements in their present form contain much valuable information but that it is not well organised. Furthermore, much valuable information is lost in excessive detail and some is not included at all because the present form of statements does not allow for its inclusion.

Mr Speaker, that is not as damning as the section on the public accounts, but it clearly says that it is time the government provided itself and the people of the Northern Territory with sufficient well-presented data to enable itself and the people of the Territory to make a judgment about where the government has been and where it is going.

The good thing about this report, and the reason we brought this debate on, is that the Auditor-General is not content merely to criticise but has put forward what he called 'possible solutions'. In terms of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements, his recommendation is that the example form which he has prepared and shown as Appendix C of this report, be adopted as a necessary part of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement. Without being comprehensive, it provides for the financial statements to contain a statement of assets and liabilities and to present a clearer picture of the financial position as at the balance date. They would contain a statement of sources and applications of funds to assist in the understanding of changes in financial position, financial flexibility, cash flows and investment expenditure. They would contain sufficient explanatory notes to make sure all the information was understood. There are 8 recommendations altogether in that section.

Mr Coulter: I will deal with that.

Mr SMITH: You will deal with that? You are going to take them on board?

Mr Coulter: Yes.

Mr SMITH: Mr speaker, the public accounts section, of course, is the more damning one. This is what the report says about the accounts and the financial operations conducted by departments at present:

All in all, however, the financial reporting by departments is disjointed. There is no consistent approach across all departments; and there is generally a lack of meaningful financial information. In short, the financial information which is presently available in respect of departments does not satisfy the objectives of general purpose financial reports; namely, to disclose information: (a) useful in making economic decisions; and (b) to satisfy accountability.

He goes on to say:

... I believe that the nature and size alone of departments are compelling reasons for those entities to prepare general purpose financial reports and for that financial information to be audited. Departments control large amounts of public property and resources and clear information regarding their management is generally not available at present.

The Auditor-General does not have to tell me that. One of the major problems that this opposition has in trying to interpret the government's actions and plans is the lack of detailed information concerning them. The problem is even more serious when the Auditor-General says this lack of detailed information is so great a problem that the government itself lacks the information it needs to make intelligent decisions about financial planning. That is the core of the problem: the government itself does not have sufficient information, presented in an appropriate form, to enable it to make sensible decisions.

Again, the Auditor-General comes up with a series of recommendations. They are that: departments should produce general purpose financial statements; the development of the form and content of departmental financial statements should be undertaken in conjunction with the development of financial statements for the government as a whole; and that departmental financial statements should form part of the reports issued by Chief Executive Officers in accordance with section 22 of the Public Service Act. He provides an example, in terms of the operation of his own office, as to how that information should be presented. I would invite every member of the opposition and the government to read section 9 of the Auditor-General's Report, which is the account of the operations of his own office. It will give them a very clear understanding of the financial situation in the Auditor-General's Office. After reading that section, members should read the information that is presently available for other government departments. They will soon get the picture.

In the case of the Auditor-General's Office, one can tell where the money has gone; what works are in progress; what assets have been lost or written off; what payments have been made including, for example, cleaning payments; the office inventory; employee entitlements; superannuation commitments; lease commitments; other contractual commitments; insurance; auditors' fees and so on. It is all spelt out so that the people of the Territory are able to assess what is happening in that particular department.

Mr Speaker, I put it to you that the people of the Northern Territory, the taxpayers, have the right to demand that sort of financial information from all departments and statutory authorities in the Northern Territory.

He then goes on to make some comments about statutory corporations and it is worth spending some time on them. The report says, at 4.2:

I believe that some prescribed statutory corporations consider the accounting and auditing requirements imposed upon them by the act as being unnecessary and unreasonable impositions in light of the other freedoms they have. My own view is that the question as to what constitutes a desirable degree of administrative freedom in any particular circumstance should be considered independently of the question as to what are appropriate accountability requirements.

He then goes on to say:

I believe it is both desirable and possible to complete the whole process of reporting from statutory corporations much earlier, given the best endeavours of all parties involved in the process.

The Auditor-General's comments in this respect highlight a problem that we have pointed to before: namely, the reluctance of statutory authorities to provide the level of information presently required by the act, let alone what the Auditor-General is recommending in terms of further reporting requirements which are necessary for a proper scrutiny of government accounts and records. That is an area that the government needs to look at carefully.

As I have said, these matters are not new. The Auditor-General has provided a service for us in drawing them all together under the imprimatur of his office. I hope the government realises that things are very serious when the Auditor-General is forced to make such a public report on the inadequacy of the government's operations. Auditors-General always point out problems in the operations of government to the departments involved and to the ministers involved, and always attempt to resolve those problems before going public. This report is a sign of the Auditor-General's frustration that the attempts that he has made since he took office to improve the standards of accountability in the Northern Territory have been ignored. There is no other way to describe it: they have been ignored. He gave a fairly gentle hint in 1986 that there was something seriously amiss and the government should come to grips with it. Nothing was done. What we have this year is the Auditor-General's desperate attempt to get his message across in a damning report on the operation of this government in relation to financial and accounting accountability.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the problem is that the government has never realised that budgeting and accounting procedures have changed and that it is no longer appropriate to produce financial statements which simply show income, expenditure and the end-of-year balance. Those days are gone. They are gone in terms of government accounting standards and practices in Australia and they are certainly gone in the commercial world as well. What people demand of governments now is a much higher level of information and a much higher standard. Sensible governments demand the same thing because they know that, if they have that information, they will be better placed to make decisions about their future financial dealings. Without that information they will continue to muddle along as this government does, getting itself involved in commercial deals that will cost us millions of dollars for years to come without having a clue about the effectiveness of its spending. This government does not have a clue about the effectiveness of its expenditures because, to put it in simple terms, it has no procedures in place to measure its outputs. It measures its inputs by saying it has put in so much money. However, it does not have any procedures in place to measure its outputs, and that is one of the major concerns of the Auditor-General.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by asking the government specifically to support the motion and in so doing to commit itself to implementing, as a matter of urgency, the recommendations contained in the Auditor-General's report.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, over a long period of time, the Leader of the Opposition has given us that story in various forms. Fancy giving him any information at all. He only wants to can us and knock us. Even when we do provide him with information, as I will point out in a moment, he cannot read it. On many occasions I have described him as economically colour-blind. He does not understand the difference between red and black on a balance sheet, yet he stands up here and quotes selectively from the Auditor-General's report. I also have some quotations that I would like to read from the report.

Mr Speaker, when I looked at the Auditor-General's report yesterday and was asked to comment upon it, I expected that a constructive debate on the objectives and the forms of government accounting was about to commence. How wrong I was. Here we have the Leader of the Opposition giving his unbalanced, unfair and unreasonable criticisms again.

Mr Smith: Tell us how it is unfair.

Mr COULTER: It is very easy to tell in 30 minutes. In fact, I could do it in 3 minutes. However, in order to give some depth and quality to this debate, I will take a little more time to explain things slowly, so that the Leader of the Opposition will understand. That is what will take 30 minutes.

Mr Smith: And loudly?

Mr COULTER: No, I will not get excited about it.

I have now had the opportunity to observe these unbalanced, unfair and unwarranted criticisms and the attack on the government's financial reports and, by implication, the officers producing them. I think that is important. I would like to respond to the comment that the Auditor-General makes about the difficulty of recruiting by putting on the record my sincere appreciation of the work done by my very dedicated staff in the Treasury. They have worked very hard to produce the annual financial statements and they have my full support and confidence. The Leader of the Opposition should recognise the quality of employees we have in the Northern Territory Public Service, in particular the Treasury, who work under considerable pressure to produce the goods. Time and time again they come up with the goods and produce the figures which are required. My full congratulations go to members of the public service, particularly employees of Treasury, and it is a pity the Leader of the Opposition does not recognise their efforts.

The opposition has picked up a series of generalised observations made in the course of a full report by the Auditor-General and summarised them in terms of failures in accountability, lack of relevance, lack of meaningful financial information and delays. That was the opposition's approach. It concluded that we need a wide-ranging shake-up in government accounting procedures and reporting. Regrettably, the Auditor-General has not provided more and better examples of the precise difficulties which he perceives for the government, parliament and the general public in absorbing the material that the government produces on its financial position and achievements. Without specific examples to get our teeth into, the report is little more than a generalised collection of non-specific and, I am afraid, unhelpful complaints.

It is not my intention to attack the Auditor-General or his staff. They are doing an essential and valuable job for this House and the people of the Northern Territory. Let me say categorically that I will consider any advice on financial recording matters, whether it comes from the Auditor-General or my department. My main concern is to provide the Assembly with the best possible financial information which is useful and relevant in determining the Territory's priorities and implementing them. I have a duty, however, to attack the meaningless, inept and out-of-context use made of selected excerpts from the report. I will give the House some facts.

We have before the House at the moment, 2 reports by the Auditor-General. Tabled simultaneously, they were completed almost 2 weeks apart. The first is the Annual Report for the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1987. It includes comments on departmental accounts and the general philosophy, approach and objectives of the Auditor-General's own office. It also includes comments on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements as they were presented in 1986. It is interesting to see that the Auditor-General has also recognised the problems that exist within his own office in some of these matters. His criticism is general and meant to be constructive, as I said on television yesterday evening.

It is unfortunate and even a little curious that the Auditor-General's own report focuses upon the Annual Financial Statements of a year ago and makes little reference to the changes that have been brought about in the form of those statements during the past year. The fact is that significant, useful and meaningful changes have been introduced over the last year but these are not highlighted or, indeed, mentioned.

Mr Smith: Like what?

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition displays his ignorance but, if he will listen, I will try and explain it to him like a third-grader would to a first-grader. His attack relies on recommendations from the Auditor-General which are out-of-date because changes have already taken place. I note none of the Leader of the Opposition's public comments or complaints about lack of meaningful information have made any reference whatsoever to the substantial volumes of material tabled with the budget only last month. I guess they have now disappeared from the Leader of the Opposition's table.

Mr Smith: You are a real clown.

Mr COULTER: Unlike the Treasurer's annual financial statements, which are purely a historical record, the budget papers produced not only a record of the year past but also detailed financial projections for the year ahead. Members who have taken the trouble to work their way through the volumes of supporting material, particularly the explanatory notes, will realise how empty the opposition's charge of incomplete and meaningless information is. We will see who is a clown in a moment. We will demonstrate to the people of the Northern Territory where the funny side of this debate is. It is not on this side of the Assembly.

Exactly what recommendations does the opposition motion urge the government to implement forthwith? In section 2.6 of his annual report, the Auditor-General recommends a variation to the form of the financial statements. The Treasurer's annual financial statements already provide details of receipts and payments and these are based on cash accounting principles. It may be that the present statement will require revision if the orientation of financial reporting becomes more commercial and is based on

accrual accounting principles. No one should assume that this development is a foregone conclusion. I have no difficulty with the Auditor-General's recommendation because what he has recommended is already in place.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr COULTER: He never mentioned any of that. He went backwards, like you. Nobody looks forward or sees what is happening.

A statement of assets and liabilities is generally known as a balance sheet. Whilst balance sheets have been considered at various times by state governments, they have not been introduced in a single state. I understand that only Victoria and South Australia even considered the possibility. That in itself should cause us to reflect. Honourable members might wish to consider here the only example provided by the Auditor-General: the balance sheet of his own office. It appears on page 64 and honourable members might like to look it up so that they can understand what I am talking about here. If someone could sit next to the Leader of the Opposition and help him to find it, I would appreciate that assistance.

Mr Smith: I have it, I have it!

Mr COULTER: The balance sheet for the Auditor-General's office lists total liabilities at \$169 000 and total assets at only \$115 000. Are we supposed to infer that the Auditor-General's office has a negative value of \$54 000? Going further, are we to do something because that negative value has increased from only \$8000 a year earlier? What a load of nonsense! Would we, as a private organisation, give consideration to closing the office because it is demonstrably unprofitable and getting worse? Is that the way we are to conduct business? Of course not! I only give this illustration as an indication of the difficulty of attaching real meaning to a statement of assets and liabilities in the public sector context. In saying this I do not propose to open the question of the considerable expense which would be involved in valuing government assets such as roads, bridges, schools, water services, Crown land etc for an uncertain purpose based on private sector commercial accounting practices. Accordingly, at this stage I do not intend to insist that all departments produce exhaustive listings of assets and liabilities in the form of balance sheets.

The Auditor-General's recommendation warrants further attention in terms of statements of sources and application of funds. I have been advised that most of the useful information is already available. I have already asked Treasury officials to continue to develop this approach during 1987-88.

The Auditor-General refers to explanatory notes. These have not been a feature of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements in the past. When considered in conjunction with the full set of budget papers, explanatory notes are generally clear and concise. I have no objection to providing more explanatory notes, provided I am told where extra meaningful and useful information is seen to be needed and am convinced that it will help the government do things better for the Territory.

In respect of accountable officers' estimates, we need to examine further whether accountable officers have the necessary resources and documentation to provide useful and reliable estimates which will be meaningful in an accounting and operational context. Once again, we must be mindful that the cost involved in providing these estimates does not exceed the benefit which they are expected to produce. A similar comment must be made regarding the

recommended general purpose financial statement for those organisations which do not match expenditure with revenue or, in commercial terms, expenses with income. Whilst commercial administrative units should prepare such statements, I see little use in these departments, which are primarily spenders, using scarce resources to produce statements which serve no analytical purpose.

The Auditor-General's recommendations regarding timeliness of reports by prescribed statutory authorities is fully endorsed. As Treasurer, I am anxious to ensure that prescribed statutory corporations, particularly those with commercial activities, finalise their financial statements as soon as possible after 30 June. Indeed, I issued an instrument in May 1987 which reduced the period in which financial statements are to be prepared from 6 months to 3 months.

In the area of local government accounts, the fourth recommendation of the Auditor-General is already in place and the Office of Local Government is well advanced in reviewing the accounting and audit requirements of local government corporations, following discussions with local government officials - to which the Auditor-General was invited, by the way - several months ago.

In respect of the Auditor-General's recommendation in relation to Commonwealth acquittals, I have asked Treasury officials to report to me on the present situation. I am aware that some improvements have already been made at the request of the Auditor-General, but have directed Treasury to further review procedures to ensure that the acquittals are effected promptly.

On the question of timeliness, Mr Speaker, I will simply point out that, last year, the Treasurer's statements were tabled in this House on 25 November. This year the accounts were tabled on 20 October, or some 5 weeks earlier. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition, one would be obliged to believe that there had been no improvement in the time of the presentation of the accounts.

In a closely related area, I point out to the House that next week I will be publishing the quarterly accounts for the 3 months ended September 1987. Last year, the quarterly accounts for the same period appeared on 14 November. These improvements to the form of the accounts and the timeliness of their presentation have followed a program approved by me but implemented by the hardworking and dedicated Treasury. I think it is most regrettable that the very significant achievements that have been made over the last year have been ignored and belittled in the present publicity. As in all well-managed organisations, whether they be in the private sector or the public sector, priorities have to be set. While real achievements in presentation have been made over the last year, the first priority has been to get the accounts of the Territory produced accurately and on time.

During a period in which the computerised accounting system has been converted completely and the banking arrangements for the Territory have been fundamentally and significantly changed, I think the achievements have been outstanding and I believe that this House will share my views.

The most important point that should be registered in this debate, however, does not concern the management information task at all; it concerns the objectives of the reporting process. I must say that I have some concern at certain aspects of the Auditor-General's report in which it seems that he is encroaching, or intending to encroach, on areas which are clearly the

responsibility of the Treasurer, the government and the Legislative Assembly. I quote from page 57 of his report.

In accordance with modern audit philosophy I intend to expand the scope of the audit so that I am able to express an opinion as to the fairness of the financial statements and, thus, provide the reader with the considerably greater degree of assurance generally expected these days. Such an expanded opinion will encompass not only whether the statements agree with the underlying records but also such things as whether the statements have been prepared in accordance with appropriate accounting standards and whether there is adequate disclosure of all material matters necessary to a fair view.

On page 54, in developing model financial statements, the Auditor-General states that:

...considerable prior research was required to arrive at a form which was most appropriate to the legislative, governmental, managerial and administrative environment of the Northern Territory.

A third quote, from page 52:

For the guidance of all future audit effort, I have determined that the aims of my office for the next 2 years are: to promote improvement in the public sector financial reporting and accounting in the Northern Territory and to establish a recognised resource for the promotion of improvement in the operational efficiency of Northern Territory public administration.

Mr Speaker, I find in these observations a disturbing possibility that the Auditor-General is taking it upon himself to determine certain matters which should be decided in this House or, where delegated, by the Treasurer of the Northern Territory. It is a most important principle of our parliamentary system that this House makes decisions about the type of information that we need and how it should be presented to us. We decide what is appropriate, not the accounting profession or its eminent member, the Auditor-General!. I hasten to add that we seek the best possible advice in making such decisions, and that includes advice from the Auditor-General, the Treasury, other interested departments and, indeed, experts from the private sector. That process will continue.

I will turn now to the Leader of the Opposition, who so frequently talks in this House about my ignorance of financial matters. He never misses an opportunity to do that. On page 219 of the Parliamentary Record for Wednesday 23 September, he is recorded as saying: 'I have a supplementary question. Can I point out to the Treasurer who has again demonstrated an appalling ignorance about his own financial ...'. In that case, he was talking about financial statements and, remember, this is information that was provided to him. He talks persistently about the financial competence that I lack and that he has. On that occasion, the Leader of the Opposition, our shadow treasurer, had the gall to suggest an ignorance on my part about financial matters when putting a question about the Northern Territory Land Corporation Trust Account. This financial wizard not only quoted balance figures from the wrong quarterly report but also demonstrated that he could not differentiate between a 12-monthly and a quarterly report when he tried to reconcile figures in the 2 documents.

A reading of Hansard will show clearly that his question made no logical sense. Nevertheless, I quite reasonably offered to obtain the information for him. To set the record straight, the Northern Territory Land Corporation Trust Account was only established on 14 January 1987 and had a credit balance of \$48 018 at the end of the March quarter. The opening balance for the 12 months ended 30 June 1987 - I see he is writing it down. This information is clearly available to him.

Mr Smith: It is not available. The report says you are presenting it now.

Mr COULTER: It is available. The opening balance for the 12 months ended 30 June 1987 was, of course, properly described as nil. It is all pretty basic stuff.

The Leader of the Opposition apparently still has some obsession about 9-month periods. He has quoted them on a number of occasions in this Assembly which has indicated his inability to read and comprehend the simplest headings on financial statements, let alone offer sensible comment on their content. His description as 'shadow treasurer' is most appropriate in this instance, as we have seen from today's debate. Let me quote from the Concise Oxford Dictionary. He is quite used to quoting from documents. The definition of 'shadow' is 'unsubstantial', 'unreal' and 'counterfeit'. Perhaps 'shady' is the most appropriate term if one considers the often outrageous statements he is prone to make about our economy.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! If you look at me, I think it is difficult to say that I could be 'unsubstantial'. I do not object to that but I do object to the implication that I am shady. I would ask the Treasurer to withdraw any such implication.

Mr COULTER: I am quoting from the Concise Oxford.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order and I ask the honourable minister to withdraw the remark. I am advised by the Clerk that one cannot quote from an authority and use that in a reference against a member.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Vindictive distortion and scare tactics are the trademarks of the would-be treasurer opposite. Our Northern Territory can well do without his negative and destructive influence and that of some of his colleagues. Can we go a little further? Why does he want all this information? The Auditor-General indicated in his report that a vast quantity of information exists in the Northern Territory.

The reason why the Leader of the Opposition wants this information is fairly obvious. It is so he can put down development. It is so he can use it to knock the people in the commercial world who are trying to get on with the development of the Northern Territory. He wants this information as ammunition to shoot down these commercial practices. He has already spoken today about our entering into deals and so forth. He cannot read the very basic financial statements that are offered to him and he wants more information. It is an absolute nonsense which really amazes me. You buy him books and all he does is sit down and chew the backs off them. We are becoming sick of supplying him with those books. He really has not learnt much about the understanding of literature and books since he was in kindergarten.

The Leader of the Opposition is saying that he wants more information. I must say that I do not know why, because he seems to have extreme difficulty in understanding what he gets already. What he does understand, he uses maliciously for short-term political gain as he has demonstrated in this debate today. The rest automatically assumes a suspect and negative status which must be knocked, if only as a matter of principle.

It saddens me to say that I am unable to trust the motives of the honourable members opposite as they have so clearly demonstrated their lack of commitment to the Territory on too many occasions. Their pious call to be better informed in the alleged interest of the public is nothing more than a search for ammunition which may be used to further their own ends, which are to knock development in the Northern Territory. Members opposite have no inkling of commercial realities or practices and have shown that they have no regard for the confidentiality of sensitive financial data.

In this day and age, it is becoming increasingly necessary and beneficial for governments to adopt corporate commercial roles. We regularly deal with the full spectrum of our community, from private individuals to multinational corporations, in negotiations on matters which relate to the advancement of the Northern Territory. Many of these arrangements involve considerable sums of taxpayers' funds. It is precisely to protect these funds that at least some of the government's accounts and dealings must remain confidential. Any initial warm inner glow gained from exposure of all our accounts would become cold comfort to our taxpayers when they realised the cost to them of such exposure. Those with whom we do business would find massive financial advantage, to our disadvantage, through prior knowledge of such things as provisions for projects, land development proposals, defence or prosecution arguments on legal matters, bottom-line negotiation positions and so on.

The Leader of the Opposition says his role is to scrutinise government activities. I would suggest to honourable members that his urgent initial task is to scrutinise his own motives. I see little point in including him in developing terms of consultation or in accepting his advice but we will consult with experts in the private sector and we will take constructive criticism from them. We will not be taking it from the Leader of the Opposition because it fails in one very basic respect: it is not constructive. In fact, he would not know the meaning of the word. I have little doubt that he or one of his successors will be on the first train from Alice Springs when it rolls into Darwin, demanding that this Assembly urge the government to build the line. The spirit will be okay but, as usual, he will be years late.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Leader of the Opposition's motion be amended by omitting all words after 'Northern Territory government should' and inserting in their stead: 'consider the recommendations contained therein and should implement those which prove to be appropriate, as soon as possible'.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, in the course of my time in this Assembly, I have criticised much of the government's legislation but I find it somewhat peculiar that I must rise to defend Northern Territory legislation from an attack by a government minister. I will not dwell upon much of what the Treasurer had to say. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will defend himself more than adequately when he replies.

However, I feel that I must make some comment in regard to the Treasurer's comments in respect of the activities of the Auditor-General. Those in particular distress me greatly. The Auditor-General has a special position

within the Northern Territory. Auditors-General throughout the Commonwealth have a special position within the various legislatures by which they are appointed. Their special position is based on the need for independence within the audit office. So that the Treasurer is under no illusion about the role and activities of the Auditor-General, I will read section 47(1) from the Financial Administration and Audit Act, which includes the duties of the Auditor-General:

(1) Subject to this act, the Auditor-General shall audit the public accounts and other accounts in such manner as he thinks fit, having regard to the character and effectiveness of the internal control and recognised professional standards and practices.

It is very important that at least the Treasurer be aware of that particular subsection of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. He may then have some grasp of the role of the Auditor-General. Internal control is very clearly defined in the Financial Administration and Audit Act as:

the method adopted within a department (a) to safeguard its assets, (b) to check the accuracy and reliability of its accounting data, (c) to promote operational efficiency, (d) to encourage adherence to management practices and (e) to secure compliance with legislative provisions.

The Treasurer needs to be told, either by the Chief Minister or somebody who has some authority over him, that his comments on page 11 of the written speech he circulated are nonsense. I refer to the following statement: 'I must say that I have some concern at certain aspects of the Auditor-General's report in which it seems that he is encroaching or intending to encroach on areas which are clearly the responsibility of the Treasurer, the government and the Legislative Assembly'. That is an absolute nonsense.

The act which sets out the duties of the Auditor-General says that he is obliged to audit the public accounts and other accounts in such manner as he thinks fit, having regard to the character and effectiveness of the internal control and recognised professional standards and practices. If the Auditor-General had not submitted this report and made those observations, he would not have performed his duty as is required by the Financial Administration and Audit Act. It is clearly his role and if he did not carry it out, I would be criticising him. He has a professional responsibility and a legal obligation that surpasses the immediate wishes of this Treasurer and this government. Unless we change the act, he has an obligation to apply professional standards and to adopt them in his report to this Assembly. If he does not do so, he should be sacked. He does not, however, have to satisfy this Treasurer or this government. He has to apply professional standards when reporting to this Assembly.

I would suggest to the Treasurer that, firstly, he should sack his speech writer and, secondly, that he should withdraw his comments about the Auditor-General encroaching on inappropriate areas, because my view is that they constitute a breach of the privilege of this Assembly. The Privileges Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly may have a different view but it is my view that the Hansard record will clearly show tomorrow that the Treasurer has breached the privilege of this Assembly in criticising the Auditor-General for doing his job under the provisions of legislation which has been passed by this House. Mr Speaker, if he does not withdraw those comments or at least apologise for them, I would suggest that the Chief Minister should sack him, because at the very least they represent a gross breach of privilege.

Mr Dale: I have never known a man who wants to call for so many resignations.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I do not mind going to bat with the member for Wanguri or any other government minister but, if I am to deliver this speech without having to do that, I expect your protection.

This Assembly must pass - without amendment - the Leader of the Opposition's motion. If the Treasurer's amendment proceeds, this Assembly would be saying that we are prepared to settle for second-best because, if the Treasurer's amendment is agreed to, the motion will read: 'That this Assembly, having noted the annual report of the Auditor-General for the year ending 30 June 1987, is of the opinion that the Northern Territory government should consider the recommendations contained therein and should implement those which prove to be appropriate, as soon as possible'. This Assembly cannot pass that amendment and remain credible. We must pass the Leader of the Opposition's motion, which reads: 'That this Assembly, having noted the Annual Report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1987, is of the opinion that the Northern Territory government should implement the recommendations contained therein as soon as possible'. Unless we pass that motion, unamended, we will totally lack credibility in financial matters and this Assembly will look as financially incompetent as the Treasurer.

I would suggest that the Treasurer withdraw his amendment. I hope the Chief Minister will speak next and will suggest to the Assembly that the amendment be withdrawn and that the motion, as put by the Leader of the Opposition, proceed unamended. To do other than that will render not just this Treasurer and this government absolutely ridiculous, but this Assembly as well. I suggest that that is what the next speaker on the government side should do.

I will turn now to the actual report of the Auditor-General. Recently, I had the privilege - and I do thank the government for allowing me the facilities - to attend a biennial conference of public accounts committees. I believe it is the Chairman's role to present whatever reports the Public Accounts Committee may make to this House and to the government. It is not my role to do that so I will not discuss any matter which has come before the Public Accounts Committee. It was a public meeting that I attended and the papers that were given at that biennial conference are publicly available. There were many people there from throughout Australia and the papers that were given and the addresses were in no way considered confidential.

I do not think that I am breaching any privilege by reading some of the comments made at the conference on Friday 29 May 1987 by Mr K. Robson, the Auditor-General of New South Wales. I fully agree with his comments and, given the very professional standards adopted by auditors throughout Australia and throughout the Commonwealth, I know that they would be supported by the Northern Territory's Auditor-General:

Until the 1980s, the public sector was not required to have recourse to accounting standards. In fact, they were virtually unheard of. The result was that organisations produced financial statements when they liked and included in them whatever they liked. Compared to present day standards, they are nothing short of a sham.

I would suggest, after reading the Northern Territory Auditor-General's report, that in accounting terms we are still living in the pre-1980 era. I will admit that, because it is quite voluminous, I am reading selectively from this document. The New South Wales Auditor-General also commented:

Accountability, in its simplest terms, presumes that there is one party to allocate responsibility and another who accepts that responsibility and undertakes to report the results. Traditionally, financial statements by which governments report operations have been based on reflecting parliamentary appropriations and demonstrating stewardship. This has led to limitations on the scope and value of the public accounts. Where statutory bodies have been concerned, the problems were even greater in many cases.

In relation to the new accounting methods, he says:

The need to report in that way is important but there is a need for a wider accountability in terms of the total resources under government control. The fact that state treasuries have introduced programmed budgeting is indicative of the forthcoming need for auditors and management to analyse transactions and operations outside the traditional financial framework.

The Auditor-General's office is the linchpin in the system of public accountability. The value of such an office lies in the fact that it is independent and on-site more often than other external reviewing bodies. The Auditor-General can therefore be seen as the first external checkpoint. It is part of the role of the Auditor-General to not only give an opinion on the financial position of the organisation but to act as an adviser to the parliament on public accountability issues and encourage improvement.

The requirement for annual reports to show all transactions affecting the respective organisation is another step in the process of accountability, as is including Commonwealth grants within the state budget.

I find that to be a most interesting comment when considering the Northern Territory's budget. Perhaps the most poignant section of his speech is contained some way through the document.

Where you look at the financial statements, particularly in the area of departmental commercial operations, there are marked variations in the quality of disclosure. In most cases, organisations are only too happy to demonstrate their ability to function effectively and economically. In others, the primary aim seems to be keeping outsiders as ignorant as is possible.

I would submit that 'others', in the Northern Territory context, includes almost every government department.

It goes on:

Despite meeting the minimum requirements set out in reports legislation, and I regard them as a minimum requirement, these organisations are not able to demonstrate satisfactory performance and therefore engage in innovative accounting practices to conceal their true picture.

I also suspect that applies to the bulk of the Northern Territory government's instrumentalities. It goes on:

What some enterprises regard as prudent commercial practices such as the establishment of substantial reserves, others would regard as a blatant attempt to withhold money. One of the consequences is that pricing policies may be completely distorted. Another is that there might be pressure placed on the ability of the government to raise revenue.

That is extremely important to the Northern Territory. If the Northern Territory does not pursue acceptable accounting practices, the cases that we pursue with the Commonwealth Grants Commission will be put seriously at risk. I would ask the Treasurer and his Chief Minister to consider that, not only for the sake of their own egos, but for the sake of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I will close by repeating what I said at the beginning. The Auditor-General has a responsibility to this Assembly which transcends the Treasurer's version of his role. He has a responsibility to this parliament and the people of the Northern Territory which transcends any government version of his role. One of the matters which he must assess is the internal controls within organisations. Every member of this House should be obliged to read the definition of internal control because it is extremely apposite. It is: 'the means adopted within a department (a) to safeguard its assets'. How can you safeguard assets if you do not even know what they are? How do you have the remotest possibility of safeguarding them? The definition continues, covering the checking of the accuracy and reliability of accounting data and the promotion of operational efficiency. That is something else I have spoken about in this House on previous occasions. How can you have efficiency unless you have some means of measuring the attainment of objectives? The definition also covers the encouragement of adherence to management policies. It would seem that the Treasurer has no management policies, so it is very difficult to understand how he could adhere to them. Finally, internal control should ensure compliance with legislative provisions.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I will not take much time in this debate other than to say that it saddens me to see the opposition bring on a debate on the Report of the Auditor-General in the full knowledge that the report is automatically referred to the Public Accounts Committee and in full knowledge that that committee would investigate any matters reported to the parliament by the Auditor-General and report back in due course. I am afraid that is a sign of the Leader of the Opposition's intelligence.

Mr Smith: The PAC does not take the place of parliament, Mick.

Mr PALMER: The keeping and reporting of public accounts has developed in the Westminster system over many years. The Auditor-General's observations are merely part of an evolutionary process. All he is doing is informing the government about how reporting and the keeping of public accounts has evolved in other places. The opposition refuses to recognise the evolutionary process which occurs in organisations such as the Trade Development Zone Authority. It wants it to make money from day 1. It refuses to recognise that the form of keeping and presenting the public accounts is continually evolving. It changes gradually from year to year. The government cannot be expected, nor can the public be expected, to accept and understand any radical departures in the method and form of keeping of our public accounts. There are good reasons why the public accounts are kept in their present form. One is so that consistency can be maintained with other governments in Australia, so that the Northern Territory government can present a case to the Grants Commission.

Mr Smith: You ought to read the Grants Commission report and see the problems it had.

Mr PALMER: The Leader of the Opposition should speak to Justice Else Mitchell.

There are good reasons for the public accounts being kept in their present form. One is so that they will be consistent from one year to the next. Any ad hoc departure from that will lead to confusion in comparing current performances with those of past years or past decades.

The honourable imbecile masquerading as ...

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

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I withdraw it.

The Leader of the Opposition has brought shame to this Assembly by using the otherwise constructive Report of the Auditor-General to make specific criticisms of officers of the Northern Territory Treasury, without regard to the good work they do and without regard to the spirit in which the Auditor-General submitted his report. Can this Assembly expect fearless and honest advice from its senior public servants when such advice is immediately debated in this Assembly, apparently without thought or comprehension? The Leader of the Opposition is no genius. He demonstrates that fact regularly in this parliament. I cannot see how, in the short time since that report has been presented to this parliament, the Leader of the Opposition could have been able to fully assess its implications and to acquaint himself with the way public accounts have evolved in other places. He is a 1-day expert who presents himself as an expert on all matters. The definition of expert is that 'ex' is 'former' and 'spert' is 'drip'.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude by saying that I find it rather sad that the opposition could not wait ...

Mr Smith: Is this the limit of your contribution?

Mr PALMER: It has to be the limit of my contribution, yes.

I find it rather sad that the opposition could not wait for the Public Accounts Committee to look at this report, talk to the Auditor-General and report back to parliament in due course on what actions the Public Accounts Committee - which the opposition insisted the government should set up - should take in light of the contents of the Auditor-General's report.

Let me close by saying that the opposition did not criticise one specific item contained in the Auditor-General's Report. Most of the Auditor-General's Report was taken up with reports on the various areas of government responsibility and the Auditor-General's notes. The opposition did not choose to criticise one area of that. It simply chose to criticise the government for not immediately implementing what represents a radical departure from normal methods of public accounts keeping. I support the amendment.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I am very sorry to see the amendment moved by the Treasurer because I think that it entails an insult to our Auditor-General and a slight upon this House and the legislation that it put in place to set up that office.

I believed that the government would accept the Leader of the Opposition's motion and that we would have a good discussion on the excellence of the Auditor-General's report. I thought that the House would unanimously endorse the motion and that the minister would implement the recommendations of the Auditor-General as a matter of course.

The member for Karama put forward the incredible argument that no action can be taken on this report until it has gone to the Public Accounts Committee to peruse, investigate and report on to this House. Of course the Public Accounts Committee will investigate the report. We will be investigating some fairly substantial items in there. There are a couple that I would like to highlight now and put on notice to the minister.

I will be trying to examine further the \$72 654 that was identified as money and property lost by departments during the year. I will investigate with even keener scrutiny references to money and property stolen during the year. An amount of \$60 473 has been identified in relation to stolen property and money. Those are matters that we will investigate, but I would hope that the implementation of the recommendations of the Auditor-General will not be held up while we complete our report, because I will be wanting to go to the departments which are the subject of recommendations to ask what they have done to implement them. If they have not implemented them, I will want to know why.

It is clear to me that the Treasurer's amendment seeks to water down existing legislation. He is attempting to put on record a resolution which will state that the government no longer has to take seriously the recommendations of the Auditor-General. It will only have to look at them and act on those it considers appropriate. The government wants to be able to say: 'The Auditor-General has made his report and the Assembly has accepted it. The acceptance includes the recommendations but we will not take any notice because we are not under the thumb of the Assembly. We will not take the recommendations seriously. We will only look at those which we think might be appropriate for us'.

The Auditor-General has gone to a great deal of effort to ensure that his report will be easily understood so that it will be easy for us to highlight problems in the government's accounting systems. He has come up with some recommendations which I would have expected the government to be moving on already because it undoubtedly had this report before the Assembly received it.

Mr Coulter: We had already implemented some of the things.

Mr EDE: That is excellent. I hope the government has implemented procedures to overcome its major problems with misallocation of expenditure items, because that happens time and time again. It is very difficult to find exactly where money has been spent because the present coding system allows moneys expended to be listed under the wrong expenditure head.

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 274. I believe that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is alluding to information that he has gained as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and which has not yet been reported on to this Assembly. I believe that is a breach of privilege.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I find it rather outrageous that the honourable member attempts to stop me by referring to the fact that the 10-digit coding

system used in Treasury has been mentioned in the PAC. I am sure that thousands of public servants would be able to talk about that without having the benefit of membership of the Public Accounts Committee. Information about Treasury's coding system is in the public arena and many thousands of public servants know of it. References to matters before the Public Accounts Committee are not sufficient to exclude those matters being debated here unless they are given to members in their capacity as members of the Public Accounts Committee. Ordinary citizens are aware of the coding system and that enables me to raise it in this Assembly.

Mr Coulter: You gained the knowledge through the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr EDE: No. Everybody knows about it. I set up a similar coding system myself. I can describe it in much more detail than has been put before the PAC.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! For the information of all honourable members, I will quote standing order 274, which pertains to evidence not reported: 'The evidence taken by, documents presented to, and proceedings and reports of a committee which has not been reported to the Assembly, shall not, unless authorised by the Assembly or the committee, be disclosed or published by any member of such committee or any other person'. I would remind the honourable member that, if he is in possession of some information which has been gained as a result of his membership of the PAC, he must not refer to it further.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the 10-digit code system which I am referring to was developed by the University of Virginia in the United States - which is new knowledge to the members of the Public Accounts Committee - as a means of tracing funds, departmental activity, responsibility and so on. The system first came to my knowledge about 6 years ago now when the University of Melbourne purchased it from the University of Virginia to run its accounting system which, at that stage, was one of the largest computerised accounting systems in Australia. At the time, I was developing a management information system for Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs and central Australia. I can assure honourable members that my knowledge of it considerably foredates my membership of this Assembly and certainly of the PAC.

The concept of the 10-digit coding system is hierarchical. You start from the left-hand side and work through, in alphanumerical sequence, a series of hierarchical codes which allow you to move from the general to the particular. For example, the first 2 digits may identify the department, the second 2 the fund, the third 2 the division, the fourth 2 the activity area and the fifth 2 the actual item.

It is extremely simple, within that system, to utilise one of 2 methods of ensuring that your coding - and hence your data collection - is accurate. You can either take your allocation to a high enough level of the organisation to be sure that the level of expertise and experience is such that the required accuracy is obtained or you can move further down to the area of direct responsibility, the activity level. You utilise pseudo-codes which simply take the 10-digit item and, by using an alpha prefix to take in the first 4 2-digit codes, you then identify the ...

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I wish to clarify the situation. Has a decision been taken in relation to the point of order that was raised because, if it has, I must have missed it.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes it has.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, having identified where the area is, it is quite simple to allow people to work simply within a 2-digit coding system which enables the required accuracy to be gained. Of course, you can also use an amalgam of the 2 approaches. Matters such as this can be assessed by the government and taken into account in overcoming the problems that the Auditor-General has identified.

As the Auditor-General has pointed out, in order to fulfil its obligations, the Assembly needs accurate and appropriately-presented accounts which show how funds have been expended. The information should also be in a form which can be used by the people responsible for the allocation of funds and their control in the public service. As I have said in this House before, if you do not have that, you do not have information. You simply have data which is not much use to anyone. For data to be transformed into information, it must be accessible and understandable which, in terms of members opposite, has considerable implications. Furthermore, it must be up-to-date and it must be accurate.

In this speech, I have addressed the issue of the accuracy of the financial information which is presented to us. The computer facilities we have should enable us to receive information quickly. It should be presented in a form which is easily digested by bodies such as the Public Accounts Committee, which the Auditor-General referred to specifically in relation to the formats he recommended. I would hope that the simplified form suggested by the Auditor-General would make it possible for even the Treasurer to understand the information, although I doubt it. I certainly hope that he has not failed to accept our motion because he would still find it impossible to understand the financial information of government, even in a simplified, more detailed and more accurate form. I hope that is not why he has moved this ridiculous amendment, which I reject.

Mr Coulter: You couldn't even go the distance.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I am speaking to the amendment. I do not think members opposite should talk about people going the distance after the rather disgraceful performance of the member for Karama. Not only is he the member for Karama, he is the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He should, if he is doing his job properly, have full knowledge of this particular area.

The Treasurer's amendment is a classic case of forgetting the message and shooting the messenger. Of course, that is the traditional way this government operates: when it gets news that it does not like, it attempts to cast aspersions on the abilities and competence of the people who bring the bad news.

In the light of this exercise, I particularly want to quote one paragraph of the Treasurer's written speech, and I thank him for the copy of his speech that he has provided. On page 3 the speech says:

It is unfortunate, even a little curious, that the Auditor-General's own report focuses upon the annual financial statements of a year earlier, and makes little if any reference to the changes that have been brought about in the form of those statements in the past year.

Mr Speaker, I think the Treasurer should seriously consider withdrawing that remark because it implies that the Auditor-General has not done his job, and that he has attempted to mislead this House by reporting on events that occurred, not in the 12 months leading up to 30 June 1987, but in the previous 12 months. If the Treasurer has evidence that that is true and refuses to withdraw the comment, he should be prepared to take disciplinary action against the Auditor-General, but he cannot ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition must withdraw that remark implying that the Treasurer is attempting to mislead the House. He must not make such an allegation or comment unless he seeks to do it by way of a substantive motion.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I think you may well have misunderstood me. What I suggested was that, if the Treasurer's comments were taken to be accurate, you would be left with no other conclusion than that the Auditor-General had misled the House - not that the Treasurer had misled the House.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition may continue. No withdrawal is required.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the allegation made by the Treasurer is very serious indeed. It reflects on the competence and the integrity of the Auditor-General and I would ask seriously that either he correct his statement or that he inform the House of what action he intends to take against the Auditor-General for presenting a report which purports to be what it is not. The matter is that serious and I would suggest to the Treasurer that he should seek advice in relation to it. It is a serious matter indeed.

To continue my comments on the amendment, of course the opposition rejects it. It is clear from the comments of the Treasurer that he has no serious intention of taking on board the more far-reaching comments made by the Auditor-General. The member for Nhulunbuy has demonstrated clearly that, in Australian terms, the Northern Territory has been left behind in its financial and accounting procedures. I do not think there is any doubt that we may be the most advanced in our computer applications but we have been left behind in our financial and accounting procedures.

It is equally clear from the Treasurer's comments that he has no intention of introducing any of the serious recommendations of the Auditor-General. It is clear that he continues to subscribe to the view held by members opposite that the Northern Territory Treasury is purely an extension of their own personal bank accounts and that they have no more accountability to the public of the Northern Territory for the expenditure of Territory funds than they have to the public of the Northern Territory for expenditure of their own personal funds. Unfortunately for them, that is not an attitude that will wash. It is not an attitude that has washed in the Northern Territory for the last 12 months to 2 years. The sooner the government comes to grips with that, and realises that it has an obligation to the people of the Territory to introduce changes to its financial and accounting procedures to bring them into line with those being used in the rest of Australia, the better off we will all be.

One of the Treasurer's defences for not instituting improved financial and accounting provisions which would better enable the government itself and the people of the Northern Territory to scrutinise the financial activities of the government was his statement - and I was so staggered by it that I wrote it down - that he was not prepared to provide us with any more information or to

accept the recommendations of the Auditor-General because he is 'unable to trust the motives of the people opposite'. He may not trust our motives. In fact, I would be surprised if he did trust our motives because that is the nature of government and opposition. The point is that he has an obligation that is higher than that. There are other obligations and considerations in the matter of accountability of government and the need for government to provide proper information. It goes far beyond the motives of the opposition and what use it might have for that information.

The prime responsibility that this government has is to provide proper and accurate financial information for its own purposes and, secondly and equally importantly, to enable a thorough scrutiny of that financial information and the course of government by people in the Northern Territory and outside if necessary, irrespective of their motives. Whether they want to bring down the government or to entrench it for the next 20 to 30 years is irrelevant. The government has an overall commitment to provide that information to enable those assessments to be made, and that is where the government has fallen down. It has not been prepared to consider that overriding commitment, to take it on board and to come up with a system that will provide people with the information that they need and deserve according not only to us but also to the Auditor-General, judging by his reports in 1986 and 1987.

Mr Speaker, as part of his justification of the stance that he has taken on this particular issue, the Treasurer said that we have public servants who are doing a good job and we have nothing to worry about. I have no problems with the competence of public servants in the Northern Territory. The problem is not the public servants in this case; the problem is the direction or, more accurately, the lack of direction given to public servants about the keeping and the maintaining of government financial and accounting records. That is what the Auditor-General is saying. He is not saying that the public servants are not doing the legal job required. What he is saying is that the government is not requiring the necessary standard of information that would enable it to make proper decisions and would enable it to be properly accountable. You cannot blame public servants for that. It is not their fault; it is the fault of this government for not putting the guidelines in place and not recognising the need to do that on behalf of everybody in the Territory, itself included.

To put it colloquially, the Auditor-General is saying that the law is an ass in the area of financial accounting. If necessary, the laws need changing so that we can have a responsible system of financial and accounting practices which will enable the government to know where it is going and so that the people of the Northern Territory will be able to scrutinise that. Until we have that, we will not have any improvement in the government's accounting system. That is why we oppose the amendment. It is an easy cop-out for members opposite. They will go away from here and nothing will happen because they are under no requirement to do anything about it.

Mr Coulter: The Public Accounts Committee is going to look at it.

Mr SMITH: Again, I point out to the Treasurer that the Public Accounts Committee has a very valuable role to play. It is a role that complements that of this Legislative Assembly. It certainly does not take over the role of the Legislative Assembly on this or any other issue.

Mr Coulter: I have a dictionary for you to look at in a few minutes.

Mr SMITH: You might like to use it to help you put together the terms of an apology so you can get yourself out of the mess you have put yourself in.

Mr Speaker, we oppose the amendment because it provides a cop-out for the government and an opportunity for it to continue to do nothing about this very important issue. It is necessary for the government to commit itself to pulling together its financial and accounting practices and to presenting them in a form which is satisfactory to the Auditor-General.

Under our legislation, as the member for Nhulunbuy pointed out very clearly, the Auditor-General has the obligation and the duty to inspect and report, in a manner that suits him, on the government's financial and accounting practices. He has said that those practices are not satisfactory. The government, in the view of this opposition, has no choice but to act on its obligation and to put into effect as quickly as possible the recommendations of the Auditor-General.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by going back to where I started. I would ask the Treasurer to think seriously about the comments he made on page 3 of his written speech and to make an apology to the Auditor-General in this House or give an explanation of the action that he intends to take against the Auditor-General for allegedly attempting to confuse this House and for not doing his job properly.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16	Noes 4
Mr Collins	Mr Ede
Mr Coulter	Mr Leo
Mr Dale	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Dondas	Mr Smith
Mr Finch	
Mr Firmin	
Mr Hanrahan	
Mr Harris	
Mr Hatton	
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mr Palmer	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	
Mr Vale	

Amendment agreed to

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Law and Justice Implementation Review Committee

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

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

21B LAW AND JUSTICE IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

- (1) A standing committee to be called the Standing Committee on Law and Justice Implementation Review to consist of 5 members shall be appointed at the commencement of each Assembly.
- (2) The duties of the committee shall be:
 - (a) to examine the implementation and relevance of existing law within the Northern Territory in its application to the residents of the Northern Territory;
 - (b) to report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the justice system in the Northern Territory which the committee considers appropriate and advisable;
 - (c) to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter which affects or may affect the implementation of law and justice which is referred to it:
 - (i) by resolution of the Assembly; or
 - (ii) by the Administrator or a minister.
- (3) The committee shall take care not to inquire into any matters which are being examined by a select committee of the Assembly especially appointed to inquire into such matters and any question arising in connection therefrom that may be referred to the Assembly for determination.
- (4) The committee shall elect a government member as Chairman.
- (5) The chairman of the committee may, from time to time, appoint a member of the committee to be the deputy chairman of the committee and the member so appointed shall act as chairman of the committee at any time when there is no chairman or when the chairman is not present at a meeting of the committee.
- (6) In the event of an equality of voting, the chairman, or the deputy chairman when acting as chairman, shall have a casting vote.
- (7) The committee shall have power to appoint subcommittees and to refer to any such subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.
- (8) Three members of the committee shall constitute a quorum of the committee and 2 members of a subcommittee shall constitute a quorum of the subcommittee.
- (9) The committee or any subcommittee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records, to adjourn from place to place, to meet and transact business in public or private session and to sit during any adjournment of the Assembly.

- (10) The committee shall be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it and, unless otherwise ordered by the committee, a daily Hansard shall be published of such proceedings of the committee as take place in public.
 - (11) The committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that all members have not been appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy.
 - (12) The committee shall report annually and shall have leave to report from time to time and to report its proceedings and evidence taken; and any member of the committee shall have power to add a protest or dissent to any report.
 - (13) Unless otherwise ordered by the committee, all documents received by the committee during its inquiry shall remain in the custody of the Assembly: provided that, on the application of a department or person, any document, if not likely to be further required may, in the Speaker's discretion, be returned to the department or person from whom it was obtained.
 - (14) The committee shall be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and shall be empowered, with the approval of the Speaker, to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee.
 - (15) The foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.
2. that, unless otherwise ordered, the committee consist of 3 members nominated by the Chief Minister and 2 members nominated by the opposition.

Mr Speaker, I have considered for some considerable time that there is a real need for such a committee of the Legislative Assembly. We live in a very diverse community; nobody could imagine one more diverse. We have extremes in cultural influence within our community and the impact of those extremes is all too readily witnessed by the various problems that we have within our penal institutions. Despite the commendable efforts of the government and the minister, those problems continue to multiply. I do not believe that it is enough that a committee of the Department of Law or a committee of some bureaucratic body examines these very pressing matters. It requires the full authority of a committee of this House.

Mr Speaker, on the basis of my knowledge of my electorate, I believe that the diversity within our community is probably growing. The most significant minority group in our population, the Aboriginal community, is increasing. Its exposure to the influence of western law is increasing each year and each year it is increasingly affected by the application of the laws that we pass in this Legislative Assembly. Unless we can make the application of those laws relevant to the lives of those people, it is my belief that we will create gulfs and divisions within our community that will be extremely difficult to overcome within another generation.

I believe that this committee could look at the future implications of a continuation of present approaches to implementation of the law in the

Northern Territory and how those implications might affect our children and grandchildren. I think that there is a wonderful future ahead for the Northern Territory if it can demonstrate to Australia and the world that people of diverse cultures can live harmoniously within the boundaries of a single state or legislature.

However, that will not be achieved if we do not take into account the appropriateness of the laws that we pass here and their effects on the lives of that significant minority of the Northern Territory's population. Unless we address this matter with a sense of real concern and a sense of real urgency, the converse of what I have described may happen. If the gulf between our cultures widens, the Northern Territory will face an extremely bleak future. It behoves this Assembly, as the law-making instrumentality of the Northern Territory, to pursue all means to ensure that the laws which we pass are relevant, understood and accepted by the significant minority group in the Northern Territory's population.

The relevance and application of the Territory's laws to other groups in the community should also be examined. For instance, the Commonwealth and various state legislatures have passed equal opportunity legislation. They have passed anti-discrimination legislation to ensure that persons and minority groups - irrespective of place of birth, sex, colour or creed - are recognised within the laws of those various legislatures. That concern has been shown in this matter in other parts of Australia. I believe that it is appropriate, because of the extremely diverse nature of the Northern Territory community, that this Assembly undertake a critical examination of our society, its likely future and ways in which we can correct what we perceive may be the potentially damaging effects of legislation upon people so that we can create laws which help to erode the divisions within our community.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate that the recent Commonwealth census has indicated that the Aboriginal population is stable or marginally on the decline. I do not believe that the national census, particularly in rural Aboriginal communities, was very accurate. That is not the fault of the persons conducting the census. I know several people who have no knowledge of the census having been conducted at all. It is extremely difficult to count accurately the Aboriginal population in rural parts of the Northern Territory, certainly in remote locations and the very isolated parts of Arnhem Land. I do not believe that the census was very accurate. Even if it was, we are talking about 25% of our population. There is no indication that that population is shrinking.

Aboriginal people are not going simply to die or go away. In the future, as now, that 25% will be demanding a greater place within the broad Australian and Northern Territory communities. Some people will blame the Aboriginal people for their situation. It is all very well to say that it is up to the Aboriginal people to go out and get jobs or to become educated. An orgy of blaming, however, will do no more than create greater gulfs between the races. If that gulf widens, the racial disharmony which already exists in some communities will certainly increase rather than decrease. That does not augur well for our future.

I look forward to the comments of the Attorney-General. I do appreciate that the government may not accept this motion because perhaps it has not had sufficient warning of it and may require further time to investigate it. Mr Speaker, I would be more than pleased to accept the adjournment of debate on this motion today, in order to allow for further investigation by government members. If government members are at all concerned about some

aspects of this motion, I would urge them to express their concerns but not to throw the baby out with the bath water. If they need to have further time to examine the motion and contemplate amendments which they feel may need to be pursued, I would be more than enthusiastic to see them do so, because we are talking about the future of the Northern Territory here. I would accommodate almost any amendment that the government proposed to this motion. I believe, however, that unless we make a serious undertaking on this matter in the not-too-distant future, we will be discussing extremely grave events in this Assembly, events which we have the opportunity to prevent.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wondered what the member for Nhulunbuy's motion was about. After listening to his speech in support of the motion, I still have great trouble understanding what he is trying to get at.

I think it is pretty appalling that the opposition puts forward such motions when the Northern Territory faces so many serious problems. These include transport, railway developments, the airport and its effect on tourism, and the land rights situation, which is a cause of dissension and needs to be remedied in terms of uranium mining and the great opportunities which exist for development, jobs and wealth. We have problems in education, where the federal government refuses to acknowledge our university. The Commonwealth also fails to recognise our special problems in Aboriginal housing, education and health and refuses to provide the special funding we need to improve them. We have thousands of miles of roads which need to be upgraded. The fringe benefits tax has forced 1% of the population to pay about \$40m whilst 40% of the population pay \$8m. The airlines are holding Territorians to ransom and it is cheaper ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! We have listened with some patience to the minister, hoping that he would start to address the motion. He has not done so. The motion deals with a specific issue and I would ask that you rule that he address himself to it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. However, I would ask the Attorney-General to confine his remarks to the motion at hand.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, what I am driving at is that we have many serious problems facing us and I could go on describing them for some time. I listed a few of them in order to point out the sort of matters which could be addressed by the opposition on this General Business Day. Instead, we get a motion that takes the member for Nhulunbuy 5 minutes to read out and means absolutely nothing. It has no substance and does not relate to anything that is occurring in the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I tried to follow what the honourable member was talking about and, believe you me, I had great trouble. I think he was trying to say, first of all, that we have tremendous problems with our prison system in our diverse society. We do have a diverse society. It includes about 60 nationalities and Aboriginal people comprise the largest minority group. The member expressed concern about the terrible problems in our penal system.

A series of programs has recently been screened on ABC television. Those programs depicted the problems in the penal system. We saw cells with 3 people jammed into them. We saw places where people were kept in their cells for 16 hours a day. We saw the sort of problems that exist in southern prisons. What did we see occurring in the Northern Territory? We saw 1 prisoner to a cell and innovative programs like home detention and community

service orders, which are leading the country. We are so far in front it is not funny but, instead of acknowledging that, the member for Nhulunbuy talks about terrible penal problems. He did not tell us what they were, mind you. Obviously he does not know. Perhaps one of his colleagues will identify 1 or 2 of the problems that this so-called law and justice review committee is to solve. I cannot think of any problems and I cannot imagine how such a committee could solve them.

He made some other suggestions. He said that the parliament could look at the problem, take this minority into account and ensure that legislation passed here caters for it. Five of the members opposite and a couple of members on this side represent electorates which have predominately Aboriginal populations. Surely, the contribution by those members in debate on laws in the Territory should reflect the views of their constituents or, if they do not, those constituents will get rid of them. But the member for Nhulunbuy suggests that we should take those law-making processes out of the parliament, the law-making body, and give them to a backroom committee, simply because Aboriginals are involved and they have to be treated differently.

Mr Speaker, in the Northern Territory, Aboriginals are treated in exactly the same way as any other people. We have anti-discrimination legislation in this country and we have equal opportunity legislation. People are treated equally and there is nothing which would support the suggestion that any person ...

Mr Ede: We do not have equal opportunity legislation here.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I will answer that. The member for Stuart obviously believes that the Northern Territory is not part of Australia. Well, I have news for him. The Northern Territory is part of Australia and equal opportunity legislation in this country covers Territorians just as it covers anyone else. No person in the Northern Territory can suffer because of a lack of such specific legislation here.

Does the member for Nhulunbuy know about what is happening in his electorate? Does he know about what is happening in terms of court processes at Yirrkala, where we are now introducing the community justice system which has been operating very successfully at Elcho Island? Hopefully, we might hear a contribution from the member for Arnhem about the success of that particular innovative program, which takes into account the problems of justice in predominantly Aboriginal communities. I hope the member for Nhulunbuy will go along and take notice. That program allows the elders and the male leaders of the community to assist the magistrate in the hearing of cases and in determining sentencing options. They ensure that appropriate family members are available to the magistrate in the court so that the whole court procedure involves Aboriginals in the administration of justice in the community. It is only the second place in Australia where this is occurring. The first was Elcho Island. It is an innovation that we should be proud of and the member for Nhulunbuy should stand up and support it, rather than saying that we need some special committee to solve a problem.

He has not brought one specific problem, nor one specific law, to this Assembly's notice and I simply do not know what he is trying to suggest. Maybe he is trying to suggest that we should have traditional law in this Legislative Assembly, that we should encode it. Maybe we should have traditional drivers' licences; perhaps we should split our laws and have one law for black and one for white. I think that is a retrograde step but I cannot see that he is suggesting anything else. I think that the member for

Nhulunbuy and any member of the opposition that supports this particular thrust should hang his head in shame, because it suggests that Aboriginal people are different to European people. The motion infers that Aboriginal people must be treated differently with separate laws, separate procedures and separate criminal justice provisions.

For the information of the member for Nhulunbuy, we have a situation in this country where the Australian Law Reform Commission has made a report on customary law. The member for Nhulunbuy should take note that many of the commission's recommendations follow initiatives already taken in the Northern Territory. These include, for example, the recognition of tribal marriages, the custody and welfare of children, fishing rights, rules for gathering evidence - including the Anunga Rules, where we lead the rest of the country - certain defences under criminal law, the reduction of murder charges to manslaughter under certain circumstances, and so on. Many other recommendations will be coming up for consideration in December at the next meeting of Aboriginal Affairs Ministers.

The Territory leads the rest of the country. We are the innovators. The rest of the country is taking notice of us and the Australian Law Reform Commission is taking notice of us. At the same time, the member for Nhulunbuy cannot give us one example of a law that is causing problems or one example of a problem in the penal system which justifies the creation of a special law and justice implementation review committee.

Mr Speaker, what does Pettifer say about the role of committees?

The principal purpose of parliamentary committees is to perform functions for which the Houses themselves are not well fitted to perform, that is, finding out the facts of a case, examining witnesses, sifting evidence, and drawing reasoned conclusions.

Mr Speaker, in terms of the application of traditional law, this Assembly has the most innovative legislation in the country. In our court methods and our approach to criminal justice, we are being followed by the rest of the world. Yet the member for Nhulunbuy wants us to form a special review committee. Not only does he have his head in the sand, he does not even know what is happening in his own electorate. He should be proud of the innovative steps that are being taken and he should talk to the old men at Yirrkala and see what is going on. Instead, we hear this diatribe about something being amiss. He gives us not a single concrete example, nor is he able to show us where existing procedures fail to take into account any potential problems caused by different customs or traditions. He fails to show that we are not handling problems or that we are not aiming to do so in the future. He totally ignored the fact that our penal system leads the country and that we are making further changes in relation to correctional services.

There are so many issues which the opposition could raise for discussion in this Assembly as matters of public importance, issues which present real problems like some of those I mentioned at the start of my speech. Instead, the opposition creates a beat-up based on nothing. We have the best court system in Australia, and it wants to set up a review committee. We have the shortest waiting times. We have courts available in all centres. We have special innovations, like the Aboriginal Community Justice Project. We have the best prison system in the country, with 1 cell per person, home detention, and community service orders. We have the best, most honest and well-trained police force in the country. We have the best criminal code in the country. We have the highest representation of the Aboriginal population in parliament

and we even have 2 Aboriginal members. We can process legislation relating to traditional Aborigines better than any other parliament in this country. Nevertheless, the member for Nhulunbuy proposed a committee that does not exist in any other parliament. The opposition member wasted this Assembly's time with his diatribe when we have so many important matters to cover. If he thinks there are any problems in relation to the application of the law, he should have had the decency to give at least 1 example. He could not do that. He has shamed both himself and the opposition and wasted the time of this House.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel constrained to make a few comments following that outburst from the Attorney-General. I rise to lend weight to the comments made by the member for Nhulunbuy in respect of his proposal for a committee of the Assembly. At the outset, I would refer the Attorney-General to the essentially bipartisan debate that was held in this Assembly on Wednesday 10 June on the resolution that the Assembly should work towards the development of an appropriate relationship between Aboriginal customary law and the current justice system in the Northern Territory. Some of the issues that have been canvassed by my colleague and which are implicit in this motion are cognate with that particular debate, in which both sides of the House recognised that the Northern Territory government deserves credit for many initiatives. After the rather uncharacteristic outpourings of the Attorney-General, this debate needs to be put into perspective.

Given that Aboriginal people in the Territory constitute such a large proportion of the population, we have a special responsibility. This is intended in no way to detract from the efforts that the government has initiated. The Attorney-General referred in the June debate to the Anunga Rules, which he prefers to call the Forster Rules. There was discussion of a specific case at Ali Curung where there was discontinuity between some Aboriginal expectations and the expectations of the Australian justice system. I believe it is quite appropriate that such matters be debated.

Equally, I believe that it is appropriate that a select committee of this sort be set up because Aboriginal people in the Territory comprise such a large group. This motion has not been put forward in an attempt to make life difficult for the Northern Territory government. Like the motion put forward during the previous General Business Day, its intention is constructive. I was disappointed to hear the Attorney-General respond as he did on the government's behalf. I would refer the Attorney-General and government members to comments made by the Attorney-General in that previous debate in relation to the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on Aboriginal customary law, which provided much of the substance of my contribution on that particular day. The Attorney-General had this to say:

This particular report that the honourable member referred to is being looked at by various government departments and will be commented on. Also it will be raised for discussion at a meeting of interstate ministers responsible for Aboriginal issues and the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General will look at various aspects of the report. I think it is important to realise that the majority of the recommendations in the report are actually carried out in practice in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the Territory is in a different position from the states in this regard. I think the state with the next highest Aboriginal population, expressed as a percentage of total population, is Western Australia. There, Aboriginal people make up between 2.5% and 3% of the population. The

Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory comprises between 25% and 30% of the total, a percentage which is 10 times that of Western Australia. Those figures are a clear indication of our greater responsibility in relation to these issues.

Members are aware that recently the federal government set up a royal commission to inquire into Aboriginal deaths in custody, which is an issue of great concern to Aboriginal people throughout the country. I do not need to reiterate the statistics of huge imprisonment and homicide rates which have been the subject of my comments to this Assembly on countless occasions. We cannot walk by on the other side of the road; we in this legislature have particular responsibilities. The proposal of the member for Nhulunbuy is essentially a very positive one. I find it very disappointing that the Attorney-General responded in the terms he did.

After almost 10 years of self-government, the Aboriginal people are no better integrated into the economy of the Northern Territory. In terms of the justice system also, they are not integrated to an extent that we can sit back and say that nothing more needs to be done. For that reason, I believe that the proposal that this committee be formed is positive.

The Attorney-General seemed to take the proposal in far too partisan a fashion. I do not believe that anything the member for Nhulunbuy said suggested that the Northern Territory government had done nothing or that the Northern Territory government had not done things that provided an example for law-makers elsewhere in the country. I suggest that it is appropriate to set up a committee of the type proposed, in order to draw together experience and expertise in the Territory so that we can make a contribution not only to solving our own problems but to ensuring that the measures we take are an example to other parts of the country. It is not too late. I believe it would be appropriate, as my colleague the member for Nhulunbuy suggested, for a government member to adjourn this motion after the members who wish to contribute to the debate today have done so. This would allow it to be given more mature consideration. With those few words, I commend the motion.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am certainly disappointed that there appear to be no other members of the government with sufficient interest in the relevance of existing law and our judicial system to contribute to this debate. It is amazing that nobody else has been prepared to speak. Perhaps, however, if we give members opposite a few more facts to sit down and cogitate upon, they may be able to stir up enough interest in our system of justice and our laws to contribute at a later stage.

The Attorney-General's remarks were disappointing to say the least. The narrowness of his horizons continues to amaze me. He cannot lift his gaze enough to develop any vision and breadth of view. In the face of any constructive or positive suggestion put forward by this side of the House, he retreats into his shell like a hermit crab. He goes into hiding and erects the protective walls which come in the form of materials provided by his staff. He read out a great litany of problems and achievements. After citing 2 or 3 developments in 2 or 3 communities, he went on to boast: 'We are leading Australia'. Before long we have left Australia behind and 'we are leading the world!' It is quite incredible stuff.

Either he has no confidence whatsoever in what he is saying or he is unable to lift his horizons far enough to imagine how we could create a Territory which would be something that we could all be proud of. All he does is knock, knock, knock. It is becoming extremely boring and repetitive. It

is sorrowful and pathetic. It is a small man in a big job, unable to grasp the opportunity that he has been given to contribute to the growth of the Territory and to actually make his mark. It is a shame that history will write him off as an ignorant and pathetic little man who had his opportunity and did not take it.

He does not understand the situation in the Northern Territory. He rambled on about equal employment opportunity legislation. His argument was that it is federal legislation which applies in the Territory and that therefore there were no equal opportunity problems here. He does not even realise that it does not apply in the Northern Territory public service, the major employer in the Northern Territory. He is the Attorney-General. He is also in charge of one of the largest departments, the Department of Education. Equal opportunity does not apply in the Northern Territory Teaching Service either. He has displayed incredible ignorance, yet he stands up and pontificates about how we lead the world. He does not know where he is starting from and does not know where he stands.

Nothing in the motion refers to a law-making power. I would ask the minister to look at it again and tell me which provision even remotely refers to the law-making power. However, that is what he said. He said that the Assembly would be giving its law-making power to a committee. What absolute nonsense! He should take the opportunity to read motions before he discusses them. We know he does not research his remarks. He has a fixed speech which he reads out, ad-libbing occasionally. He should read the motion to make sure that he is actually debating the right one. On this occasion, he seems to be referring to a motion that was brought forward 6 months ago.

Let us look at the provisions of the motion. Paragraph (2)(a) says that the proposed committee shall 'examine the implementation and relevance of existing law within the Northern Territory in its application to the residents of the Northern Territory'. Let us have a look at existing laws and their implementation. I recall a report that came out of the United States not long after the prohibition legislation was repealed there. The report stated that the commonly-held view that prohibition was impossible to enforce was not correct. Resources were available but the will was lacking. There was not sufficient will to enforce the legislation. There are similar situations in the Northern Territory, where legislation is not enforced. In raising them, I note that some of this legislation is particularly difficult to police. My comments are directed at the law rather than the policing of it, because policing is not always the way to make a law work.

If legislation is faulty in some way, 1000 police can try to enforce it without making it effective. If legislation is rejected generally by the community, there will be problems - even if you have 5000 police. You have to work with people, not against them. We have some legislation which is not generally accepted and we have encountered problems in enforcing it. That is the type of matter which would be addressed by the committee.

Drink-driving legislation is an example. The problem is rife. We have laws which prohibit drink-driving. The minister keeps increasing penalties and lowering alcohol levels. He puts more and more legislation through this Assembly and everybody says, 'Hooray, the problem will stop'. It does not stop. It gets worse. We have had 6 deaths on our roads in the last 5 days. We are passing more and more laws but the problem lies with the implementation of those laws.

Unsafe vehicles are another example. They contribute mightily to our road toll, as the minister for Transport and Works is always saying. We have laws against unsafe vehicles. We have so many laws that they are coming out of our ears. We sit back and pass these laws, thinking that we have done our duty. We have not finished the job until the legislation is implemented, which is not happening. Are more police the answer? We cannot afford to have more and more police to implement our laws. We need to start looking at the reasons why these problems are rife in the Northern Territory and why laws which work reasonably well in other parts of Australia do not work here.

I would have hoped that the collective wisdom of 25 members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, after discussing the issues and obtaining information from other parts of Australia or overseas, could create some solutions for these problems of implementation.

The bush is not the only place where these problems exist; there are also problems in the towns. What about the amount of under-age drinking? Can any member honestly tell me that the laws about that are effectively implemented? If they try to, they will be rightly accused of walking around blindfold or living with their heads in the sand. The problem is rife. If any member walks into one of the numerous drinking holes around this town or in Alice Springs, the amount of under-age drinking will be quite obvious. There are kids there who are 14 and 15 years old. That problem is a perfect example of one to which legislation applies, but is not implemented.

Mr Dale: What do you mean by implemented? Are you saying that we should pick up every single offender?

Mr EDE: No, but the problem is now absolutely rife. If the minister or his staff did their job and talked to 15 and 16-year olds - which the minister might have some problem doing because when they looked at his face they might have some difficulty talking back - they would realise that under-age drinking has reached endemic proportions in our community. It is unfortunate that the Minister for Health and Community Services, that paragon, the minister responsible for child welfare, does not realise just how bad the under-age drinking problem is in our Northern Territory.

Laws have been passed also in relation to violence against women. They, too, are not being implemented.

Mr Dale: What about speeding? We do not catch every person who drives at speeds in excess of 70 km an hour.

Mr EDE: The minister should keep his mouth closed for 5 minutes and engage his mind for 2 or 3 minutes. I know that is the limit of his mental ability; he is not for the long run, being better fitted to racing around his chair. If he would just close his mouth, listen and engage his mind, he may understand what we are talking about.

The issue of the implementation of legislation requires this House to examine why, in the context of more and more draconian legislation and a large, very efficient and well-equipped police force, laws are continually being abused to a greater and greater extent, so that we have an imprisonment rate which is 6 times the national average. Why is this happening? It is obvious that there are problems with implementation.

Another matter which needs to be looked at is the relevance of existing laws within the Northern Territory. There are many laws which, despite having

been very appropriate to one time and place, are not appropriate to another time or place. A law must be relevant to the cultural norms of the community. If it is, it gains acceptance. If it is not, and it is the will of the Assembly that it be enforced - and the comments we have just heard cause me some concern on that point - means have to be found to enforce it. There are people who will obey a law simply because it is a law and others who will obey it because they fear the consequences of breaching it. However, there are others who will look at a law and say that it is a stupid and has no relevance to them or their associates. They will only obey that law if it is enforced.

Mr Manzie: That would be you, wouldn't it? I know your sort.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I think that remark is fairly unparliamentary and the Attorney-General may wish to apologise for it later. If you wish to allow it, Mr Speaker, that is your prerogative.

Mr Speaker, this House has a Public Accounts Committee, something that this opposition fought long and hard for. Notwithstanding the fact that we have an Auditor-General, we set up that committee to ensure that money allocated for expenditure by this House was disbursed in the way in which it was intended that it be. That committee was set up to monitor the way in which money is spent and to report back to this House. But who watches the laws that we pass? Who does for law enforcement the task that the Public Accounts Committee does for public expenditure? It is not the Ombudsman. He does not carry out that function; he only acts when there is an instance of abuse of the law or a complaint. He does not watch the overall function of the law, its implementation and the way that the system is working.

The government's attitude is quite amazing when we consider that it has a backbench committee which indicates that it has seen the need, at least in part, for a committee of this nature. As I understand it, that particular committee goes through the laws of the Northern Territory and makes recommendations about any legislation which should be repealed because it is out of date. That, of course, is only part of the problem in relation to the relevance of legislation in the Northern Territory. The committee proposed by the member for Nhulunbuy could be taking that matter further to the benefit of the Northern Territory.

Who goes out along the highways and byways with the authority and prestige of this House, to talk to people and find out about their attitudes to the laws which are being abused? Who goes out with the power of a committee of this House to get the experts, to summon the witnesses, and to report to this House so that, hopefully, we will start to implement the laws that we pass? It may be that, on the basis of such reports, we will decide to amend legislation so that it is more in tune with community attitudes. We may decide that there are alternative means at our disposal in terms of ensuring the implementation of the law.

Members opposite should think for a while about where the institutions of our society come from. They are not conferred upon us from on high, out of the blue. Those institutions, as they relate to the Anglo-Saxon majority group in the Northern Territory, are the result of thousands of years of evolution and development. They have evolved over that period of time, continually changing in response to the pressures that came to bear upon them. They have survived because of their degree of relevance to the culture which created them.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is terribly difficult to get excited about this motion. Unlike the member for Stuart, I have no intention of getting red in the face. Even with an open mind, it is difficult to grasp just what this motion is all about. The opposition put it together only 2 days ago. It suddenly dawned on members opposite that they did not have a very full program for the General Business Day. They had to get something together so that their leader could go on radio this morning and declare this would be the busiest day for the parliament this year. One would have thought that they might have raised matters which were more pressing for the Northern Territory.

It is not for me, I suppose, to despair at the ineffectiveness of Her Majesty's Opposition. However, it is another illustration of my bipartisan approach when I offer members opposite a very constructive suggestion. Before they are further embarrassed, they should seek the approval of this Assembly to withdraw their motion and undertake some real homework to determine exactly what the perceived problem is. If any problem exists, they should address it and make an effective and positive contribution on the next General Business Day. The Leader of the Opposition said this would be the busiest day of the year, but the opposition is busy doing absolutely nothing and going nowhere. It is a sad fact that this Assembly's time has been wasted today.

I will try to reflect a little on the specific points in the motion. The idea of forming a committee needs to be examined. What effect would such a committee have? What would such a committee achieve that this parliament itself cannot achieve? If there are problems with the implementation of the law, we have yet to hear of one single example. The member for Stuart reflected on what he perceived as being the ineffectiveness of road traffic laws. He also reflected on drink-related laws. Quite simply, he is miles off the track.

I ask him to contemplate where we would be without those traffic laws and without the effective program that this government has put in place. Next week, I shall do him the courtesy of outlining where we have been effective in terms of safety, specifically in respect of Aboriginal people. The only thread of commonality between the 3 speakers opposite seemed to be, if I perceived it correctly, concern at some discrimination on the grounds of race or sex.

All of our laws, including our traffic laws, take special consideration of Aboriginal people as part of the community. The member for Stuart was reflecting on the fatalities in the last 5 days. People travelling in the rear of utilities is a classic example. This government has deliberated positively on the effects of legislation pertaining to Aboriginal people travelling in the backs of utilities.

Mr Ede: You have been doing it for 8 years.

Mr FINCH: It is very embarrassing to hear the member for Stuart lead with his chin again.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will remind members of standing order 239. Some are sailing very close to the wind. The standing order refers to the persistent and wilful obstruction of the business of the Assembly. The Minister for Transport and Works will be heard in silence.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I have heard a great number of interjections, I have yet to hear one which is constructive. I would welcome some constructive comment from honourable members opposite.

Let me reflect on the traffic laws as they pertain to carriage of people in the back of utilities. It is very disappointing that the member for Stuart led with his chin again. His leadership aspirations have been temporarily disrupted. The new Traffic Act was passed at the last sittings. Was he absent then? We enacted requirements for people travelling in the backs of utilities: they have to be properly seated, they cannot hang over the side and the sideboards have to be of a minimum height. Those sorts of provisions will contribute to solving the problem which he highlighted. The reason we did not prohibit people from travelling in the backs of utilities was quite simple. It was our very genuine desire to ensure that Aboriginal people were not disadvantaged through the removal of what, in many cases, is their only means of transport. Does the member for Stuart not understand that? I mention it only as a very simple example of how this government takes Aboriginal matters into account in its law-making and regulatory processes.

This government has many other means of ensuring that the law is properly enforced in Aboriginal communities, particularly in relation to road safety. For a couple of years we have been using videos to educate people about laws pertaining to road safety. I do not want to digress too much now because members of the opposition will have the opportunity next week to hear about these measures in detail.

The member for Nhulunbuy said that bureaucratic bodies are not the most appropriate organisations to review the implementation of laws. If there is a more classic example of a bureaucratic body than the proposed committee I have not seen or heard of it. No member of this House comes from a legal background. If members opposite think members of this House could comprise a group with legal expertise, they are badly mistaken. The proposed committee would need so much technical and departmental support that it would set up another bureaucratic process.

The most effective means of reviewing legislation and assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of laws are obvious. It can be accomplished through the activities of this House, through representations to members and through lobby groups. Many such groups exist to look after the interests of Aboriginal people who, in terms of this motion, seem to be the main concern of members opposite.

Lawyers would be the most appropriate people to support such a committee. We all realise that their services do not come cheaply and, to be quite frank, they are not easy to find in this town at present. I would be astounded if we could find appropriate support for this committee at a reasonable cost. I have been trying to stretch my imagination to understand what this motion is all about. Perhaps it is all about entertaining the half dozen or so Labor lawyers who ran for the ALP so unsuccessfully in the last Territory election. The left-oriented Labor lawyers who put themselves up as candidates are probably thinking that this motion may be a good springboard to get into politics next time around. The only way they will do that is by pursuing one of the seats already occupied by members opposite. I can quite confidently assure members opposite that none of the candidates who stood for the ALP in the northern suburbs in the last election stand any chance of being elected next time, regardless of any pseudo-training they might receive behind the scenes by running around assisting members of the opposition in some sort of mickey mouse committee.

As the Attorney-General pointed out, the basic purpose of any committee of this or any other parliament is to perform functions. It is not to perform duties for and on the behalf of this House. Paragraph (2) of the motion raises the new concept of committees performing duties. Members of the Opposition, Aboriginal communities and any other group which might be concerned about specific matters - and I am yet to hear of any in this context - have opportunities to ensure that those matters are raised in this House in MPis, grievance debates, debates on specific motions or through the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee whose function is bipartisan. Those members opposite who have taken the trouble to be involved in the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee would know that there have been instances in which that committee has protected the rights of individuals. These instances have involved Aborigines in some cases, and also females, specific people living in certain suburbs and so on. That is a meaningful function. The necessary review process exists already.

The opposition directed some flak at the government backbench Statute Law Review Committee. Quite frankly, that committee has been extremely effective. The backbench of the CLP has got its teeth into some terribly obsolete legislation, some of it dating back to the last century. I doubt very much that the cumbersome committee proposed in the opposition's motion could achieve anything like that.

This government is about getting on with the job and it is a pity that today has been absolutely wasted. The Leader of the Opposition said on radio this morning that this would be a busy day and that the people of the Northern Territory would see the alternative government in action. They have seen it all right. It is no wonder that the media take no interest in General Business Day. It is no wonder that there was nobody in the gallery. Obviously, the school children got the message that it is General Business Day.

There seems to be some suggestion that the rights and entitlements of Aboriginal people are disregarded and that they need some special help with the law. Could I suggest, and I doubt whether there is anyone here who would disagree with me, that Aboriginal people are just like any other race of people. They understand and generally live by basic rules of civilised behaviour. I doubt very much whether any member of the opposition would disagree with that basic observation. The basic rules of civilised behaviour are, in fact, the basic principles of law. They are not foreign to Aboriginal people at all, as members opposite would have us believe.

Some would say that Aboriginal people have greater access than others to representation in legal matters, through Aboriginal Legal Aid. I do not begrudge them that; I think it is most necessary, although I occasionally wonder about a system which offers greater advantage to one group than another. I refer to the lack of means testing and the number of people who take advantage of the system at taxpayers' expense, regardless of their means, when they can well afford to use the open system of legal representation which others have to utilise.

The member for MacDonnell suggested that the opposition did not put this motion forward to make life difficult for the government. I agree. If this is the best the opposition can do, maybe we can get back to 3 sitting days per year. He also suggested that, after 10 years, Aboriginal people were not better integrated into the economy. That is absolute rot. It is a fact of life that the Northern Territory government's positive attitude and approach to all of its constituents, including Aboriginal people, has led to many

Aboriginal people becoming members of the public service. Aboriginal people have also become involved in private enterprise, including their own enterprises. The situation is quite different now to that which applied 10 years ago. Aboriginal people, quite rightly, are being encouraged to pursue meaningful jobs and meaningful endeavours and to suggest, as the member for MacDonnell does, that nothing has changed in 10 years is absolutely unbelievable.

It is difficult to get excited about the opposition's motion. It takes us nowhere. It can achieve nothing, would cost a great deal and would be absolutely ineffective. If opposition members have specific concerns, they have not enunciated them to any great extent. Those they have mentioned can be handled easily by this Assembly and the appropriate committees of it. I would suggest, with great respect, that members of the opposition withdraw their motion, go away and think about it, and come back to the next sittings with a more meaningful, digestible and understandable motion.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I really did not appreciate how disappointed I could be. The Attorney-General and the Minister for Transport and Works have used the same words, the same arguments and the same tone as were used for 7 years to oppose the motion that this Assembly establish a Public Accounts Committee. I defy the Attorney-General to find, in anything that I said, any implied or direct criticism of the government's activities to date. If he can show me any such criticism, I will certainly correct it in the House next Tuesday. I made no criticism of the government's activities to date. However, after the Attorney-General's speech, I believe there is now serious doubt whether that was a very wise course to pursue.

The Attorney-General did not give this House a single constructive or relevant piece of information in a diatribe which totally reflected his dogmatic attitude towards the motion. Nobody in this House would deny that the Northern Territory government has made sincere efforts in trying to grapple with the problems of our very diverse community. However, the member for Stuart pointed out the irrelevance of passing laws in this House when the result is that our jails are filled with people who either ignore them or are unaware of them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am disappointed. I do not know why I am disappointed because I should have understood that the government would do precisely what it has done. I should have known it would say that it is too expensive or that we were wasting the time of the House or that this House could solve all the problems without putting any new body in place. That is precisely what happened in the 7 years during which I introduced and reintroduced the motion to establish a Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure government members that, whilst this may be the first time that this motion has been proposed, it will not be the last. I can assure honourable members that I intend to pursue this matter. It is of such grave concern to the community of the Northern Territory in general that it must be pursued. If the government wants to continue with a nonsensical and defensive debate on a matter which is of grave concern to the Northern Territory, then I will be happy to listen to its tripe year after year. The establishment of this committee is important for the Northern Territory. It is important for the future of our children and grandchildren and, for those reasons, I intend to continue to pursue it.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 16

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

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Select Committee on Northern Territory Land Corporation

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- (1) a select committee to be known as the Select Committee on the Northern Territory Land Corporation be appointed to inquire into and report upon the establishment, operation and accountability of the corporation, with particular reference to:
 - (a) the role of the Northern Territory Land Corporation in the acquisition and disposal of land;
 - (b) the financial arrangements of the Northern Territory Land Corporation;
 - (c) the present lack of accountability of the Northern Territory Land Corporation to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly; and
 - (d) whether there is a continuing need for the Northern Territory Land Corporation and, if so, what should be its role and legislative base;
- (2) the committee consist of 5 members to be appointed by a later resolution;
- (3) 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;
- (4) the committee report to the Assembly as soon as possible;

- (5) 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
- (6) 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, the history of the Northern Territory Land Corporation is a tortuous one. In order to adumbrate fully the opposition's position with respect to the Northern Territory Land Corporation, I will need to delve back into history. In addition to my comments detailing the history of the corporation, the Leader of the Opposition will refer in more detail to a couple of other matters that will become clear as I proceed through the very murky history of the corporation.

Quite obviously, the inspiration for this motion has been the quite astounding and staggering events that have surrounded the government's purchase and subsequent disposal of Finniss River Station, and its subdivision. That, of course, is not the substance of my comments in support of this particular motion although it may have been a catalyst for it.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory Land Corporation commenced life in 1979. It was then known as the Territory Development Land Corporation. It was one of 2 land-holding corporations set up by acts of this Assembly in 1979. The other was the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Land Corporation. I do not have copies of the original legislation at my fingertips. I have only the original second-reading speeches, which make quite interesting reading in themselves.

Mr Speaker, although it is not mentioned in the debate on either the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Bill or the Territory Development Bill, I believe the intention was essentially to create title-holding bodies beyond the shield of the Crown. I believe that Paul Everingham's intention was to ensure that much of that land could not be claimed under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I believe that was also the intention behind some of the subsequent dealings relating to land around Tennant Creek and so on. Honourable members will recall the vesting of large amounts of land and the bills which were presented in this Assembly in the early 1980s, accompanied by large schedules including stock routes and the like. Many of those matters continue to be vexed issues. That, of course, is not relevant to this particular debate or the need, which I believe has already become clear, for the setting-up of a select committee which will be accomplished when the government agrees to this particular motion.

To refer once again to the original circumstances under which it was enacted, it is probably worth quoting the reaction of the then Leader of the Opposition, Jon Isaacs. He said:

Perhaps the best way to describe these 2 bills is to say that they are most extraordinary pieces of legislation. They establish companies or corporations, to be now called land corporations. There is no requirement for accounts to be kept, no requirement for an audit of any accounts which are kept, no requirement to be presented for scrutiny by parliament or anyone else and no requirement for an annual report to be presented to parliament. Except for the members of the corporation, the minister has no right of direction or control of a body which conceivably will spend millions of dollars of public money.

The land corporations will be body corporates, responsible only to themselves, and they will determine their own procedures subject to a very few minor amendments as spelt out in the acts. All moneys for the corporation fund will come from either the Territory Development Corporation or the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission. Perhaps the most significant item is the fact that the land corporations will not be statutory corporations. That seems to be the key to it all.

I might say that the opposition supports the legislation, notwithstanding the remarks that I have just made.

So the opposition was then prepared to go along with the legislation but quite obviously ...

Mr Coulter: He was the smart one. He got out.

Mr BELL: As did the bloke who introduced the bills, and that is what you blokes are wearing at the moment.

Surely this government is haunted by those comments of the then Leader of the Opposition concerning the lack of accountability of the organisations set up under this legislation. I suggest that it is not just a blot on the government's record but a blot on this legislature. I suggest that the only way we will be able to make progress towards resolving the issues is by exposing the transactions of the land corporations to the clear light of day.

Mr Speaker, if the then Leader of the Opposition's comments were prophetic, I think that the response of the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, is also worthy of note. I should mention here that one of the ostensible reasons for the setting up of a corporation beyond the shield of the Crown was to enhance its loan-raising capabilities. Although it is not an area of public administration I am completely au fait with, I understand there are Loans Council restrictions on borrowing capacity and that the establishment of the corporations related to that. Both government and opposition had concerns about the lack of audit requirements, and the then Chief Minister said:

I think that the main criticism of the bills is that the corporations will not be the subject of audit and adequate financial control. I have not had the time to look at the Financial Administration and Audit Act to make certain my position, but my recollection is that we can prescribe by regulation that these are corporations to which the auditing provisions will apply. That is my understanding of the position.

He went on to say: 'Amendment obviously is possible if it becomes necessary'.

Mr Speaker, let me say that amendment has now become necessary. It is a matter of great embarrassment to the legislature that the corporation is not subject to any audit requirement. It spends public money and there is no requirement upon it to account for that money to the people who provide it. That is a matter of concern.

To continue the legislative history pertaining to land corporations in the Northern Territory, in August last year the Chief Minister introduced various cognate bills under which, inter alia, the then Northern Territory Development Corporation was split up and its functions hived off into various other areas.

In addition, the 2 land corporations set up in 1979, the Territory Development Land Corporation and the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Land Corporation, were amalgamated into the one extraordinary excrescence, the Northern Territory Land Corporation.

Mr Speaker, in the process of preparing my contribution to this debate, I have had cause to take some interest in the legislation under which the land corporation operates. It raises some issues that need to be looked at. The status of the corporation is set out in section 6 of the Northern Territory Land Corporation Act. Subsection 6(2) says: 'the corporation is not subject to the control and direction of a minister or the Crown'. However, subsection 15(7) says: 'the minister has the care, control and management of all land and interests in land held by the corporation'. At least on one level, there appears to be some contradiction there. Section 15(7) is subject to subsection 15(6), which says: 'the corporation may enter into such arrangements as it thinks fit with the Territory or any other person in relation to the care, control and management of land or an interest in land held by the corporation'. My reading of that is that the corporation is the boss. I think this whole area requires clarification. The establishment of a select committee, which takes evidence where necessary, is the appropriate way to establish the role and purpose of the land corporation.

In passing, Mr Speaker, I will reiterate a point that was made in prior debate on this issue. It is not unusual for statutory authorities and for companies in the private sector to trade but it is highly unusual for government money to be paid into an organisation which not only trades but has no accountability to the people who pay the bills. That is what is so extraordinary about this organisation and why this motion is so much in need of government support. It is about time these issues were clarified.

Mr Speaker, there are a couple of further questions that will be addressed in more detail by the Leader of the Opposition. I refer to the financial dealings of the land corporation and its capacity to make loans to people. I draw attention to section 15 of the act, which refers to the activities of the corporation. The Leader of the Opposition will address the question of the extent to which it is legal for the land corporation to provide loans in the way that it has.

The opposition has taken a much keener interest in the Northern Territory Land Corporation since the Finnis River fiasco came under public scrutiny. It has been quite an extraordinary imbroglio and it has raised some questions which are still to be answered. The opposition has been absolutely flooded with phone calls and representations from various people, basically congratulating us on our pursuit of this particular issue and encouraging us to go further. Honourable members will recall that Block H at Finnis River was sold at a receiver's auction in September last year. It was bought by Mr John Anictomatis and, 2 months later, was sold by him to the land corporation at a substantial profit.

In a file at home, I have an inventory provided at the receiver's auction which details the plant and equipment that was on the homestead block at the Finnis River Station when it was sold by the receiver to Mr Anictomatis. It has been suggested to the opposition that it would be appropriate to compare that inventory with the inventory that presumably was drawn up when the land corporation took over the homestead block. I do not expect the Minister for Lands and Housing to be able to drop that inventory on the deck this afternoon but I presume he will give an undertaking that he will provide an inventory of the assets which were on the block when the land corporation took it over. I

trust it will be a suitably audited inventory of assets. There has been a suggestion in relation to discrepancies between the 2 inventories and, although it is only a suggestion at this stage, this is the only forum in which it can be cleared up. I suggest that the government certainly has it within its power to do so. A comparison of those 2 inventories needs to be made.

Mr Speaker, the other issue is far more damning. I refer to the behaviour of the Treasurer in question time this morning when I asked him whether he had instructed the land corporation to sell Block H at Finnis River for \$650 000. His answer on this occasion, unlike many of his answers, was quite unequivocal. My recollection is that he said: 'No, I did not instruct the land corporation'. The Treasurer could not possibly have given a clearer message. Quite clearly, he maintains that he did not instruct the land corporation to sell to Input Pty Ltd at \$650 000.

I have to advise honourable members that I am deeply concerned about that answer because, when the many issues of concern in relation to the government's role in the subdivision of Finnis River Station were being debated during the last sittings, the Chief Minister came across and had a chat to me. He said: 'You probably won't be able to believe this' - or words to that effect - 'but Barry told the land corporation to sell it off at \$650 000'. Obviously, there is a significant disparity between the comments of the Chief Minister and the Treasurer. One of them is not telling the truth, because I will swear on a stack of Bibles that that is what the Chief Minister said to me. What better argument can there be for the setting up of this select committee than contradictions like that? How can a hard-working opposition of 6 people protect the interests of people in the Territory if we cannot be guaranteed that the Chief Minister will tell us the truth? If he was telling the truth, the Treasurer was not. Which one of them was and which one was not?

There are many questions. We want to know who took the decision to purchase, who took the decision to sell, who took the decision to provide vendor finance and why there was a decision to sell at a loss, especially in the light of other purchases and interest in the block at a higher price.

What other dealings are there, Mr Speaker, that we do not know about? For example, what about the purchase of Annaburroo or the purchase of St Vidgeon? What about the government's interest in the block in the vicinity of Limmen Bight? There has even been a suggestion that the financial arrangements entered into by the land corporation include providing mortgages for private houses. How do we know, given the government's incapacity to be direct in its answers to this Assembly, that that does not happen? One wonders what else may be occurring. The Leader of the Opposition will raise further questions about dealings in relation to the trust account that has been set up recently. I will leave those to him, along with questions about disbursements from the Treasury to the land corporation, and exactly where they come from.

Mr Speaker, I believe that, in the 25 minutes I have been on my feet, I have provided an incontrovertible case for the establishment of this select committee. I have raised some of the questions it should look into and a reading of my speech and that of the Leader of the Opposition would be a very suitable briefing for its first meeting. To bring a little light to this subject, the select committees must look into the following general questions. What properties does the land commission now hold? How did it acquire them and for how much? What is the total value of the land held by the land corporation? Why was it acquired? What plans exist for the land? Is it to be kept for public use?

Members will recall that, when the legislation came through the Assembly in November last year, the Leader of the Opposition said that one of the concerns about the merging of the Development Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation was that the conservation estate of the Northern Territory was being merged with land that would be used for commercial, industrial and agricultural exploitation. I believe that is a matter of concern also and that is why the select committee should ask what plans the land corporation has for the land that it holds. Will it be for public use, for sale, for lease or for development and, if for development, will that be industrial, commercial or agricultural? How does it identify what blocks of land to purchase? What guidelines are there for acquisition? Could it come along and acquire my block, with no reference to anyone? How do we know everything is above board? The fact of the matter is, we do not.

How can the people of the Northern Territory be convinced that this land corporation's dealings are straight and above board? I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that the only way that can happen is if a select committee is set up to make a full and frank inquiry. As I have said, I believe that the comments I have made in respect of this particular motion have set up an incontrovertible case for the establishment of a select committee, and I sincerely trust that the government will find it in its heart to accept the establishment of such a committee.

Mr HANRAHAN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, the motion before us is rubbish, and will be disposed of as such. I thank the opposition, past and present, for its support for the introduction and passage of the legislation relating to land corporations, both in March 1979 and August 1986.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory Land Corporation has been established pursuant to the Northern Territory Land Corporation Act 1986. Its predecessor, the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation was established under the Territory Development Act. According to section 6 of the act, the corporation is not an authority or instrumentality of the Crown and is not, for the purposes of the Interpretation Act or of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, a statutory corporation. Further, the corporation is not subject to the control and direction of a minister of the Crown. The function of the corporation is to acquire, by agreement or otherwise, hold and dispose of real property.

The legislation intentionally establishes a body independent of government or ministerial control. The establishment of the corporation allows for it to make decisions as to the future use of land vested in or held by it. The land can be held to allow for proper decisions to be made in the best interests of Northern Territory development. This could include release of land for business, pastoral purposes, conservation development and to meet the needs of Aborigines, such as in relation to living areas.

The operation of corporations such as the land corporation has been examined by the High Court, which acknowledged the independence of the corporation from the Crown. It is important that the independence of the corporation be maintained and that it be free to operate in a commercial manner without being burdened by bureaucratic procedures.

There is nothing to hand which would suggest there have been criticisms of the corporation or the way that it has operated. Indeed, in relation to the Jawoyn land claim, the Northern Land Council has proposed lease-back arrangements with the corporation's sister organisation, the Conservation Land Corporation.

The corporation's trust account is included in the published quarterly accounts of the government, which are tabled in this Assembly. Given the corporation's role and functions, which I have alluded to, it would be inappropriate to require further reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14	Noes 5
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Firmin	Mr Smith
Mr Hanrahan	
Mr Harris	
Mr Hatton	
Mr McCarthy	
Mr Manzie	
Mr Palmer	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion moved by the honourable member for MacDonnell be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 3	Noes 17
Mr Bell	Mr Collins
Mr Ede	Mr Coulter
Mr Smith	Mr Dale
	Mr Dondas
	Mr Finch
	Mr Firmin
	Mr Hanrahan
	Mr Harris
	Mr Hatton
	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mrs Padgham-Purich
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Noting Ministerial Statement on Territory Energy

Continued from 6 May 1987.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in rising to speak to the energy statement delivered by the Minister for Mines and Energy. Firstly, I would like to direct some remarks to energy in the form of electricity.

Energy impacts on our lives in many ways. In fact, it would be difficult to find another resource that has such a profound effect on our society. Unfortunately, the cost of electricity is very closely related to the amount of electricity that is used. If many energy-hungry industries were attracted to the Territory, the cost per unit of electricity could be reduced substantially. The trouble is that those types of industries will not come to the Northern Territory if the cost per unit of electricity is not competitive with the cost elsewhere in Australia. It is a classic catch 22.

There is no doubt that the changeover to gas, efforts to expand the energy pipeline grid and the initiatives of the government spelled out in the minister's statement will encourage those industries to come to the Northern Territory and, at some stage in the future, we will be able to look to reducing the cost of electricity to the people of the Northern Territory. However, there is still some way to go. We must endeavour to promote the Northern Territory vigorously as a place where people can come to set up industries. As that occurs, electricity consumption will increase and the price will go down.

Mr Speaker, the minister mentioned that the government's energy management programs have saved a considerable amount of money. I would like to make the point here that there are still some very real problems in this area. For example, in many of our isolated communities in the Northern Territory, as the major consumers of electricity, government departments are asked to run their air-conditioners day and night in order to reduce the maintenance cost. If the government does that, maintenance costs are reduced, but the additional electricity consumption has to be paid for. That matter has to be looked at again. It is very difficult for us to address that type of situation, which exists in many isolated communities. There is an example at Lake Nash, where the 2 generators could service the whole of Camooweal.

On 5 May, during the debate on the minister's statement on Territory energy, the Minister for Industries and Development said quite rightly that there were 2 things which could change the entire progress and development of the Northern Territory in a very short period. Both related to energy. The first was, and I quote the minister: 'The insane policies of the federal government on uranium'. I know that the Minister for Mines and Energy has had discussions with the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Hon John Kerin. The federal minister's recent announcements on the need to review present policies on uranium mining, and the 3-mine policy in particular, are most encouraging. It is obvious that things will not happen overnight but it is certainly heartening to see that a federal minister is prepared to take another look at his government's policies and evaluate their relevance to present-day circumstances. It is also interesting to note that the member for Arafura is espousing the need to encourage mining in places like Jabiru and Kakadu. I am very pleased to see what appears to be a softening of attitude. There is no doubt that we should be allowed to progress as quickly as possible in that area.

The second matter referred to by the Minister for Industries and Development was the possibility of finding enormous reserves of oil and gas in the Bonaparte Gulf and Timor Sea. The potential in that area is enormous. We already have enough reserves of gas in Mereenie and Palm Valley to last us for 65 years but, if we are able to proceed in the Bonaparte Gulf and reserves are proven there, the capacity could be sufficient to last for over 400 years. That demonstrates the scale of the exercise. On 26 August this year, the Minister for Mines and Energy signed the consent for a second major drilling rig, the Sedco 708, to operate in the Timor Sea. That rig arrived in Darwin in early September to joint the Energy Searcher.

It should also be noted that BHP Petroleum is putting 50% of its Australian exploration effort into the search for oil in the Timor Sea. BHP Petroleum has applied for a production licence for the Challis Field and has combed the world looking for a vessel suitable for modification as a floating production facility similar to the Jabiru Venture. BHP Petroleum doubled production from the Jabiru Venture during July with the addition of another sub-sea well and by modifying facilities. Production is now about 29 000 barrels per day. BHP has also announced that it will spend at least 8 to 10 years in the area, based on the known Jabiru and Challis reserves. The company regards Jabiru and Challis as no more than scratching the surface and believes that its proposed exploration program will result in further and even larger developments. Also in August, the minister authorised the release of 4 new exploration areas in the Bonaparte Gulf and the Arafura Sea.

The interest shown by the petroleum industry is an optimistic indicator of the promise of these regions. Other companies with drilling plans in the first half of 1988 include Gulf Aquitaine and Western Mining. Gulf Aquitaine plans 2 wells. One of these is Petrel 4, which will advance the eventual exploration of the substantial Petrel gas reserves another step.

The Timor Sea is Australia's most promising offshore area and increasing activity heralds a substantial growth in production over the next couple of years. Dollars spent on exploration and production in 1986 reached a record \$120m, 3 times the amount spent in the previous year. The Timor Sea is Australia's most active offshore area. Geophysical activity, which usually precedes drilling, also established record figures in 1986. More than 11 000 km of survey line was run, double the previous year's figure.

The other important factor relating to all this exploration work and production is the opportunity for Darwin to establish itself as a support base for major north Australian offshore operations. Judging from comments made in the suppliers' seminar, it does not appear that we are faring all that well. We need to lift our game there. Indeed, it was pointed out at that seminar that some \$75 000 per month is spent to bring meat up from Perth. It is very important that we increase our capacity to service the rigs, and I am sure that many Territory people will benefit if suppliers get their act together.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this statement on energy. Other issues have been canvassed by other members but I felt that it was important for me to comment about the problems we face in relation to isolated communities. Energy has a great future in the Territory and I am sure that, as we develop, the community will benefit not only in Darwin but in the rest of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 37)

Continued from 10 June 1987.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to pass some comment on the bill that is before the Assembly. The bill seeks to make only one change to the existing act, which is to allow people who enrol within 7 days of writs being issued for an election to be included on the electoral roll for that election.

It is rather disappointing that the opposition has decided to introduce this particular amendment because all honourable members are aware of what the Chief Minister said in this Assembly during the September sittings. He announced that a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act would be undertaken. He also indicated that it was preferable for the act to be reviewed comprehensively rather than in a piecemeal fashion. In announcing the review, the Chief Minister stated that submissions would be received from any members who were interested. In other words, we have a procedure in place which will accomplish a review of the entire Electoral Act.

If the opposition members were not present in the Assembly when that review was announced - as most of them are not present at the moment - they can go through Hansard to see what they have missed. The review will be comprehensive and will look at all areas of the act where there may be problems. Given that, consideration of this amendment seems like a time-wasting exercise.

Mr Bell: It is simple. You only have to say yes.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has returned. Actually, I will be very pleased to hear any contribution he makes in this debate because I am sure it will be quite scintillating. He might address a matter which I raised in this Assembly in April this year. I will come to that in a minute.

The proposed amendment talks about allowing people an extra 7 days. Most members of this Assembly, particularly those who take an interest in the legal requirements relating to electoral enrolment and voting, would be fully aware that there is a legal requirement for people over the age of 18 years to be on the roll and, if they change address, to notify the Electoral Office so that the rolls can be changed. That obligation is pretty clear. It is an offence for people who are supposed to be on the roll not to be on it. The opposition says: 'This is a terrible thing. There should be an extra 7 days after an election is called, to allow people to get their names on the roll'. People who do not enrol are breaking the law, which requires them to be on the roll. The opposition is actually suggesting that the existing legislation should be ignored and that we should have special provision for people who are too lazy, cannot be bothered, or just do not want to go on the roll. When an election is called, members of the opposition and their mates want to run around and sign a few people up.

The law is clear and is the same as that in most states, with a couple of exceptions where there is provision for the rolls to be closed a week or so after an election is called. Most states require that people should be on the rolls. If any members opposite have a problem with that, I refer them to the appropriate legislation.

I brought one of the things that worry me to the attention of the House in April. I certainly urge honourable members to have a look at the rolls for the MacDonnell and Stuart electorates. I did so very quickly over a lunch hour and I found that, in the electorate of MacDonnell, there were 160 names that appeared on that roll twice. Looking through the roll for the electorate of Stuart, I found 158 names that appeared twice. For the benefit of the member for Stuart, I looked through the roll for my electorate and, lo and behold, I did not find such a thing occurring. I looked through a few other rolls and I found that it was a pretty rare occurrence except in some of the rolls for southern electorates. MacDonnell and Stuart were glaringly unbelievable.

That leads me to wonder whether there has been deliberate action in those electorates to get people on the roll 3 or 4 times. I wondered whether those people voted more than once or if each one of those persons had a vote registered. I suppose we will never find the answer to that but it is certainly something that needs examination. I am sure that the inquiry will cover things like that. Obviously, some shenanigans could be occurring in the electorates of MacDonnell and Stuart. I am sure that none of us would condone any misbehaviour in that regard. This a pretty serious accusation but the facts are there in front of us. We look at the rolls and it is there in black and white.

Mr Smith: It is, and you ought to be very careful in making it.

Mr MANZIE: Instead of showing concern, the Leader of the Opposition is actually saying that I should not dare to raise the matter. If I should not raise it in this Assembly, where should I raise it? Surely the Leader of the Opposition is not suggesting that I do not have a right to raise the matter here. It is a very serious matter and, when I raised it once before, we heard no comment from him or his colleagues. I ask that they look at it again.

I can assure the member for Millner that his roll appears to be in reasonable order. It worries me that the member for Stuart overreacts so greatly to the fact that the names are there. That certainly indicates to me that there is a problem, but it will be sorted out in due course.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not support the bill. The matter will be looked at in detail when the act is reviewed. I ask members to remember that it is an offence for people not to be on the electoral roll. If any action should be taken, maybe we should look at directing the Electoral Officer to prosecute those who are not on the roll rather than giving them an extra 7 days in which to enrol. If such an amendment were passed, can you imagine the situation that would occur 7 days before an election? The Electoral Office would spend most of its time putting together supplementary rolls rather than preparing for an election. The law is very clear and very concise at present. People are required to be on the roll of the electorate in which they live. There cannot be any clearer or more concise requirement and it is quite a normal procedure throughout this country. Any change would cause a bottleneck at the Electoral Office. That is certainly not necessary.

I refer honourable members to section 27 of our Electoral Act which says: 'Subject to section 28, a person qualified to vote in an election, who has lived continuously in a division for 1 month, shall, within 21 days of the expiration of that period, make a claim for enrolment'. A person who contravenes or fails to comply with that provision is guilty of an offence. I urge honourable members opposite, if they have any problems, to notify their constituents of the requirements of the law during the next 2 or 3 years and

thereby help ensure that people living in their electorates who are entitled to be on the rolls, actually appear on the rolls. They could also point out to their constituents that failure to do so is an offence.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not support this amendment to the Electoral Act, for a number of reasons. In his second-reading speech, the sponsor of the bill, the member for Stuart, spoke of the large proportion of itinerants in our population. He feels very sorry for these itinerants. They do not have the opportunities to get on the rolls that the local people have.

Mr Bell: Why don't we bring back the property franchise?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If I have to speak louder than you, I will.

If it is good enough for the locals to get on the roll, it is good enough for the itinerants. These itinerants are moving around Australia. They will only stay here, as the honourable member said, for 'a year or 2 or even less'.

I know the law on this matter as well as the Attorney-General; I know that people are obliged to be on the roll. However, looking at this idea sensibly, if somebody only intends to stay here for a minimal time, is it right that he should vote for people to represent the populace? That argument, advanced by the member for Stuart in his second-reading speech as a reason for increasing the enrolment period by 7 days after the issuing of writs, is very weak. If somebody is concerned with his interests, rights and responsibilities, he will get on the roll.

I believe that Aboriginal people should not be considered separately from non-Aboriginal people. We are supposed to have one law for white people and black people. If it is good enough for other people to get on the roll, it is good enough for Aboriginal people. Everybody's vote is equal and the same rules apply to both groups. The member for Stuart indicated that Aborigines are prone to miss out on enrolment. If he is saying that that occurs because they move around a lot, all I can say is that they had better stay still long enough to get on the roll. Aboriginal children go to school these days and Aboriginal communities are well able to make representations in their own interests. They know as well as other people do that, if they wish a certain person to represent their views in this Legislative Assembly or in other places, it is in their interests to get on the roll. It is all very well to have rights but there are responsibilities which go with them. In this case, the responsibility is to enrol and to vote for the representative you want.

In his second-reading speech, the member went on to talk about mobile polling teams. I believe that that has nothing to do with the amendment at all and could only have been included to pad the matter out.

Mr Ede: Where? What paragraph?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Paragraph 4: 'We have spoken before about the fact that mobile polling teams do not visit every community and they do not always attend at the same location. That leads to the situation where people expect polling teams to come to them and do not reach the polling place in time to vote'.

Mr Ede: Then they receive a notice to 'show cause as to why they should not drop off the roll'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We are not talking about them dropping off the roll. We are talking about them having 7 extra days to get on the roll. The fact that they have been on the roll should encourage them to stay on it. I believe it is in the interest of those people - including their local members, if they are representing these people truly and are concerned about the matter - that either they ensure that they are in a position to vote or, if they are not in a position to do so, that they submit a reason for not voting.

The member went on to say that 'average Australians do not give a very high priority to getting their names on the electoral rolls'. I would like to tell him that that is not strictly the case in the rural area where parents strongly encourage their children, once they reach the age at which they are entitled to vote, to put their names on the roll. As one would expect, there is a little flurry of interest before an election but I make it my business generally to approach people who I believe should be on the roll, and who may want to be on the roll, and remind them of their responsibility. If they want to be on the roll, I offer to help them. As well as that, many young people who reach the age of 18 are encouraged by their parents to come in and apply for enrolment.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that, if people are insisting on their right to vote, it is their responsibility to get on the roll so that they can vote. I believe it is only fair that they should put their money where their big mouths are.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Koolpinyah did not really make it clear why she objects to this particular piece of legislation, apart from saying generally that the law is as it is and people should be able to fit in with it.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They have certain responsibilities as well as rights.

Mr BELL: People have certain responsibilities as well as rights. I think that is probably a reasonable view of life in general. I would have thought it was the responsibility of the legislature to make it as easy as possible for people to fulfil their responsibilities, and that is the very issue at stake in this particular bill. It is not a question of the Labor Party, or the members for MacDonnell, Stuart or Arafura manipulating votes in the bush or manipulating Aboriginal people. It is a matter of assisting people to exercise their responsibilities in the simplest possible way. I am completely bemused by the opposition of the government and the independent members to this particular bill. It really strikes me as extraordinary.

In simple practical terms, it is a fact that people do not become interested in elections until elections are called. We are interested in them. Politicians are pathologically interested in elections; our continued tenure here depends on our success in them. Either you have a job or you do not, and there is nothing quite like the prospect of an election to concentrate a politician's mind. I think we take such an interest in elections that we often ignore the fact that the other 99.9% of the population does not give a fig about them, except to think that the fewer of them there are the better. Inevitably, when an election is called, they think, 'Oh yes, I must get on the roll'. I do not believe that that is a reaction that occurs only in the bush. In fact, in the bush you probably have a better chance of getting people on the roll beforehand, because in bush electorates there is a much lower turnover of voters than there is in town electorates. There may be some town electorates that have more stable voting populations; I do not have the figures off the top of my head. I would, however, be very surprised if

MacDonnell had a higher population turnover than, say, Araluen. The electoral officers sitting in the glass booth would probably be able to provide us with the figures here and now. Essentially, it is not an issue that is of specific importance to my electorate.

Let us consider some of the comments made by the Attorney-General for a minute. I am not sure to what end, but he made great play of supposed duplications on the rolls for MacDonnell and Stuart. Assuming for a moment that he is right, and I do not believe he is, there is a better chance that people will take the trouble to find out if they are on the roll if there is a period of 7 days after an election is called than if the period is only 7 hours.

I received bitter representations from constituents at Kintore after the 1983 election. I think the writs were issued about midday on Tuesday and the rolls closed at 6 pm that night. Mr Deputy Speaker, you can imagine how much time the people who were out there had to check whether they were on the roll or not. You can also imagine how much time was available to those who found out that they were not - and some of the kids had turned 18 beforehand - and who wanted to enrol. They had no chance to do so. If there was a 7-day period for enrolment, people in that position would be able to enrol. The Electoral Office would be able to send out an electorate roll, people would be able to check whether they were on it or not and, if they were not, fill in an application.

I do not believe that there are 160 duplications on the MacDonnell roll, but let me say that closing the rolls early increases the chances of duplications appearing. When you have 3 or 4 hours to enrol you say, bang, bang, bang, sign here and you just whack them in. People decide they had better make an application in case they are not on the roll.

Mr Setter: You don't check first to see if they are already on the roll?

Mr BELL: I am not talking about my activities, I am talking about people who may be involved in enrolling in any place around the Territory. It is a fairly natural human reaction to say: 'I might not be on the roll so I will whack in an application anyway', whereas if they had 7 days in which to do it, they would be much more inclined to spend a bit of time checking the rolls so that they could simply see who was on it and who might need to be reminded to vote. That would work much better. We would have a better chance of keeping the rolls tidy if there were 7 days to enrol after the issuing of writs.

I dispute the Attorney-General's claim about 160 duplications. I do not believe that it is accurate. To illustrate that, let me say that there are 3 ladies who live at Papunya who all have the same name. During the 1983 elections, a zealous electoral office purged 2 of these names, believing that they were not only a duplication but a triplication. The people concerned were very keen to vote. One old lady became extremely cranky. She sat down on the ground outside the polling booth and proceeded to sing to the polling staff. That not only caused her considerable concern; it caused the polling staff some concern as well.

Members opposite become quite exasperating at times. The Attorney-General said in stentorian tones that section such and such of the act makes it an offence not to be on the roll. It is quite appropriate that it is an offence not to be on the roll. It is part of our political culture in Australia. Voting is compulsory and enrolment is compulsory. On self-government, it became obligatory for all Aboriginal people to be on the roll. You will

recall that at one stage it was obligatory for Aboriginal people to be on the Territory roll while it was optional for them to be on the Commonwealth roll. This harks back to the debate earlier today about the law and justice implementation review proposed by the member for Nhulunbuy. It is really very exasperating to hear the Attorney-General of the Northern Territory say that, once a law exists, it is people's fault if they cannot satisfy its requirements. We make the law and they have to fit in with it. Forget about the fact that they cannot read. Forget about the fact that they cannot write. Forget about the fact that they have never been to school. Forget about the fact that they do not speak the language that the bloody laws are written in!

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

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly. I am occasionally inspired to unparliamentary comment by the arrogance of government members, which has so little foundation either in education or experience, and is thrown, spat and spewed at us so frequently. I think that the line that the Attorney-General was running in that particular case was objectionable in the extreme.

The plain fact of the matter is that we have an obligation as legislators in the Northern Territory to give people every possible chance to satisfy the legal requirements. Although the penalty for a breach of this law is not jail, the Attorney-General's attitude to the operation of the law does neither him nor the government any credit nor, in the final essence, this legislature as a whole. The opposition is not putting this bill forward in an attempt to gain electoral advantage. I certainly do not need it. I received 72% of the vote in my electorate in the last election and if this bill is not passed, as appears likely, there will be no skin off my nose. I am, however, here to try and assist my constituents to satisfy the legal requirements.

The concern which non-English-speaking, traditionally-oriented Aborigines have for satisfying the demands of the law is almost pathetic. Those people are deeply conservative in that respect and they very much desire to satisfy legal requirements. I have seen some really offensive incidents in polling booths where proud middle-aged and elderly Aboriginal men and women, who do not speak English as their first language if they speak it at all, submitted themselves to perky young electoral officers and temporary polling officials who know the act inside out and spit out questions, left, right and centre. I intend no criticism of the Electoral Office, which makes every effort to provide interpreters and, in recent years, has taken steps to ameliorate that sort of behaviour. As a scrutineer, before I became a member of this Assembly, I saw incidents in which, in order to satisfy their legal requirements, people submitted themselves to a great deal of embarrassment.

I hasten to reassure the Attorney-General that people do want to satisfy their legal requirements. All we are asking is that they be assisted to do so, particularly in outlying areas. They need the extra time. There are few post offices. If you live at Docker River you have no hope of getting to the Electoral Office to put in an electoral application by 6 pm on the day the writs are issued. Even if you live in Braitling you will probably be pushing to get your enrolment application in by 6 pm on the day writs are issued.

The government's unwillingness to support this bill does it no credit. I reiterate that the opposition is not seeking any electoral advantage. We are simply seeking to amend the act in the Northern Territory so that it operates along the same lines as the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

Mr Ede: Like Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

Mr BELL: Indeed. I refer to the Commonwealth act simply because that act, in other respects as well, is much better attuned to the needs of isolated Australia than the desperate little urban act that we have. It is clear that, when the chips are down, this government is not interested in people in the bush. That is what it comes down to. I do not just mean Aboriginal communities in the bush. I get complaints about this sort of thing from ringers on stations in my electorate.

Incidentally, it is much more easy to get on the roll in MacDonnell if you are black than if you are an itinerant white ringer working at a station. It is a hell of a lot harder for them. People come and go in that sort of work and there is a pretty high turnover, so their chances of getting on the electoral roll in MacDonnell are reduced. I will not claim that Labor draws many votes from those people and I suggest that it is in the political interests of the Country Liberal Party to agree to this amendment. It might help it to win a few extra votes. There is probably mileage in it for the CLP and for the National Party. In that sense, we are cutting our own throats but we believe it is appropriate that people be given this extra time, just as they are given time under the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Frankly, I find the opposition to this particular bill quite astounding.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak on this bill today because of its particular impact on my electorate. With due respect to the proponent of the bill, I would say to him that we are really picking at the edges of some of the changes that need to be made to our Electoral Act to get it into gear. We need to make a couple of basic decisions. Is it our intention that people have a vote? If it is our intention that they should have a vote, then we ought to provide the mechanisms that will ensure that happens. Quite clearly, under the existing provisions of the act, it is quite easy to disenfranchise at least 15% of my electorate either by closing the rolls early or setting the periods for the votes to be returned on polling day in such a way that aircraft cannot get them back in time to be counted in the Electoral Office.

In this amendment, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is concentrating on the need for change so that people can get on the roll. The member for MacDonnell talked about the problems of people living at Papunya. Let me tell you that if you live in Tennant Creek you cannot get on the roll within 24 hours. I do not know how people in the northern suburbs of Darwin manage. Perhaps they can drive into town if they hear an election announced on the radio.

Mr Ede: Ask about the ringers at Balbirini.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition refers to the ringers at Balbirini. There are people throughout my electorate who do not have a prayer of getting on the roll, even within a week. In most cases, the forms have to be sent out by plane and the next plane back does not go for a week. The mail then has to connect with the normal air services and mail runs, so it takes between 2 and 3 weeks for somebody to fill out the enrolment forms and get them back.

There can be other complications. In one case I called in at a station where 18 people were not on the roll. They filled out the forms and I took the forms back to town and gave them to the Chief Electoral Officer. He said that some had not been witnessed properly and therefore those people could not vote. Technically, he was quite within his rights. He had not given any thought to the fact that people had gone to a lot of trouble to get the forms

out on the mail plane, have them filled in, find somebody to sign them and get them back. The person who had filled in the 4 incorrect forms was living in a stock camp and was not quite sure whether he was spelling 4 names correctly. He did what he thought was right, fouled up the witnessing procedure, sent the forms back to the station, only to find that the people could not vote because the forms were not witnessed correctly. The system needs to have some common sense injected into it.

I would say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that we are stopping short if we accept his amendment, because new technologies now exist. What if a station happens to have a facsimile machine and wants to send enrolments on a fax sheet? Why shouldn't that be acceptable? Why does a particular form have to be mailed to a certain person before 6 pm on a certain day? I do not understand that. With the technology we have today, why are we doing things as they needed to be done 10 years ago? If a citizen of the Northern Territory is prepared to sit down and write a letter or fill out a statement to say that he wants to vote on a certain day in a certain election because he is eligible, and if he can fax that through to the Chief Electoral Officer, why not? Why all the humbug? What is wrong with somebody out in the bush sending in a telegram saying: 'I am here. I will not be at a post office to enrol, but I declare in this telegram that I am eligible to vote under the act. Please send me a postal vote and, by the way, it will take 2 weeks for it to reach me and 1 week for it to be returned, so please ensure that the dates of the election are organised so that my vote can be recorded'.

The changes we need to make are not particularly exciting. They are commonsense measures which we ought to be taking very quickly. I raise them because, in the by-election on 5 September, at least 150 people who voted had been unable to vote in the general election because they had been unable to get on the roll. There would have been another 50 or 60 people whose votes were recorded in the by-election because the plane times were such that they could get their votes out and back.

At one station, 12 people have not voted in the last 2 elections because the Electoral Office did not realise that their mail came through Mt Isa and was sending it through Tennant Creek. They did not even get the ballot papers before election day, let alone get them back. The Chief Minister can tell you, Mr Speaker, of a couple of people he visited who have not voted in the last 2 elections because their votes did not arrive at the Electoral Office. He went to the trouble of making a Chief Ministerial order to see that the votes arrived in time. That is terrific if you happen to have the ear of the Chief Minister during the course of the election. But if you do not have that, you do not vote.

Some people will say that the amendment is proposed for the benefit of the Labor Party and that it will get more votes because of it. I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that what will happen is that many Europeans who have not had a vote for a long time will start to lodge one and we will see a change in the pattern. Let me ask honourable members who do not know how life in the bush works, how they would feel about going to the trouble of enrolling and casting a vote if they knew that, in the last 2 elections, they could not even get a ballot paper? Would it give them a warm, fuzzy feeling inside and make them look forward to being able to cast their next vote? You reach to the stage where you think politicians are all a bunch of monkeys and none of them is worth a vote. That is a perfectly human response to what people see as contempt for their right to vote.

I make this comment to the Chief Minister: the act needs an overhaul so that the mechanics of administering elections can enable people to vote. If we do not want to do that, then we are accepting the fact that we do not want people to vote. Let's stop beating our heads against the wall. If we are serious about it, let's bring it in here, get it on the table and get it out of the way. It is not really big time; it's something we should have done an age ago.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I fully support many of the comments made by the member for Barkly. As honourable members know, I had the opportunity during the unfortunate election campaign - I say 'unfortunate' from everybody's point of view because the fact that it had to be held was unfortunate - to obtain a first-hand knowledge of some of the difficulties of electioneering in the bush areas.

Many of the points that have been made are quite correct of course. I announced in a previous sittings that a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act would be undertaken during the life of the current parliament. In announcing the review, I made a number of points that are relevant to the stance that the government has taken on the legislation now before the Assembly. In announcing the review of the Electoral Act, I indicated that it was preferable for the act to be reviewed comprehensively rather than in a piecemeal fashion. I advised the Assembly that the government would be happy to receive submissions from honourable members on electoral matters. I am confident that the timing of the roll closures after the issue of writs for an election is a matter that will be considered as the review of the Electoral Act proceeds.

Mr Speaker, given these considerations, the government does not intend to debate the specific provisions of the opposition's Electoral Amendment Bill. To make any observation at this time on the substantive issue, either in a personal capacity or on behalf of the government, would be premature and would prejudice the objectivity which should be accorded to the recommendations of the Electoral Act review. Therefore, I advise the Assembly that the government will not be supporting this bill.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thought we all believed in democracy but I am not quite so sure after today. It is a pretty sensitive flower, and it needs nurturing otherwise it dies. Unfortunately, today we have already seen a fairly determined effort to put some dents in the concept of democracy that most people hold dear, that is, the right of this parliament to debate important issues without the government of the day applying the gag.

This motion goes to the essence of democracy which, in this particular instance, means the right of people to get on the electoral roll and exercise a vote. It is all very well to talk about what the law says. No one disputes what the law says but good laws take human nature into account. In this case, it is quite clear that the present law is not in accord with human nature. We all know that it is human nature to leave electoral enrolment to the last minute. That is the case with the majority of people.

We may not agree with that priority, but enrolling to vote is certainly not a high priority for people who have shifted house or relocated. That is hardly surprising when one considers all the other things that people in that position have to do. They have to settle themselves into a new residence. They have to settle into a new job or in many cases, unfortunately, find themselves a job. If they are at home looking after kids, they have to settle the kids into school, settle themselves into their new household, make their

arrangements and settle themselves into their neighbourhood. They have to alter their address for Medicare and insurance purposes, obtain a driver's licence for the Northern Territory, register their car in the Northern Territory and so on. They have many obligations and I, for one, can fully understand why getting themselves on the electoral roll slips their minds. It is normally something which only affects them once or twice every 3 or 4 years. That is not to say, in the words of the Attorney-General, that they are lazy or cannot be bothered. It is simply not a priority for them.

If we believe in democracy and if we believe that laws should take human nature into account - and that does not mean that laws should interfere with the rights of other people - it is time that we looked at this particular law that prevents so many people from voting. It not only happens out in the bush, it happens in every electorate. People are caught short by the sudden announcement of an election. In the last 2 Northern Territory elections, such people have had 8 or 9 hours to get on the roll. They are unable to do so in that short period of time. Not only does that have the immediate effect of disenfranchising them, it has the longer-term effect that was mentioned by the member for Barkly. They become dissatisfied with the system and they say: 'If they don't want us this time, they won't get us next time'.

Mr Speaker, there is a staggering number of people scattered throughout the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia who, for one reason or another, are not on the roll. A significant number of those people are not on the roll because they tried once and were knocked back in a situation similar to those we have described.

The problem of disenfranchisement of voters is worse in the Northern Territory than elsewhere because, as my colleague the member for Stuart has said, we have a much higher turnover of population than elsewhere. By closing off the rolls on the day the election is announced, we are disenfranchising a much higher percentage of our population than would occur if a similar decision and a similar law applied in the states of Australia. It has been indicated already that in a number of those states such a law does not apply. In other words, even though their problem is not as severe as ours because their population turnover is lower, they have recognised that there is a problem and that, in the interests of democracy - which we are supposedly all interested in - and in the interests of giving everybody the greatest possible potential to vote - which we are supposedly all interested in - they allow for a 7-day period of grace.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if you accept that it is human nature for people to leave enrolling to vote until the last possible moment, you have to weigh up the reasons for not introducing a 7-day period. If you believe in democracy and the greatest possible opportunity for people to get on the roll, you need pretty good reasons to deny them that 7-day grace period, particularly when it is in the Commonwealth legislation, as I have said, and in legislation for several states.

I would like to know the government's reasons for not allowing that period. The only one I have heard was from the Attorney-General, who said: 'Horror, horror, horror! We will have to put out supplementary rolls'. Can I point out to him that supplementary rolls are put out anyway and that the Commonwealth, and the states who have adopted this system, do not seem to have any problem with doing that and still meeting their deadlines.

There are probably 2 real reasons why this is done. One is that conservative governments believe that the people who leave enrolment to the

Last possible minute are more likely to be non-conservative than conservative voters. I do not accept that argument and I do not think the member for Barkly does. The member for Stuart has certainly said that he does not. Even if it were true, however, there is an overriding principle involved: the right of every eligible person to get on the roll. The second reason is that it has become the fashion and the trend to run elections in the shortest possible time. Another important principle is involved there. The perceived political advantage of running an election over the shortest possible period has to be weighed against the possible disenfranchisement of voters. Again, I would submit that the price is too high. If there were 150 people in the member for Barkly's electorate who could not get on the roll in time for the general election, we would be looking conservatively at an average of 100 people in the same situation in every electorate across the Territory, which adds up to 2500 people being disenfranchised because the rolls have closed abruptly.

Mr Ede: Nearly 5000 used the provision in the federal election.

Mr SMITH: My colleague the member for Stuart tells me that nearly 5000 people in the Northern Territory enrolled in the 7-day period prior to the Commonwealth election. That is nearly 5000 people out of a total of about 80 000 on the Commonwealth roll. That means that 6% or 7% of the total voting population enrolled in that 7-day period. That is justification in itself for introducing this provision.

As I said, one reason for governments not allowing a period of grace is that they want to run short election campaigns. They want to run 3-week campaigns, as has been the case here in the last 2 elections, rather than 4-week campaigns. I think the price is too high if you have a belief in democracy and a belief in everybody being entitled to a vote. Adding an additional week to an election campaign is a price worth paying if it means that up to 6% or 7% of people eligible to vote will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I take the point that the government has not ruled out our amendment and that it has simply indicated that it will not support it at this particular stage. I welcomed the announcement by the Chief Minister some time ago that there would be a complete review of the Electoral Act. I thought he might well have taken the opportunity, during the course of this debate, to announce some details about this proposed review. But no, his silence has been deafening.

We have moved this amendment so that the government could use it as an occasion to demonstrate its positive attitude towards the framing of an Electoral Act which better reflects the circumstances of the Northern Territory. If the government were genuinely interested in electoral reform, it could demonstrate that by accepting this amendment. It is not a radical proposal. It has been introduced, as my colleagues have said, at the Commonwealth level and in a number of the states. The government could have demonstrated its sincerity in this particular matter and its real interest in reform of the system by accepting this non-controversial amendment.

Let me go back to some comments made by the Attorney-General, who obviously either ignored or had not received his riding instructions from the Chief Minister on this particular matter. On this side of the Assembly, I must say we are getting sick and tired of the cynical remarks of the Attorney-General who, every time we talk about electoral reform or the Electoral Act, shows his complete contempt for the people of the Northern

Territory. He does it continually. He did it on a couple of occasions after the 7 March election. He alleged that, in the electorate of Port Darwin, votes were rigged and people voted for other people. An investigation was undertaken and no evidence was found to support his accusation. Again, after the 7 March election, there were allegations that the vote in MacDonnell had been rigged in some way or other, and that some people's names had appeared on the roll more than once. That allegation was checked and no substance was found to it. The same hoary old chestnut was brought up today - that there are 158 names which appear twice on the roll for MacDonnell. It is time the Attorney-General put up or shut up instead of making accusations every time this matter is brought up and casting aspersions on other political parties and people in various electorates throughout the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister is quite keen on the same sort of practice when it suits him, and no one will forget his disgraceful performance in the Barkly by-election campaign when the member for Barkly accused the Labor Party of bringing in voters from across the border. I must be fair. The Chief Minister decided that he would check it out, not on any objective basis, but because he had been told by his own party people and the member for Barkly that something was wrong. If that was not a clear case of confusing your role as the elected head of government and your role as the head of a political party, I do not know what was. It was a disgraceful performance on the part of the Chief Minister on no other evidence than the inflamed imaginations of his own supporters and the member for Barkly. The only people who gained any benefit by crossing the border were some ringers who were brought across to 1 or 2 stations and I do not know who they voted for; they certainly were not voting for us. I guess Malcolm Holt must be very pleased that he lost the election because he would have had 200 ringers working his property after he and the Chief Minister spent so much time during the campaign in Elliott and Borroloola promising people jobs on cattle stations.

Mr Hatton: Rubbish!

Mr SMITH: It is not rubbish at all and you know that. We were getting continual reports during the course of that election campaign.

Mr Hatton: Mr Deputy Speaker, I demand a retraction. I made no such promise in the election campaign.

Mr SMITH: Sit down and keep quiet. I have the floor.

Mr Hatton: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not going to put up with that nonsense.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: There is not even a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the Chief Minister making a point of order?

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am seeking to make a point of order in relation to the false accusations made by the Leader of the Opposition. I demand a retraction. He has impugned my reputation and I would like those statements retracted.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Which statements are you referring to?

Mr HATTON: The allegation that I had made some false promises about jobs on cattle stations. I refute that suggestion totally.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you have ruled that way I will withdraw that remark. Might I say it was reported to me on a number of occasions during the election campaign that those comments had been made by the Chief Minister and his CLP candidate. As I said at the start of this particular exercise, the government had the opportunity in the course of this debate to express its interest in electoral reform by supporting this amendment. It is to its shame that it has not taken up the opportunity because it would have demonstrated that it has a serious intention to effect electoral reform in the Northern Territory. For it to knock back this uncontroversial amendment is to demonstrate a commitment to electoral reform which is similar to the commitment it demonstrated earlier today towards reform of the financing and accounting system.

It is not good enough to say that the government will reject this amendment now because it is to undertake a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act. When is this comprehensive review of the Electoral Act to take place? An answer to that question would be a very useful start. I am most disappointed that the Chief Minister has not seized the opportunity presented by this debate today to tell us about the timetable for that review.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation. The Leader of the Opposition accused me of raising accusations in relation to disparities in the Port Darwin electorate at the last election. At no time did I raise any such matter. I think the Leader of the Opposition was referring to claims made by members of the opposition that dead bodies had voted. Those claims were referred to me for investigation. At no time did I raise any such matters.

I also feel that it is entirely within my role and my responsibility to raise facts about irregularities in the electoral rolls for MacDonnell and Stuart. It shall always be my role, and the role of any member of this House, to raise such matters. Any inference by the Leader of the Opposition that raising such matters is improper is totally unfounded.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the difficulties faced by people in remote areas in the Northern Territory are fairly well documented. Members of this House have spoken about them on a number of occasions. The simple difficulties of communicating with Darwin and the rest of Australia are well-known and well-documented.

There is nothing more frustrating for people in isolated areas, when they do everything in their power to get on the electoral rolls albeit very close to the time of the rolls' closure, than to be placed at an added disadvantage to people who live in Darwin simply because they live in a remote area. If the rolls are closed on the day the writs are issued or a day after the announcement of an election, people in Darwin can still walk into the Electoral Office and get onto the roll. If that happens in Nhulunbuy, you cannot do that. There is no physical means of doing it. It is not fair that people in remote areas have the added penalty of being unable to vote simply because they live where they do.

If you live outside Nhulunbuy in a place like Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak or Yirrkala, or if you live in a place that is not on normal air traffic routes, that is an added burden. You cannot even get to a post office so you can put the damned forms in a mail box. You are continuously disadvantaged because of where you live, and that is not supportable any more.

I ask the Chief Minister to agree to the passage of this bill. I accept that he will instigate an inquiry into the Electoral Act that will lead to its amendment but the passage of this bill now will indicate clearly to that inquiry that that is the direction which this government and this Assembly would like to see that inquiry take. That is not unreasonable. It will probably serve no real purpose because I doubt that there will be another election in the Northern Territory within the next 3 years. There may, however, be a by-election although I assume all honourable members are in good health and none will depart this earth within the next 4 years. It is possible though.

If this government were to accept this bill in good faith, that would be a clear indication to the people of the Northern Territory of the direction that the government is taking. It will be a gesture of its goodwill towards people in isolated areas and to many other classes of people that the Leader of the Opposition has described, people who come to the Territory and have many other things on their minds apart from getting on the electoral roll.

It continuously galls me that young people in Aboriginal communities who are eligible to get on the electoral roll cannot do so just because they live at Gapuwiyak or Yirrkala, where electoral enrolment cards are not always available. We talk about the development of democratic principles and young people being involved in the system. People might reach 18 years of age a few weeks or months prior to the closing of the rolls but never have the opportunity to be enrolled because there are no forms in their communities or for some other reason. I think it is incumbent on this government ...

Mr Hatton: You can get provisional enrolment 12 months in advance.

Mr Reed: You can put your name down when you are 17.

Mr LEO: Can you? I have learnt something today. Thank you very much.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are circumstances where people have great difficulty in enrolling. I am sure that the Chief Minister and government members accept that not everybody lives in Darwin and is able to walk into the Electoral Office at 4 pm on the day that the rolls close. You simply cannot do that in the bush. I would ask all members to accept this bill in good faith.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I had not really intended to speak but I was listening in my office to the Leader of the Opposition, which provoked me to come down and say a few words. He will no doubt be quite interested to hear what I say. Before I come to the main point I wish to make, I must say that I am sure that none of us would want to see any genuine resident of the Territory prevented from voting. That would be an abuse of our positions and of the democratic process.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that the member for Barkly had used, for his own electoral advantage, stories about people coming from over the border to vote. I was in Alice Springs when he made the allegation and I thought: 'I hope you have some firm evidence for that because it is the sort

of allegation that can backfire'. I visited Tennant Creek at the time of the election and the only story I heard concerned a local shopkeeper asking an Aboriginal woman who did not normally live in the area where she had come from. She said 'Camooweal'. He asked if she was in town for the rodeo and she said, 'No. For the voting'. That is a story which I did not hear first-hand and honourable members can give it whatever credence they wish.

Strangely enough, the evidence which I found convincing was given to me in Darwin by a person who has many connections with Aboriginal people in central Australia and in the Barkly region. He has worked in Aboriginal organisations and is currently a fairly high-level public servant. What is more, I know he has had a long friendship with the former Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins. I may be misjudging but I think tentatively that his politics may favour Labor although we did not discuss that in any great detail. He told me in the Mall that Tuxworth was dead right and that people had been brought in from over the border. He said: 'I did not get that from white people or from the Labor people. I got it from my Aboriginal friends'. That may not stand up in court but I am quite satisfied that there was a great deal of truth in it. The only other thing that tends to persuade me a little is the fact that my good friend the member for Stuart tends to blush when I talk about the Camooweal Bus Company.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, in response to that last remark, I would be quite surprised if there were not some people from the Barkly electorate who were visiting Camooweal and returned to vote. That is quite different from electoral impropriety, in which people living elsewhere come in to vote in another electorate. The strange thing about that allegation is that the people who it is alleged were brought in came after the rolls had closed. It is rather a pointless exercise to bring people in after the rolls close. If there were any point in it, we could bring people in from all over Australia to vote. The allegation strikes me as very strange. If the people were not already on the roll, there was not much point in bringing them over.

Some rather strange comments have been made in this debate. Once again, the Attorney-General gave a really abysmal performance. He said that it would be a waste of time to pass this legislation. That was the sum total of what he said: it would be a waste of time so the government will not do it. He went on to make claims about 163 duplications of names on the electoral roll for MacDonnell and 158 duplications on the roll for Stuart. That is an absolute and categorical lie and I challenge the minister to prove it or to withdraw if he does not wish to face this Assembly's wrath for deliberately misleading it.

It has been completely overlooked in this debate that the Electoral Office in Alice Springs was closed in the lead-up to the election. It appears that nobody has taken into account that the Electoral Office that is open between general elections is in Darwin and that, if people live anywhere in the Territory other than Darwin, they have to go to considerable trouble to enrol. Obviously, the Attorney-General does not think about those people. He does not care about them. He does not believe that his mandate to govern extends past the Berrimah line unless it is a matter of raising funds rather than dispensing justice.

The Attorney-General made a great deal of noise about the fact that enrolment is a legal requirement. Nobody has disputed that. Of course that is the law. It is the same problem that we raised in the earlier debate. He could not understand it then and he does not seem to be able to understand it now. Perhaps he can tell us how many prosecutions have been launched against

people for not enrolling before an election. I have been unable to find any. He has made no effort to enforce that legislation. He simply makes the assertion that, because the law exists, everything should be all right.

I have spoken at length already about the high mobility of people in the Northern Territory and the low level of literacy. It would be repetitive for me to raise those matters again in any depth because it is obvious that members opposite are not interested. The member for Koolpinyah made an unfortunate contribution, arguing that there should be no special provision for itinerants. She drew a distinction between locals and itinerants although I think probably most locals could have been classified as itinerants when they first arrived. The point I intended to make about itinerant ringers out bush has already been well made by the member for Barkly and I thank him for that.

We have already heard the Leader of the Opposition describe how thousands of people were able to avail themselves of a similar provision during the recent federal election. The member for MacDonnell showed that many of those presently unable to enrol in time would probably be conservative voters. Despite the period of 5 days in which the rolls were open after the issuing of writs for the Barkly by-election, the ringers employed by the CLP candidate at Balbirini did not manage to get on the roll. It cannot be very easy to get on the roll when that sort of thing happens. Perhaps he thought that they might vote ALP and did not want them to have the chance to do that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that the government takes on board the comments of the member for Barkly regarding the use of modern technology and telegrams. It seems to have escaped the memories of members opposite that, when this act first came into force some years ago, there was a far more extensive network of mail planes than there is now. There used to be mail runs from station to station all around my electorate. That does not happen any more. It is one of those services that has disappeared. It used to be far easier to lodge applications to enrol and postal ballots than it is now.

I was very disappointed with the contribution of the Chief Minister. He acknowledged that he had sympathy for much of what we were saying and stated that he was calling for a review. Since that stage, we have already had one by-election. I raised the matter on the first normal sitting day after the last elections as a matter of public importance. We have since had the federal election and a by-election. Who knows how many more by-elections we will have during this next term? The Chief Minister is not even prepared to set a preliminary date as to when the review will be available.

We raised this matter on its own deliberately because we know from experience how impossible it is to get the honourable members opposite to try to hold more than one concept in their heads at a time. We have to propose these matters individually so that we can say: 'Here is a single concept. Have a look at it. Debate it. It is simple. Think, think, think; not knock, knock, knock'. What happens? All the government talks about is reviews, reviews, reviews. All through our General Business Day, they use the argument that they have a review under way. Other governments put such matters to a committee; this mob put them to a review. It is quite pathetic. It is obvious that they are not interested in electoral reform. We intend to continue to hammer electoral reform until the government is dragged screaming to a recognition of justice and we start to get some results.

At the very least, we would have expected an assurance from the Chief Minister that, for by-elections between now and his review - or for general

elections if he decides to call one early because his colleagues are knifing him in the back - he would provide a 7-day period of grace as a matter of course. He would not even do that. We have no assurance about when the review will occur and no assurance that he will accede to our request within the current legislation. It is a sad and sorry situation when the Chief Minister and members opposite continue to show no thought for what is just and what is right. It is simply a blatant misuse of the numbers which they will not have for much longer.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 14

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

NORTHERN TERRITORY HERITAGE BILL
(Serial 38)

Continued from 10 June 1987.

Mr HANRAHAN (Conservation): Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart will be disappointed with this because he has made some comments relating to reviews and that is exactly what is under way in this matter at present. It has been happening for some time. If he opened his ears and cleaned out the wax and whatever else is in there, he would be aware of the direction I have taken because it was announced when I opened the Heritage Legislation Seminar. I clearly stated the direction in which the government is headed.

This opposition heritage legislation remains a direct lift from the 1979 version prepared by a consultant to the Northern Territory government from the Heritage Advisory Committee. It was rejected at the time for reasons that I fully support. It is an administrative and regulatory nightmare. I am amazed that anyone could support it.

Mr Speaker, I have taken a different view and I outlined it at the opening of the seminar on heritage legislation. This government is attempting to reduce red tape and bureaucracy of the type contained in this legislation. For the last 6 months, the Conservation Commission has been having discussions with the Department of Lands and Housing, the Department of Mines and Energy, the Royal Institute of Architects and the National Trust. The purpose of these consultations is to: obtain agreement on the objectives of a draft heritage policy, canvass views on the most appropriate means for implementation, to determine if these objectives can be achieved by amending

existing legislation and, if so, recommend specific amendments to the Planning Act, the Conservation Commission Act, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act and the Mining Act, and obtain the appropriate departmental approval for these amendments.

What I am saying is that we have the basic legislative infrastructure to incorporate a large amount of what is in this legislation and to do it with much less fuss. The legislation before us is not acceptable to government and we will not be supporting it.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we might need to rechristen this government the mirror government: it is always looking into things and nothing much comes out. There is an urgent need in the Northern Territory to put heritage legislation in place. The need is probably greatest in Alice Springs. There have been a number of recent incidents which have demonstrated the need for an objective assessment of what are claimed to be items of historic and heritage value.

Mr Collins: The Stuart Arms.

Mr SMITH: Not the Stuart Arms. I never thought the Stuart Arms was of great historical or heritage significance. The example that comes to mind in particular is Turner House. There were very good arguments for preserving Turner House as an excellent example of the early history and architecture of Alice Springs. I am not qualified sufficiently to say whether the arguments would have stood up under rigorous scrutiny but, certainly, arguments were put forward.

Mr Dondas: It wasn't on the heritage list.

Mr SMITH: I would invite the member for Casuarina to contribute to this debate and break his self-imposed silence at these sittings, but would he mind shutting up for the moment?

The point I am attempting to make is that there was no avenue available for people who wanted Turner House to be considered as an historical building. That was the problem in that particular situation. I understand that in Alice Springs at the moment there is a controversy, which may become a major one, over the preservation of the Walk-in Theatre. The legislation that we propose would provide an objective means of evaluating the arguments put forward by those who want to preserve the Walk-in Theatre.

One of our problems is that the Territory is growing very rapidly but also has a proud history. It is important that we strike a balance between preserving our history, because we are all proud of it - and certainly we want to keep representative examples of the architecture of the past - whilst at the same time not hampering development unduly.

Another example will create some interest in Darwin in the next few weeks. It is the magnificent old fig tree that stands over in the ...

Mr Coulter: Old fig tree? How old is it?

Mr SMITH: I have no idea exactly how old it is, but it is a magnificent fig tree.

Mr Coulter: Daryl Manzie knows. He was there.

Mr SMITH: My point is proved. I am talking about the magnificent fig tree that is on the old Darwin police station site. I know that many people are interested to see that fig tree kept if at all possible.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Did you plant it?

Mr Manzie: No, I was there when it was planted.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Koolpinyah will have her chance shortly.

Mr SMITH: I hope that matter will be looked into even without any formal legislative protection. It is the sort of issue which is given a legislative basis in this bill. I accept that there are many people with good intentions and I accept that there has been a pretty dramatic movement in community attitudes to these sorts of things in the Northern Territory over the last 5 or 10 years, and we owe people like George Brown an enormous debt for that.

Mr Setter: He is a fine man.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, honourable member for Jingili. The Environment Centre has played a very valuable role in that area as well. In fact, I might tell its staff that the member for Jingili has paid them a compliment. They will fall over backwards.

Mr Speaker, it is true that attitudes have changed in the Northern Territory quite dramatically in the last 5 to 10 years, on questions about the protection of our heritage. The contents of this bill are a logical extension of that. As my colleague said in introducing the bill, it provides a legislative base to enable those concerns and interests to be expressed, so that we have something concrete to work on rather than sentiment alone.

In the past, there have been a number of glaring occasions when significant trees or buildings have been pulled down without proper thought and I think that is something that people on both sides of the Assembly can now accept should not happen. Essentially, that is why we have introduced this piece of legislation. I guess it was too much to hope that the government would take it on board and support it, but I put the government on notice that this matter has high priority with us, and we will be asking questions on a regular basis about the progress of the review that the government has undertaken. I would hope that it will not be too long before the government introduces legislation for this Assembly to consider.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there have been few occasions during the 6 years that I have been a member of the Legislative Assembly when I have seen a performance from a government minister like that we just saw from the Minister for Conservation. It was both contentious and contemptible. Mr Speaker, I make a point of staying in this Assembly for debates that relate to my portfolio and during those debates I am here from go to whoa. I do not make a point of staying in the Chamber when debates concern neither my electorate nor portfolios for which I am responsible.

Mr Coulter: That is a little parochial for an elected member for the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Treasurer. I really fail to see how it is being parochial to represent my electorate and spend my time as a shadow minister exercising concern for the portfolio areas I am

responsible for. What I am saying is that the Minister for Conservation has given a performance lasting only 2 or 3 minutes and that is pathetic. Presumably, he has given some consideration to this particular bill. Yet the best he can come up with is a few peremptory remarks about issues which are of vital concern to his electorate, people in Alice Springs generally, and of vital concern to people living in Darwin. I hope the minister actually reads this at some stage because I will make damn sure that people in Alice Springs are made well aware of the contempt ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell has consistently, in this House, reflected on the time that honourable members spend inside the Chamber. That is quite contrary to the standing orders of this parliament and practices related to it.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the honourable member speaking against the point of order?

Mr BELL: No, I just presume there isn't one.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would remind honourable members that it is against standing orders to cast reflections against other members of the parliament.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, can I just have some clarification about casting reflections on other members of the House? Far be it from me to wish to offend standing orders but when the behaviour of honourable members, let alone office-holders of this parliament, is such that I am forced to cast reflections on their behaviour, I wish to do so within the ambit of standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: I will quote standing order 62 for the information of the honourable member. Its heading is 'Offensive or unbecoming words:

- (1) No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words against the Assembly or any member of the Assembly or against any House or member of another Australian parliament or against any member of the judiciary, or against any Northern Territory statute unless for the purpose of moving for its repeal, nor shall a member attribute, directly or by innuendo to another member unbecoming conduct or motives; and all offensive references to a member's private affairs and all personal reflections on a member shall be deemed to be highly disorderly.
- (2) When the Speaker rules that words used by any member are highly disorderly, such words shall not be published in the Parliamentary Record.
- (3) The provisions of this standing order relating to unbecoming conduct shall not apply where a substantive motion on notice brings a charge of misconduct against a member.

Mr BELL: Suffice it to say, Mr Speaker, that I think my vocabulary is sufficiently rich to be able to choose appropriate epithets that cast reflection on the behaviour of the Minister for Conservation without me using offensive or unparliamentary terms. I see, with some satisfaction, that I have been able to shame the Minister for Conservation into returning. This is by no means a rapprochement. As I say, his performance was both contemptible and contemptuous - contemptible in the sense that it is worthy of the contempt of every member of this Assembly. The opposition introduces legislation of

this sort after much consideration and after taking soundings in the community.

Quite obviously, Mr Speaker, as I think you would be well aware, there is deep concern amongst significant sections of the electorate in Alice Springs that the government refuses to take this issue seriously. If the Minister for Lands and Housing has initiated some review or taken up some issues of concern, I am completely unable to understand why the fruits of his deliberations resulted in no more than the 3 or 4 minutes tirade of abuse that he delivered to us.

Mr Hanrahan: You were not even here to listen, you mug.

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

Mr Hanrahan: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the fact of the matter is that through the door and within the lounge, I managed to catch every syllable of the minister's offering. It was both contemptible and contemptuous - contemptuous of the issue, of his role as a minister and of this Assembly. Because I put considerable thought into this issue, I find the minister's behaviour worthy of the strongest condemnation.

Mr Hanrahan: Your bill was prepared by the Northern Territory government.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, you will recall the number of times that I have spoken in this Assembly about retaining memories of the past and that the only way we can maintain our direction of growth in the Territory is to know not only where we are now and where we are going, but also where we are coming from. Frequently, opposition members discuss representations from their electorates about Aboriginal sacred sites because it is exactly such things that inform Aboriginal people about where they have come from, what they are tied to and where they are going.

Mr Setter: I thought we were talking about fig trees.

Mr BELL: I will come back to the member for Jingili's fig tree in a minute. I think I can use an illustration which will convince even the member for Jingili. I certainly trust he will be contributing to this debate because he has already indicated by way of interjection that he is something of a closet environmentalist.

Mr Coulter: This is one of the nicest speeches I have ever heard. Come on!

Mr BELL: If my oratorical flourishes lack something, I can only attribute that to the constant interjection and abuse I am receiving from the government.

This is important legislation and it deserves far more serious consideration on the part of the government than it is receiving at the moment. I have taken considerable interest in this issue and I attended the seminar conducted in Alice Springs to consider heritage legislation. The minister's attendance at that particular seminar was reflected in his speech today. He did not turn up at the seminar because it was not of sufficient interest to him. I am not aware that he sent a staff member along to take notes because, if he did so, that was not obvious from the speech that he delivered today.

Mr Ede: Worse than that, he sent Eric Poole.

Mr BELL: I will come to the member for Araluen in a minute because he did front. I would have thought that, if the Minister for Lands and Housing were doing his job and if the Northern Territory government were doing its job, they would have sent somebody along to say something sensible or to express their view or, at the very least, to take enough notes to give the minister sufficient information to make a sensible contribution to this debate.

Mr Speaker, I have had to put up with constant interjections during the 10 minutes I have been on my feet. I hope that those interjections will be mirrored by some contributions from the loudmouths opposite.

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

Mr BELL: I withdraw the term 'loudmouth' unreservedly. I trust that the vociferous outpourings of government members will not only be expressed through interjections but also in a more orderly contribution to this debate. I will bet that not one of them gets up to speak. I will bet the Treasurer does not get up. I will bet the member for Jingili does not get up. I see the member for Casuarina has already left the Chamber. He gave an indication that he was somewhat interested in this debate.

As for the member for Jingili's fig tree, I am not aware of it. It has not been drawn to my attention.

Mr Setter: You will spend the next 10 minutes telling us about it.

Mr BELL: I shall not spend the next 10 minutes telling you about a fig tree that I have not seen. That would be nonsensical, but I am quite sure the member for Jingili would be able to. As you will recall, Mr Speaker, the fact of the matter is that it was not a particularly ...

Mr Coulter: Aren't you embarrassed?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I presume even the Treasurer will recall the International Year of the Tree.

Mr Coulter: You are wasting them by using up paper in this Assembly. Sit down.

Mr BELL: You are wasting them by interjecting constantly. How about giving me a go? In the International Year of the Tree, considerable interest was taken in the heritage value of particular trees. I am quite sure that that is an issue of concern to many people. I am prepared to accept that the member for Jingili takes the fig tree seriously.

The theme of my contribution is that the material that surrounds us often provides pointers to where we have come from and provides us with signposts for where we are going. I suggest that, in the brave new world that the Northern Territory government believes in, when every tree has been knocked down and when every building older than 5 years has been knocked to the ground and replaced with 3 ft of concrete, Territorians will be the poorer for it.

That is the sort of mentality we get from this clown, Mr Speaker. The people of the Northern Territory are fortunate to have an opposition of our calibre. We have some idea of balancing the demands of development with the necessity to recall where we have come from. I suggest that the opposition's

efforts in presenting this private member's bill will be well respected by people. We are not necessarily saying that this bill is the be-all and end-all of heritage legislation. Quite obviously, heritage legislation in Australia is a relatively recent phenomenon and there have been lessons learnt around the country. If any of the government members had turned up to the very informative seminars that have been conducted, they would have realised that much has been learnt about the way we should protect our heritage.

The Northern Territory government could have come into this debate and said that it was concerned about this section of the bill or that section. It could have said: 'These are the principles we are adopting and perhaps we can come to some arrangement'.

Mr Coulter: We are reviewing the whole trip. That might have been a sensible contribution.

Mr BELL: The idiot interjections I am getting from the Treasurer just reinforce the fact that the government has nothing sensible to say about the issue. Not only did the Minister for Conservation say nothing about the issue of heritage protection or the principles of it, he said absolutely nothing about the current examples in his electorate and his home town of Alice Springs. I am staggered that somebody can treat this electorate with such contempt. His utterances in this debate today have been contemptuous and that is why I find them contemptible. I do not believe that members of the government have anything to say.

The member for Araluen came to the seminar and made quite an instructive little contribution. All credit to him. He stayed and listened to Mr James from New South Wales and heritage experts from South Australia. He said: 'I will be backing it. I will do whatever I can'. The National Trust people from Alice Springs were pleased to hear that he would be supporting such initiatives. I certainly trust that he will rise in this debate to indicate his support for the opposition's initiatives. Having been to the seminar, I am quite sure that he will be able to make a more ...

Mr Coulter: Was it like Mecca? Did you go there to go through some sort of ritual?

Mr Ede: Why don't you keep quiet? You are very boring.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am being fairly tolerant. The member for MacDonnell will be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am sure that the contribution of the member for Araluen will be more informed than that of the Minister for Conservation who had nothing to say about the issue and was not prepared to give any assent to the importance of heritage protection.

The fact of the matter is that many people in Alice Springs were concerned about the destruction of Turner House and the way it was carried out. Many people are concerned that other areas may be in jeopardy, such as the Hartley Street precinct. There are distinctive types of Territory architecture which need to be preserved and the precinct in Hartley Street has some wonderful buildings which were built in the 1930s and 1940s with wide verandahs. It is a wonderful style. It would probably bump building costs up considerably if we were to construct in that style these days. Those buildings should be preserved. It is not just a matter of keeping those places in limbo. We have to find ways of integrating them into the economy of today so that they are not just a drain on funds.

Mr Collins: The Hartley Street School.

Mr BELL: That is a perfect example. I thank the member for Sadadeen for providing it and I am sure he will rise to the opposition's defence in this matter. It was a pleasure to attend the opening of the Hartley Street School. It is a good example of one of the original buildings in Alice Springs. It is protected on the basis that it is occupied by the Tourist Promotion Association and a couple of other tenants. Some parts of the building have been kept in their former condition whilst others provide functional working space. It is an example of an intelligent, thoughtful and helpful heritage protection process. More thought needs to be given to the Hartley precinct.

The destruction of Turner House was outrageous, and not only in its manner. Consideration should have been given to the incorporation of the old Turner House into some development, but that did not happen. That is exactly why the people of Alice Springs expect a better effort than the government has made to date.

The Minister for Conservation said that this particular bill, which the opposition has put forward in the interests of sensible public debate, was rejected by the government in 1979 or 1980. If it was rejected, we never heard about it. I cannot remember the government ever saying that it did not intend to proceed with heritage legislation. The government's unwillingness to accept this sensible contribution from the opposition does it no credit. Heritage legislation is one area where the Territory is out of step with the rest of the country and I suggest that it is about time we caught up.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I was delighted to hear the member for MacDonnell suggest that old buildings should be put to some practical use. He mentioned the Hartley Street School and he spoke briefly about what is happening there today. It could have been an even better story if the offer of Papa Luigi, a well-known businessman and restaurateur in Alice Springs, had been taken up. He was prepared to put up \$250 000 to restore the Hartley Street School along the lines that the National Trust wanted. He was prepared to cooperate with the trust and have the place adorned with memorabilia. In return, he required a 5-year lease with a right of renewal, to run an Italian restaurant in it, right in the heart of town.

I am quite sure that a huge number of people would have been attracted there because he was an excellent restaurateur, as you would know Mr Speaker. A great deal of Alice Springs' history would have been displayed for visitors and locals alike to see and read. Not only was he prepared to restore it in exchange for that 5-year lease with the option of another 5, but he was also prepared to pay a reasonable amount of rent. If I recall rightly, the figure that he was prepared to pay was in the order of \$50 000 or \$60 000. The Alice Springs National Trust is not very wealthy and it would have gained that amount as well as playing its role. Unless people are seeing heritage and learning from it, there is not much point in protecting it.

I will not go into the full details of what transpired, but the deal came unstuck. There were some complications. The government, of which I was a backbench member, did its best to solve the problems but there was one it did not solve: that of the exchange house for the Commonwealth office. The Hartley Street School made an excellent venue for the Toy Library and all the other groups which had been displaced from the library. They were promised that they could move into the restored Hartley Street School if they could raise the money. The Commonwealth officers - bless their hearts - bent all the rules. They asked us to give them a house for their office somewhere else

and to pay the difference in valuation, which was \$100 000. If that had been done, the project could have gone ahead.

The government messed around and hummed and hawed. I kept on pressing for about a month but Papa Luigi, being of good Italian temperament and not used to bureaucratic bulldust, said he was not going to hang around any longer and the whole deal fell through. That was very sad because it would have been a far better approach. The building would have been totally restored. I know there have been donations from the Bicentennial Trust and tobacco companies, but it could have been done differently and the National Trust would have had \$50 000 or \$60 000. The National Trust people in Darwin were very supportive but, unfortunately, some National Trust members in Alice Springs were less than helpful. They tried to prevent me from doing what I wanted to do and one of them seemed quite glad that the deal had fallen through. I was rather disappointed with that attitude.

I believe that the member for MacDonnell was basically correct. If we are going to save and restore these buildings, they must be put to economic use. That brings me to Turner House. I was saddened when it was demolished, possibly because I had some excellent meals in the restaurant there and some very enjoyable evenings. Although the building was just about the only one of its type in the central area of Alice Springs, there were hundreds of similar buildings in the suburbs of North Adelaide so, to me, it was not dramatically unique.

In addition, I put myself in the position of the people who owned that property, the Turner family. It was a valuable property. If all of us were in their position, our attitude might be different. If the public believes the government should ensure that properties are preserved, I believe it should be prepared to pay market value for them. That is the only fair way of doing these things. You cannot tell property-owners to forgo their rights in the interest of the town or the country. They should be dealt with fairly and squarely and they should be able to receive market value.

Trees have also been mentioned tonight. I would like to draw members' attention, particularly Centralian members, to a magnificent ghost gum in the Centralian region. Mr Speaker, you are familiar with the White Gums area and the Commonage out past the dump and the sewage ponds. There is a gap in the range there where Mr Kramer has his new farm. Hopefully, he can shoot stray dogs with fewer problems than he had at his old property. I first saw this particular tree from the air. It is on the next range south, following the creek from a gap at Temple Bar, out towards Pine Gap. The ghost gum's girth is such that 3 grown men can barely touch fingertip to fingertip around the base. It is a most beautiful tree. It ought to be a tourist destination but there is the old problem that some idiot may well deface it. This magnificent tree deserves to be seen but it must also be protected.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, one could be forgiven for addressing this bill as the recycled bill because it was first introduced on 12 November 1986. When the Assembly was prorogued, it lapsed and was reintroduced in June.

I was interested in the comments of the member for MacDonnell when he told us how the opposition had introduced this legislation after much consideration. When the member for Stuart introduced the bill on behalf of the member for Arnhem, the shadow minister, he said: 'The bill before this Assembly is a direct lift of Mr James' 1979 proposal'. How could the member for MacDonnell claim that the opposition had spent much time and effort on

this when it is really something that was produced in 1979? I understand that Mr James' proposal was based on 1977 New South Wales heritage legislation.

Mr Ede: That is not true.

Mr SETTER: If we have a look at what has happened in New South Wales, we find that its Heritage Commission currently employs 28 people. That is horrendous. In my opinion, this is another example of the socialist push for big government. That is what it is all about: big government and centralism.

The bill suggests that we establish a heritage council which is to be similar to bodies such as the Women's Advisory Council, where the majority of members are paid a sitting fee. However, the cost of that would mount up because it would involve travel, accommodation, meals and support staff. In addition, the opposition is talking about appointing an Aboriginal Advisory Committee, no doubt to advise on matters relating to Aboriginal land. The opposition is proposing another big commission. It loves commissions. Look at the way the federal government has created commissions over the last few years. Only yesterday, the member for Stuart was proposing a privacy commission.

Mr Ede: A privacy committee.

Mr SETTER: It does not take much to develop a committee into a commission, does it? Now we have the member for Arnhem proposing what virtually amounts to a heritage commission.

What is this really about? I would term it an anti-development bill. What they are on about is playing to the greenie vote. I notice that the Leader of the Opposition pricked his ears up when I commented about the Environment Centre. He thought that it was fine that I thought the Environment Centre played a reasonable role in this community. I quite like some posters that it issues but some of its other activities are far from attractive.

Mr Smith: So are you.

Mr SETTER: If one looks at the Leader of the Opposition's delightful pink shirt, one realises he has gone up-market today. That is very nice.

Members opposite are trying to attract the greenie vote. We are talking about the rent-a-crowd people who have been carrying on in a disgusting manner at Pine Gap during the last week or so. They are the sort of people who will be at the gates of Katherine Gorge next; the sort of people who would be promoting inscription of Kakadu stage 2 on the World Heritage List. If they had their way, it would not be very long before the whole of Australia was on the World Heritage List. That is their long-term aim; let there be no doubt about that.

Our legislation is quite adequate to cater for our needs. Indeed, the minister indicated in his earlier comments that a review of the existing legislation is already under way. I am quite sure that, in the short term, various acts of the Northern Territory will be amended. Let me just draw attention to a number of the acts that already apply and protect heritage interests: the Environment Assessment Act, the Conservation Commission Act, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Planning Act, the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the Mining Act and several pieces of Commonwealth

legislation such as the Land Rights Act and the Heritage Act. There is adequate protection in existing legislation, without establishing another bureaucracy.

This is a very cunning deceit on the part of the opposition to make people feel warmer about how they will protect historic buildings, fig trees, Turner House and similar structures. Personally, I do not have a problem with that. I think that we should be preserving old buildings of significance in our society. Indeed, some very positive things have already been done in that regard. In this city, for example, you can see Browns Mart and Holtze Cottage, the old Fannie Bay Gaol and a number of other structures.

I am quite sure that all members are aware of the tremendous role that has been played by the member for Braitling in the Ghan Preservation Society which was established in Alice Springs several years ago. Its members have achieved an enormous amount since. For example, they have established a museum at MacDonnell Siding. They have restored a number of buildings. They are restoring a section of the old telegraph line which was constructed in 1872. They are restoring about 25 km of the narrow-gauge old Ghan railway line from MacDonnell Siding to Ewaninga. There is an old fettler's cottage that is being restored at Ewaninga and various other old railway buildings and a number of old steam trains. I have been there and I have seen what they are doing. It is a tremendous project and I can only offer tremendous compliments to the member for Braitling and the Ghan Preservation Society in terms of the role they are playing. Have a look at the old Telegraph Station.

All that is living evidence of the attention that the Northern Territory government is paying to heritage matters. However, whilst the opposition talks about preserving buildings, that is only a ploy. You have to see past that and look for the hidden agenda. There is a hidden agenda in everything that the opposition brings before this House, mark my word. Labor continually tries to deceive this House. Let us have a look at some of the items that have been on the hidden agenda. What about the ID card during the last election? That was on Mr Hawke's hidden agenda. What about the Bill of Rights and its iniquitous implications? The ALP has not proceeded with that, but there is no doubt that it is being recycled, just like this bill, and that it will come back in some other clothing.

Mr Ede: And grab yer!

Mr SETTER: It won't grab me, I can assure you; it won't grab me because I am awake to the way people in the opposition try to deceive the community.

Consider the matter of world heritage, which members opposite feel so warm about. It sounds great until you talk about the Franklin River Dam, logging in rainforests in north Queensland and mining in Kakadu stage 2, when it becomes clear that world heritage legislation is being used in a political manner. It is being absolutely abused. It was not designed for that in the first place. It is being used as a political weapon to achieve the socialist goals of the people sitting opposite and their colleagues down in Canberra.

Mr Speaker, this legislation would raise another very costly and unnecessary barrier to the Territory's development. It could have a horrendous impact on the Territory's mining industry; there is no doubt about that. When you look through this legislation, it is clear that the opposition is trying to use it to cause problems for the mining industry.

Let us have a look at the requirement to produce evidence of a current development application under the Planning Act when applying to carry out development work. Effectively, that means that no such application could succeed unless the area was included in the town planning area. Few if any mine sites are within town planning areas. Again, Mr Speaker, there is a hidden agenda.

There are already enough impediments to proper and rational development in the Territory. This proposal would establish another building full of red tape to cause problems for the entrepreneurs and developers we need so much. It is this government's policy to facilitate reasonable and desirable development. There is no question about that. The Chief Minister has indicated that it is his objective to reduce red tape, if not completely eliminate it, and we will be working towards that objective. This horrendous piece of legislation would introduce more and more red tape, and we do not want it.

There is no doubt that we intend to establish new guidelines for heritage matters. My personal opinion is that we should be making it as easy as possible for entrepreneurs and developers to get out there, invest their money and develop this Northern Territory of ours. That is what we are trying to do. The people sitting on the opposition benches are attempting to retard those who want to drive down the road of development by putting stones and barriers in their path. When a proposal ...

Mr Ede: I would like to see you sit down.

Mr SETTER: We will see you in a pink shirt next. Be very careful.

When a proposal is brought before the Planning Authority, I would like to see it measured against a set of guidelines which could be drawn up for various types of proposals. The developer could look at these guidelines, consider his particular proposal in relation to them, and see whether it complies or otherwise. If it complies, that is fine. If it does not comply, he has to go away and do his homework again. If it does comply, however, he should be able to advertise his proposal and, after allowing 30 days for objections to be lodged, it should go back to the the Planning Authority for consideration. If there are no objections, the developer should be allowed to proceed instead of going through the horrendous exercise which people are subjected to at present in order to obtain approval for a project.

We need to reduce red tape. We need to make it much easier for entrepreneurs to get out there and develop this Northern Territory. I will not have any part of any ploy by the Labor Party to inhibit their actions.

Mr Speaker, I do not support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members opposite for their contribution - those that have made one. Specifically, I thank the member for Casuarina for his enlightened interjection some hours ago. I thank the honourable member for Araluen ...

Mr Dondas: I did not tell you to shut up.

Mr EDE: I thank the member for Araluen, who had the grace to remain silent throughout the whole debate.

Mr Smith: What about the member for Karama, who had the grace to open his eyes at least once?

Mr EDE: Yes, the member for Karama, because he peered at us through his slits.

In April and May, when the seminars were held, I found the contribution of the member for Araluen to be rather remarkable. My recollection of it was slightly different to that of the member for MacDonnell. He began by saying that there was no need for legislation because these items were listed by the National Trust, quite ignoring the fact that National Trust listing has no legislative support whatsoever. He then stated that he could not support our legislation because it included such-and-such. We said: 'No, that is not in it'. He said, 'I would support it if it had this and that in it,' and we said, 'Well, they are both in it'. He said, 'Right, remember that I am only one person in the party room', and he got out. I am sure that he spoke long and forcefully in the party room, urging the government to support this legislation. In fact, he is probably single-handedly responsible for the government having dusted off the reply it made in 1979, which was that it would have a look at it.

Mr Speaker, it is now 8 years since the government completed the review that resulted in this piece of legislation. Let us imagine what could occur with this legislation in place. The government feels it is not adequate but, in fact, it would provide protection. There is no doubt that it would have covered the Turner House situation. That building would have been protected under this legislation and there is no other legislation that would do that. The 4 pieces of legislation that the Minister for Conservation - and I choke on that word - stated could be brought together to look after those buildings do not provide the protection that is needed.

An enormous amount of work obviously needs to be done because, after 8 years, we still have had no action. We brought this legislation forward in October or November last year before it lapsed with the prorogation of the Assembly and we have now brought it forward again. The government has had all that time. It has known that we were bringing on this legislation but all it offers is a condensed extract from a speech that the minister gave to a gathering here in Darwin in March or April this year. He has made basically the same points. Since then, another 8 months have elapsed. The government is obviously intent on doing nothing about it. It is taking the same approach that it took earlier when dealing with the Electoral Amendment Bill.

It is a shame because many people in Alice Springs feel that the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre is under threat. Mr Speaker, probably you know that place better than most of us as it is likely that you are the only member of this Assembly who actually went to the pictures there on your own. Maybe be 1 or 2 others might have been there with their parents. The member for Flynn would have been too young to go on his own.

The Walk-in Theatre was built by Snow Kenna back in 1942. He had arrived back in Alice Springs in 1934 with about a ton of old nitrate film and, I am reliably informed by David Liddle, he showed his films at the old town hall at Anzac Oval down at the end of Todd Mall. He later showed them in the Capitol Theatre, which was built by the Underdown family and, in 1942, he built the Pioneer Walk-in Theatre. He later started the Pioneer Drive-in which became the Starline Drive-in.

The Pioneer walk-in Theatre is the last building which links us with the old town of Alice Springs. The world premiere of 'A Town Like Alice' was held at the theatre, attended by Neville Shute and Peter Finch. The theatre has quite a history. In fact, I have been advised by some of the older residents of Alice Springs that at least half of the products of the baby-boom in Alice Springs were probably conceived there. It had quite a reputation. Obviously, the member for Flynn - who is the only member I know of who was born in Alice Springs - would have no recollection of that.

It is a shame that the government is once again refusing to take heritage legislation seriously. As with the Electoral Amendment Bill, we would not be doing our job if we did not continue to raise matters which are important to the community, which are legitimate, and which have been attended to around the rest of Australia. We know these things will be accepted here in the Northern Territory eventually and we will just continue to battle away at this conservative government, which apparently does not realise the value of heritage items, both from a financial point of view in relation to the tourist trade and in terms of their intrinsic worth as our children's inheritance.

Unfortunately, another piece of good legislation is to be thrown out by this government, simply because that is all it can do. Members opposite do nothing but criticise us because they say that they have the running on everything and are doing it all. We put forward good ideas and they refer them to committees where they sit for year after year while nothing happens. This is a do-nothing government and tonight has demonstrated that again.

Motion negatived.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 41)

Continued from 11 June 1987.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, in this instance I will be speaking largely in relation to my portfolio responsibilities for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. I will not keep the sponsor of the Liquor Amendment Bill, the member for MacDonnell, in suspense. I will not be supporting the bill.

My advice from the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Northern Territory Police Force is that the proposed legislation is unworkable. The Legal Services Directorate of the Northern Territory Police has advised that the proposed amendments could be in conflict with court processes related to exhibits. Before the member leaves the Assembly to drown his sorrows, however, I should offer him some words of comfort. As I said here 2 days ago, next month the government will be considering the Restricted Areas Inquiry Report, otherwise known as the d'Abbs Report. It may well be that, as a result of those considerations, the vehicle forfeiture provisions of the Liquor Act will come under serious examination. Obviously, I cannot make any promises to the honourable member because the d'Abbs Report is yet to go to Cabinet. In any case, it is my strong view that any action to amend the act should only be taken after the recommendations of Mr d'Abbs receive proper consideration.

I must also disappoint the honourable member on another aspect of his second-reading speech. He asked me to test the views of the Ntarrria Council on forfeiture of vehicles. He was sure the council would support the amendment he was proposing. I did test the council's views and I have to tell

the honourable member that the President of the Ntarria Council strongly expressed the view that the communities he represented did not want any softening of vehicle forfeiture provisions at all, nor any softening of the approach to offenders. He was asked whether, if a person is charged with taking 1 can of beer into a restricted area, his vehicle should be forfeited. His answer was 'Yes'. He also indicated that his communities would not support a discretionary power being given to magistrates, as they remembered what used to happen when the courts had this power. He said vehicles were continually returned and the law was not a real deterrent to offenders. Mr Williams also said liquor was a major problem at Hermannsburg where some people were using ceremonies as an excuse to stockpile liquor at a time when Europeans, including police, were not permitted in the area. The member for MacDonnell invoked the Ntarria Council as an ally to support his case. Perhaps he should have checked before he took such a risk.

I could go through the particular points of the honourable member's bill but I do not see that as necessary. As I have said, it is highly likely that the act will be amended as a result of the d'Abbs Report. That report takes a long look at the provisions on vehicle forfeiture. Mr Speaker, piecemeal amendments will not help to solve the long-term and vexing liquor problem in Aboriginal communities. The government is addressing the matters raised by the honourable member in detail, with the full weight of expert advice from its various departments and authorities.

I should mention that the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission is about to employ a legislation officer to upgrade all of its legislation. Many matters have been identified by commission members and staff which may require amendment and some matters in the d'Abbs Report have the highest priority. In short, my advice to the honourable member is that he should not to lose any sleep about the failure of his bill. The matter is in good hands.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will lose some sleep over the failure of this legislation and I know at least 1 of my constituents will lose a lot of sleep over it. Graeme Mibus, who is not necessarily a friend of the Australian Labor Party and, indeed, is a friend of the government, was charged with taking alcohol into Yirrkala. The case was thrown out of court although I am not too sure of the reasons. It certainly never proceeded to conviction. Mr Mibus was never even convicted of the charge of taking alcohol into Yirrkala. However, some 5 months later, his car still sits at the Nhulunbuy Police Station and he cannot touch it. The magistrate has no right to release it and neither does anybody else. It is rotting away at the Nhulunbuy Police Station. That is the lunacy of the present requirements of the Liquor Act.

I will tell you another story, Mr Speaker. Late last year, I had the very great privilege of travelling with the member for Arnhem, the Chief Minister and numerous other persons. We went on an Air North flight to various communities within my electorate, including Gapuwiyak and Galiwinku. I must say that the Chief Minister put the issues of statehood fairly to those communities and both Mr Lanhupuy and myself spoke at the meetings. At the end of the meeting at Galiwinku, the pilot of the aeroplane brought out an esky containing some alcohol. Mr Speaker, if a policeman had been there, that Air North plane would have been seized and it would still be impounded today.

Mr Speaker, I have no doubt that if the police went out to the airport tomorrow and checked any of the Air North flights from here to Galiwinku, Ramingining or Milingimbi, they would find bottles of whisky being smuggled within parcels, packages, loaves of bread and concealed in people's clothes. You cannot blame the airline company or the pilots but, legally, those planes must be impounded under this stupid piece of legislation.

In the present legal situation, if the police were to actively pursue all traffic into and out of those Aboriginal communities which have been declared dry, totally innocent people would be heavily penalised. That is the ridiculous situation that we find ourselves in. It is not as though you can go to the magistrate and say: 'Your Worship, I had nothing to do with it'. A taxi driver in my electorate instructed his employee not to take alcohol onto Yirrkala. His employee took alcohol to Yirrkala and the taxi was impounded. The employee received a \$50 fine and might have lost his job, but the poor old proprietor never got his cab back. That is stupid. That is absolute insanity.

Mr Manzie: It is the law.

Mr LEO: It bears perfect witness to the old adage that the law is an ass. This law is an absolute ass. I defy the minister responsible for police, the Chief Minister, to instruct the police to go to the airport at Nhulunbuy and search every plane that flies to Aboriginal communities, because he will wipe out the MAF fleet within an hour, the Air North fleet within half-an-hour and Arnhem Air Charter within three-quarters of an hour.

Mr Manzie: He has been aware of offences and has been condoning them.

Mr LEO: I have never condoned them, Mr Attorney-General. I have never condoned them.

Mr Manzie: He has not reported it to the police or my office.

Mr LEO: I am telling you now. The Chief Minister knows it very well because he was sitting on the plane which took alcohol to Galiwinku. He knows very well that this is the truth. If the Chief Minister wants to instigate proceedings against Air North, I will appear in court as a witness for him. He knows it went there. If he wants to instigate proceedings, I will go along as a witness and we can wipe out a twin-engined aeroplane. It is a stupid law and the minister's attitude is equally stupid.

Mr Speaker, this piece of legislation needs to be passed tonight but if the government is too pig-headed to do so, then the d'Abbs Report must be considered immediately and appropriate recommendations must be implemented next week. This is an urgent situation.

Mr Graeme Mibus is a man who has worked amongst Aboriginal people for a very long time. He is very familiar with all of the problems and he has gone out of his way to act in an exemplary manner in and around Aboriginal communities. He is incensed that his case can be dismissed from court and, although he is a perfectly innocent man, yet for 5-months his car has remained in the police lock-up. It is a stupid law. The magistrate cannot release his vehicle; the police cannot release it; nobody can release the damned thing! Yet he has never been pronounced guilty.

This is a stupid law. The government has an obligation to amend it and to reframe it in a form that is acceptable. The government has had this piece of legislation for months. With all its resources, it should have been able to come up with workable amendments. If it maintains that our amendment is unworkable, that is fine. Let the Attorney-General come up with amendments that will make the legislation workable. He has had months in which to do it, with the entire resources of the Department of Law and the Northern Territory Police Force at his disposal, yet the best he can do is get up and say that our bill is unworkable. The government has an obligation to move ...

Mr Coulter: Yours is unworkable, that is what we are talking about.

Mr LEO: You can move amendments to our bill.

Mr Coulter: We can do a lot of things. We will be doing it.

Mr LEO: You can move amendments to this bill to make it work but the best you can do is sit there and say that it is unworkable. By the time you deal with Mr d'Abbs' report in Cabinet and get around to introducing legislation in 3 months time, another person will have lost his car. I hope to hell the Chief Minister has the guts to tell the police to investigate every single plane flying to Arnhem Land. I would like to see old Henry and Walker then. They would go a little pale around the gills when they started seeing their planes lined up in the police yard.

Mr Speaker, for months the government has had the opportunity to look at this legislation and draw up amendments, and it has done nothing.

Mr Coulter: And we are not going to do it tonight, mate, so that's it.

Mr LEO: Precisely, they are not going to do it tonight. So more people in the Northern Territory will be unfairly and unjustly penalised because of a law which can be correctly described as an absolute ass.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I cannot support these proposed amendments to the Liquor Act. The whole basis of these amendments is what the member for MacDonnell believes his constituents want and what he interprets as natural justice.

In fact, in the majority of dry areas, particularly in central Australia, it is fairly apparent to anybody who reads the various reports available and discusses the issues involved with the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Aboriginal communities, that there are conflicting views in both the white and Aboriginal communities. The member for MacDonnell is well aware of the fact that the d'Abbs Report will be presented in the near future. It is a review of the NT restricted areas legislation.

Surely, Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell should wait until this report is available and not attempt to change the act in bits and pieces. He should wait until this House has considered the report and responded to community comment from both Aboriginal and white communities on all kinds of aspects of the Liquor Act.

Personally, I have a long shopping list with regard to alcohol and the Liquor Act, and I think it is time we reviewed the effects of the 2 km law. Legal costs pertaining to some current licence applications, which currently average \$15 000, exceed \$100 000 in some cases. I have always had the impression that the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission operated in such a manner that legal representation was not required. Unfortunately, although that is its stated premiss, many people who appear before it seem to insist on hiring legal representatives. Of course, it is a fact that ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The bill before the Assembly relates to the operation of the dry-area legislation and the forfeiture of vehicles carrying liquor. It has absolutely nothing to do with applications for liquor licences before the commission. I do not believe that that is relevant to the debate in hand. I believe the member is wasting the time of the Assembly. It is now 8.20 pm and the government has already indicated that

it is not prepared to accept the bill. I am not prepared to sit here and have my time wasted and the Assembly's time wasted.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr POOLE: Mr Speaker, it is a fact that sometimes private enterprise likes to keep its business very confidential. Most objections to licence applications come from competitors. On the other hand, if you want to open a clothing shop across the road from another clothing business, you have no problems.

There are many aspects of the liquor industry which require examination. These include hours of operation, standard of premises and the need to serve food with liquor in restaurants, in respect of which I should declare an interest. I would certainly endorse a further examination of how alcohol affects law and order in the community. I would like to know what financial costs the community has to bear in terms of policing and health services for both blacks and whites.

Mr Speaker, in short, the opposition's amendments are premature. Let us wait for the d'Abbs Report to be submitted and then act, not in isolation, but with a view to solving some of the community's problems in relation to the sale and consumption of alcohol. I do not support the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I have been provoked into rising by the inane comments of the member for Araluen who certainly is newer to this place than myself. I have not been here all that long but I have been here long enough to trace this particular piece of legislation, which was first introduced by the member for Barkly in December 1982. Ms Pam O'Neill, the then member for Fannie Bay, proposed an amendment because she said that she believed that the legislation would have the effect which we now know it has. She said there would be no discretion and there would be grotesque injustice. She said that people would lose vehicles which were stolen from them and then used to carry alcohol.

In the debate, the member for Barkly replied that that was not the case and that there was no way in the world that that would happen. In a hearing of the full bench of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, an extract from Hansard was utilised in relation to a case. The court stated that, although it would use every means at its disposal to prevent a grotesque injustice, if this Assembly had passed legislation whose clear intent was to perform a grotesque injustice, it had no choice but to enforce that law.

Mr Speaker, it is the right of this Assembly to enact legislation which includes the most grotesque injustices. The provision in the act has been described as such by our own Supreme Court. Since then, the opposition has been attempting to amend it. The then Leader of the Opposition introduced an amendment in April 1983 to attempt to remove the grotesque injustices included in the act. We failed again.

The first amendment that I proposed in this House was an attempt to remove that provision from the legislation. That was in 1984. I recall that, in that debate, the minister responsible said that there might be something in what I was saying but that the government intended to have a review. In 1985, the present Leader of the Opposition sponsored another bill in an attempt to have the legislation changed. When it was finally debated, he received the answer that it was being reviewed. By that time, the government had a name to quote: Mr d'Abbs was undertaking the review.

During 1985 and 1986, I consistently asked questions about the progress of the d'Abbs Report. I was told that it was occurring, and then that Mr d'Abbs had been given some other job but would be back onto it soon. In 1987, we have finally been able to bring our amendment bill forward for debate in this Assembly. Once again, the answer is that the matter is under review.

The last 3 pieces of legislation tonight - the Electoral Amendment Bill, the Heritage Bill and the Liquor Amendment Bill - are all under review. That is all this government can do, year after year. It has no intention of amending the Liquor Act because it is not interested. It knows that there is grotesque injustice but it does not care. The matter has no priority for the government, which is not willing to confront the issues. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, it has had every opportunity to deal with the issue. It is not something which has come to light recently. We have been raising it since 1982.

Mr Speaker, one would have thought that 5 years would have been sufficient time for this government to take the minor steps necessary to rectify the problem. We are not asking it to overhaul a major piece of legislation like the Criminal Code. We want it to pass a small amendment which will restore some justice and equity to the situation.

Do members opposite not recall the story that I told them last time we debated this issue? It concerns an old couple who were crippled in a car accident and finally received a pay-out of \$7000 or \$8000 after 4 or 5 years. They used the money to buy a second-hand Toyota because their last wish in life was to die in their own country, at a particular outstation. A mob of young hooligans pinched their vehicle and went into town to pick up a load of grog. They returned with the grog and the vehicle was confiscated. The old couple could not get their vehicle back. It was not the court's fault or the fault of the police: it was the fault of this Assembly. It was our fault because we passed the legislation and we have consistently refused to amend it. The blame lies nowhere else and the situation is absolutely outrageous.

The only reason the legislation has not been changed is because the people who are hurt by it are not the rich and the powerful; they are not the people this government is interested in. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, planes fly regularly into communities with grog on board. Whisky bottles are concealed in hollowed-out loaves of bread. I predict that this legislation will not be amended until a Cessna belonging to Air North is confiscated. When that happens, there will also be retrospective legislation so that the aircraft can be returned.

Mr Bell: Rushed through under urgency.

Mr EDE: Rushed through under urgency. That will be the story. I dare members opposite to stand up and deny it, because that will be the situation. It is absolutely outrageous. They are quite prepared to rake off the very small capital base that exists in Aboriginal communities. They will not even change the legislation so that the proceeds from the sale of impounded vehicles go back to the community to be used on community work or something similar. One has to go down on one's knees to try to have a vehicle transferred to another community organisation so that it can be used for the benefit of the community. Even then you do not get anywhere. It is outrageous. It is unjust and it is grotesque. It remains a blot on this Assembly. Our bill will not be passed. Members opposite have once again made up their minds that, no matter how good our legislation, no matter how just our cause and no matter how reasoned our arguments, they will not pass it simply because it comes from this side of the Assembly.

Mr Coulter: Don't tell me that.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, give me another reason. Why didn't the government amend our bill if it thought something was technically wrong? It has had 5 years in which to do so. One would have thought that, even for this government, 5 years would have been enough. It is pathetic. I have never had an amendment passed in this Assembly.

Mr Finch: We have to draw the line somewhere.

Mr EDE: Exactly! Play the man not the idea. That has been the government's approach and I am glad it is on the record. I will not continue wasting my breath on the members opposite. They have made up their minds, as they did with the Electoral Amendment Bill and the Heritage Bill. They did not discuss them on face value. They had no means of debating the issues. All they could say was that they would review them.

We will be raising these matters again. The time will come when the people of the Northern Territory will wake up to the ways of this government, which treats people's legal rights with contempt and has no feeling for what are regarded elsewhere in Australia as the common bounds of decency. It is disgusting but it is typical.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I see that the member for Katherine has had second thoughts. I am quite sure, when we advise the media in the Northern Territory about the appalling performance of the government in this matter, that he will try to tell his constituents that he was not present in the Assembly when it was debated.

I am deeply disappointed that, for no reason whatsoever, the Treasurer and the government have decided to knock back this amendment once again. The Treasurer's only argument of any substance was that the d'Abbs Report is about to be considered by the government and that amendments may flow from that. That argument just will not stand up. There are precedents in this House for enacting urgent legislation and this is urgent legislation. I would be surprised if it were not an issue in Victoria River and it surprises me that the member for Victoria River has not taken part in this debate.

Mr McCarthy: It is no problem at all.

Mr BELL: No problem at all? Are there no dry areas in the electorate of Victoria River?

Mr Manzie: What about your area?

Mr BELL: I will come to that. I have plenty of time. We will come to Gus Williams in a minute too, along with the Ntarrria Council and the way the act operates in my electorate.

All I am saying is that, in spite of the d'Abbs Report, this bill needs to be passed urgently. I remind the Minister for Transport and Works of the precedents in this House. He will recall that on 6 May we passed an amendment to the Traffic Act. I presume the Treasurer will recall that too. We passed an amendment to the Traffic Act that changed some of its breathalyser provisions. That was less than 2 months before a whole new act was introduced. I am afraid that the Treasurer's argument just does not have legs. It will not stand up.

It would have enhanced this legislature to pass this bill tonight. It would have been seen as responsible but the government has decided that, because the opposition has introduced it, it must be knocked back. I think that is tragic and the government is going to wear the results. Opposition speakers have put up logical, cogent reasons for passing this private member's bill, in terms of the electorates that they represent.

The contribution of the member for Araluen did not even bear consideration. He did not speak to the bill and I doubt that he has even read it. He has a passion about liquor licences and the process by which they are granted, in which he confessed a personal interest. That was a total irrelevancy which is not worth mentioning. He spoke about how there are differing attitudes in Aboriginal communities to the concept of dry areas. He was right. Surprise, surprise! Aboriginal communities are characterised by the same diversity of opinion as ours are.

None of the members opposite knows anything about the setting up of dry areas because not one of them has been in this Assembly or represented a bush electorate long enough to know. They have not been in attendance when negotiations on the setting up of dry areas have been conducted in communities. I have. I have seen the positive and the negative sides of the issue, which is dear to my heart. The dry-areas legislation is not without contention in the communities where it operates. Of course it is not! That is why there are offences and that is why the law is there to protect people. The law is there to stop people getting killed. I have seen that happen too, as I said when I introduced this legislation. However, laws have to be seen to be just as well as to be just. The way that fact escapes members opposite makes me puke.

The contempt with which this bill has been treated by members opposite defies understanding. The Treasurer read his couple of pages. When I am on my feet he feels free to interject. He is fairly good at shouting but he does not have a quick enough mind to pick up an interjection once in a while. He has to stick to his pat script because that is all he can manage. He presented one argument: that the matter would be dealt with after consideration of the d'Abbs Report. In May this year, the Traffic Act was amended. One month later, in June, a whole new act came before the Assembly. His argument will not stand up.

The Treasurer also said that this amendment was somehow unworkable. I do not expect the Treasurer to be a particularly logical character. I have seen enough of him over a few years to know that his logical capacities are not too flash. I presume, however, that he might be able to find somebody who will explain to him the distinction between an analytical argument and an argument by assertion. He said that our amendment is unworkable but he did not offer a single argument in support of that assertion, nor did he offer any possible amendment or means of correction. He could have introduced a raft of amendments or put forward other measures to make this bill work, so that the sort of forfeitures of motor vehicles that have been discussed here ad nauseam could have been carried out in a way that enhanced this legislature. The fact of the matter is that the Treasurer is dragging the administration of justice in the Northern Territory through the dirt. I have enough trouble explaining to people throughout my electorate that they should have respect for whitefeller law. The Treasurer's behaviour tonight just makes that more difficult.

It has been a very instructive day for me. My colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, put forward a motion to establish a Law and Justice Review

Committee and that was bucketed by the Attorney-General. This is the second private member's bill which has demonstrated the screaming need for exactly that review committee. The insular, suburban, uninformed, ignorant, unoriginal, mendacious contribution of the Treasurer, written word for word ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! There are 2 grounds for this point of order. The honourable member is deviating from the subject under debate, which is a bill relating to the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, and the other is that he is casting improper dispersions on myself and other members of this House.

Mr BELL: Can I speak to the point of order, Mr Speaker? First of all, I presume the Attorney-General means 'aspersions' and not 'dispersions'. Secondly, there is only one point of order and that relates to the word 'mendacious' which basically means that he is a liar. I withdraw that unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. There was a point of order, and I am grateful that the honourable member has withdrawn the remark which he was about to be asked to withdraw.

Mr BELL: However, Mr Speaker, I am not withdrawing my observation that I consider his comments to be insular, suburban and uninformed.

Mr MANZIE. A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member is discussing the subject of a previous debate and, under standing orders ...

Mr BELL: I am not. I am discussing this one, Daryl. Sit down and listen.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell is referring to my comments in a previous debate and I think that he should be required to confine his remarks to the subject of the debate in progress.

Mr Leo: He is having a shot at the Treasurer, you dummy.

Mr MANZIE: He should have explained that. He was talking about me when he ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw his remark.

Mr Leo: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the Treasurer's arguments against this bill do not stand up. I will not discuss them further, having well and truly demolished anything which might have been construed as a genuine argument.

I will just return to his comment about the Ntarria Council and his own record in restoring its vehicles. Whilst the arguments advanced were pretty punk, his actual behaviour has been even worse. I will reiterate the story of Santa Teresa. I found it quite interesting that the Treasurer did not bother to mention the extraordinary events that he was involved in in relation to Santa Teresa and the flow-on effects at Ntarria.

For the benefit of those honourable members who do not recall the events I am talking about, a bus was seized under the provisions of the Liquor Act. The events which followed were quite extraordinary. I have not seen a report of the actual incident in which the bus was seized and I have a great deal of respect, which I think I placed on record in my second-reading speech, for the police who enforce this legislation under very difficult circumstances. I certainly know that that is not an easy task. This particular bus was seized and the due processes ensued. The people of Santa Teresa were then without their community bus, which was the only form of public transport for the basketball teams and the football teams that play in Alice Springs and for the people, particularly the young people, who live there. They were unable to compete in the competitions in Alice Springs because one person had broken the law. This was perceived by most people as pretty unreasonable, but the law is as it is. The courts have no discretion. The Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission had no discretion, so the bus was impounded.

I made representations concerning the matter and Brother Cletus Reid from Santa Teresa wrote to the local paper. As a result - though far be it from me to try to imagine how the mind of the Treasurer works - the bus was suddenly given back. The fact that there was an election a few weeks later might have had something to do with it. Naturally, the people at Santa Teresa were delighted but the Pandora's box had been opened because, at Hermannsburg, the Ngurratjuta vehicle - another community vehicle - was seized under similar circumstances. I have made representations on behalf of the people concerned and perhaps the Treasurer might like to let me know if he was as magnanimous with the Ngurratjuta vehicle as he was with the Santa Teresa bus. He is not interjecting quite as vociferously as he usually does. He is fairly quiet. How extraordinary, Mr Speaker! I think he must be a little ashamed.

If he is ashamed about that, he might like to go a deeper shade of red in relation to what happened when I raised the matter of the Santa Teresa bus in this Assembly. He snuck across to this side of the Chamber and grabbed the letters that I had about the issue from the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service. I thought, 'That is okay Bazza. You can have a look at them'. Terrific! I did not get either of them back.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 65. The member for MacDonnell has breached this particular standing order sufficiently in his contribution to this debate and it is becoming somewhat embarrassing.

Mr BELL: I am sure it is becoming deeply embarrassing.

Mr SPEAKER: Would the honourable member like to speak to the point of order?

Mr BELL: If I find out what it is, I might.

Mr Coulter: You wouldn't know. Your contempt for this House is such that you would not know.

Mr SPEAKER. There is a point of order. The honourable member shall refer to the minister by his correct title.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I know what a sensitive soul the Treasurer is and I understand what a deep respect he has for the due processes of law. I appreciate that my referring to him by such a common sobriquet would have affected his tender soul, and I apologise profusely.

Mr Speaker, the fact of the matter is that those documents that I gave him ...

Mr Finch: You carry on like a pork chop.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk and I are undecided whether that remark is unparliamentary. In the words of the Clerk, he is 'not quite sure how a pork chop carries on'. However, I would ask the Minister for Transport and Works to withdraw his remark.

Mr Finch: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr BELL: Suffice it to say that the Minister for Transport and Works gives a fairly good imitation of one.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for MacDonnell must withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw it unreservedly.

To return to serious business, the fact of the matter is that the Treasurer came across to this side of the Assembly and asked me for some documents in relation to the specific issue I was pursuing here. He took them back to the other side of the Chamber and, in the succeeding weeks, my electorate secretary attempted to pursue them. I still do not have them back. The Treasurer should lift his game. When he then rises in this Assembly and is extraordinarily dismissive of constructive opposition initiatives such as this one, which springs from the very heart of our electorates, he deserves no more and no less than the contempt which I trust I am expressing.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the Treasurer has an even more malign motive in rejecting this bill. It was a very sad day for the Northern Territory when the Liquor Commission was merged with the Racing and Gaming Commission and became the responsibility of the Treasurer. The opposition fought very strongly against that merger because we believe that the Liquor Commission is more appropriately placed, in terms of its functions, within the Health and Community Services portfolio.

Mr Dale: I might put you into Ward 9.

Mr BELL: If you can be a little bit more specific about Ward 9, I might be able to answer you, Don, but I do not know what Ward 9 is.

Mr Dale: You are not familiar with my portfolio so stop criticising it.

Mr BELL: I am sufficiently familiar with it and with the appropriate distribution of functions to know that the Liquor Commission should have stayed in it rather than being placed in Treasury alongside racing and gaming. It was probably before you were in here, boyo, so I do not necessarily expect you to know about it.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 65. The member for MacDonnell is still referring to members by other than their correct titles. I am just trying to add some class to his debating skills.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member will refer to other members in this Assembly by their correct titles.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will not only refer to them by the correct title, but I will also address them through the Chair. That might stop me from being tempted to throttle them at times.

Mr Dale: You can take that on board whenever you like too.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, as I said, I think there is a rather more malign motive behind the Treasurer's rejection of this bill. As I said when I introduced this bill, we expect the punishment to fit the crime. We consider that a jail sentence or a fine would suitably reflect the gravity of the offence. As I said in my second-reading speech, people are effectively receiving \$50 000 fines for bringing 1 can of beer into a dry area. I thought I had made an impression on the blockheads over there, but I have not.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker. I thought I had made some impression on the IQs of members opposite but that is obviously not the case. Obviously, Mr Speaker, like myself you imagine that they are fairly low. I can understand your concern.

Mr Dale: You had better get on with it.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this bloke is trying to ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! For the fourth time, I refer to standing order 65.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am speaking through the Chair. I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: The member is not being asked to withdraw. The term 'bloke' is not unparliamentary but is an incorrect title.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the Treasurer is blatantly using the relevant provision of the Liquor Act to raise revenue and that explains his opposition to our amendment. I will be very interested to learn, in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill, how much money has been raised through it. Not only that, it has been raised from the section of the Territory's population who can least afford it, and who have no public transport services. As far as I am concerned, the government's opposition and the Treasurer's performance in this debate are abysmal.

I have demonstrated that every argument advanced by the government does not stand up. If our amendment is unworkable, I ask the government to tell us why. The argument about the d'Abbs Report does not stand up because the government was prepared to amend the Traffic Act only 2 months before it introduced an entirely new act. The government had to find a reason to reject this bill so it seized upon the d'Abbs Report as its excuse.

Mr Coulter: Your constituents don't want it.

Mr BELL: The Treasurer says that it is unworkable. He had 45 minutes to tell us why it is unworkable and he did not make one substantial contribution. I cannot imagine why it is unworkable.

Let me just explain why it is workable. The plain fact is that the current situation is totally unworkable. We have Ghengis Khan - sorry, the the Treasurer ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 239(d). The member for MacDonnell is persistently and wilfully refusing to conform with a standing order. He has now been instructed by you on 4 occasions in this debate. He really needs to be brought into line.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, the Treasurer did not state what his point of order was. He did not demonstrate his objection to the member for MacDonnell's speech. He did not give any indication to the Chair of what he was objecting to. He is presuming upon the Chair. If you like, Mr Speaker, he has carried his arrogance to the throne. He is indicating to you what your ruling should be. I have not yet heard what the Treasurer's point of order is and, whilst I accept that you are able to rule on it, I think it will be a very sorry day for this Assembly when the arrogance of the government frontbench impinges upon the Chair.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the reference to Ghengis Khan.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw the reference to the Treasurer.

In the time that remains to me, I do not have too much to say beyond placing on record my contempt for the government's behaviour in this regard.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Noes 12

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Finch
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, today has not been one of the brightest days in the firmament of this parliament. It is most rare in this House for a debate to be gagged and whenever that happens it is most unfortunate. However, the issues which were raised in the debate which was gagged certainly will not go away.

In the same way, the issues raised in the first question asked in question time this morning will not disappear. In his normal arrogant way, the Treasurer refused to answer my question on the grounds that the matter was sub judice. I want to spell out the issues that are involved in this particular matter because they are important. It is time that this Assembly looked at the notion of sub judice.

Mr Manzie: It is the Speaker's decision.

Mr SMITH: I know that. This matter has not yet been determined by the Speaker and I just want to go through the issues involved.

Mr Speaker, in answer to a question from me yesterday, the Treasurer said that a writ has been taken out by Burgundy Royale against the Northern Territory government and Westpac. There are 4 grounds for that writ and I will go over them again. Burgundy Royale claims that, in a 1979 investment mission to Asia, it was promised that no other 5-star hotel would be built until its hotel was up and running, that a casino licence for high rollers would be offered to the Beaufort Hotel, that the Darwin Airport terminal would be constructed by the time the hotel was up and running and that the Darwin to Alice Springs railway line would be constructed by that time.

Mr Speaker, I accept that the validity of those claims is a matter which is sub judice, despite the fact that yesterday the Treasurer himself made some comments about them. He said: 'It is our legal advice that Burgundy Royale's case is not particularly sound'. Quite clearly, that was a reference to a matter which is sub judice. He also said that I was acting as a debt collector for people who are aggrieved and I think it would be possible to argue that that is also a reference to something which is sub judice because of his use of the word 'aggrieved'. I have no problems in accepting that those matters are sub judice.

The question I asked this morning, however, does not relate to matters which are sub judice. I will repeat it now: 'As I understand it, the government has paid rent for office space at the Beaufort Centre for 5 years in advance. Does the liquidator consider this to be a debt held by the government against Burgundy Royale and, if so, where does it rank in the order of debts? Secondly, and conversely, if no arrangement has been entered into with the liquidator for recovery for the rent advanced, how does the government propose to avoid paying rent again when the property is sold?' The answer, or the evasion, went as follows:

I will not be discussing the matter of Burgundy Royale in terms of its financial position or anything of that nature in this Assembly, as the matter of the writ has now been listed. No financial considerations or part of the Burgundy Royale situation will be discussed by me during the course of these sittings.

This matter may well require a Speaker's ruling. The situation is as follows. There is a specific writ before the Federal Court of Australia which deals with a number of promises that Burgundy Royale alleges were made in 1979 and which it further alleges were the basis on which it proceeded to build the hotel. My questions this morning were not directed at the operations of Burgundy Royale at all; they were directed at decisions taken by the Northern Territory government. They were not comments about the financial position of Burgundy Royale, as the Treasurer inferred in his reply. They were questions relating to the financial position of the Northern Territory government. Burgundy Royale is not even involved in what I am asking about. Does the

liquidator consider this to be a debt held by the government against Burgundy Royale? I am asking for the opinion of the liquidator, and obviously the Treasurer knows the answer. Where does it rank in the order of debts? Again, this is a question of the liquidator and not Burgundy Royale. A further question of the liquidator is: if an arrangement has been entered into with the liquidator, how does the government propose to avoid paying rent again when the property is sold?

I want to put the Treasurer on notice that I do not believe that there is a matter which is sub judice involved in relation to these questions. I intend to keep asking those questions and others relating to matters like electricity, water and sewerage that I believe are relevant. I expect that, after mature consideration, the Treasurer will answer my questions.

Mr Coulter: Here we go again.

Mr SMITH: People are genuinely concerned about what is happening in this particular situation. There is no way that it can be described as being sub judice.

Mr Coulter: That is not for you to decide.

Mr SMITH: It is not for you to decide either, and you tried to decide it when you used the words 'sub judice'.

Mr Coulter: I did not use them.

Mr SMITH: That is true. You said: 'as the matter of the writ has now been listed'.

I cannot think of any reason the Treasurer might have had for not answering the questions other than that he considered the matter to be sub judice. I want to make it clear to him that I will continue to ask those questions until I get answers. He may continue to refuse to answer but I will continue to ask, because it is a matter of legitimate concern to the people of the Northern Territory and they have a right to an answer.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening because I wish to take up comments made by the Leader of the Opposition about my position in relation to land rights. I am sure that members of the opposition are all going to leave. They do not have the gumption to sit here and listen. What an important day of business it is for them! I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to stay and listen to what I have to say to him but, on this very busy General Business Day, he is about to depart and leave us to it. He will be able to read about it in Hansard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the Daily Hansard of Tuesday 20 October, the Leader of the Opposition is recorded as saying:

As an aside, it was interesting to note that the member for Jingili, one of the most fervent anti-Aboriginal and anti-land rights members of this Assembly, in the completely different environment of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, when he thought no one was listening, came out with a very positive statement in support of land rights.

I found that quite fascinating. Let me just run through those comments and pick them up point by point. He claims that I am one of the most fervent

anti-Aboriginal and anti-land rights members of this House. I deny that. It is absolute nonsense. I have stood here on a number of occasions in the last few years and raised matters of concern to me in relation to Aboriginal people, such as the kava issue and other substance abuse. I raised the issue of kava when members of the opposition were saying nothing about it, and that includes even the member for Arnhem. The member for Arafura was not in the House at that time, but the member for Arnhem had not said bcc about kava. However, I stood here and raised the matter as an issue of concern to me in relation to Aboriginal people.

I have no problems at all with Aboriginal people and it is absolutely disgraceful for the Leader of the Opposition to say that I am one of the most fervent anti-Aboriginal and anti-land rights members of this house. I deny it totally. Once again, he is using a political ploy in an attempt to further his own interests.

He went on to talk about an address I gave to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and how I supposedly made some remarks when I 'thought no one was listening'. I certainly know one person who was not listening: the delegate representing the opposition. He was supposed to be in attendance for the 4 sitting days of the CPA Conference and he turned up for about an hour. He did not have the good grace or the courtesy to attend the opening ceremony. Oh no, he snuck in after lunch, sat there for an hour, and then disappeared. I understand that the honourable member had other commitments, which is fine, but at least the opposition could have appointed somebody else. Surely the opposition knew that its delegate had other commitments. It could have appointed somebody else. Even the member for Stuart could have attended. I know the member for MacDonnell came into the Chamber and sat in the gallery for a number of hours on a couple of occasions. Perhaps he could have been the substitute for the delegate. Why didn't the Leader of the Opposition offer the position to one of the independent members? I think it was an absolute disgrace. It is beyond my comprehension that he has the hide to use the phrase 'when he thought no one was listening' when his own delegate was not even there to listen.

In one breath he said that I am the most fervent anti-Aboriginal anti-land rights member of this House and, in the next, he said that I support land rights. What a contradiction! That is typical of the sort of things that the Leader of the Opposition says.

Let me turn now to comments made by the Chief Minister when, in a ministerial statement, he referred to the Katherine Gorge National Park and clarified the position of the CLP. He said:

The Northern Territory government is committed to an equitable system of land rights that can satisfy legitimate Aboriginal aspirations for security of land tenure which is compatible with the needs of the wider community. In this context, I will quote from the platform of the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party.

'The party accepts and endorses the concept of Aboriginal Land Rights in the Northern Territory and will continue to recognise the fundamental affinity that Aboriginals have with their land'.

My comments at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association simply confirmed the position of this government and the policy of the CLP. That is exactly where I stand. I support the right of Aboriginal people to own their own land.

Mr Ede: Big deal. That is terrific!

Mr SETTER: You might think it is a big deal. I know that your party policy devotes about 5 pages to that very issue.

Mr Ede: Yes.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I will not bore the Assembly by going through all of the fine details, but my position and that of my party is that we support the right of Aboriginal people to own land. Having said that, let me clarify it further. I do not support, and I know that my party does not support, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in its present form. That particular act has perpetrated a horrendous injustice on the wider community of the Northern Territory and there is no doubt about that. If anybody cares to have a look at the map of the Northern Territory today compared to what it was 11 years ago, he will see that around 50% of the Northern Territory has either been granted to or is under claim by Aboriginal people. We hear differing figures in this House relating to the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory, but my understanding is that we are talking about 22.4% of the population. Others say it is 25%. Regardless of that, the Aboriginal people have now been granted or have under claim more than 50% of the Northern Territory land mass, and they still have about 10 years to go. I understand that Minister Holding put through an amendment to the Land Rights Act earlier this year, introducing a 10-year sunset clause.

I have no problem with Aboriginal people being granted land for their own use, but I certainly have a problem with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in its current form. I think it is one of the most divisive acts that has ever been passed through the federal parliament and perpetrated on this country.

I will quote from the NT News of 6 May 1986. That well-known scribe, Frank Alcorta, was referring to the Labor Party Conference which was held at that time, and the article was headed: 'Labor Peace but at a Price'. He wrote: 'The Labor Party's Annual Conference achieved peace but at a price. What the conference was all about was 2 issues: land rights and mining, particularly uranium mining. Both were sacrificed on the altar of the progressive left'. I might ask the member for Stuart where he fits into the structure.

Mr Ede: The Centre Left.

Mr SETTER: Centre Left? Is that progressive?

Mr Ede: Bloody oath.

Mr SETTER: I am sure it is.

Mr Ede: But not that progressive.

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

Mr Ede: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I will continue quoting Mr Alcorta:

On land rights, after the usual rhetoric on the colonisation of dispossessed and alienated Aboriginal people, the conference agreed

to: maintain the Aboriginal right of veto on mining on Aboriginal land; provide for excisions on pastoral properties up to 2% of their total area; provide for Aboriginal control of the Northern Territory coastal waters within 2 km of and adjacent to Aboriginal land; and legislate to allow Aboriginals to enter upon, use bore water, hunt and forage over pastoral properties provided they comply with reasonable requirements by pastoralists.

He goes on to say:

Other measures include predictable legislation to ensure the protection of sacred sites, calls for self-determination and support of the Aboriginal homeland movement.

That is the position of the Labor Party.

Mr Ede: Which one are you objecting to? Come on, tell us.

Mr SETTER: Just let me proceed, Mr Deputy Speaker, by quoting from the Central Land Council 6th Annual Report, 1985-86. Of course, we are all aware that the director of that organisation is Mr Patrick Dodson. Mr Dodson says:

In terms of the wider community, much of the effort of the directorate in the public relations field has been directed at countering false and deliberately misleading information from opponents of land rights. The mining industry has been extremely active in this regard, not only publishing false information, designed to undermine the support of non-Aboriginal people for land rights, but also lobbying intensively in an effort to have the Commonwealth government amend the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 to take away the right of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to refuse permission for mining on their land or to impose conditions under which mining is to take place. This campaign by the mining industry has been maliciously racist, and has had the backing of seemingly limitless funds. In the absence of any government-funded or authorised campaigns to counter this racist offensive, land councils were forced to take on the mining industry themselves and finance their struggle from within their meagre budgets.

From the comments of Mr Dodson and the outcome of the Labor Party Conference, we can see where the problem lies with regard to land rights and the the racism that seems to be generated by some people on the opposition benches and within the land councils, to the great detriment of the wider community of the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in tonight's adjournment debate I wish to discuss the problem that is emerging in respect of secondary colleges in the Northern Territory.

Specifically, I wish to address my comments to the situation at the Casuarina Secondary College. That college has far outstripped the projected growth rates that were compiled by the government back in 1985. At that stage, the government predicted an enrolment figure for 1988 of 909 students. We all remember the debate on the introduction of the senior and junior high school system. The government letterboxed the Darwin area in September 1985 with a pamphlet entitled 'High Schools and Secondary Colleges - a New Deal for Secondary Students'. That document was intended to hose down the growing

opposition to secondary colleges and to allay the fears of parents in relation to how senior secondary colleges would operate.

As I have said before in this House, I am and was a supporter of the senior and junior high school system. I do not resile from that. However, I have criticised and will continue to criticise the government when it does not live up to the promises that it made when it introduced that system and thereby places that system, which is a very good one, under threat. Let us look at some of the promises that the government made in that particular pamphlet.

It stated that 'senior high schools would be restricted to around 1000'. It said that, whichever schools were designated as senior high schools, that 'should not result in schools being of excessive size'. Further, Mr Speaker, '1000 pupils are to be the maximum enrolment in a senior high school'. Throughout the document, the figure of 1000 was mentioned. That is in accord with the general view of educationalists around Australia, who talk in terms of preferred levels of 700 although there is a general willingness to go to 1000, given tight economic circumstances.

The actual enrolment at Casuarina High School in 1987 was 1285. The projected enrolments for 1988 vary between a minimum of 1240 and a maximum of 1360. Within a couple of years of the advent of the system, the government has blown by an average of 33.3% the maximum that it set for itself. It is not a pretty picture. It is not one that will encourage parents in the Northern Territory to maintain their commitment to our education system.

There are a number of reasons why numbers have increased. For example, there was the introduction of school-assessed subjects. Recently, there was the cessation of the unemployment benefit, or the dole, for 16 to 18-year-olds and the introduction by the government of the 2-year matriculation system. There was the unfortunate cessation of access courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology. There has been a marked decrease in employment opportunities for students leaving school after Year 10. These have all resulted in increased retention rates at the college. As I said in a recent debate, there has been a marked increase in retention rates in the Northern Territory, even though ours are still the second-worst in Australia. Those are some of the factors that have caused the increased numbers.

Whatever the circumstances, the government must now address the problems being caused by the severe overcrowding. The overcrowding in those schools must affect the students' ability to learn. It certainly places extreme pressures on teachers, whose numbers have already been reduced because of the government's decision no longer to include support staff in the staffing formula. More students are being taught by fewer teachers.

That environment will result in increased disciplinary problems. Every teacher to whom I have spoken has said that there are fewer disciplinary problems when there is good student-teacher contact. When teachers know their students and work closely together with them, the students keep on track. The blackboard-jungle stage, with large numbers of students and very few teachers, is when the problems start. Students become riotous and it is very difficult to bring them back under control.

The teachers at Casuarina Senior High School have repeatedly raised the problems of pastoral care. They believe that the increased numbers are making it more and more impossible for them to give the pastoral care which they believe it is their duty to give to students in their last few years of high

school. This problem must be addressed. We cannot allow students to continue to suffer these problems for another 2 or 3 years. The last years of secondary school are extremely important and students in mid-adolescence should not have to deal with problems caused by this government's failure to plan adequately.

The government's own figures indict it. Its lack of planning has led to this problem. It is not good enough for the government to say that it cannot be blamed for what has happened and that people will just have to grin and bear it. It got away with that approach in secondary education out bush. It most definitely will not get away with it in secondary education in the northern suburbs of Darwin. The government must look at the problem and find a solution.

As I understand it, a number of possible solutions have been canvassed. It is possible that the government will just continue to place demountables at the school, increasing temporary accommodation in the hope that somehow the students will cope with it, ignoring all the evidence and advice about the problems with numbers in the hope that the problem will go away.

The government could instruct parents living on the air force base, whose children attend Nightcliff Junior High School, to send them to the senior section of Darwin High School when they finish their junior-level studies. However, Darwin High School itself now has about 1100 students as well as an intensive English unit of about 60 students. It is quite obvious that if this path is followed, as has been mooted by some, it will not reduce the problem at Casuarina High and will compound the problems that already exist at Darwin High.

Another possibility is that Nightcliff High School will take on a manageable number of enrolments for a certain number of courses at senior high school level, with other courses being taken at Casuarina, thus creating a multi-campus situation.

I have also heard of the possibility of using the split-shift education system, where one batch of students would start at 7.30 am and continue for a specified number of hours. When they vacated the premises, another batch of students would come in, finishing in the later evening. That would be a substantial change in terms of practices in this country, although it has been attempted in other countries.

I hope solutions to this problem will not be dropped on the community in the same way as happened with the 'Towards the 90s' document. Indeed, I hope that, having heard my speech in this adjournment debate, the minister will come back to this House before we rise next week and tell us how he proposes to overcome what could be the major constraint on senior high school education in the Northern Territory. I have already raised with him the problem of the number of local students attending the University College. I have further questions about that which I will be raising in another debate. It is obviously now imperative that we attend to the senior high school situation so that we can produce the raw material for our university. I call on the minister to tell us how he intends to overcome these problems so that this House can debate the issues involved and allow parents - not just in Darwin but throughout the Territory - to know how the government intends to rectify its planning mistakes and solve the problem of over-enrolment at senior high schools.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of matters I want to refer to in this evening's adjournment debate and I will do so as expeditiously as possible.

The first concerns my portfolio responsibility of transport and works. I draw the attention of the Minister for Transport and Works who, I am pleased to see, is still in the Chamber, to the NT Road Construction Price Index Inception Report and the contract for \$8000 that was arranged in August last year. I wrote to the minister when the matter was drawn to my attention and I am advised that there has been no further progress because it has not been pursued by the government. Obviously, the question of road construction prices is of considerable concern throughout the Territory. I am very concerned to ensure that Territorians get value for the dollars that are spent on roads within the Territory.

The report was to form the basis of a price indexing system relative to the local road construction industry. In the last paragraph of the letter I received from the current minister's predecessor, he said: 'It has been found that current systems, such as the CPI, the Construction Price Index, are not particularly valid when related to the local road construction industry'. He concluded by saying that: 'A Northern Territory-oriented index would be a valuable corporate management tool for use in cost forecasting for forward planning'. I would be interested to learn what further consideration has been given to the matter and what the Territory government received for the \$8000 it paid to Syromath for the development of the Construction Price Index. I would appreciate hearing from the minister about the matter at some stage.

While I am discussing the question of roads, I should point out that there are certain issues about which my constituents frequently make representations to me. One of these is the state of the roads in MacDonnell. I have mentioned my concern about the Olgas road in these sittings, and my views in that regard have already been placed on the Parliamentary Record. I will make no further reference to that matter this evening. The roads I intend to mention are, unfortunately, basically Northern Territory government responsibilities. I would like the minister to make a note of them and seek some information about the grading of them.

Firstly, I refer to an important tourist road, the road between Willowra and Kings Canyon. There is great concern amongst the people in that vicinity, particularly Mr Conway of Kings Creek Station. I had a discussion with him about the difficulties the many tourists visiting the Kings Canyon area were having with that particular road. A large number of vehicles call into Kings Creek Station because they have suffered considerable damage. With the sealing of the south road, many more people are visiting the Territory. I can remember driving to Kings Canyon many years ago in an HK Holden sedan. It was dirt all the way from Alice Springs, and it was a very rough little run in those days.

With the increased amount of sealed road in the vicinity, it is not so difficult now to reach the halfway point but from then on people are confronted with a bit of a shock, the same sort of shock they receive, dare I say, on the Olgas road. The Territory government has developed a reputation for zeal for making representations about the Olgas road. This little stretch of road to an area that is as attractive as any in the Centre - the Kings Canyon and Reedy Rock Hole area - is attracting more and more visitors by the week and requires some upgrading. I would like the minister to pay some attention to that.

There was a proposal on earlier government capital works programs to seal the road all the way to Hermannsburg. Unfortunately, that has not happened. There have been cutbacks and I suppose we must all expect to cop some of the consequences. However, the Northern Territory government seems to be very reluctant to accept its share and prefers to beat the federal government around the head. My approach to capital works in my electorate has been a reasonable one. In the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill, I will be asking for an assurance that capital works are attended to on an even-handed basis and not on the basis of pork-barrelling.

The Hermannsburg road has been the subject of representations from people on Larapinta Drive, as it is called when it appears on capital works programs. The grading program on the Hermannsburg road is a matter of serious concern. That road carries many visitors through to that wonderful Palm Valley area. I am not sure whether the minister has had the pleasure of visiting Palm Valley.

Mr Finch: Yes, I have. It is a delightful spot.

Mr BELL: I am delighted to hear that and, since the minister finds it so delightful, I trust that he will find it within the resources of his department to make getting there as fine an experience as actually being there.

The other piece of road I want to refer is the road between Papunya and Kintore. My constituents at Papunya and Mount Liebig along that route, and also 60 miles further out at Ilbilli, the place Lasseter set out from with his camels into the breakaway country, have made representations to me, as have the people who live at Kintore or Walungurru. The stretch of road between the sandhills and across the flat is in need of attention.

I hope that some regular grading program, such as the Commonwealth government has undertaken in respect of the Olgas road, can be organised because these roads carry a considerable amount of traffic. Obviously, I am not seeking a monthly grading program on these roads but they are all in need of better attention than they are receiving at the moment. I hope the minister will take the issue on board and provide a better service than is being provided at present.

One of the joys of being a member of the Legislative Assembly is to be able to pay tribute to people like Bob Pasternak or, to give him his full Czech name, Bohumil theofil Pasternak, who was recently the recipient of an award. Bob became one of Australia's unsung heroes in 1958 when he undertook a 6-hour swim through the night to save the lives of 2 companions left clinging to an oar after their fishing dinghy sank in Darwin Harbour.

Bob was born in Czechoslovakia and, whilst serving as a commando towards the end of World War II, was wounded in the arm by a dum dum bullet during a raid in Poland. If my memory serves me correctly, he was with the Allied Forces at that stage. He had been a member of the Soviet army and received decoration while fighting on what would have been the Soviet Union's western front. One of life's huge ironies is that he sought to march in an Anzac Day celebration in the early 1950s and, in those days of McCarthyism and the Cold War, that provoked some concern. His bravery in fighting on the Allied side during World War II was of little account in the early 1950s.

To return to the incident in Darwin Harbour, despite his crippled right arm which was a legacy of the war wound, Bob knew that he was the strongest swimmer of the 3 people who were caught in the harbour after their boat lost

its outboard motor and sank at about 11 pm on a Friday night in December 1958. He volunteered to go for help. The tide was against him and for the first couple of hours he merely dodged channels to avoid being carried further out to sea. When the tide changed, he began to swim in earnest and finally, despite choppy seas which made breathing difficult, he was hauled aboard the life raft of a vessel which had heard his cries for help. He was able to give directions for a search before being taken exhausted to the Darwin Hospital.

Two planes and several small craft were sent out to seek the survivors but could find no trace of them. They were about to abandon the search when someone suggested calling in an expert on the currents and channels of the harbour. With the assistance of a boating friend, Bob plotted where he believed the tides and currents could have carried the men, by now presumed to be dead. I believe the friend was Mr Carl Atkinson, who would be well-known to the member for Fannie Bay. They set out separately and each located one of the survivors, hauling them aboard barely alive. Both recovered after treatment, and they say they have Bob Pasternak to thank for their lives. Bob is now in his 60s and lives at the Old Timers Home in Alice Springs.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1987-88
(Serial 58)

Continued from 21 October 1987.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, it is indeed a privilege for me to be able to stand in the Assembly today and close the debate on the Appropriation Bill. A full discussion has been had by members on both sides of this House. I thank honourable members for their contributions. It is impossible to address directly all the matters raised by honourable members but, no doubt, many questions will be answered in detail during the committee stage.

The Leader of the Opposition and his deputy said that the budget lacked a goal or a plan. Perhaps they were looking for a 5-year plan. The budget contained an explicit theme which clearly indicated the priorities and goals of this government. That theme is development, a theme that the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy have difficulty in understanding. It was interesting to hear the member for Stuart use the word 'development' in this Assembly this morning and I congratulate him for that. Mind you, he used it in a negative context.

The theme of development has been seen clearly by the community. The budget is strongly developmental in its thrust while continuing to provide essential services at adequate levels and, at the same time, offering greater encouragement to the private sector to take up roles previously dominated by the public sector. The mining seminar held in Darwin last week is ample evidence of the private sector's wish to become more involved in the development that is occurring in the Northern Territory at the moment. Over 250 people attended that seminar. The seminar was of great interest to suppliers in Darwin. Many realised that some opportunities were being lost to them. For example, one company was supplying fruit, vegetables and meat, valued at \$75 000, each month. Another supplier who anticipated a \$3m sales budget this year exceeded that figure in the first 3 months. He has now revised his expectations to \$10m in sales. I will give members the name of the company later if they wish.

Since the budget was brought down, we have had many examples of development. Building projects have been announced, goldmines have opened and offshore oil exploration and drilling has accelerated. As each month passes, we will see more and more of the budget's deliberate developmental emphasis eventuate in projects, jobs, exports and wealth creation.

The Leader of the Opposition has argued that the budget has not laid out the specifics of the government's role in assisting development. I must inform him that we do not theorise about assisting development; we have an outstanding track record of doing it. The mining industry will tell him that the Northern Territory government leads the way in Australia in its efforts to minimise bureaucratic entanglement and in its attempts to bring projects on stream. If he wants bits of paper about direction and policies, all he has to do is to go back to the Territory election earlier this year when the CLP issued policy statements and plans on a welter of issues and topics. This telling point was made by the Chief Minister in his contribution to the budget speech. He mentioned that the areas covered included health, drug and alcohol abuse, respite care, education, housing, women, law and order, community care, mining, energy, fisheries, land, agriculture, business, industry, tourism and the pastoral industry. Is that not good enough for the Leader of the

Opposition, Mr Speaker? I think not. He would have us despoil forests in order to issue pieces of paper. This government is about getting on with development.

The Leader of the Opposition also made much noise about the decline in a number of economic indicators. Whilst it is a fact that various economic indicators have fallen recently, it must be remembered that they have fallen from a very high base. From 1981 to 1986, the Territory's average population growth rate was 4.72% and the equivalent Australian rate was 1.43%. In the last calendar year, our population growth rate declined to 2.4% but this was still far higher than the estimated Australian average rate of 1.5%.

In building, the Territory still leads the way despite the decline from the record levels of the early 1980s. Approvals in the Territory for the year ended August 1987 were 9.63 per 1000 people compared with 7.54 for Australia. In non-residential construction, commencements in 1986-87 grew by 19% to \$19.4m compared to an Australian growth of 17%. Activity in engineering construction declined from very high levels following completion of the gas pipeline and the Channel Island Power Station but, again, commencements in 1986-87 were almost double the Australian rate.

I was in Pine Creek on the weekend and I was interested to see a very large industrial engineering workshop being established. It will employ 14 engineers of various types in a town that, 10 years ago, was given up for dead. One of the other developments in Pine Creek has been the development of a substantial number of hotel-motel units. Those units have had a 70% occupancy rate since their construction.

That is the type of development that is occurring in the Northern Territory and we should all be very proud of it. It presents problems but, as I said recently, they are the sorts of problems that we should be proud to have. In particular, I referred to the backlog in the processing of mineral exploration licences. While I apologised for it and said that we had almost doubled the number of the people processing those applications, there is tremendous development occurring. People adopt different stances in respect of developmental proposals but I am proud that we have such development in the Northern Territory. I am proud of Territorians who have the wherewithal to face up to developmental problems and satisfactorily resolve them in order to develop that one-sixth of Australia that we all love very much.

It is all very well to talk about a decline in economic indicators but those falls have to be put into perspective. The Leader of the Opposition also spoke about what he said was the real reason for the introduction of a fuel tax and the tourism marketing duty. He said it was to lift the levels of Territory revenue. That must be recorded as the most obvious statement of 1987. Certainly they will raise revenue, which is what was intended. In the case of the fuel tax, we have moved to adopt a state-like tax, given that the Grants Commission attributes a state-like revenue capacity to the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Barkly continue to miss a critical point about the tourism marketing duty, which is that the revenue collected will be used exclusively to assist the Territory's tourism marketing effort.

The Leader of the Opposition's comments about a \$26m fall in revenue estimates were addressed specifically in the budget speech. It was explained that \$20m in water and sewerage revenue was now being paid directly to the Power and Water Authority and not into the Consolidated Fund. The member for Koolpinyah also raised the matter of variations between the expenditure of the

Power and Water Authority as detailed in the Appropriation Bill and in the explanatory notes. I will go into greater detail for her benefit.

For comparison purposes, expenditure for 1986-87 has been reduced by an amount equivalent to the operating revenue received from the water and sewerage charges and paid into the Consolidated Fund during 1986-87. The Water Directorate's need for appropriation in 1987-88 is reduced because the new authority will retain water and sewerage revenues. The amount given for operating revenue on page 3 of the explanatory note is \$20.368m. However, this amount does not take into account some end-of-year adjustments. The correct amount is \$20.625m as shown on page 24 of the explanatory notes.

Members opposite trotted out their favourite lines about casinos and hotels. The Leader of the Opposition conjectured that if Federal Hotels had still been running the Territory casinos, we would have collected \$3m more in taxes. That is nonsense. Let us be blunt about it. We all know that Federal Hotels' performance as a casino operator in the Territory was unsatisfactory. Its operation centred exclusively on the local population and that is not what the casinos were established for.

Mr Smith: How many high rollers does the Darwin casino attract these days?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition could speak to people like Michael Anthony and Lindsay Gray. I know he does that frequently but perhaps if he listened to what they were saying, he would understand the opportunities that were made available to them, as businessmen, as a result of the junkets and charters from Singapore which were recently organised by Aspinalls. We did very well out of those exercises and they indicate the benefits which flow when we go out and attract additional people to our venues.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition might like to speak about that to his colleague, the federal Minister for Transport. It relates to what the Minister for Transport and Works said. Qantas cannot afford to buy any more planes and therefore, in order to bring tourists in, it has to fly significant numbers out. I could speak to the Leader of the Opposition about this at length. I could certainly point out the inadequacies of Qantas. Maybe we should get rid of Qantas altogether and open the skies up to everybody. If Qantas cannot perform and cannot buy planes and carry enough people, development is restricted.

I can give you an example. Recently, I travelled from Hawaii to Cairns on a 747 which did not have a single empty seat. There are huge numbers of people in the USA who wish to visit Australia but are unable to do so because Qantas has to carry all the traffic. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition probably agrees with that policy. He would say that Qantas is for all Australians. He does not care that it cannot do the job and puts bottlenecks in the path of development. Let him speak to Korean Airlines about its attempts to get into Australia. It has problems with JAL as well as Qantas. I think the Minister for Transport and Works will be bringing that on as a subject for debate in this Assembly in the near future and we can get to the bottom of what is really holding back development.

Let me now turn to casinos again.

Mr Ede: Yes, I wish you would.

Mr COULTER: If you would stop interjecting and talking nonsense which I have to correct for you, I might be able to do that. It is very difficult, Mr Speaker. I keep buying him books and buying him books and all he does is sit down and chew the covers off them.

Since Federal Hotels departed, more than \$10m has been spent on upgrading the Darwin casino and tourists have been attracted in increasing numbers. The Alice Springs casino has been turned around in a remarkable fashion by the new operator so that now, for the first time since it opened, it is running at a profit. I give full credit to the operator of the Alice Springs casino. There is a man with guts and determination or intestinal fortitude, if you like, Mr Speaker, who has got on with the job of development. He is not worried about the knockers and the people who say it will never work. I understand that, in March, he will proceed with stage 2 of his casino development, the new front area. Not only that, work will begin in March on stage 3, the auditorium, which was to have commenced at a later date. He will also increase the capacity of the auditorium, originally planned for 1000 seats, to 1500 seats. That is the extent of his confidence. When that casino was operated by Federal Hotels, you could not get a chair inside the door let alone enjoy the facilities of a 1500-seat auditorium. That is the type of development that has occurred since we took the decision in relation to Federal Hotels. The development of the casino has ensued.

I particularly wish to congratulate the operator of the Alice Springs casino, Lasseters Casino, for his determination to develop the Northern Territory. As I said, that casino now runs at a profit for the first time since it opened because management has been given to a local. In the longer term, the revenue potential for the Territory is much higher than it ever could have been under the Federal Hotels regime. I hope that I am here on the day when that can be rubbed into the neck of the Leader of the Opposition, because that day will surely come. My problem is whether he will be here or not.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to use figures about subsidy levels to Sheraton Hotels, he should get them right. He suffers from the same problem as the editorial writer in yesterday's NT News. They have this propensity for rounding off figures to the next highest \$100m or the next highest \$50m. Nobody gives accurate figures any more and nobody cares, it seems. Members opposite do not know what they are talking about. They have never have been able to count and it is of no importance to them. The figure is not \$10m; it is \$8.5m. I remind him once again that the government input into these desirable projects will be recovered in full when the hotels are eventually sold.

Another issue misused by honourable members opposite, most particularly by the member for Barkly, concerned an investment by the trustees of the Employer's Superannuation Trust Fund in Housing Commission mortgages. This matter has been so mischievously distorted that I need to spell it out clearly and distinctly in the hope that members opposite will stop trying to run outrageous scare campaigns designed to frighten Territorians who are purchasing Housing Commission dwellings. The government established an Employer's - and I stress Employer's - Superannuation Trust Fund in June 1986, to which the government appropriated \$15m in 1986-87 to meet, to the maximum extent possible, its public sector superannuation liabilities. These are occurring at a rate of about \$48m per year. The \$15m superannuation provision was budgeted for from the beginning of the 1986-87 financial year.

The trustees of the Employer's Superannuation Trust Fund made a decision to invest \$15m in Housing Commission mortgages to secure a mortgage-backed income stream. The rate of return is commercially sound at 14.1% per annum, which was 1% above the Commonwealth 10-year bond rate at the time of the investment. The \$15m received by the Housing Commission was used to repay some of its long-term debt. There was no net effect on the Territory budget for 1986-87. The Housing Commission will continue to administer the mortgages, and no mortgage will be affected in any way. Thus, claims that this matter helped the Territory to balance its budget in 1986-87 are totally wrong and malicious.

I do note a change on the part of the Leader of the Opposition. He has not mentioned a certain subject for some time - Hungerford Refrigeration. Does everybody remember Hungerford Refrigeration? The Leader of the Opposition is now out there saying publicly that the TIO is ...

Mr Ede: What about the Trade Development Zone?

Mr COULTER: The member for Stuart has not been converted yet, but let us keep working on him. The Leader of the Opposition is now saying publicly that the TIO is responsible to its policy holders. He is not talking about taxpayers any more, and I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on that. He may not be aware of it, and it may have been a mistake on his part, but he is now referring to the TIO as being responsible to its policy holders rather than to taxpayers.

I can report that the total assets of the employer's fund on 30 June 1987 amounted to about \$53m, with total liabilities of about \$144m. I must stress that contributions from members are held entirely separate from the employer's fund. They are held in a separate bank account and investment under the provisions of the Superannuation Act 1986. The current balance of employee contributions is \$4.3m which is held in secure bank bills and an interest-bearing bank account.

The member for Nhulunbuy was terribly concerned that the budget raised the prospect of double-digit inflation in the Territory. I can assure him that his concerns are almost certainly misplaced. The Commonwealth budget paper predicted an annual inflation rate for the March quarter 1988 of 7%, falling to 6% in the June quarter. Inflation rates in the Territory differ from national rates only when there are significant variations in key consumer price index components. The combined effect of these components is not expected to be sufficient to result in the Territory's inflation rate differing markedly from the rest of Australia in the current financial year.

The honourable member cast doubts on the accuracy of estimates of the Territory's Aboriginal population. We must depend on the 1986 census, and my information is that the Commonwealth generally feels that its census data on the Territory's Aboriginal population was successful. Follow-up studies comparing census data with health data and births and deaths registrations suggest that census data has been generally reliable. The proportion of Aborigines in the Territory population is declining. According to the census, the Aboriginal population increased by 19% over 5 years while the Territory population as a whole increased by 25.9%. This is seen to be due to the high rate of migration to the Territory in that period. Interestingly, much of the growth in the Aboriginal population has been in urban areas, and that is seen as people now identifying themselves as Aboriginal where previously they did not do so.

The member for Koolpinyah seeks to blame outlandish wage increases for the decline in business activity. Without delving into a major area of political discussion, I pass on to her the information that weekly total earnings in 1986-87 increased by 2.9% in the Territory compared with 5.8% in Australia. That is clear from the graph which appears on page 8 of the budget paper. The Chief Minister mentioned it to me as an economic indicator that wages had declined. I believe that is a clearer indication of what is happening in the Northern Territory than the Consumer Price Index and average weekly earnings. It is a pointer to quite a healthy business atmosphere.

The member also said that Correctional Services had suffered a name change to 'Custodial Services'. She has always been confused. The Department of Correctional Services indeed contained a division called Custodial Services. The Department of Correctional Services was absorbed into the Department of Health and Community Services in March 1987 but the Custodial Services Division continues to exist, without any name change, as part of the Department of Health and Community Services.

The member for MacDonnell was pleased that Commonwealth payments to the Territory, in his words, remained fairly steady. It is difficult to agree with him. The \$2m increase noted by the honourable member does not take into account certain Commonwealth payments which do not show up in the Consolidated Fund or the reduction of \$22m in semi-government borrowings. If we compare like with like, using the Commonwealth's own budget papers, the reduction in total Commonwealth-related payments is in fact some \$47m.

The member for Stuart expressed great disappointment about cutbacks in the supply of housing for Aboriginal people in rural areas. I had the opportunity to look at some Aboriginal housing programs over the weekend and I would like to congratulate the Department of Lands and Housing on the standard and quality of the houses which it is building on Aboriginal communities. The community which I visited has had 5 houses built recently. I asked whether the particular Aboriginal community would allow visitors to look at the houses in terms of the types and standards, and the community gave its approval for that to happen. I suggest that any member who has a large Aboriginal constituency should look at these houses. They should get in touch with the Minister for Lands and Housing or the member for Victoria River in order to obtain information prior to inspecting them.

Mr Ede: Which community?

Mr COULTER: They are at Kybrook Farm just outside Pine Creek. The dwellings are highly finished and extremely practical. I learnt a few lessons down there the other day. Indeed, we could perhaps incorporate some of their design features into the houses we are building in the northern suburbs and perhaps at Palmerston. The houses have cross-flow ventilation and are of a very functional nature. I congratulate all who have contributed to the project. I also congratulate those involved with the construction of houses by prisoners.

The member for Stuart should know that there have been significant reductions in funding for housing programs. We have to learn to do more with less. We have to consider different designs and other measures and there is ample evidence, some of which I saw during the weekend, that this is happening.

Over the past 3 years, the Territory government has substantially increased expenditure on housing in non-urban areas. The honourable member

should note that, when the current federal government came to power in 1983, it promised to overcome all housing problems for Aboriginal people within 6 years. It will have to make a mighty effort in the next 2 years to achieve that promise. I suggest it has as little chance of being achieved as the Prime Minister's promise about no child living in poverty. It is the type of statement that we hear from the Prime Minister from time to time and which caused me to remark, when he arrived in Dublin recently and said that he felt like he had come home, that I hoped he stayed there. That sort of rhetoric will not wash in the Northern Territory. We need action. We still have a long way to go in relation to Aboriginal housing. If the federal government's 1983 promise is to be fulfilled, it will need to make a much greater effort than it has to date.

The budget highlighted tourism as a spectacular growth area and the Minister for Tourism provided exciting growth projections. He told us visitors numbers reached 762 000 in 1986-87 and that the Territory will be welcoming more than 1 million visitors in 1989.

The Minister for Industries and Development produced figures which point to a remarkable 4250% growth in the value of Territory horticultural produce.

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Treasurer from speaking for such time as is necessary to conclude his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER: The minister also gave a figure of \$40m for the value of horticultural production by the 1990s. We have gone from less than \$1m 4 years ago to \$6m or \$7m today. We are looking at \$40m by the 1990s. That is a remarkable rate of growth. The horticultural industry is now creating meaningful full-time employment. One has only to drive around the boundaries of Darwin and other urban areas to see evidence of the horticultural activity now under way. The Batchelor region is also noteworthy, particularly the joint venture between Woodcutters Mine and an entrepreneurial farmer who is tapping the water being pumped from the mine and using it to grow rockmelons. The Minister for Industries and Development is actively promoting the development of horticulture as a major growth industry in the Territory and the figure of 4250% is indeed impressive. It highlights the enormous potential of the industry.

The member for Jingili had the pleasant task of expanding further on developments in the Territory's mining industry and the bright prospects in store. He was able to provide flesh on the bones of the mining story presented in the budget speech, and for that he has my gratitude.

The Minister for Health and Community Services had much to offer in his contribution and it is a fact that his department carried many of the new initiatives in the 1987-88 budget. In particular, it was notable that election promises made by this government in respect of respite care and care for the disadvantaged have been met in our first year of office.

The Minister for Labour and Administrative Services spoke about his commendable plans for further developing opportunities for the training and employment of apprentices and of the need for greater Aboriginal involvement in meaningful employment. Indeed, the member for MacDonnell, myself and the

member for Port Darwin discussed that issue in a debate in this Assembly recently. I believe that there will be further discussion, in the course of debating this budget, concerning the issues of employment and economic development in predominantly Aboriginal communities.

Among the many points raised by the Minister for Education was the often overlooked fact that the Territory is now producing substantial numbers of trained teachers through the Territory education system. Only a few years ago, all our teachers came from interstate. However, since 1983, the numbers of students enrolled in our own teacher training courses have doubled. This year, for the first time, more than 100 will graduate from teacher training courses in the Territory, and I think the Minister for Education is to be congratulated on that, together with all the education administrators involved. It is very gratifying to see that we are providing locally-trained teachers with the educational facilities that have been provided for that purpose.

The Minister for Education spoke about the development of the Northern Territory University College and some of his frustrations in that regard. Members on this side of the Assembly wish him well, and I only hope that there is some support from members opposite for his continuing efforts to develop our university facilities so that the Northern Territory can continue to prosper and grow, as Territory-educated students offer their skills to the local work force.

It is a fact that the Northern Territory population has stabilised. We no longer experience, for example, the massive 50% turnover in departmental staff which occurred prior to self-government. Our work force is more stable. These developments have come about because of the efforts of people like the Minister for Education, who have worked to ensure that the Northern Territory has education facilities which allow us to avoid the massive disruption which used to affect whole families as parents took their children interstate to obtain tertiary education. The Territory also lost out in many cases when students educated interstate took up employment opportunities interstate. We lost the parents and we lost the students. The Minister for Education is to be congratulated on his untiring efforts to establish the university on an even stronger footing. Although it is the subject of some discussion with myself from time to time in relation to finance, it is a pleasure to be able to work with the minister.

The Minister for Transport and Works, perhaps unsurprisingly, dwelt on his fierce ambition to see the Darwin Airport upgraded to the standard everybody in this House agrees is necessary. It is to his credit that, since he spoke, he has made real strides in bridging the communication gap that existed previously with the federal government on this matter, and we can all take fresh confidence from his efforts to deliver the goods.

I share the member for Sadadeen's enthusiasm about the White Range prospect area at Arltunga. Rare earth and its application in high technology and in the computer industry is a commodity largely overlooked in the development of the Territory's mining industry. I have taken to heart the honourable member's request that I involve myself closely with this promising development.

I was most interested in the member for Arnhem's comment about the need for Aboriginal participation in mining development, and I would like to speak about the subject at length with him. I will contact him to obtain his views and ideas in more depth. It has been my view for some time that Aboriginal

people should be more involved in mining. When that happens, they understand all the issues that miners have to face and some of the red herrings and constraints that make it hard for them to get on with development. I will be making contact with the member for Arnhem to seek his support and to hear his ideas on how we may both be able to achieve more in this area. If he is suggesting that it is to the advantage of Aboriginal people to share in the full process of mining development, including the exploration, extraction and value-added or downstream stages of product development, I fully agree with him.

The member for Arafura offered positive views on community government for Aboriginal people, and I welcome his support for the concept. Four successful community government councils operate within his electorate. The honourable member supports the establishment of further councils and I advise him that the government would welcome any such approaches.

The member for Port Darwin added weight to debate about the education initiatives mentioned in the budget, a subject which the honourable member addresses with considerable experience and authority. The member for Katherine combed through the budget papers for his contribution about the effects of the budget on the Katherine area and that must have been a pleasant task. Katherine received special attention in the budget because of its continuing high growth rate. Next week, the member for Katherine will be present at the official opening of the new gas-fired power station. Indeed, I understand that he has already received his invitation.

Speaking of the Power and Water Authority, I was asked a question by the member for Sadadeen about the development of bores in the Roe Creek area. I am in a position to tell him that both bores have been drilled and that the pumps have arrived in Alice Springs. They will be fitted and the bores will be brought into production, once again demonstrating that the budget is on line and things are happening. I thank the member for Sadadeen for his question which was very timely indeed. He may have been responsible for the delivery of the pumps into Alice Springs.

Despite some concerns expressed by honourable members - and I hope that I have largely addressed them - it appears that the 1987-88 Northern Territory budget has been well-received. I ask honourable members to realise that this budget was framed within difficult economic times and the mechanics of its delivery were not helped by the federal election and the delayed Commonwealth budget. It presents, I believe, a realistic strategy for the Territory economy. It points the way to continued growth and expansion, particularly in resource developments. Those developments are already unfolding and we are ready to reap the benefits.

There is plenty of talk in Canberra at the moment about the possible need for a mini-budget. I am confident that no such need will occur in the Northern Territory. No doubt many other comments will be raised during the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill. I believe that ministers will be well-equipped to provide relevant information and I thank the shadow spokesmen for giving notice of some of their questions so that detailed answers can be given.

I take this opportunity of referring to the Auditor-General's comments regarding the scarcity of professional expertise in relation to some functions of the Northern Territory Treasury. Mr Speaker, I can tell you that I am privileged, as the Treasurer of the Northern Territory, to have the opportunity of working with some of the most qualified and professional staff

that Australia and, indeed, the world has to offer. Their dedication to their work and to the Northern Territory is something which I hold very dear. The Treasury portfolio was described to me by the previous Treasurer, the member for Fannie Bay, as one in which one is extremely busy for 3 months of the year and very busy for the rest of the year. I can tell honourable members that the extremely busy period leading up to the budget is indeed an exciting time, during which work above and beyond the call of duty is carried on in the wee hours of the morning.

I must also give credit to my ministerial colleagues. They sometimes do not see the picture as I see it but compromises are generally found or, more often than not, they come round to seeing it my way. I also wish them well in developing the Territory budget throughout the year and ensuring that it meets the government's goals as determined by Cabinet.

Mr Speaker, that is about all that I wish to say about the budget at this stage. No doubt various aspects of the budget will be discussed throughout the year. I wish departmental heads and ministers well in developing this into one of the most exciting budgets that has ever been delivered in the Northern Territory. Of course, the hallmark of Northern Territory budgets is that they are balanced, and this one is no exception. Everybody who has participated should be congratulated.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Appropriation for division 14:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I recall a debate in this House last week in respect of the Auditor-General's comments about his ability to conduct what he considered to be an effective audit. Given those comments, does the Chief Minister consider that this appropriation will allow the Auditor-General to conduct an appropriate audit?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the answer to the question is yes. I say that on the basis that the appropriation provided was that recommended by the Auditor-General himself. I can reasonably presume that he has costed that. Honourable members will note that the Auditor-General has indicated that he is utilising outside accounting services to provide assistance and that has been provided for within the allocation.

Mr BELL: I am curious about the use of both private sector and public sector accounting services. I am interested to hear from the Chief Minister about the basis on which the division between public sector and private sector resources has been resolved. He might also like to mention whether that has been a source of concern for Cabinet.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, as honourable members will appreciate, the process of auditing for departments and authorities tends to be concentrated into a relatively short period of the year. Whilst ongoing audit functions are carried out by the Auditor-General during the course of the year, the activity peaks near the end of the financial year and the early part of the following financial year. The Auditor-General has adopted the practice of recruiting auditors from private firms on a contractual basis to meet those peak requirements. The basic staffing allocation provides the ongoing functions and contract auditors are brought in as required. That matter was addressed in the Annual Report of the Auditor-General which was debated last

week. I raised the matter with the Cabinet and the practice has been accepted as appropriate. It does not cause any conflicts.

Appropriation for division 14 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 15:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is an increase of only \$4000 for salaries and payments in the nature of salaries. That has been explained by a reference to the \$10 per week increase in the national wage. For 11 people, that comes to \$5700 rather than \$4000. Is there no provision for increments, overtime and so forth, or is it that last year's allocation allowed for expenditure on particular items?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the expenditure for 1986-87 reflects the actual expenditure under that particular item and therefore it would incorporate any additional payments. Adjustments are made to the base salaries as a consequence of the national wage case that has already been granted. There is no provision in the budget for any increases that may be granted during the course of this year. They are dealt with in subsequent budget reviews by means of allocations from the Treasurer's Advance, where there are funds set aside for that purpose.

The adjustments for the average levels of overtime and so forth are covered by built-in growth factors. If my memory serves me correctly, the last national wage increase occurred before the end of the last financial year and there would have been some payments in the last financial year as a consequence of that. There would have been an effect for part of last year with a full-year effect this year. That may explain the slight difference in salaries.

Appropriation for division 15 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 16:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have provided the Chief Minister with a series of questions. I would like to go through the first before we move on to the others. Can he provide us with some details on the current situation of the school-based community police system, plans for its development, and the costs of the program?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this budget provides for the development of the school-based community police program to be completed this year. Community police officers will be placed in all government secondary schools. At present, 13 positions have been allocated and I trust that honourable members will recognise that circumstances will occur from time to time in which a promotion will lead to a temporary gap while an appropriate person is being recruited. Negotiations are under way with the 2 schools which do not have community police officers at present and it is proposed to fill those positions and complete the project during the course of this year.

Of schools to which an officer has been allocated, the position at Taminin High School is currently vacant and an application is being sought. That is the circumstance I referred to. The estimated cost for a full year of this program is \$450 000.

Mr SMITH: It is an expensive program at \$450 000. Can the Chief Minister tell us what objectives the police officers in the schools program have, and what measures have been taken to determine the success of those objectives?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I do not want to go into the fine detail of the program now, as the matter has been debated in this House on a number of occasions. The principal objective is part of our overall thrust towards the prevention of crime rather than merely catching people who have perpetrated crimes. The community policing program is an integral part of that overall thrust.

The placement of school-based community police constables was commenced, I think in 1985, at Casuarina High School. The evaluation of that initiative during the first year showed a significant improvement, not only in behaviour in schools but in the incidence of house breakings in and around the school area. I understand that the matters raised have been addressed and I am prepared to provide the Leader of the Opposition member with more details later in these sittings.

I can say that this program has been hailed throughout Australia. In fact, a number of the states are now investigating the possibility of introducing similar programs as a consequence of this program's success. When it was first introduced, there was considerable resistance from teachers and school communities. Following the initial trial at Casuarina High School, however, enthusiasm for the program has increased quite dramatically. Many schools have been approaching the police force and requesting that a police constable be based on their campuses. One reason for this is the improved attitudes of young people towards the police. They are seen in a far more sympathetic role and this breaks down much of the alienation that occurs between police and young people. There is significant empirical evidence which shows that. It also reflects an increasing understanding by members of the police force of some of the difficulties and concerns of young people.

School-based police have participated in a number of interesting programs. For example, they have generated support for homeless children. In fact, on occasion school-based constables have identified children who, unbeknown to the schools, were homeless and were moving from one friend's home to another's to find a bed to sleep in. Young people in that difficult situation have been assisted and the program has been strongly supported by teachers and parents in the schools where it has operated.

It is a major preventive measure against crime and we have some statistics, but I must tell the Leader of the Opposition that I do not have them immediately available to me. The program is assisting significantly in the rehabilitation of a number of young people with problems. A study is being considered to enable us to look at the longer-term benefits which we anticipate could include a more positive attitude towards society and the police community amongst young people, and a more active involvement in the community. We are trying to break what appears to be a growing trend of alienation from the community and involvement in juvenile crime.

As I have said, if I can get more specific details during the course of these sittings, I will be happy to provide them. All the communities that have been involved have been very supportive of the program and have expressed the view that the funds are being very well spent in crime prevention and improved attitudes and social behaviour amongst young people.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, under the activity 'Southern Command' on page 15 of Budget Paper No 4.1, there is a reference to improved communications in remote areas. I would like further information on the nature of the improvement to communications, and the cost.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, communications have been improving significantly in the Southern Command area. We are in the process of connecting Papunya and Yuendumu police stations to the normal telecommunications system, with the expansion of the DRCS and the DRS systems into central Australia. That would leave only the police station at Harts Range unconnected. This depends on the Telecom network being available, as expected, in late 1988. The only other station which is not connected is at Finke. I understand that it is a police aide station and, because it is not operating as a full police station, it has not been connected at this stage. I am advised that all other stations in the Southern Command area are on the normal telecommunications network.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister just referred to police aides and police aide stations. I have heard that the number of police aides is well below establishment at present and has been for some time. Can the Chief Minister advise whether that is the case.

Mr HATTON: I obtained that information during the luncheon period. The member for Stuart will be very pleased to know that the police force has an establishment of 24 police aides. With the recent recruitment of 5 aides who are now in training, all police aide positions are filled.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the Chief Minister advise of plans to provide departmental housing for local recruits in rural areas? I refer specifically to police aides. We have an incredible anomaly in the provision of housing for local recruits. In my electorate, for example, there are 2 major communities of Yuendumu and Lajamanu. If a person from Yuendumu joins the police force at Yuendumu, he is ineligible for a house. The same applies for a person at Lajamanu. However, if the person at Yuendumu goes to Lajamanu or vice versa, he immediately becomes eligible for departmental housing. This is rather a ridiculous anomaly. I can understand the way this policy has developed in urban areas where a significant block of housing is available. In communities where this is not available, school teachers and police aides have considerable difficulties with matters such as keeping their uniforms clean and so on. Does the Chief Minister have any plans to review this situation?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the only local recruits in rural areas are police trackers or police aides. Police trackers historically have been provided with accommodation. However, since self-government, the policy has been to build trackers' accommodation only where the complex is remote from Aboriginal communities. Police aides must be considered as quite distinct from trackers and substantially different philosophical criteria govern their selection. Essentially, police aides are chosen by the local community and must be fully accepted and respected by that community and be seen to be fully assimilated with it. This means that the aide is a member of the community or tribe in which he is to serve and ordinarily is living in that community at the time of recruitment. It is essential that he remain clearly a member of the community after this recruitment. In line with this, the policy is that it is the responsibility of the community to supply housing for police aides. Experience has shown that some communities which have selected an aide have been unable to replace him when he has ceased employment. If the government had provided specific accommodation, it would now be empty.

Mr Chairman, we are seeking to encourage police aides to go beyond that particular status. I might say that at least one honourable member of this Assembly has served as a police aide in the past. We are actively seeking to encourage police aides to undergo further education in order to become fully-fledged police officers within the Northern Territory Police Force. There is no intention of changing that policy at this stage.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is incredible. The Chief Minister has told us what a great system it is. He has said that the government really wants to develop it but, while accommodation will be provided for trackers, it will not be provided for aides. He also said that, historically, the government has always provided trackers with accommodation. There is a fundamental flaw in the philosophy that the Chief Minister is espousing. He is saying that, while he hopes to increase the status of police aides, not only are they ineligible for accommodation if it is available but the government has no plans to make any available.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I will try to spell this out carefully for the member for Stuart. Police aides are selected by the community. The government then provides training for those persons to work as a police aides within their own communities. Unlike police trackers and police officers, police aides are not subject to transfer and relocation. If an aide happens to resign from his position, it is quite feasible that the community may select another aide to replace him. It has been part of the agreement with the communities that housing would be provided by the communities, not by the police force. Police aides are essentially members of the community. They are not part of the normal police force, subject to the normal processes of transfer and movement. A police aide works only within his own community. He is not recruited in Darwin and transferred to some other location in the Northern Territory, nor can he be transferred from community to community.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, I have 6 questions to ask the Chief Minister. The budget allows for an increase of 27 new recruits in the first stage. Page 11 of the budget paper refers to a maximum staff level of 1059 and page 12 gives the figure as 1054. Could the Chief Minister please explain the difference?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the allocation of 1059 is the number of staff positions allocated. Of that number, 5 positions were being transferred - I think it was 2 from the Department of Treasury and 3 from the Department of Transport and Works. Those 5 positions have not been funded in the Northern Territory Police Force budget, and discussions are presently under way between Treasury and the Department of Transport and Works in respect of those positions. Those matters of specific funding and transfers of funding will be dealt with in the course of a budget review later this year. The 5 positions have not been funded and that is why, whilst one figure shows the total approved allocation of staffing, the other figure shows what is currently being funded.

Mr TIPILOURA: My second question concerns the administrative and operational expenses of the Management Services Command. Will the Chief Minister list a breakdown in costs for expanded training programs relating to domestic violence and police prosecutors.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, \$70 000 is provided for the domestic violence program and \$10 000 for police prosecutors.

Mr TIPILOURA: Under the the administrative and operational expenses for the Southern Command, there is a reference to improved communications to remote areas.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I dealt with that particular matter prior to the honourable member returning to the House.

Mr TIPILOURA: In the activity headed 'Executive and Administration', the explanation relating to property management indicates that a number of policemen are waiting for government housing. Can the Chief Minister give separate figures for urban and bush areas?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, government housing is generally provided to married members or members with dependants, single staff being accommodated in barracks or rented units. At present, 8 officers in Darwin and 4 officers in Alice Springs are in receipt of by-law 54 allowances while awaiting government housing. A further 6 married members in Darwin are in leased accommodation pending the allocation of government housing. At all bush stations, the department either owns or rents, from the Department of Lands and Housing, sufficient accommodation for the approved police strength of that station. I understand that everybody is accommodated.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, will the Chief Minister list details of increased support for volunteer fire-fighting units for rural areas?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, funding has been increased from \$65 522 in 1986-87 to \$75 000 this financial year to provide a variety of minor items of equipment and clothing for the various volunteer units. It will also provide for the initial establishment of a new volunteer fire unit at Howard Springs.

Mr TIPILOURA: Would the Chief Minister explain what is meant by 'reduced costs elsewhere' in relation to the administrative and operational expenses of the Northern Territory Emergency Service?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of honourable members, at the bottom of page 20 under 'Explanation to Variations' it is indicated that allowance was made for higher utility, supplies and payroll tax costs and that these increases are expected to be offset by reduced costs elsewhere. That is because, both in last year's expenditure and this year's allocation, the figure is \$386 000.

During 1986-87, some \$45 000 was spent clearing a cyanide spill on the Stuart Highway. These funds have been incorporated into the 1987-88 financial year. The member for Stuart is well aware of that cyanide clean-up and he thought he had given us some assistance with it. I understand that he gave reporters in Alice Springs a bit of a scare when he walked in with an envelope full of what he alleged was cyanide. We know the opposition has a bit of a thing about cyanide, and I will not deal with that in this particular debate. Allow me to say, Mr Chairman, that \$45 000 is still included in the figures made available in 1987-88.

Other amounts related to an additional member on workers' compensation, estimated to increase our costs by \$7000, \$5000 for office cleaning costs previously charged to the Department of Transport and Works, \$15 000 for repairs to and transport of the Nhulunbuy boat to Darwin, \$10 000 for minor operations and \$5000 for updating of the counter-disaster plans.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I was very interested to hear the Chief Minister say that a certain sum of money had been appropriated to establish the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade. It just so happens that I was asked to intervene over the non-supply of goods to the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade. Despite what the Chief Minister indicated through you, Mr Chairman, that brigade has no vehicle.

There is a limit of \$1000 in dollar-for-dollar funds for the brigade's necessities. It is trying very hard to obtain a block of land in the Howard Springs Reserve so that it can erect a shed, and that is proving rather difficult. At the moment, the brigade does not own a vehicle. It has the use of a second-hand vehicle from the Bees Creek Volunteer Fire Brigade. I ask the Chief Minister when that situation will be regularised. I was also asked to intervene in relation to the allocation of uniforms. It is not all beer and skittles out there.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I have been involved in discussions with the volunteer fire brigade in the Howard Springs area, part of which is in my electorate. I have had discussions with the secretary and the captain of the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is why they came to me afterwards.

Mr COULTER: It is probably correct that they would choose to do that. The day they go to you first, we will all have problems.

We are about to hold a meeting similar to that which the member for Koolpinyah attended with me some 12 months ago.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, and they still do not have their vehicle.

Mr COULTER: That is correct, but the Chief Minister has made it quite clear today that funding is available. There are a number of issues and the member for Koolpinyah will be aware of one of them. It concerns the nonsense about a \$5000 fee for the connection of electricity to the site in the Howard Springs Reserve. Another is that the site is to be on land controlled by the Litchfield Shire Council. I believe this can be dealt with simply by the Shire President, who will be in attendance at the next meeting, designating an area of land. The Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade has also offered to provide dollar-for-dollar funds for construction of a shed to house the truck. It is a hard-working conscientious group and ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: So far it is not getting much support.

Mr COULTER: The group can be given the information that the Chief Minister has provided today and informed of the proposed meeting which, I believe, is to take place within the next 3 or 4 weeks. It is difficult to run a rural volunteer fire brigade without a motor vehicle. This group has the partial use of a second-hand vehicle, which is not satisfactory. I realise that, but the issue is in hand and the meeting will be another step towards ensuring that the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade is fully equipped and operational. The problems are difficult and do not just pertain to Howard Springs. The Virginia Volunteer Fire Brigade has had a similar problem in terms of getting electricity, a block of land and a water supply. That problem will also be addressed at the meeting.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I ask the Chief Minister whether the recently-announced Gold Squad will be staffed from the establishment of 1054 officers or whether it will be additional?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the staff will be additional. The matter is to be finalised by the Commissioner of Police. I understand that the squad will be attached to the Crime and Special Services Unit of the police force.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, my question also concerns the Gold Squad. I ask whether the government or the Chief Minister has made any decision about the funding of the proposed Gold Squad. Will it be funded from royalty payments made by miners to the Northern Territory government or will it come from Consolidated Revenue?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, this matter has been the subject of considerable discussion. The actual costs and the possible involvement of the Chamber of Mines and the Northern Territory government were discussed last week by myself, the Commissioner of Police and the Minister for Mines and Energy, who has been holding discussions with the Chamber of Mines. There will be a budget allocation to the police to meet the costs of the Gold Squad and I refer that particular matter to the Treasurer.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, several options were put to us. The Chamber of Mines formed a committee called the gold producers' association or the gold producers' committee. I am not particularly sure of the title. One of the options that it considered was the Western Australian model, upon which the Gold Squad is based. There is no cost to industry with that model. The producers play a levy on the gold, which is as high as 20¢ per ounce, and that is their contribution to the running of the squad. We will be continuing to have discussions with the industry.

Here in the Territory, we already have a royalty on gold production. I spoke with the chairman of the gold producers' group before he left for Sydney last week and he indicated that the producers are prepared to top up the cost of running the Gold Squad. They are asking the Northern Territory government to seed the Gold Squad initially. As gold production increases, they would pay a levy to top up the funding.

In the first instance, the producers are asking the Northern Territory government to establish the squad and get it running. There will then be a small levy on gold to provide recurrent funding. That is what we are working towards. It is not finalised at this stage but, as I said last week, that is how the Gold Squad will be funded.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I understand 2 members of the police force will be assigned to the Gold Squad. Will these 2 police officers be working full-time on the Gold Squad or will it be a bit like the Stock Squad - and I do not know whether that is still in operation - which worked occasionally on stock activities and the rest of the time on criminal activities?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the intention is that there will be 2 members of the Gold Squad. As I said, they will be attached to the Crime and Special Services Unit of the Police Department but they will be working full-time on matters associated with the gold industry. They will not be used in other areas or on other activities.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the last 2 speakers on the government side have yet to tell us how much it will cost, both in capital and recurrent funding, in a full year.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the estimates vary quite considerably. We had estimates ranging from \$220 000 down to \$150 000. There are considerable costs involved in terms of vehicles and aircraft charter. It is always hard to estimate just how much activity the squad will be engaged in over the year. It is difficult to predict how many gold thefts may occur. I understand that

an amount of money has now been agreed and the Chief Minister will speak in relation to that.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, one of the reasons for the different estimates is related to the structure of the Gold Squad. Originally, there was a proposal that it be established as a separate and completely independent unit. The cost of that was estimated at well over \$200 000 per annum. With the unit being part of the Crime and Services Unit, even though it will be working exclusively on matters relating to gold, the cost is estimated at \$150 000 per year. This includes salaries and other costs for 2 police officers, provision for a vehicle and additional travel costs, particularly for aeroplane and or helicopter hire. The Commissioner of Police has estimated that that would be the necessary marginal cost of operating the Gold Squad.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, if the government proceeds with the precedent of asking the industry to pay for the policing of the Gold Squad, is it reasonable for us to expect that the cattlemen will pay for the Stock Squad and the casino operators will pay for the licensing and surveillance of casinos? The same would apply to other areas in the community where the police carry out special functions at taxpayers' expense. If it is not the intention of the government to ask the cattlemen, for instance, to pay for the Stock Squad, should the goldmining industry pay for this squad at this time?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I appreciate the point made by the honourable member. I am sure he is aware that the Gold Squad in Western Australia has been operating since about 1906 and, throughout that period, has been funded by the gold industry. The idea of a Gold Squad in the Northern Territory came as a specific proposal to the government from the Chamber of Mines which indicated that it would contribute towards the cost of providing that squad. The industry is prepared to make the contribution and, in return, to have officers exclusively assigned to deal with those matters. That provides the immediate advantage of specialised services to the industry. If the industry is prepared to make finance available, far be it from me to refuse it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, in these harsh times, I can understand the Chief Minister's enthusiasm to lay his hands on a few bucks. However, this departs from the historical operation of the police force which is paid for by the public purse. What the Chief Minister is implying is that, if an industry has difficulties with lawlessness and it can afford to pay for additional police to look after it, that is okay. If other industries cannot afford it, they may not receive protection. If you want to extend this line of thought to an industry like the liquor industry, in which the police play quite a major role in maintaining law and order, perhaps we should look at asking licensees to pay for that section of the police force that is involved in providing protection and other services. I would like to know where this will stop because it could extend into all sorts of areas. The precedent being set by the Chief Minister means that industries which can afford to pay will be looked after with special police surveillance and protection whilst those which cannot afford it are left out.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I wondered how long it would take for this argument to deteriorate in the committee stage, and I think we have just heard the start of that process.

Mr Chairman, when we become innovative or try to implement something new, along come the knockers. They can't do it and put it down and say it will never work. The member for Barkly would know that one of the main areas where gold theft takes place is on exploration licences or mineral claims where there is

no mining. What is he suggesting? That it is unfair for members of the Chamber of Mines to be supporting miners who are not even mining? We have seen some major gold thefts in the Northern Territory in recent months, one of them the recent \$250 000 robbery at Cosmo Howley Mine. Mount Bonnie was another example. There have been other accusations of gold thefts in the member for Barkly's own electorate.

There is a problem. The industry recognises it and has discussed it. It is unfair. It is a little bit like suggesting that we support bank robbers because we all pay for gun licences and a bank robber may use a gun. There are all sorts of facets to this particular issue, but it is a start which has been welcomed by the industry. Is the member for Barkly speaking as an industry spokesman? Has he been lobbied by the industry? I can assure him that the Gold Producers Association is a major gold producer in the Northern Territory. It has come up with this particular compromise. It is prepared to live and work with it. The inequalities that exist will be overcome in time. As the Chief Minister said, the precedent was set in 1906 with the formation of the Gold Squad which was paid for by the gold producers and established in Kalgoorlie.

Once the squad is set up, it will gain a great deal of knowledge which will cut down on lengthy investigations. There will even be an opportunity, by working with chemists, to clearly identify gold from particular regions. That happens now in Western Australia and we believe that the same thing can be done in the Northern Territory. The technique relates to bismuth content and so forth. A wealth of helpful knowledge will be gained. In Western Australia, to offset its operation, some insurance companies donate recovered gold back to the Gold Squad. Does that mean that we should do that in respect of the Stock Squad or the Drug Squad or whatever - that we would get a killer or a pound of dope? Mr Chairman, this really is an innovative idea. It offers protection to the industry. There are inequalities but, for heaven's sake, let's not knock every innovative move that this government puts forward.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I was not knocking an innovative move. I was asking where it all ends. The Treasurer has answered that question for me because he said that this is a start. I guess that, in the days ahead, we can expect to see many sections of industry paying for this sort of protection, supervision, surveillance or investigation ...

Mr Coulter: They already do. The football clubs and 100 other groups do it.

Mr Perron: You pay for police escorts.

Mr Coulter: Escorts have to be paid for, along with many other services. The member for Barkly was minister responsible for police at one time. Remember?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I would like to deal with the remark of the Minister for Industries and Development, which was that we pay for police escorts. That is quite a different situation, Mr Chairman. In most communities, you have an opportunity to hire an escort or an armoured car if you require that type of service. In some places, you cannot hire those services and the police provide them for a fee. That is not the same as charging people for a service that might be expected from the police as a matter of course.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I do not think the continuance of this debate is contributing to the passage of the Appropriation Bill, but allow me to clarify a couple of points. Firstly, the member for Barkly cannot draw the conclusion that this process is the start of a general trend for charging industries for specific policing services. Honourable members will be aware that the Crime and Services Unit of the police force is there to investigate major crime, and it is available to investigate any crimes in respect of gold theft and other issues associated with crime affecting the gold industry in any way.

The fact is that this particular innovation has come about as a response to a proposal put to the government to provide a specific specialist service to the gold industry and to concentrate 100% of its attention on that industry in an intelligence, investigation and follow-up program. The industry put the proposal to us. Part of that proposal involves a contribution to the government for the provision of that specialist service, and we have acceded to that. There is no doubt that general policing of the Northern Territory is funded from general revenue, but a proposal has been brought forward for specific functions for which the industry has offered to make specific partial contributions, and we have accepted that offer.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in relation to the Northern Territory Emergency Service, I note that the federal government budget papers mention a specific-purpose payment for recurrent purposes. This is a tied grant of \$208 000 under the heading of 'Emergency Services' and I presume it would come under that heading in the Territory budget. Is that expended within the normal gamut of the division's functions or is it tied to some specific activity?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I cannot give an immediate answer to that. I would suggest that it has been incorporated into the general emergency services budget. As I understand it, the funds are provided for the purposes of providing emergency services, with the balance of funds coming from the Northern Territory government's allocation. I do not believe that the grant is tied to any specific activity within the emergency services function, although the capital and recurrent costs that we incur in training and so forth are part of an overall national plan for emergency services programs. I cannot specifically answer the question about the \$208 000 and, if I can obtain the information during the course of these discussions, I will advise the honourable member.

Mr EDE: The federal government's papers also refer to a specific-purpose payment of \$100 000 for natural disaster relief. Does that come under this division?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, natural disaster relief is for things like drought relief, flood relief, cyclone relief and so on. A natural disaster has to occur before that funding becomes available. Perhaps the Treasurer could advise whether that amount was a repayment of last year's expenditure or a provisional allocation for this year.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I was waiting for the Treasurer to get to his feet but he has not done so. Can the Chief Minister offer any guarantee that the formation of the 2-man Gold Squad will lead to a better success rate in terms of solving the crimes associated with gold robbery?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, that is a presumptuous question. It would be presumptuous of me to guarantee that results will be better. One must assume that results will be better otherwise neither the industry nor the government

would be seeking to spend additional funds on specialist services to try to circumvent gold theft, particularly in areas where there are exploration licences and where people may be venturing into others' exploration or mining areas and gouging or stealing gold in remote bush areas. The Gold Squad will be concentrating on this problem in particular.

In situations like the recent theft at Cosmo Howley, companies have significant responsibilities to provide reasonable security on their own premises to protect their property. The Gold Squad will of course be directing some of its energies towards crimes associated with industrial premises, including the filtering-off of gold, or taking out of material at different stages of the production process which employees in the gold industry have been known to engage in. The squad would not ignore issues such as the Cosmo Howley theft. I do not accept the criticism that we have been totally ineffective. I think the industry needs to look very closely at security arrangements and needs to become much more effective at protecting its own property.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, does the Chief Minister envisage a situation arising when the industry will only pay on results which bear out the efficiency of the Gold Squad?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, some bonus schemes operate for the people who work in the Western Australian Gold Squad. They are able to obtain percentages of any available rewards, but we have not adopted that approach in our police force. There is no indication at this stage that we will be moving towards a system of payment by results and, in fact, arrangements in the future will inevitably be ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am referring to the industry paying by results.

Mr HATTON: I understand that. The answer is no, although we are still in the process of finalising negotiations on exactly how payments are to be made. There is a multitude of matters to be considered. For example, do we fine companies if their inadequate security measures allow gold thefts to occur on their establishments? The fundamental point is that this initiative is being taken. I commend the program to honourable members and I trust we have answered all questions in reasonable detail.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I might need some more information from the member for Stuart in relation to the question on natural disaster relief. In the event of a natural disaster, the Northern Territory government pays the first \$2m and the Commonwealth contributes beyond that. As in the case of gold thefts, it is difficult for budgeting purposes to predict the extent of expenditure on natural disasters. I understand the budget provides for an ongoing amount of \$86 000 which is the salary of 3 specific staff members. Another \$40 000, which was not included in the budget, is being used for the provision of accommodation for volunteers in Jabiru and Katherine. Other moneys are also expended on natural disaster relief. For example, the natural disaster courses conducted at Macedon in Victoria are paid for by the National Disaster Relief Fund and that money does not come directly into the Northern Territory. Can I have the question again so that I can chase up the relevant information?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman I am referring to Table 136, pages 210 and 211 of Budget Paper No 4 of the Commonwealth Budget. It details Commonwealth payments to the Northern Territory for this year under the heading of 'Specific Purpose Payments - Capital Purposes'. It lists a figure of \$100 000 for natural disaster relief.

Mr COULTER: If I could have a copy of that information, I will have my officers chase up the answer.

Mr BELL: I have a further question to the Chief Minister on the subject of the Gold Squad. Is he able to reassure the sporting fraternity in the Northern Territory that the Gold Squad will be competing at the Seoul Olympics?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, knowing the exceptional talents of our police, I am sure that, if it did, it would be able to bring some gold to the Northern Territory.

Appropriation for division 16 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 11:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to clarify the expenditure detailed for the Electoral Office. It states that the 1987-88 budget allows for the ongoing functional cost of the unit which includes election education, special printing and publications such as maps and pamphlets. I am not clear about what election education is actually carried out by the Territory's Electoral Office. We all know the work that is carried out by the federal Electoral Office but I would like some detail on what is being done by the Northern Territory office or what is proposed for this year.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the Northern Territory Electoral Office has been running a number of electoral education programs through schools and in Aboriginal communities. It has produced some video programs which it is providing to communities. Should the honourable member like to have a closer look at some of the excellent programs, I could certainly arrange with the Chief Electoral Officer for him to do that. The office is carrying out electoral education programs around the Northern Territory, as is the Commonwealth Electoral Office. In fact, the 2 offices are located next door to each other and are cooperating in a mutually supportive role. This is a classic example of intergovernmental rationalisation, which is minimising the cost to both ourselves and the Commonwealth.

Mr EDE: I will be very happy to follow the Chief Minister up on his kind offer.

My next question relates to the 'other services' allocation which has been reduced from \$400 000 last year to zero for 1987-88. I note that the \$400 000 related to the 7 March general election. My query relates to the election we had in Barkly recently. I know that I sold a lot of raffle tickets but I did not know that we paid for it completely. I thought that some of the costs were picked up by the Electoral Office, although I do not see any mention of that in the budget papers.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, in the allocation for 1986-87, there is a figure of \$400 000 for the 7 March election. As the honourable member said, there is no specific mention of the Barkly by-election. The particular funds we are discussing are held in a special cheque account which is administered by the Chief Electoral Officer. This enables him to make the immediate payments necessary in an election to cover such things as casual wages, travel, mobile polling, hire of premises, advertising etc. When all accounts for the election on 7 March 1987 were finalised, there was a balance of \$30 000 remaining in the cheque account. These funds were used for the Barkly by-election on 5 September 1987. Expenditure for the Barkly by-election falls

within the 1987-88 financial year, but actual expenditure came out of the cheque account that was appropriated and charged as having been expended in the 1986-87 financial year.

Mr EDE: Was there a trust fund?

Mr HATTON: A separate cheque account.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I can understand how there can be a cheque account but there must be some means within the system of accounting for what we used to call 'gash' in my days in the public service - funds salted away. Obviously, that would not occur in a very well run public service like ours.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, my advice is that it is a separate cheque account. When the payments went into that cheque account, they were treated as expenditure funds. I will confirm for the honourable member whether it is specifically set aside as a separate trust account.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I provided the Treasurer with a copy of Table 136 for 'Commonwealth Payments to the States'. One of the items was a tied amount of \$100 000 to the Northern Territory to assist in participation in Expo 88. It is unclear whether the Protocol and Public Relations Branch or some other unit looks after this.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, first I will return to the Natural Disaster Fund. I understand that the figure is nominal. If we spend over \$2m, the \$100 000 is available to us. It has been available for the last 2 years but we have never been able to make use of it.

Mr Smith: Not a big enough natural disaster?

Mr COULTER: That is right.

I understand that the federal government has made an amount of money available to all states for attendance at Expo 88. I am not sure of the closing date for entry to Expo 88. However, when I was last speaking to a minister of the Queensland government, he told me that it intended to close nominations by now.

Mr EDE: Are we participating?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I went to Brisbane to investigate whether we should participate. Cabinet determined that a reasonable show would cost at least \$500 000, including the subsidies that were being offered. It would cost a minimum of \$1m, probably \$1.2m, to present a good, active show as distinct from a static display for the 6-month period of Expo. In light of the financial constraints on the Territory government, we decided that we would not participate.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in relation to the Protocol and Public Relations Branch, I note that it contains a Ministerial Driver Unit. At this stage, I am not including that within my comments. Apart from that unit, how can the rest of the branch be justified in these stringent times?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, expenditure in this area deserves closer analysis in order to obtain a comparison. There has been no change in the staffing for this unit. There is an adjustment upwards of \$10 000 for salaries to take into account the increase as a consequence of national wage cases. In

administration and operational expenses, there has been a reduction of \$53 000. The major increase is the \$120 000 for capital items, which is for the replacement of some of the VIP protocol vehicles. Quite frankly, we have held off replacement of those vehicles for so long that they are in a dangerous state and the repair and maintenance costs are quite extraordinary. We have gone well past the time when they needed to be replaced. Four will be replaced during this financial year.

In routine operational expenditure, there has in fact been a reduction. The Protocol and Public Relations budget allows for the following major functional costs. An amount of \$150 000 is allowed for all official hospitality expenses arranged by Protocol, other than in the function room of the Chan Building, such as restaurants, hotel functions, catering etc. Function room costs are \$30 000. An amount of \$20 000 for printing and publication covers the costs of menus, place cards, programs, business cards etc. An amount of \$50 000 is for costs of the VIP fleet, unit staff and VIP travel costs including accommodation, car hire etc. An amount of \$80 000 covers presentations and gifts, including special gifts and stock items such as flags, brooches, ties, cufflinks, stickpins, scarves etc. The \$18 00 for incidental other matters provides for sundries, freight, florists, uniforms etc. Public relations promotions of \$100 000 relates to costs associated with the unit's full-time photographer who engages on work requests. Honourable members should note that the photographer has the use of 2 darkrooms and that the unit holds \$100 000 worth of photographic equipment. In 1987-88 there is provision of \$5000 for travel and charters; \$20 000 for general equipment and machines, including repairs; and \$5000 for sundry items. There is \$50 000 for public relations and another \$50 000 for the purchase of promotional materials. This includes the purchase and publication of giveaways and presentation material for VIP packages. Examples of materials are booklets, such as fact sheets, binders for fact sheets, NT calendars, Top End books, Stuart Highway books, Kakadu books, Alice Springs books, Tennant Creek books, Katherine books, Living North, My Territory, insignia, folders and so forth.

Superficially, it may appear to be an area of expenditure that can be cut. The reality is that the government engages in quite a significant amount of protocol work. For example, during the course of their 2-year term, every Ambassador or High Commissioner to Australia will visit the Northern Territory, as they will visit each of the states. The Protocol Unit is required to set the programs and conduct a significant amount of hosting for those people. Visits of dignitaries from interstate and overseas involve a number of protocol and entertainment functions. Ministers and senior officials of this government also travel overseas and gift-giving is a standard practice all over the world. All of those costs are built in.

It is my view that this area of government is stretched very thin. It is a unit that is doing an exceptionally good job and its operational budget has been cut for 2 years in a row. It really has been pruned. I know that, on a number of occasions, honourable members have noted that they have difficulty in obtaining some items that they like to use in their electorates, such as NT flags and stickpins. Many of these stock items were far more freely available in the past. Supplies have unfortunately had to be pruned because of budget restrictions so that we can concentrate the funds into areas where necessary and essential expenditure is associated with the natural, usual and necessary protocol functions that have to be carried out by the entire Northern Territory government.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, would the Chief Minister confirm for me that the figure for gift exchange is actually \$80 000, which is more than \$1000 a week?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, there is a provision of \$80 000 for presentations and gifts. They cover an enormous range of material. While some items may consist of a scarf or a set of cufflinks, there are ...

Mr Coulter: How many buffalo do you reckon you would get for \$5?

Mr Ede: Bring them in and let us have a look.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer referred to an example. Recently, our government donated 25 buffalo to the Indonesian government in West Timor, as part of the international goodwill program, towards the development of the buffalo industry in West Timor.

Mr EDE: Did that come out of this?

Mr HATTON: That is the sort of purchase of gifts that this budget could well pick up. There are other gifts that could cost more than \$1000 in some circumstances. The Northern Territory Museum and Art Galleries and the government have received a wide range of quite expensive gifts. If our government is to carry out that necessary function of protocol and intergovernmental development, we must be in a position to do the job properly.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the Chief Minister whether his government has a policy on the gifts that are received by ministers, members or people representing the government overseas, and if he could detail to us what that policy is?

Mr HATTON: With pleasure, Mr Chairman. Our policy is quite straightforward. Any gift beyond the value of \$50 is required to be incorporated into a gifts register and is the property of the government. If the honourable opposition members have received gifts beyond that value, we would be happy to put them on a gifts register for the government too.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in respect of management services, I am rather confused about the statement at the end of page 37 that the 1987-88 budget allows for non-recurring costs associated with the transfer of electorate offices to the Legislative Assembly and the full year's effect of known cost increases. Leaving aside the full year's effect of known cost increases, I cannot understand why it is that the 1987-88 budget is picking up non-recurring costs for an event which happened in 1986-87.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I checked this and I thank the honourable member for asking this question. The 1987-88 budget allows for the ongoing administrative costs of the department which include office requisites, stationery, equipment, machines, recruitment, recreation leave, transport costs, power, tax, the Remuneration Tribunal and the Australia Day Council. The 1987-88 budget allows for non-recurring costs associated with the transfer of electorate offices to the Legislative Assembly and the full year's effect of such cost increases. The budget also allows for anticipated reviews to be undertaken by the Remuneration Tribunal in 1987-88.

Mr Chairman, the support for the electorate offices was transferred to the Legislative Assembly on 1 September 1986. Expenditure for July 1986 and August 1986 was included in the total 1986-87 expenditure of \$1.603m. The expenditure covered overhead costs such as power, tax, recreational leave, fares and recruitment. That is my specific advice in response to the question he referred to me.

I am advised that, whilst there are a number of cost increases, those have been offset to an extent by the non-recurring cost. The net effect is an increase of \$69 000.

Mr EDE: Moving on to constitutional development, I was amazed that the allocation of \$305 000 in 1986-87 has blown out to a figure of \$708 000 for 1987-88. Initially, I jumped to the conclusion that that related to the cost of running a referendum on statehood in 1988. However, we have been assured that such a referendum could be held at the end of 1988 at the very earliest. For the life of me, I cannot understand what this \$708 000 is for. It seems to be a massive amount, given that statehood was not going to cost us anything.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I will ignore that last trite remark and treat it with the disdain that it deserves. An amount of \$500 000 has been allowed for, to cover the cost of consultants who will be engaged in specific areas. The expertise of Sir John Moore has been commissioned in the preparation of the industrial relations model on statehood. That is not to suggest that Sir John Moore will receive anything like that as a consultancy fee.

If I could break the constitutional development budget down, \$100 000 is provided for any specific advertising associated with statehood awareness and that includes all the paraphernalia that would be associated with that. \$50 000 is provided for printing and printing materials associated with the statehood awareness program. \$50 000 is provided for travel, both interstate and intra-Territory, necessary for attaining statehood. Provision was made for the Cabinet to approve the Michels Warren consultancy in 1987-88. As this contract has been cancelled, the funds allow for the consultancy by Sir John Moore.

During the course of this financial year, we will probably engage in a marketing program as part of the statehood awareness campaign. Whilst we have not determined the final structure of the marketing program, nor have we appointed a marketing organisation at this stage, we cancelled the previous arrangement so that we would not incur ongoing costs until we are ready to proceed. There is provision in the budget to enable that program to proceed when we are ready. Funds are provided to enable us to carry out the consultancies and any marketing for a statehood awareness program without necessarily being firmly committed at this stage.

Mr EDE: To clarify it, we have \$100 000 for advertisements and promotion, \$50 000 for printing, \$50 000 for travel, an unknown fee of perhaps \$100 000 for Sir John Moore and \$400 000 in case it is decided to move ahead more rapidly with the marketing phase of the plan.

Mr HATTON: Yes, Mr Chairman. Those costs are not locked in but we have made necessary provision in the budget to enable us to move to a full marketing program if appropriate.

Mr EDE: In relation to the Office of Women's Affairs, I notice that, after allowance has been made for the television program Women Today, there has been an increase of 100% in administrative and operational expenses. I wonder if the Chief Minister could give us a little more detail on whether there are some special programs which necessitated a 100% increase.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the Women Today program was costed under subdivision 4 in 1986-87. The cost of \$54 000 in 1987-88 is shown under subdivision 2. The unit was transferred in March 1987 and, as it was not

fully staffed, the full program of activities could not be undertaken in 1986-87. The 1987-88 budget allows for the full program to be implemented. Six meetings are being programmed for each year. In 1986-87, only 5 meetings were held.

This budget has 3 separate categories. \$48 000 for the Office of Women's Affairs provides for travel, printing, consultancies and minor office costs. There is \$54 000 for the Women Today program which covers issues of interest to women. The program is of 5 minutes duration twice a week for 40 weeks in 1987-88. The amount of \$122 000 for the Women's Advisory Council includes \$22 000 for travel, fees, advertising, printing of newsletters, consultants etc. That is a total cost of \$224 000.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I note that the Electoral Distribution Committee has not received an allocation this financial year. While I believe that has nothing to do with the fate of the Remuneration Tribunal, which was run by the same person, I wonder whether the Chief Minister can give any indication as to whether there will be another redistribution in 1988-89 or whether he is waiting for further information from the latest census?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, no decisions have been taken at this stage in relation to a redistribution. It is a matter to be determined on the advice of Executive Council. It would naturally arise as a result of significant changes in demographic trends. Redistributions usually occur in anticipation of and in reasonable proximity to potential election periods, particularly given the dynamic nature of the Northern Territory population. A review was carried out last year and, if another were carried out now, there could be a need for yet another before the next election. Any review will be carried out as we move towards the next election period and will be based on demographic data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. At this stage, there is no fixed program.

Mr EDE: In relation to the activity entitled 'Aboriginal Development, Communications', could the Chief Minister give details of all the videos and newspapers which are produced? I would like some idea of the number of products produced and the extent of the distribution runs. I would also like a commitment from him that members representing constituencies with a large Aboriginal population, or indeed other members, may be entitled on request to receive copies of the videos and newspapers so that they can keep in touch with what the government is sending out.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I would be happy to discuss the second issue with the honourable member. I do not foresee any problem but, if he would care to raise the matter with me later, I will deal with it in more detail.

In respect to the particular budgetary matter, 4 productions of Aboriginal video magazines are arranged in the financial year and 500 copies are produced on each occasion. Copies are distributed to adult educators, communities, Aboriginal organisations, departments and so on. Four editions of Aboriginal News are produced each financial year with 5000 copies being produced on each occasion. Copies are distributed to the same groups as the video magazine, including libraries, hostels, city councils, schools and so on. The budget of \$193 000 is distributed as follows: film and video production, \$60 000; software, \$16 000; equipment, \$20 000; maintenance, \$12 000; print materials, \$40 000; travel and subsistence, \$40 000; and specialised training, \$5000.

Mr EDE: I referred earlier to a table detailing tied and untied grants from the federal government. I notice that it refers to an amount of \$42 000 as a recurrent tied grant for Aboriginal advancement. The list of specific-purpose payments for capital purposes contains another item of \$54 000 in respect of Aboriginal advancement. Are these funds expended by the Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Unit within the Chief Minister's department or elsewhere?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart has already asked whether that unit within the Chief Minister's Department is the former NTCAP committee under a new name or with changed functions. Is this what he is leading to?

Mr EDE: I was coming to that. At this stage, I am dealing with these 2 tied grants from the federal government because I thought that they may refer to the item on page 45. The other matter relates to page 47. The way the federal government lists these grants does not indicate which Northern Territory department has responsibility. Perhaps the Treasurer has the answer.

Mr COULTER: I thank the member for Stuart for filibustering for me. It is nice to have some cooperation. I understand that there was a recurrent amount of \$46 000 and a capital grant of \$54 000. We are still negotiating in relation to the specific-purpose payments that have been made available to us by the Commonwealth, to determine exactly how they will be spent and through which departments. I understand that it is the first time such moneys have been offered to us and I will endeavour to keep the member for Stuart informed as to the final allocation of that money, should we decide to take up the offer, and what conditions apply to it.

In this context, I might highlight the growth of specific-purpose payments from the Commonwealth. We now receive 136 specific-purpose payments and this one has been offered for the first time this year. It just shows the growth of the Commonwealth Treasury.

Mr Hatton: The intrusion.

Mr COULTER: As the Chief Minister suggests, it just shows the extent of the Commonwealth's intrusion into state-type functions. Some of these specific-purpose payments may have to be topped up by this government, and I will inform the member for Stuart of the destination of those payments should we decide to take them up.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I now come to the Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Unit. I ask the Chief Minister whether it is another version of NTCAP, which formerly came under the aegis of the then Department of Community Development, now Health and Community Services, whether there has been a change of functions, who is involved and how it is operating?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, the NTCAP committee no longer exists. Its coordination function is now carried out by the government's coordination committee which, as honourable members would be aware, is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister, who is also the Coordinator-General. If the honourable member has any specific questions in relation to that, I will be quite happy to deal with them.

Mr EDE: My particular problem relates to changes in how these matters are handled. Previously, we had a regional branch of NTCAP which covered Alice Springs and central Australia. How are these matters being dealt with now?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, they are being dealt with through the overall coordination functions of government. The Coordination Committee comprises the heads of all the major administrative units of government. It is a committee of some 13 or 14 senior executives. Each region now has its own regional coordination unit. There is a person in each major community who is appointed as the coordinator of government services within that particular township or community. These include Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. NTCAP matters are dealt with through that same mechanism and there is no duplication of coordination functions. These are all dealt with by a single government mechanism.

Mr EDE: The matter of vehicle replacement is referred to throughout the budget papers. How many vehicles are owned by the Chief Minister's Department and how many does he intend to replace this year?

Mr HATTON: I understand that 17 vehicles will be replaced this financial year in the Department of the Chief Minister. Honourable members would be aware that these include the 4 vehicles in the VIP fleet which I referred to earlier. Costings for ministerial staff vehicles are also included in this section of the budget. I want to be careful in answering this question so I do not mislead the honourable member. The Department of the Chief Minister currently has 102 vehicles and 17 of these are to be replaced. Of these, 4 are for ministerial officers, 1 for the executive, 1 for the NT Electoral Office, 4 for the VIP fleet, 1 for Parliamentary Counsel, 1 for management services and 3 for the Administrator and Government House.

Appropriation for division 11 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 10 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 31:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the minister responsible for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority just how the authority will carry out that extremely important job of promoting the role of the authority for the princely sum of \$2000. I will not be specious and say that it is throwing money all over the place when we consider it in the light of the \$700 000 or so that we are spending on statehood. However, I would ask for some indication as to whether it is a nonsense amount and that nothing will happen in that area or whether something effective can be done for \$2000. I doubt whether the minister would disagree that it is extremely important to promote the role of the authority.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I have taken another course of action in order to overcome the obvious shortage of funds that the government is faced with. A promotional scheme is being conducted in conjunction with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority which is largely an initiative developed by the director of the authority and the chairman of the commission. It will involve the preparation of several strip maps covering routes up and down all the major highways, including the road into Borroloola. I think that will go a long way towards effectively promoting the image of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. Certainly, \$2000 does not look like a great deal of money, but we have been able to overcome the problem by carrying out that program in conjunction with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I think that we ought to sack the Protocol and Public Relations Unit and hire the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection

Authority if it can do it for that sort of money. The other point that I would like to raise does not relate to the overall ongoing operation of the authority. It relates to the review of the authority which was conducted. Will the report soon see the light of day and is it thought at this stage that it will have any effect on these budgetary considerations?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am unable to answer that question because the review was actually called for by the Chief Minister and I have not officially received it. I understand that it is still being analysed. I do not anticipate it having any major effect on the appropriation before us for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority.

Appropriation for division 31 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 30:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, my first question relates to nominated funds under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement and I draw the attention of the minister to page 25 of Budget Paper No 4.2. There is a rather surprising difference between Commonwealth government funding and the funding provided by the Northern Territory government. As the table on page 25 of Budget Paper No 4.2 shows, Commonwealth government funding has decreased by 3.6% whereas Northern Territory government funding has decreased by a massive 88%. I am aware of the note on that particular section which mentions that, under the administrative changes after the last election, the appropriation for housing was distributed between the Department of Lands and Housing, the Department of Transport and Works and the Housing Commission. I also note that details on page 25 relate to the Housing Commission which is, in fact, division 86.

Mr Chairman, I might leave those comments until we come to the Housing Commission's appropriation. I do apologise, Mr Chairman, but I draw the attention of honourable members to the fact that division 30 is entitled 'Department of Lands and Housing' and division 86 is entitled the 'Northern Territory Housing Commission'. I do not think that I can be savagely calumniated for that.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am happy to answer the question now. I have made no secret about the fact that, over the last 3 or 4 months, the building program in the Northern Territory has been reduced significantly. In fact, it has come down from some 695 units to 205. The reason is that, over the last 5 or 6 years, the Northern Territory government has made an outstanding commitment to housing in the Territory, largely to encourage individuals and families to stay on in the Territory and buy a home. The time has now come when, quite simply, there is no longer the demand for the number of houses that we built in previous years.

Mr Ede: There is out bush.

Mr HANRAHAN: The member for Stuart would be aware of the significant program in relation to Aboriginal housing taking place this year. Ask me the questions and you will get the answers.

Mr Chairman, I acknowledge the fact that the Territory government's commitment is significantly reduced and I have made no secret about the fact that we have reduced our building program to a very large degree.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would like to draw the minister's attention to his second-reading speech on the Appropriation Bill, where he made reference

to the Aboriginal Development Commission's assessment of housing needs in Aboriginal communities. I take note of the comment that he made. I think we have basically the same understanding about the shape of the housing market, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs, which is characterised currently by a high vacancy rate. I think we commented in the second-reading debate on this bill about concerns in the housing industry generally about that vacancy rate.

However, I would draw the minister's attention to a suppressed demand for housing in Aboriginal communities. That was made clear in the Aboriginal Development Commission's report on needs. I really do not think it is good enough for the minister simply to say that, because there is an adequate supply of housing in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, that there are no needs for the government to address.

I am reliably informed that the government did not take up the nominated funds available under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement. I would like the minister to give us some figures on the amount available under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement and how much was actually taken up by the Northern Territory government.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I cannot supply that figure to the honourable member but I will do so shortly. It was certainly our decision not to take up the full amount of money that was available to us under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement. That has been announced previously. The actual figure that we took up fits in with our building program, our philosophy and our new directions in housing. Once I find the amount that we elected to take up, I will have no trouble in giving the information requested by the member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, it certainly does fit in with the philosophy of the Northern Territory government to ignore what I have described as a need for housing in Aboriginal communities. As the minister will recall, when he made his pious statements about the Northern Territory government's efforts in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, it was apparent that he was ignoring urgent need in that regard in his own electorate. I would appreciate some comment from the minister with respect to housing available on the Karnte lease in his own electorate and what sort of investigations he has carried out about shelter for those homeless people this year.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, with respect to the situation at Karnte, on 21 July this year an offer was made to the Karnte Aboriginal Association for a term Crown lease over Lot 7850 in the Blatherskite Valley area of Alice Springs. That offer was only accepted formally on 21 August 1987. The expenditure will be \$100 000 for roadworks, \$14 000 for water and \$18 000 for electricity. The funds to provide water and electricity to the boundary have been identified in the minor new works program, and these funds will be released to the Department of Transport and Works during this month of October.

Mr Bell: Is that expenditure to date?

Mr HANRAHAN: No, that is the money that will be released to the Department of Transport and Works for the roads, electricity and water to the boundary. The internal services are a matter for the relevant authority, and I have instigated some action to follow that up. The honourable member may or may not be aware that the Tangentyere organisation has plans to build 5 houses on the Karnte lease and we are told that the cost will be between \$400 000 and

\$500 000. Those funds are supplied by the Aboriginal Development Commission and the Northern Territory government. I certainly have no problem in saying that the people at Karnte are being looked after. It has taken some time but the process is proceeding.

As for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, the Northern Territory government has been active. You would be aware, Mr Chairman, that funds for many of these projects are allocated in conjunction with the Commonwealth and need to be approved project contractor funding. I announced the projects at a function on 5 October, World Habitat Day, in the process of launching the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. I am quite happy to go through the details of where that money is being expended, if the member for MacDonnell wants me to. Otherwise, he could quite happily ...

Mr Bell: Yes, it will save me asking the question.

Mr HANRAHAN: All right, I will go through it. An amount of \$30 000 is being spent by the Gwalwa Daraniki Association for the establishment of a centre for homeless, alcoholic and or disabled Aborigines. An amount of \$3700 is being spent by the ASTI project at Bees Creek to produce a documentary on the project, to be used as an educational and visual aid to promote the work and to encourage other people to go the same way. \$29 000 has been allocated for research into and provision of Aboriginal women's crisis accommodation through safe houses as an alternative to refuges. That grant has gone to Tangentyere Council.

The Community Tenancy Scheme is still being finalised, although the allocation of some funds has been approved by the Commonwealth. At this stage, the guidelines and specific programs have not been agreed on by the group that we are dealing with. I cannot recall its title off the top of my head, but it is the group that looks after crisis accommodation for many women's groups and refuges. It has an additional allocation in this year's budget towards the Community Tenancy Scheme and, as soon as it agrees on the guidelines and approved mechanisms, we will start expending the funds.

Assistance is being provided for Territory delegates to attend the Women's Housing Forum in Alice Springs on 24 and 25 November. An Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service has been established in Darwin and Katherine. Without going into full details of the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service, I am sure the honourable member is very aware of the success of that service in Katherine and Darwin. I believe that it has dealt with something like 450 requests for assistance since being established. It is certainly proving effective and is a well-known facility there.

The amount of expenditure on various Aboriginal housing programs was \$11.8m in 1986-87, an amount which provided 310 dwellings, including 100 outstation shelters. In 1987-88, an amount of \$12.5m is allocated to provide 265 dwellings, including 104 outstation shelters. Although funding has increased, the reduction in dwellings is attributable to increased construction costs and the increased expectations of communities. There is a greater demand for cabins with internal cooking and ablution facilities and the government is seeking to provide a higher standard of dwelling to prolong economic life. In addition, the removal and replacement of a number of derelict buildings is being met through this year's program. As well as rural housing, it is estimated that some 20% of the Housing Commission's urban stock is utilised by Aborigines.

I have covered the Community Tenancy Scheme, the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service and the program we have under way in respect of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. I will not go into the housing stocks but the member for MacDonnell is aware of the high turnover and the waiting lists. Unless he has some further questions, I think that reasonably covers some of the points that he raised and effectively demonstrates that we are doing a pretty good job of providing housing for the disadvantaged and Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL: Can he advise the House how many of those programs are actually paid for from Commonwealth funds?

Mr HANRAHAN: The majority of them are approved Commonwealth projects in which we seek dollar-for-dollar funding. We need to submit details of how a program will operate before the Commonwealth releases funds.

Mr Bell: That means that, for each of those programs that you referred to ...

Mr HANRAHAN: There is an element of Commonwealth money.

Mr Bell: You are using nominated funds under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement?

Mr HANRAHAN: I am not too sure. I will get an answer on the exact break-up of the funding.

Mr BELL: I appreciate the honourable minister's undertaking in that regard. I have a further question about the Aboriginal Development Commission's needs survey that the minister referred to. Has that been taken into account in the Housing Commission's program outside major Territory centres?

Mr HANRAHAN: The member for MacDonnell would be aware that there is an advisory group that includes the ADC, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the National Aboriginal Congress and various other associations that meet on a regular basis. Priorities for the allocation of these housing funds throughout the Territory are set through ADC, upon whose advice the Northern Territory government sets its parameters as to what will be built where. The Housing Advisory Council has been set up to look at the broad spectrum of housing, including the formation of the shared equity scheme, and includes the regional Director of DAA on that. There is constant feedback but we use the priorities set by ADC to determine our priorities. In fact, I think you will find that it is in a position to virtually tell us what the priorities are.

Mr BELL: I turn to the shared equity scheme that the government announced in March with a great fanfare and has subsequently deferred introducing. To what extent will Commonwealth States Housing Agreement money be used for that program and on what basis?

Mr HANRAHAN: Let me make it very clear right from the outset that, if it was in any way physically possible to introduce the scheme earlier, it would have been done. I notice that it has attracted some premature criticism on the basis that it has not worked in South Australia. In fact, I think there have only been about 5 applications in South Australia. This scheme is totally different to anything that will operate in Western Australia and South Australia, because it is aimed at middle-income earners. It is aimed particularly at the private market. In South Australia, if you are in the

low-income bracket, you must buy a housing estate home. If you have seen some of those at Salisbury, Elizabeth or Morphett Vale, you will realise that they are not particularly attractive places.

The difficulty with the shared equity scheme has been a legal one. Because the initial amount of money is sought from private institutions, there needs to be some formal legal agreement in place between the National Australia Bank, Westpac, ANZ, the Commonwealth Trading Bank etc. We expect on Thursday to have an early indication from the banks that the legal agreements have been finalised. If that is the case, I would hope to have the scheme operational by 1 January at the very latest. From memory, some \$13.770m is available in the budget for home purchase loan schemes. I would anticipate that, depending on demand, it could well be that the majority of that money will be used in a shared equity scheme. Bear in mind that there is very little activity under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme at the moment. There may well be a situation where money available for home purchase through the lending schemes may not be fully utilised, simply because of lack of demand.

Mr BELL: I note the comparison between the South Australian scheme and the Territory scheme and the intention to direct the scheme towards middle-income earners. I make the comment that it is not necessarily middle-income earners who will need this sort of scheme. The shared equity scheme, which is a subset of the various strategies to develop capital-indexed loans, is a strategy developed by the housing industry, both public and private, to overcome the high interest rate and high rate of inflation problems that have categorised western economies in the last 10 to 15 years.

I would have thought that middle-income earners were in a much better position to afford some of the traditional mortgage instruments and that it would be lower-income earners, who are forced into rental accommodation, who would be able to take advantage of these sorts of capital-indexed loans in order to build up some equity and take advantage of housing funds to build up some personal capital resource. I raise my eyebrows slightly at the assertion of the honourable minister that these schemes are to be directed particularly towards middle-income earners. I offer that for his consideration. I do not mind whether or not he wishes to comment on it.

The other issue I want to refer to is the revenue from land sales in the last 2 years. I have a copy of Budget Paper No 2 for 1985-86 and for 1986-87 and I draw the minister's attention to page 6 of this year's document. It refers to an actual revenue figure of \$21.295m for 1986-87. My perusal of the 1986-87 papers reveals that estimated revenue from land sales was \$27m. That is a significant shortfall of 25% or 30%. Could the minister comment on exactly why the actual revenue was so far short of the estimate?

Mr HANRAHAN: I cannot recall the amount we received in revenue from land sales last year but I think it was around the \$21m that you referred to.

Mr Bell: \$21.295m.

Mr HANRAHAN: And the estimate in this year's budget is about \$9.5m.

Mr Bell: I will come to that in a minute. I want to know why the estimate was so wildly at variance with the actual revenue.

Mr HANRAHAN: It is pretty easy. It is a sign of the times. We undoubtedly made an all-out effort to raise revenue through land sales and it

is anticipated that there will not be the same effort in this financial year. I have been speaking to the Secretary of the Department of Lands and I am advised that there is a strong chance that we will exceed that estimate, which has been made in the context of the current economic situation in the Territory. It is not all that easy to sell land at present. Auctions that we held towards the end of the financial year certainly did not result in the revenue that we expected when the estimates were made 12 months ago. This year, we have virtually halved the revenue that we anticipate from land sales. It is a sign of the times and is no big deal.

Mr BELL: I am prepared to accept the minister's explanation that the government incorrectly assessed the demand for land when it made its estimate of \$27m for 1986-87. I accept that members of the government, who pride themselves on having their fingers on the pulse, did not have their fingers on the pulse. Far be it from me to nitpick, but it certainly is a matter of concern to me that we were not able to realise the estimate.

If the government expects the opposition to extend some sort of charity to it in relation to its misreading of the market, I might draw the attention of the minister and his colleagues to the fact that they themselves rarely take such a charitable view of the economic circumstances which the federal government is lumbered with. I will be making a few more comments about this when the Treasurer gets to his feet, but I wish to draw to the minister's attention that I am prepared to accept the fact that the government was confronted with difficult circumstances, that there was a serious drop in demand for land, and that I am prepared to accept his explanation of why the estimates were not realised. The estimates might more nearly have been realised if the government had not become involved in the imbroglio over Block H at Finnis River, and I will be coming to that, but for the time being I want to hammer home to the government that, if it expects the opposition to be tolerant of its failure in this matter because it was confronted with difficult economic circumstances, it might apply some 'do as you would be done by' in respect of its criticisms of the federal government.

Mr Coulter: The downturn in our land prices is largely the result of federal government policies, including negative gearing and capital gains taxes.

Mr BELL: The Treasurer might like to contribute to this debate by explaining how negative gearing has dampened the demand for land sales in the Northern Territory.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, negative gearing is a great incentive to a developer who wishes to build flats. To build flats, one usually needs to buy land that is zoned R2, R3 or R4. I can take the member for MacDonnell to subdivisions in Sadadeen and Larapinta in Alice Springs where there is a great dearth of available R2 and R3 land. I understand that, since the federal government has announced that it is reassessing its position in relation to negative gearing, there has been a great upturn of interest in R2 and R3 land in Alice Springs. That has all happened in the last 2 months. Thus, to answer the question, negative gearing can have a very direct influence on the amount of building activity in respect of flats.

Mr BELL: I was rather surprised that the Treasurer was not able to explain himself. It will no doubt be of considerable heart to the Treasurer and the Minister for Lands and Housing that the federal government has determined to reintroduce a form of negative gearing.

I will now turn to the Northern Territory Land Corporation. The Minister for Lands and Housing will no doubt recall the debate about the dealings of the Northern Territory Land Corporation which took place in this House last week and I trust he is well briefed on the matter. Is the minister able to advise us how many properties were acquired by the Northern Territory Land Corporation in 1986-87?

Mr HANRAHAN: No, Mr Chairman.

Mr Bell: I think that is outrageous.

Mr HANRAHAN: You asked me the question. I cannot advise you because I do not have the information.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I ask again: will the minister advise the House how many properties were acquired by the Northern Territory Land Corporation in 1986-87?

Mr HANRAHAN: I would suggest to the member for MacDonnell that, if he has a series of questions on the operations of the Northern Territory Land Corporation, that I will be happy to forward them to one of the directors.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, in respect of the question I asked, that is not good enough. This is the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill and it is quite appropriate that it be basically a question and answer session. I thank the minister for his letter, which I received last Tuesday, indicating that the committee stage would be dealt with this week. I am quite happy to read the text of his letter into the committee's deliberations:

In the interests of being able to supply full particulars in response to any questions you may have, I would appreciate it if you would consider giving prior notification in writing of any such questions. You will recall that, last year, you did me this courtesy in respect of the appropriation for the Trade Development Zone and I believe it was mutually beneficial in that I was able to answer your questions at the time.

Mr Chairman, I have not been in a position to provide prior notice of particular questions but, as I said in my second-reading speech, I am quite happy for the minister to regard these questions as being placed on notice and I trust that his staff will pick them up. However, the question I asked was more than a request for information. I will repeat it: will the minister advise me of the acquisitions of the land corporation in 1986-87? It is a policy matter that is most appropriately dealt with in this committee and I would appreciate an undertaking from the minister that he will provide the information.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am sure the member for MacDonnell appreciates that I cannot pluck information from the air about specific transactions, how much money is involved in particular deals and so on. I need to go through a process of researching the information and that was why I wrote him the letter. I suspected that he would ask quite a few questions pertaining to particular details that would require investigation. The Leader of the Opposition gave me prior notice of his questions concerning the corporation's trust account and I am therefore in a position to answer them. If the member for MacDonnell would like to give me notice of his questions or put them in writing, I will endeavour to obtain the answers for him.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the question I asked the minister was not a 'how many' question or a 'which' question. It was a 'will' question, a yes or no question. I want a yes or no answer and I will not be put off. I have asked: will the minister advise how many and which properties have been purchased by the Northern Territory Land Corporation?

Mr HANRAHAN: I will endeavour to get an answer for the member for MacDonnell but I give no gilt-edged guarantee that he will like it. I will attempt to find out the information. I give him no unequivocal undertaking under any circumstances.

Mr BELL: That is certainly not an unequivocal undertaking. It is highly equivocal, and that is why I am pursuing this matter. The fact is that, as we mentioned in debate in this Assembly last week, the deliberations of the Northern Territory Land Corporation are a matter of concern to the opposition and to the people of the Northern Territory. This is one opportunity for us to get some straight answers from the minister. I intend to pursue it. So far the minister has said that he will have to go away, look at the list of the properties acquired and work out whether there are any more Finnis Rivers amongst them.

Mr Dale: He did not say that at all.

Mr BELL: He may not have said it word for word but I think I have expressed the intent of his answer reasonably accurately. I will ask him once again: will he advise me how many properties were bought by the Northern Territory Land Corporation; which properties were bought and how much was paid for those properties?

Mr HANRAHAN: I have answered the question, Mr Chairman.

Mr Bell: Okay, that is fine.

Mr HANRAHAN: I have told you that, if you give me the question, I will see if I can get an answer for you. It is that simple.

Mr BELL: I turn now to the questions of which the minister has received notice. The Treasurer advised the Assembly last week that the Northern Territory Land Corporation trust account contained \$48 000 at the end of March. In the June quarter, about \$340 000 was paid into the trust account. Where did the \$340 000 come from and what was the expenditure of \$96 000?

Mr HANRAHAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for prior notice of the question. The revenue credited to the NTLC trust account is comprised of land sales of approximately \$168 000 and the operational subsidy of \$172 000. The expenditure of \$96 000 relates to legal, accounting and maintenance costs associated with property management for the Northern Territory Land Corporation. I am able to advise honourable members opposite that the detailed financial statements of the Northern Territory Land Corporation Incorporated are to be released shortly. They are presently being audited.

Mr BELL: The honourable minister referred to a figure of \$172 000 by way of subsidy for the Northern Territory Land Corporation. Is he able to indicate the source of that subsidy?

Mr HANRAHAN: I am not. The Treasurer is not here. I will have an answer shortly.

Mr BELL: For what was the expenditure of \$96 000 in that quarter?

Mr HANRAHAN: I answered that in full. The honourable member was not listening. The expenditure of \$96 000 relates to legal, accounting and maintenance costs associated with the property management of the Northern Territory Land Corporation. I further advise that the detailed financial statements are to be released for the Northern Territory Land Corporation shortly. They are presently undergoing audit.

Mr BELL: How much money is provided for the Palmerston swimming pool?

Mr HANRAHAN: \$800 000 is provided for the swimming pool, \$125 000 in the 1986-87 financial year and the balance this financial year. 'Is the money in the form of a loan or a grant?' The money is in the form of a grant. 'Who will own and operate the Palmerston Swimming Pool?' It will be Joondanna Investments for at least 10 years, with conditions similar to other public pools in relation to opening times and entry fees.

Mr BELL: What price was paid by the government for the recently purchased Gardens Hill units and how was that price arrived at?

Mr HANRAHAN: I answered that question in the Assembly on 17 September 1987 when I indicated that the purchase price of the units was \$1.1m. The price was determined by a negotiated settlement based on advice from the Valuer-General. A letter of offer was received by the government. I think I have dealt reasonably well with the philosophy behind the purchase. We are still intending to proceed with the sale of various units in Marrakai Apartments as they become vacant.

Mr BELL: Were units in the Marrakai Apartments bought using Commonwealth States Housing agreement funds?

Mr HANRAHAN: No. I am not too sure where the funds come from to purchase those units. That was done a considerable time ago. What I am saying is that the Northern Territory government is going through a process of selling them because their asset value is approaching \$3m. I am not saying that all of them will be sold, but certainly some of them will be and their tenants will be relocated.

The operational subsidy of \$172 000 for the Northern Territory Land Corporation was a subsidy from the Northern Territory government Consolidated Fund.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, returning once again to the Gardens Hill purchase, the minister mentioned in his answer to a question without notice on 17 September that the Gardens Hill purchase was part of a spot purchase program by the Northern Territory government. What other properties have been spot purchased by the government?

Mr HANRAHAN: Off the top of my head, I could not give him the addresses. I know there was 1 lot in Northlakes and another in Alice Springs. I am quite happy to provide details.

So that there is no misunderstanding of my position on Gardens Hill, I said in this House on 17 September: 'I have no problems with the purchase of the Gardens Hills units and, if the member for MacDonnell, as the opposition spokesman for lands, would like a full briefing on the issue, I would be more than happy to give it to him'. I might add that I never received an approach

from the member for MacDonnell, only some wild and varied accusations through the various media. I say to him that, if he had taken the opportunity of that full briefing, he probably would not have to stand here and imagine shady deals. I was quite prepared at the time to give him all the details and relevant information. What I am saying to the member for MacDonnell is that the offer is withdrawn until he asks again.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I accept the minister's comments with respect to the Gardens Hills units. It still continues to be a matter of concern. Suffice it to say that I will take the opportunity of a briefing with respect to the Gardens Hill units and will correspond with him in that regard.

Mr Chairman, while we are on the subject of the appropriation for the Department of Lands and Housing, it is probably appropriate to pursue some of the questions about the Finnis River deal. I would like answers from either the minister or the Treasurer, who was Acting Minister for Lands for a period in January. There is considerable concern in the community about the way the government has been disbursing moneys, particularly in respect of Finnis River. The minister has not bothered yet to explain the inconsistency between the eventual sale price of \$575 000 for Block H at Finnis River and the Chief Minister's assertion that the then Acting Minister for Lands may have recommended a sale price of \$650 000. I also draw to the minister's attention that he claimed otherwise during question time in this House last week. He might like to clear up that little inconsistency.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the question that was asked during question time was, I think, did I 'instruct' - I think that was the word - the Northern Territory Land Corporation during my period as the acting minister. I simply said: 'No, I did not'. Mr Chairman, I did not instruct the Northern Territory Land Corporation.

Mr BELL: That is really not at all satisfactory, Mr Chairman. Whatever else we do not know about the Finnis River deal, what we have found out is pretty appalling. Dare I suggest that there is more to the matter and that that was why, last week, the government knocked on the head the suggestion that a select committee of this Assembly investigate what occurred. I suggest that it is those typical, smarty-pants answers from the Treasurer that caused so much ...

Mr Coulter: I am sorry that it does not suit you.

Mr BELL: ... concern among the Northern Territory public and in the business community, and the conviction that this government is patently unable to deal with land. I want an answer from the Treasurer about the figure that was discussed with the land corporation when he suggested or instructed - he can use whatever term he likes - that the land corporation should sell Block H at Finnis River to his mates at Input Pty Ltd.

Mr Coulter: Step outside and say that. As a matter of fact you might even be called up for saying it here.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I would ask the honourable member for MacDonnell to withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: Withdraw what, Mr Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: The imputation of impropriety.

Mr BELL: Imputation of impropriety, Mr Chairman? All I suggested was that the principals of Input Pty Ltd were known to the Treasurer. I made no imputation.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I would ask the member for MacDonnell to withdraw the statement referring to selling to 'his mates at Input Pty Ltd'.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I withdraw any imputation. I withdraw the noun phrase 'his mates' unreservedly. Let me rephrase it, Mr Chairman. What I want to know, and what the people out there want to know, is what was the nature of his dealings with the principals of Input Pty Ltd and what was the nature of his correspondence, instructions, conversations - call them what you will - with the chairman or anybody else in the Northern Territory Land Corporation, with respect to the subsequent sale. I suggest that any more smart answers will just get me back on my feet. The sooner we get to the bottom of this, the sooner we can all go home.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, a truthful answer was given to the member for MacDonnell and, if it does not suit him or assist him in relation to the fabrications and stories that he has concocted for the media and the public forum, I am sorry. I cannot add any validity to anything that he has said out there. I have told the truth and the other simple fact is ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I suggest that the implication that I have concocted stories about this - which is tantamount to accusing me of lying - should be withdrawn.

Mr COULTER: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Chairman. If the answer does not suit the member for MacDonnell, I apologise. I am sorry that I cannot substantiate the story which he has produced for people to consume. The simple fact is that I have told the truth. Another bit of truth is that I have not met with the so-called people involved in the company. An offer was put to me through the Department of Lands. I understand that the Department of Lands met with the principals involved, and I forwarded that offer to the Northern Territory Land Corporation. That may not suit the member either, but it is the simple fact of what happened. An offer was put to the Department of Lands and officers of that department met with the principals. That offer was placed before me and, as the acting minister, I forwarded it to the Northern Territory Land Corporation.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, can the Treasurer then confirm that the offer that he received from Department of Lands officials and forwarded to the land corporation was an offer to sell the property for \$575 000?

Mr COULTER: I do not recall the exact figure, Mr Chairman, but I understand that it was an offer that would have enabled us to recoup our money on the purchase price of the block.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, will the Treasurer give an undertaking to table advice received from the department with respect to that offer?

I want to place on the record, for the benefit of honourable members and for the benefit of the Northern Territory public, that the Treasurer is refusing to answer that question. I suggest that there are a few people out there who will be a little bit concerned about that. The plain fact of the matter is that, because these blokes have refused to set up a select committee so that these issues can be discussed dispassionately, this is the only opportunity we have to find out whether they can lie straight in bed or not.

The mere fact that the Treasurer is refusing to answer questions in here is tantamount to an admission of guilt.

Mr Coulter: The truth hurts, doesn't it?

Mr BELL: I will bet it does. I will bet it does, because you will not get up here and tell ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for MacDonnell will speak through the Chair and I ask him to withdraw the remark about 'lying straight in bed'.

Mr BELL: With respect, Mr Chairman, I said that we were trying to work out whether they can or they cannot lie straight in bed. I did not make a bland assertion that they could not.

Mr CHAIRMAN: An imputation is still there.

Mr BELL: I unreservedly withdraw any imputation that any government member cannot lie straight in bed.

Mr Chairman, let us return to this Finnis River issue and see if we cannot winkle out a few more answers. Let us see if the Treasurer's memory is as clear as the financial mechanism that was ...

Mr Hanrahan injecting.

Mr BELL: No, you cannot gag me, Ray. Bad luck.

Mr Hanrahan: I was not even thinking about that.

Mr BELL: No? But you would like to.

Mr Hanrahan: If you want to challenge me, I can.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, let us see what the Treasurer's memory is like in relation to the financial mechanism that came through on this so-called Department of Lands advice that he is supposed to have received in January this year. Was the advice he received on the basis that Input Pty Ltd would fund the purchase, however it might do so, or did the advice to the Treasurer - who was the Acting Minister for Lands in January - include mention of a \$300 000 2-year loan at concessional rates of interest? Was that included in the Department of Lands' advice that he forwarded to the land corporation?

Oh dear, we are having a bad day, are we not? My word, the cursed amnesia! I certainly hope that a few people hear about this. This is a woeful performance, one of the worst I have seen. In 6 years in this Assembly, this is the first time I can ever recall a government frontbencher refusing to get to his feet to answer questions.

Mr Perron: Oh, it has been done for years. How long have you been here?

Mr BELL: I have been here for 6 years and I honestly cannot recall any occasion when a minister of the Crown has refused to answer genuine questions seeking factual information. The opposition has a right to know how public money is spent. The public of the Northern Territory has a right to know why

a \$300 000 loan was discussed in January and finally sealed in September. It has a right to know, as do the other competing interests for that block of land, why there was no open dealing in respect of it. As far as I am concerned, the government's performance in relation to this matter is nothing short of a scandal.

Mr Chairman, that concludes my comments for the time being.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to refer to the heading of 'Aboriginal Housing' on page 20. Could the minister give me some more detail about what that function encompasses, how it is divided between the Top End and central Australia and how it relates to the ADC and DAA?

Mr HANRAHAN: You want to know details of the resources provided for Aboriginal housing in division 30 and how they relate to the ADC. These are the non-capital resources. There are 2 officers in the southern region who are employed full-time on program development and construction supervision, an STO 2 and a TO 2. The STO 2 officer is based in Tennant Creek and is involved in the construction supervision in Tennant Creek and part of the Barkly region. In addition, the Administration Division provides full support in processing payments and other administrative areas. Further support and overall program development and monitoring are provided by the Housing Division in Darwin.

Coordination between the department, ADC and DAA is achieved at 2 levels. The first and more formal level is through the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Committee which is established in accordance with guidelines set out in the Special Housing Assistance Program established under the Commonwealth States Housing Agreement. This committee is chaired by the Department of Lands and Housing, comprises representatives of DAA and ADC, and meets quarterly either in Darwin or Alice Springs. Its last meeting was in Alice Springs on 20 October 1987. At an informal level, there is close contact and coordination between officers of the 3 organisations, particularly in the field. There are a number of instances of joint programs involving the department and ADC and I think they have been discussed previously. Does that satisfactorily answer the member's question in regard to activities under this heading in the southern region?

Mr EDE: There is another matter which I would like clarified and it arises from a question asked by the member for MacDonnell. The minister has given assurances in relation to the connection of power and water to the boundaries of the site set aside by the Tangentyere Council for the 5 houses for which it has funding. Would the minister clarify whether his department is responsible for the actual connection from the boundary to the houses or whether that is the responsibility of another department or funding authority?

Mr HANRAHAN: As I said earlier, I am still seeking final clarification from the other departments as to the identification of funds for the internal services. I understand that Tangentyere has \$400 000 to \$500 000 for 5 houses, which is ADC and Northern Territory government money. We have identified a total of \$123 000 for road works, water and electricity up to the boundary and I am still attempting to ascertain the priority for internal services and connections, because my understanding is that the allocation of funds for those will come from the Power and Water Authority of the Department of Transport and Works. From the information available to me, I would assume that that the matter is proceeding this year and it is a matter of identifying the requisite funds in the appropriations of other departments. However, I have not been able to have that confirmed as yet.

Mr EDE: I will redirect the question to the Treasurer. There is considerable anguish among the people concerned at the possibility that the houses may be constructed without connection to services and that there may be problems with vandalism and so forth.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, correct me if I am wrong, but I think we had the same problem in Alice Springs about 2 years ago near the river on the other side of Charles Creek. The problem then related to sewerage and water supply. I was the Minister for Community Development and I recall the difficulties. I encountered another example of this sort of problem when I visited the new house that I spoke about earlier today. They were connected to a bore that was not operating. A pipe had been run across the road and connected into a bore, but the line was empty. Since I became aware of that problem, my officers have been trying to find out where the responsibility lies for the connection of services to houses built by the Department of Lands and Housing. If the member for Stuart will bear with me, I will hopefully be able to provide him with the information he is seeking during the course of these sittings.

Mr SMITH: Perhaps we should remind ourselves that the Minister for Lands and Housing has primary responsibility in this area, not the Treasurer. The minister referred to an audit of the Northern Territory Land Corporation. I want to ascertain that the result of the audit will be publicly available. Can the minister advise whether the audit is being carried out by the Auditor-General or is it being done by a private auditor organised by the corporation?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, after receiving the Leader of the Opposition's written questions, I was simply advised that the corporation's accounts are being finalised. I have no idea whether the audit is being carried out by the Auditor-General or a private auditor. I will attempt to obtain an answer for him but I certainly did not seek information on that topic. I simply sought answers to the questions that he asked me. I have advised him that detailed accounts are being finalised and I will seek further information in relation to the audit.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the minister is very glib about this matter. I would have thought that, in responding to my written questions, he or his staff could possibly have anticipated further questions arising from them and might have had some answers ready. That simple task seems to be beyond the wit of the minister and his officers.

Mr HANRAHAN: I can take that. I have big shoulders.

Mr SMITH: You are a big boy. You can take it. My next question also relates to one of my written questions. I understand that \$168 000 was received for land sold by the Northern Territory Land Corporation in the June quarter. Can the minister inform this House, at this time, of which land was sold to account for the \$168 000?

Mr HANRAHAN: No, Mr Chairman. I have no idea. I believe this question relates to that asked by the member for MacDonnell. He wanted a breakdown of blocks for sale, blocks sold and land purchased. I told the member for MacDonnell that I would attempt to find out the details and, as soon as I have them, I will advise members opposite.

Appropriation for division 30 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 86:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions relating to this division which is an extremely confusing one. I find it difficult to work out where the money comes from and where it goes. I am sure that it is all aboveboard, but I am determined to understand it. The Commonwealth's expenditures are the Northern Territory's receipts. The budget papers show allocations under particular headings but expenditures under those headings do not always relate to amounts received from the Commonwealth. The items I am about to refer to do not contain variations of millions of dollars, as some others do.

On page 25, the allocation for local government and community housing in 1987-88 is \$200 000. However, on page 17 of 'Commonwealth Payments to the Northern Territory' under capital and specific purpose payments, there is a figure of \$373 000. I acknowledge that, if one goes back to Table 136, the figure is \$200 000. Is that a communications problem? Why is there a difference in the amounts?

Mr HANRAHAN: An answer is coming. I do not have the Commonwealth document before me. The local government and community housing figure of \$200 000 is money from the federal government that is used for the community tenancies scheme and mortgage rent relief. I will find out why there appears to be a discrepancy in the figures.

Mr EDE: For the Crisis Accommodation Program, the federal government figure is \$200 000. The figure that the Northern Territory indicated it would receive in the listing of Commonwealth payments is \$358 000. The figure in the budget paper is \$200 000.

Mr HANRAHAN: I have good news for the member for Stuart, Mr Chairman. I am able to answer his question. The variation is disclosed expenditure. It relates to unexpended amounts for the particular program from previous years, reappropriated to 1987-88. Thus, in the Community Tenancy Scheme, there is an appropriation last year. Because of the difficulty of establishing the guidelines and obtaining cooperation from the group responsible for actually identifying the program, putting it in place and obtaining Commonwealth approval, the Commonwealth agreed that money appropriated last year, instead of being lost to the Territory, would be included with this year's appropriation. The figure is actually the total appropriation for the last 2 years. That accounts for the discrepancy in the figures. I would assume that there is \$173 000 this year from last year's appropriation for local government and community housing, and an additional \$158 000 from the Crisis Accommodation Program that was not fully utilised in last year's budget but has been reappropriated.

Mr EDE: We come back to the basic question which I gave the minister advance notice of. Is he able to provide a breakdown of the \$29.781m from the CSHA into Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal programs. Obviously, we have already identified a couple of programs which are not by their nature specifically Aboriginal, such as the \$523 000 for pensioner housing grants. We then are left with housing assistance for Aborigines and other housing assistance. We have identified one of these - a \$12.497m tied grant from the federal government for Aboriginal housing. I am trying to determine how much of the \$16.761m of other housing assistance is specifically related to Aboriginal housing programs.

Mr HANRAHAN: According to my advice from the department, \$15 954m of the \$29.781 is for Aboriginal housing and the remaining \$13.827m is for non-Aboriginal housing. The member for Stuart asked for the detailed expenditures in relation to those funds. In the first quarter - that is, the period July to September 1987 - the expenditure on Aboriginal housing has been \$4.442m. Based on the formula of 20% of urban dwelling stock, it is estimated that a further \$4.393m is spent on repairs and maintenance of dwelling stock occupied by Aboriginal people. That formula is an accepted arrangement between the Territory government and the Commonwealth. The amount is separate from the funds provided by the federal government.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I do not quite understand how the minister has calculated the difference between the \$12.497m and the \$15.954m, but possibly we can agree that he will ask somebody to write me a letter to explain the various formulas so that I can consider the matter over a longer period.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I have no problem with giving an undertaking that I will let the member know how it is worked out.

Mr EDE: Let us have a look at the expenditure of the \$12.497m. Mr Chairman, if you look through the capital works program you will see that the amount allocated is \$11.232m, which is less than 90% of the allocation provided by the federal government as a tied capital amount. I would like the honourable minister to advise what has happened to the balance of the funds provided by the federal government.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I would imagine that the balance of the money that the member for Stuart has identified as not being appropriated under the capital works program in the rural area is identified in the urban building program. 20% of urban stock is taken to be occupied by Aboriginal people. That is part of the formula and the agreement that we have with the Commonwealth government. I would need to address all those issues in pretty comprehensive detail but I can assure him that the formulas are agreed between the Territory and the federal government. I am sure that what he is driving at is the difference between what is shown in the capital works program and what is shown as the total allocation towards Aboriginal housing. We do not distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing in urban centres.

Mr EDE: Is it true that the Northern Territory government puts money into Aboriginal housing? So far, we have been unable to establish that it does. We have found that, of the money that comes from the federal government, only 90% is clearly allocated towards what is definitely Aboriginal housing. The remaining 10%, which is about \$1.25m, would probably be used on some massive urban housing project. With the collapse in that area, we find it extremely difficult to establish in our minds that any Territory money goes into Aboriginal housing.

Mr HANRAHAN: I was becoming confused in relation to the 2 separate questions that he asked about the total amount attributable to Aboriginal housing and the 20% of urban housing which is taken as Aboriginal housing.

The 10% of the amount of about \$12m is the administrative cost that is agreed between the Northern Territory and the federal governments. That is taken out to run the scheme Territory-wide. That is also an allocation under the formula, and I have already given an undertaking that I will give all the details of that to the honourable member.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I was told over the weekend that a couple of houses are being built at Ti Tree at a cost of \$60 000 each, while just 10 km down the road towards Alice Springs at the new camp, houses are rumoured to be costing \$150 000 to build. Can the minister investigate the truth of this and see if we cannot get better value for money, if it is indeed true?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I will certainly take that on board. I know that the construction costs for some houses for Conservation Commission rangers has exceeded \$200 000 at particular locations. I am quite happy to look into the matter and investigate the costs of those houses at Ti Tree. It may relate to the type of house that is required to be built. Obviously, we do not encourage the building of houses from fibro. They need to be constructed of brick. Obviously, they need to be built from strong materials so that they do not deteriorate in a short period. I will investigate the actual circumstances and the construction costs of the houses at Ti Tree.

Mr EDE: For the benefit of the member for Sacadeen, I believe that I know the houses he referred to. I have checked them out. They are being constructed through the ADC. Although I cannot give the exact construction costs of each, it is certainly below \$100 000 and I know that for a fact. I believe that that type of 3-bedroom brick house is quite expensive, within the vicinity of \$80 000 or so, but certainly well below the figure of \$150 000.

Mr COLLINS: Just to clarify that, Mr Chairman, the 2 houses in Ti Tree, which have been built by the Vietnamese people, are double-walled brick and are very nice buildings. I have not seen those at the new camp, but it is 10 km closer to Alice Springs, where I would imagine most of the material has to come from. It is only 100 m off the Stuart Highway and therefore there is no great distance involved and there should be no great problem in relation to the 2 sites.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I want to place on the record that I am extremely disturbed and that I share the concerns of the member for MacDonnell. I certainly understand his feelings on this matter. The figures provided to us by various bodies, such as the ADC, indicate that in the rural areas of the Northern Territory our housing program is not even keeping up with the rate of family formation. I know that there has been a very substantial increase in spending in the area. I recall the days when, in the Northern Territory, the ratio used to be 60:40. 60% was supposed to have been utilised for urban areas and 40% for bush areas. We now have 90% of the money being spent out bush, which is an achievement and is welcome as far as it goes. However, we are only just within reach of keeping up with the rate of family formation.

I have seen estimates of \$300m as the amount needed to provide reasonable shelter to all families which do not have houses at present. That is how far behind we are. Whilst I understand that the Territory government will not turn around one fine day and allocate \$300m to overcome that problem, I am disappointed that it has not used some of its own scarce resources in an attempt to overcome that backlog. That would have put it in a very strong moral position as far as the federal government is concerned. The Territory government could then have gone to the federal government, having demonstrated that it was making an above-standard effort and doing more because it understood the massive housing problems in the Northern Territory. By putting in an extra \$5m or \$10m, even without being required to do so, it would have demonstrated to the federal government that it understood the gravity of the problem. It could have asked the federal government to set a specific goal: to establish a 5-year or 10-year program. At the moment, we could have a 100-year program and that still would not solve the problem. I would like to

offer that gratuitous advice to the minister. I do so with the very best of intentions, in the hope that he will take it on board, start looking around for some surplus funds and demonstrate to the federal government that he is serious.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I take on board and note the comments of the member for Stuart.

The actual expenditure required to house everybody in the Territory is \$230m, covering 4000 units. I would like to comment very briefly on the Territory's housing program and how it is seen by the federal government. At this year's Housing Ministers Conference in New Zealand, the then Minister for Housing with the federal government, Hon Stewart West, used the programs developed by the Northern Territory government as an example and stuck it right up the noses of our Labor counterparts in the states of Australia. He went so far as to give a public undertaking that there would be an extra \$5m or \$6m in the federal appropriation specifically aimed at Aboriginal housing.

Unfortunately, there has been a change of federal minister since then and the undertaking has not been recognised. For some strange reason, the transcript of the minutes of the proceedings in New Zealand does not contain that particular conversation and advice from Stewart West. The Territory's program was used as an example. Members opposite may feel that the Territory government does not do enough. On balance, however, we make a far better attempt than any state government in Australia.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the 2 other items I wish to raise also relate back to differences between the figures that we have in front of us and those provided by the federal government. I note that the figure for excisions of pastoral leases is \$250 000. I cannot find any actual allocation in the federal budget's specific-purpose capital payments which covers that. I would like to know whether we are getting the \$250 000

Mr HANRAHAN: I will try to get the answer.

Mr EDE: If you look at Table 136, a copy of which I gave to the Treasurer earlier, you will find no reference to excisions of pastoral leases. However, there is such a reference in Budget Paper No 2.

In respect to the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme, the federal government has made a specific-purpose payment for recurrent purposes of only \$237 000, as against the estimate of \$456 000 in Budget Paper No 2. I would like to know whether this will cause substantial cutbacks in the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme or whether the government is able to continue payments at the present level.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I will provide the information as soon as the officers have finished working it out. I thought that we had an increase in funding for the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme but I will have the figures checked.

Sittings suspended.

Mr HANRAHAN: Budget Paper No 2 discloses \$456 000 for the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme in 1987-88. That is comprised of \$237 000, which is new federal funding, plus the roll-over from the previous year's allocation of \$227 000. The \$200 000 was provided in 1986-87 and a further \$50 000 was provided this year. The total expenditure in 1987-88 is \$250 000.

Mr EDE: We have a total revenue figure which is incorporated in our overall budget and, in this instance, includes funds carried forward from last year. On the other hand, we see the figure carried forward from last year. I assume that the reason why these are treated differently and are included as additional revenue, rather than in the overall figure carried forward, is because they are tied funds from the federal government whereas the others are untied funds.

Mr HANRAHAN: That is correct.

Appropriation for division 86 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 51:

Mr EDE: Can the minister provide more detail on the amount of \$779 000 being provided to the Ghan Preservation Society?

Mr HANRAHAN: It is part of our approved bicentennial program. From memory, \$500 000 is federal funding and the other \$200 000 is the Territory allocation, giving a total of \$779 000.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I cannot find in the budget papers where any provision is made for payment of a consultancy fee to Stephen Davis.

Mr HANRAHAN: I am not aware that the museum is making any special payment to Stephen Davis per se but there is an allocation within its budget for consultants. Is the member referring to anything in particular?

Mr LANHUPUY: The Milingimbi collection.

Mr HANRAHAN: That was a special appropriation handled through the Museums and Art Galleries Board from the Treasurer's Advance.

Appropriation for division 51 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 85:

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister for Conservation 2 questions. Firstly, what capital works are proposed for 1987-88 and, secondly, what is the amount allocated for the relocation of the commission to Palmerston?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of the member for Arafura, on page 16 of Budget Paper No 5, the Conservation Commission's capital works in progress and new works are shown. The fit-out of the Gaymark Building in Baywood Plaza has received an allocation of \$300 000.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the minister a few questions regarding parks under the control of the Conversation Commission, shown on page 11 of Budget Paper No 4.3.

I am sorry I did not give the minister prior notification of my question. Cobourg District Park is mentioned. I would like to know what part of the Conservation Commission's budget goes towards the running of this park, because I thought that it was essentially self-supporting through income from permits sold for the destruction of certain stock. I thought the ANPWS footed the bill for the Kakadu and Jabiru District Parks. I was unaware that Murgarella was still operating. I thought that was a bit passe now, unless it

has been reactivated. Could the minister give some detail about the coastal plains district parks? I am assuming that the Gunn Point area could be considered as a coastal plains district park. If the Conservation Commission is responsible for those parks, does that mean that it is also responsible for the basic facilities that people normally expect at these parks, such as the toilet facilities which are so very important at Gunn Point?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I will attempt to pick that up as quickly as I can. I cannot give an exact breakdown in dollar terms of the allocations for those particular parks. I can obtain the information for the honourable member, but I probably will not be able to do so at this hour. We definitely have a positive presence at Cobourg. I have no problems about supporting the role of the Conservation Commission in the work it does with traditional owners at Cobourg. I will get a breakdown of the figures for the member.

At Murgendela, we are certainly no longer involved in the forestry project but we have staff working there. I am aware of various Aboriginal interests which are working in conjunction with the people at Cobourg to investigate the possibility of using Murgendela as a tourist base camp, to take people into Cobourg as well as out into other parts of Arnhem Land. That is the involvement at Murgendela.

The coastal plains district parks are Casuarina and Gunn Point. We are responsible for them and we have ongoing maintenance programs. That relates to the question that the honourable member raised this morning with the Minister for Health and Community Services. We are attempting to use prison labour there. Discussions are presently under way with the Darwin City Council in relation to some foreshore areas presently controlled by the Conservation Commission. It is probably time that the Darwin City Council was given an opportunity to look after them and that option is the subject of continuing negotiations.

We spend money in the Kakadu and Jabiru area because we do a number of things in conjunction with the ANPWS. I am not too sure of the exact breakdown but we share responsibility for some of the roads, for example, and matters relating to this are discussed and handled through the Department of Transport and Works. We still carry out works and expend funds there, although this has been on a very limited basis. If the member wants the detailed breakdown of our actual involvement, I have no difficulty in undertaking to provide the information to her.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is again a problem with the apparent disparity between the tied funds coming to the Northern Territory from the Commonwealth and the actual Territory expenditure. I will deal with the recurrent area first.

Mr HANRAHAN: Where are you looking?

Mr EDE: I am looking at the National Soil Conservation Program initially. In its table, the federal government shows an allocation of \$307 000 to the program whereas in Budget Paper No 2 we estimate that we will receive \$279 000. Again, the federal government allocation for exotic disease eradication is \$24 000 whereas we are stating that we received \$20 000. Under the National Rainforest Conservation Program, the Commonwealth has allocated \$203 000 whereas we are stating that we only received \$157 000. The Commonwealth figures appear in Table 136, Commonwealth Payments to the Territory, and the Northern Territory figures are shown in Budget Paper No 2. I raise this matter now so that I can return to some of the questions of which

I have given notice to the minister. Perhaps he could provide the answers before we reach the end of the division.

Mr HANRAHAN: I will check those discrepancies but I think there is a pretty simple explanation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is another anomaly in the capital payments. The federal government has allocated \$243 000 and we are talking about \$254 000. I presume that the \$11 000 difference represents unexpended funds from the previous year. The figures for recurrent expenditure vary in the opposite way. We are talking about spending less money than the federal government indicates that it has allocated.

While he is working on that, possibly the minister could give us some detail on the assistance to Berry Springs Wildlife Park in 1986-87 and 1987-88? I would like some details about progress and the current time frame for its completion.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart gave me advance notice of the question about Berry Springs but I would inform him that the ongoing 1987-88 expenditure under salaries and administration is broken down into \$324 000 for salaries and \$293 000 for administration, a total ongoing expenditure of \$617 000 in 1986-87, just for the ongoing management of the park. From memory, the park will ultimately employ some 39 full-time staff, many of whom will be on contract because of the standard of professional expertise required in some areas of the zoo's operation.

We are on target. Most of the building program is completed in the nocturnal display, the aviaries and the walking trails. The nocturnal house and the aviaries are completed and the growing and stocking program will continue through 1988. The zoo should be open for public viewing at the end of next year, although it will not be fully operational until the end of 1989. We are seeking an extra \$500 000 through private sponsorship to complete the diurnal display and to finish the wetlands area which will include buffalo and fresh and salt-water crocodiles. That is all being created. It looks as though it will be ready for the opening. There is a chance that the money is available.

The local management committee should be finalised during the next 2 weeks. It has been charged with the task of developing the concessions which include the restaurant, a possible caravan park and various other facilities including, I hope, an Aboriginal cultural centre. That is the committee's task and it is certainly in its terms of reference.

There has been a dramatic rise in the cost of the walk-in aquatic display, due to an increase in the cost of the 2" thick formed and moulded acrylic material. It is normally manufactured in Japan but apparently a similar product has been manufactured somewhere in Australia. We are investigating whether it is possible to do the formwork and moulding on site. It is a \$500 000 bicentennial project, but the cost escalation is such that we may have to alter our strategy to complete it.

I would certainly anticipate that the park will go a long way towards providing an incentive for people to spend an extra night in the Top End, and that is what tourism is all about. I would encourage everybody to go out and have a look at the area. If members want to visit the area, they should contact me and I will arrange it. I think members will be absolutely amazed at the professionalism and the quality of work. Everybody who has been

involved in the project should be very proud. I am sure they will all be smiling when it officially opens.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, contract work from the ANPWS increased by 13%. What work is being done by the commission under contract from the ANPWS?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I will have that checked and confirmed for the honourable member, but some of the rangers in Kakadu are actually on contract. They are NT Conservation Commission rangers even though they wear ANPWS uniforms because the ANPWS will not let them wear Conservation Commission uniforms.

Mr TIPILOURA: Disposal of assets is mentioned. What assets are proposed to be disposed of? I know one of them.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I am not aware of all the details of the annual disposal of various assets by the commission. I can certainly find that out. As to the forestry project at Melville Island, we are not disposing of the asset. We are giving it away. It is certainly not bringing any revenue into the Territory and, as the member for Arafura is aware, there are ongoing discussions between the Territory government and the ADC. I think the onus has been on the ADC to put an alternative proposition to the Northern Territory government. We await that with bated breath.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, what expenditure recoveries were treated as miscellaneous in 1986-87?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, can the member for Arafura tell me to where he is taking this from?

Mr TIPILOURA: Page 29.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, is the honourable member concerned about the variation in internal revenue?

Mr TIPILOURA: Yes.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the note at the bottom of the page explains the situation in relation to the \$357 000. It is due to a change in accounting procedures.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the only reference to the Katherine Gorge National Park which I have been able to find in the budget papers is the amount of \$772 715 carried forward for work in progress to upgrade the access road, the car park, the electricity supply and to provide the sewerage and reticulation system. That is carried forward from last year and presumably that work is still in progress. I do not understand why no specific mention is made of current expenditure on maintenance and supervision of the park under the activity 'Katherine Region'.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, it is not identified separately. The Katherine Gorge National Park is included under the activity 'Katherine Region', within the project 'Eley District Parks'. The allocations for 1987-88 are: salaries \$188 000, administration and operational \$100 000 - a total of \$288 000. The member for Stuart has already mentioned the amount of \$772 715 for ongoing capital works which are already well under way.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, to clarify that, is that the expenditure per year on Elsey District Parks or is that specifically related to Katherine Gorge?

Mr HANRAHAN: I have extracted that. It is specifically related to Katherine Gorge.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the minister will know the interest I have in the Tanami Wildlife Park and that I am aware of the letters he has received from people in that area asking the commission to extend its activities there. A great deal of work has been done on re-establishing the bilbies in some locations on the other side of Lake Surprise and a number of other areas. I am most disappointed not to see a specific allocation in the Alice Springs region to cover that particular area. It has always been something of a disappointment to me that my electorate does not rate in any way in the Conservation Commission's budget and I would hope that we are finally going to get a guernsey. Would the minister advise me of the commission's attitude to that area and does it have any plans to expand its activities there during the year?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the member for Stuart is very aware, as I am, of the approaches made to the Conservation Commission by Aboriginal traditional owners to have various parts of the Tanami declared conservation zones. The discussions that are taking place are very encouraging indeed. I will say quietly, while the Treasurer is not listening, that I have recently approved some consultancies which relate to ongoing work with the marl colonies and fire management programs. Those 2 programs amount to a total of \$61 500 and relate to the ongoing management of programs that the member referred to. I have certainly given the Director of the Conservation Commission every encouragement to take up the discussions with the Aboriginal people and any assistance that the member for Stuart may be able to offer will be welcome.

Mr EDE: Can the minister clarify the situation in relation to the imbalance between the \$534 000 in tied recurrent expenditure government as against the \$456 000 referred to in Budget Paper No 2?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, my advice from Treasury is that, where there are discrepancies on the downward side as far as the Territory is concerned, ongoing negotiations are taking place. It appears that we are advised that we have received a particular allocation and are subsequently advised of different figures. I am quite happy to provide further details but Treasury has not as yet ascertained the exact reasons for some of the discrepancies.

Mr TIPILOURA: There is a reference on page 27 of Budget Paper No 4.3 to properties managed by the Corporate Services Group. The expenditure in 1986-87 was \$130 000 and the appropriation for 1987-88 is \$454 000. Can the minister explain the difference of \$324 000?

Mr HANRAHAN: I would imagine that it directly reflects the cost of moving to Palmerston, which is an additional \$300 000.

Mr EDE: Would the minister please justify to myself and the other people of Alice Springs why this move to Palmerston is taking place at enormous cost?

Mr HANRAHAN: I fully support the move of the Conservation Commission to Palmerston and the establishment of a major complex there. It will involve the moving of the herbarium and an allocation of land for a vehicle compound. I am sure that the Minister for Industries and Development will expand at a

later date on additional demands being made on the Berrimah Farm area in terms of primary production research and so forth. I will clarify the situation in relation to the Director of the Conservation Commission. He will be taking up residence in Darwin from 1 February 1988. It is a matter of administrative efficiency. The Conservation Commission has a big task at the moment and it is becoming too difficult for the director to spend half his time travelling between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr EDE: I want to further explore the discrepancy between what the federal government claims it has expended and what the Territory government says it receives. I want to relate that to budgeted expenditure within the various functions. Page 19 refers to moneys being spent under the National Soil Conservation Program and lists an amount of \$124 000. That is the third figure I have seen. The federal government says it is giving us \$307 000. We say we are receiving \$279 000 and then we say we are expending \$124 000.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, it would take a maestro to sort out the differences between the figures. My advice on soil conservation is that the figure, broken down between the regions, amounts to \$279 000. The matter is covered on pages 12, 13, 18 and 19. I have already offered to tackle the problem of apparent discrepancies between the Commonwealth allocations and our expenditure figures, and I can do no more at this stage.

Mr EDE: I welcome the minister's offer in relation to the amounts that the federal government says it will give us and the amounts that we say we are receiving. My last question relates to how much of that money we intend to spend in this financial year. I know figures are confusing and it is fairly difficult to get them all, but I would like the minister's assurance that he will explain to me and the member for Arafura where those expenditure figures are detailed in the budget papers.

Mr HANRAHAN: I will give the members for Stuart and Arafura a couple of options. They can either write to me setting out their questions or they can have a full briefing with the accounting people at the Conservation Commission. They can advise me of what they would like to do and I will ensure that the information is made available.

Appropriation for division 85 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 20:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, my first question concerns the commission's statement of functions. Whilst it fairly adequately describes what the commission does in a general sense, it does not provide sufficient goals in terms of what it hopes to achieve this financial year. Does the minister have specific functional goals in mind in relation to tourist numbers, the number of accommodation units that will be available at the end of the financial year, the numbers and types of new facilities that will come on stream during 1987-88, and so on?

Mr HANRAHAN: I notice that, in recent days, the member for Stuart has been quite vocal about the need for a forward plan. I can assure him that we have one and that it contains definite priorities. I can advise him that we have recently completed a very informative document which is being distributed to investors and people in the industry. It covers travel indicators, projected visitation numbers and the number of units required to meet projected demand. I suggest that he might like to obtain a copy.

Mr Ede: I have it.

Mr HANRAHAN: Good. We have also completed the Roadside Inn Review Report and taken steps to encourage the ongoing development of infrastructure in terms of caravan parks. All that is happening. We particularly need to address the development of feature areas in close consultation with the Conservation Commission. These need to be capable of handling large visitor numbers, hence the high priority now being given to Berry Springs and Litchfield Park in the Top End. We will certainly need them next year to start to ease some of the pressure on Kakadu and to allow people an alternative destination.

We are also concentrating on the wetlands area of the Mary and Wildman Rivers, Corroboree and the Murrumbidgee floodplains. Those areas are currently under investigation by consultants as part of a proposal to develop alternative areas. In the west MacDonnell Ranges region a program is already under way to complete the West MacDonnell's Park from the Telegraph Station all the way through to the other side of Glen Helen. That is expected to be finalised within the next 18 months. We also have the Kings Canyon development. In conjunction with the ANPWS, we are actively keeping pressure on the federal government to encourage future development in Kakadu. The Gagadju Association has the Crocodile Motel project under way, and the South Alligator Motel is increasing room numbers by about 100. There are 2 other developments that I am aware of in that area also. As soon as Litchfield Park is operational, we will bring Gregory Park on stream. Therefore, we do have a plan.

We are very aware of the pressure that is being placed on existing facilities in the Territory. There will be an urgent need to develop other destinations and to encourage people to start going there. We are effectively in a bit of bother at the moment because groups from Europe, the United States and Japan cannot obtain accommodation at Ayers Rock. If that situation continues, we will lose 10 years of hard work overnight.

Mr EDE: Thank you for that detail. I would like to hear more about what is happening north of Borroloola. To me, that area has the potential to rank with Kakadu and Uluru. It is a phenomenally attractive area with hundreds of kilometres of waterways and the beautiful white sand beaches and clear waters of the Gulf north of Borroloola. It is completely under-developed but it has fantastic potential.

Mr HANRAHAN: It is certainly under-developed and one of the problems that the member for Stuart is aware of is that many pastoral properties in that area are simply not viable as pastoral properties. In recent months, interest has been expressed by a couple of operators who are now wishing to become involved in tourism. One operator told me the other day that, last year during the holiday period, they were lucky to see 5 cars a day whilst now they are seeing 100. I have already written to the Minister for Transport and Works in relation to a program to upgrade the road network from Borroloola. I am keen to see some development take place there. What is happening with the rapid increase in tourist visitation to the Territory is that private enterprise is tending to come up with propositions that do not require government guarantees, underwriting or loans. That is what the whole exercise has been about and I think we are succeeding.

If the member for Stuart has any particular area in mind or has had propositions expressed to him, particularly by Aboriginal people, we would be more than happy for them to sit down with Richard O'Sullivan, the Development

Officer in the Tourism Commission, and to assist in any way we can to open up that area. We are very aware of its natural beauty. Ultimately, it will become one of the other spectacular areas visited in the Territory.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, with regard to the last point, I am planning a trip in the vicinity of the China Wall and then heading east to talk to Aboriginal groups about involvement in tourism. As some honourable members would know, the Nicholson River area is another spectacularly beautiful area.

In regard to the development of tourism plans, there are 4 major components. The first 2 are identification of areas and the people involved. The other 2 are infrastructure and training. The minister has already referred to discussions with the Minister for Transport and Works. We have an additional problem which, probably, no state has experienced to quite the same extent. We do not control the road network that people use to reach the Northern Territory. While we now have a good access route coming in from the south and the one from the west is not too bad, the one from Camooweal and Mt Isa is absolutely atrocious. One wonders why anybody would want to travel on it.

The road from Tobermorey through to Boulia is also pretty hopeless at times. The Plenty Highway route is one of the routes that has everything as far as tourists are concerned. People can come from the south, visit the Rock, the western gorges or whatever, visit Alice Springs and then head out. As soon as they are east of the highway, they have Mud Tank with all its sapphires for gougers. They move on to the Harts Range area, which is steeped in old mining history and has further delights for rock hounds. Further on is the top end of the Simpson Desert and from there you move on to the beautiful gidgee country which is quite spectacular. Anybody who does not stay at the Gidgee Guest House and get a gidgee fire going is missing something.

You then travel through the channel country of the Georgina. You have the min min lights around Boulia and over into the western Queensland cattle country. You can head to Longreach with its Stockmen's Hall of Fame. You are then into the western highlands of Queensland, and Emerald with its large irrigation areas. You can then move up through Clermont and take in the coalfields. Finally, you travel through the sugar-growing areas and move on to the coral reef.

It is one of those trips that you can spend considerable time on because you have points of interest all the way. To my mind, there is nothing less interesting than travelling the 600 km or 700 km from Julia Creek to Charters Towers by the other route. That is a route that we will have to take up with the next Premier of Queensland because we have not had any luck with the current one.

The minister was talking about the upsurge in tourist numbers through the Borroloola area. I have been amazed at the upsurge in numbers travelling the Tanami track west of Alice Springs. The first time I went out there, I broke down about 250 km west of Yuendumu and waited 24 hours before somebody came along and gave me a bit of a push. These days, you could not travel that road without seeing 20 to 25 vehicles coming the other way.

The honourable minister not only needs to examine our roads but to also undertake strong negotiations with ministers in neighbouring states in an effort to convince them that they can benefit from the development of tourism in the Northern Territory by improving their roads and not pursuing their own particular form of the Berrimah line.

Mr HANRAHAN: For the benefit of the member for Stuart, I want to point out that, in terms of infrastructure, there is a total of \$342m in private projects, of which \$282m is firmly committed and \$60m is still in the early stages. He also mentioned training. He will be pleased to realise that a comprehensive review is presently under way between the Public Service Commissioner's Office, the Tourist Commission and the Department of Education. An expert will be coming into the Territory to completely review training facilities in the Territory. I hope to have that finalised early in the new year. I am very aware of the need for an upgraded program throughout the Territory on tourism training. It is being done in conjunction with industry people, be they restaurateurs, hotel operators or bus operators.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, on page 9 the breakdown of other services is indicated. Would the minister give me the breakdown in costs for the bicentennial television commercial that was expended in 1986-87 and the ABC travel program in 1986-87? These are detailed as one-offs for 1986-87.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the bicentennial TV commercial was \$51 000, the ABC travel program \$30 000 and, for the information of members, we have been approached recently to do a special production with Michael Jackson and his 67-person entourage at Ayers Rock as well. We are still working on that but I think it goes without saying that the expenditure of \$51 000 by the Tourist Commission to use Ayers Rock for the introduction to the bicentennial program is the greatest value for money ever.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I gave the honourable minister notice of this question. Could he provide me with the 1986-87 allocations against those individual areas detailed on page 9? It is rather difficult to work out just what is going on unless one can draw a comparison between last year and this year.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I could not quite understand the question as it came to us, whether it was because of a typographical error or not. It said: 'What were the allocations and reasons for charge?'

Mr EDE: I am talking about the question about page 9.

Mr HANRAHAN: Which question is that?

Mr EDE: What were the 1986-87 allocations against individual areas detailed on page 9?

Mr HANRAHAN: Advertising was \$1.448m; Aboriginal development, \$54 000; agencies, fees and services, \$95 000; and there is a nil entry for 1987-88. Conventions and group travel was \$138 000 and there was a nil entry in 1987-88. Promotions and public relations was \$326 000 in 1986-87. Promotional material and publications was \$576 000. Support subsidies was \$416 000. Meals for trade and media, which should show in 1987-88, was \$70 000. That is a further breakdown than the one you have, but there was a nil entry in 1986-87. The total for 1986-87 was \$3.053m.

For the international offices for 1986-87, advertising was \$560 000; trade and consumer promotions was \$160 000; meals for trade and media was \$110 000; promotions, public relations, \$48 000; brochure translation, \$20 000; international travel expenses, \$30 000; and Crocodile Dundee promotion was \$450 000 with a nil entry for 1987-88.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, we have a fairly substantial decrease in advertising in the international allocation and we have a fairly major overall reduction in most items in the national allocations. The obvious question is: what will be the effect of this on the continuing development of tourism? Does the minister feel that he is really able to start withdrawing so rapidly at this time, given the parlous state of the economy and the fact that there is the danger of a major downturn in at least some sectors that our tourism industry draws from? Isn't this the time when we should promote ourselves much harder rather than withdrawing?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I take on board what the member for Stuart is saying, but I would like to place officially on the record my compliments to Bob Doyle, the Chairman of the NT Tourist Commission. Effectively, we are seeing a reduced expenditure dollar but we should not overlook the factor of the position of ...

Mr Ede: He is certainly an improvement on the last bloke.

Mr HANRAHAN: You should really withdraw that. You are reflecting on a member.

Mr Chairman, I think that what we are seeing is value for the dollar. There has been a complete shake-up and overhaul of the whole Tourist Commission operation throughout Australia. I think it is working very effectively and efficiently. There is a significant increase in expenditure on media throughout Australia and overseas and much of that is due to the position of the Australian dollar at the moment against overseas currencies, including the US dollar and the yen. I can certainly tell honourable members that we are getting value for money with our expenditure on the national television program, the direct mail campaign through the various automobile associations, and the follow-up through our bureaus.

I think, and certainly my Cabinet colleagues are very much aware, that we may need an extra allocation later in the year when Crocodile Dundee II is released. We spent about \$450 000 last year in the United States, London, Europe and Japan in conjunction with the Queensland Tourism and Trade Corporation - I think that is its name - and Qantas and Ansett. I would anticipate that we will be doing the same this time. I think we can anticipate from that that we will be looking to the Treasurer for an allocation of a minimum of \$500 000.

The member for Stuart may not be fully familiar with the advertising program that we mounted. I do not know whether he has ever seen the television advertisements, but they are available in my office if he wants to look at them. They used the picture which had been used overseas and said: 'You would go anywhere in the world to see this and it is in your own Northern Territory'. I think the efforts of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission were vindicated last Saturday night in Perth when we won the national award for the best tourist authority. Part of that judging was based on the quality of our television commercials, our print and media presentations and the overall organisation.

There is a reduced dollar there but to balance that we have a much leaner, meaner and more efficient organisation. That has come about because it was necessary. The Tourist Commission, as has every other government department in the Territory, had to face the fact that it had to operate more efficiently with less. I can say that it is an outstanding example of success under the leadership of Bob Doyle.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to place on record my congratulations to the Tourist Commission for winning that award. It was a magnificent effort and I think it is a real credit to Bob Doyle. He deserves the heartiest congratulations. From all reports I have received, he is doing an excellent job and the award certainly bears that out.

I would like a little more clarity on the form of the promotion for Crocodile Dundee. I was under the impression that it was simply a matter of putting a few things up in the foyers of theatres and people would grab a couple of brochures as they came in to see the film. Obviously, it was far more extensive than that.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I forget how many radio stations in the USA were involved in the promotion but it was no small affair. About \$2m was spent between ourselves, the Queensland authority, Qantas and Ansett. I think about 35 of the top radio stations throughout the country were used to run the promotion. It involved Paul Hogan and John Cornell and, in some cases, Linda Evans, who was prominent because of 'The Last Frontier'. There was an on-air competition and advertising. Some 180 or 200 people came from the USA alone on return trips into Kakadu, Crocodile Dundee country, as part of the promotion. The same promotion was carried into England, South-east Asia, South America, Europe and Japan.

We had representatives of the Tourist Commission at every meeting. That was mainly to stop the Queensland representatives saying that Kakadu is in outback Queensland which is a problem that we have with them. It was absolutely essential that we be involved if for no other reason than to stress the actual location of Kakadu and Crocodile Dundee country. It was a very big promotion. The success of the movies and the promotion is evidenced by the fact that we have such a huge visitation of international visitors into the Territory.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like some information about the research and surveys planned in 1987-88 in relation to the Northern Territory Travel Monitor.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, the Northern Territory Travel Monitor is the major source of statistical information gathered to provide details of the number of visitors, nights, expenditure etc in the Northern Territory. Broadly, the details that are gathered in relation to visitors relate to their origin, sex, age, income, whether they travel in groups, the length of stay, the reason for travelling, mode of transport used, type of accommodation used, expenditure and its components and various qualitative views such as levels of satisfaction, what attracts people and whether the visit is a repeat. Occupancy data for accommodation establishments is also gathered for 4 major types and data is gathered on a regional basis.

Because of the small sample size of data gathered on the Northern Territory, the Domestic Tourism Monitor, which covers the whole of Australia, is not used as a major indicator of trends within the Northern Territory tourist industry. It shows the volume of domestic travel within Australia and within each state and territory, visitor characteristics, purpose of visit etc. However, it does not provide occupancy data, information on overseas visitors nor detailed information at regional levels. It also excludes information on visitors under the age of 14 years.

Mr EDE: On page 15 of Budget Paper No 4.4, it states: 'As a result of the new administrative arrangements of March 1987, research, survey and

development projects have been included under this subdivision'. The actual amount spent prior to 19 March 1987 was \$92 000. Presumably, expenditure for the full year would have been around \$120 000. However, there is a total allocation in 'other services' of \$716 000. I am trying to work out whether there has been a massive increase in research, surveys and development projects to make the figure so much larger than last year's \$120 000 or whether the balance of 'other services', which relates to the principal and interest payments on the commission's semi-government loan, which must have been some \$250 000 last year, has jumped to some \$600 000.

Mr HANRAHAN: Where did you find those 'other services'?

Mr EDE: On page 14. The allocation for 1987-88 is \$716 000. What I am asking is whether the loan repayment and interest payments have increased massively since last year or do we intend to spend substantially more on those development projects?

Mr HANRAHAN: I will have an answer for you in a moment. In the meantime, I point out to the honourable member that this brochure has been available through the Tourist Commission. It is one of the functions that was taken over by the Tourist Commission as a result of the new administrative arrangements. The incentives for Northern Territory tourist development include various types of subsidies, including establishment and expansion grants and consultancy and feasibility study grants. There is some \$270 000 in the Tourist Commission budget for that purpose. It is certainly a matter of priorities being set by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission in conjunction with the Minister for Industries and Development. We work pretty closely on any assistance that is contemplated. One of the areas that was highlighted for possible assistance and encouragement from government resulted from the Roadside Inn Review Report. I can advise the member for Stuart that the money is being used to good effect.

The \$95 000 was a transfer of funding for the Northern Territory Travel Monitor. That was previously allocated under marketing budget. The transferred funds under the administrative changes total \$343 000. I can give a complete breakdown of the areas. It is a transfer of funds which includes an increase in relation to development projects. Opportunity studies: the Gulf region and St Vidgeon - \$15 000; Wetlands - \$15 000; the Aboriginal theme, including the cultural centre - \$15 000; West MacDonnells - \$15 000; station holidays - \$15 000; and overview studies for the Top End and the Centre - \$45 000 each. The total is \$165 000.

The ongoing projects are: Kings Canyon - \$5000; Jabiru Motel and Kakadu - \$14 000; Litchfield Park - \$13 000; NT accommodation needs - \$12 000; Cobourg - \$4000; Putjamirra - \$2000; and printing - \$8000. That is a total of \$58 000. The Cameron McNamara Northern Territory Travel Monitor is \$92 000 and the Domestic Tourism Monitor \$3000. Current projects are \$58 000, opportunity studies \$165 000, brochures \$25 000 - a total of \$343 000.

Mr EDE: Could the honourable minister give me the amount that is provided for principal and interest repayments on the loan?

Mr HANRAHAN: \$373 000

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, there are 2 things that concern me most about the budget. One has already been touched on, and that is the reduction in both international and national marketing. I do not think that the minister's comments on that quite wash. It is all right to run a very tight, mean and

lean operation but the fact is that we were talking about the advertising and marketing area.

Mr HANRAHAN: You can't take any credit for the increased visitors in the Territory, can you?

Mr SMITH: No, I cannot. And I cannot see, Mr Chairman, how the tight, lean and mean marketing organisation that the minister runs will compensate in any way for a reduction in the amount of money that will be expended on advertising in both the national and international markets.

The other relevant point is that we are still spending less money on the tourism vote than we did 3 or 4 years ago when it was established. That is a general comment. More specifically, I am concerned - and I have expressed this concern before - that last year we spent \$138 000 in the convention and group travel area, and this year we are spending zilch. In other parts of Australia, where governments or local governments are getting more and more actively involved in the convention and group travel market, we are opting out. I know that that is a concern that is shared by major operators. I hope the new manager of the Sheraton does not mind my dobbing him in but he paid me a courtesy call just after he arrived and, amongst other things, we talked about convention and group travel. He was frankly astonished that the Northern Territory government was opting out of a role in the convention and group travel market.

Wherever he had been and, as we all know, he is a very experienced hotelier, there had always been a major role for governments in encouraging convention and group travel into their particular locality. As he pointed out, it is not a job which can be done by an individual operator or even a number of operators. It is a job that needs to be done at a coordinated level. It needs to be done at government level to be most effective. I ask the minister to comment on that.

I know it is early days, but has the Tourist Commission, the minister's office or anybody else had any preliminary thoughts about the possible effects on the international tourist market of the crash on stock exchanges during the past week and the huge paper losses incurred? I have no definite thoughts as yet but my initial thought, although I have no hard evidence for it at this stage, is that, if the economic downturn continues internationally and within Australia, it is likely to have a fairly significant effect on international tourism over the next 12 months to 2 years. As I said, that is a gut feeling and it is not based on any particular evidence. Has the Tourist Commission given any consideration to the matter, given that it would have to be very preliminary indeed? If so, what sort of very preliminary conclusions have been arrived at?

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, it is not correct to say that we are completely out of the convention market. We have a fully operational marketing and sales team that deals with conventions. We have not given it the priority of its own separate budget line, which is what the Leader of the Opposition would like to see. It has been a matter of organising priorities and looking at which activities would tend to be the most successful, given the facilities available. It is no secret that conventions simply cannot be handled at Yulara any more; there is no room for anybody. There is no adequate facility in Alice Springs for major conventions but Darwin has adequate facilities.

Contrary to the view of the Leader of the Opposition, I believe it is appropriate for the operators to organise themselves. However, the Tourist

Commission will continue to give assistance to the operators of various conventions. It is interesting to note that Bill Ford in Alice Springs, who has plans for a 1500 to 1800-seat convention hall at the rear of the existing casino, has employed an officer to handle conventions. The officer is the former Convention Director with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. Bookings are already being taken for conventions to be held in the planned new facility. Possibly, when major facilities have been completed in both Darwin and Alice Springs, there could be a review of the direction and the emphasis we have placed on that particular area in the Tourist Commission.

I stand by what I have said in relation to reduced funding. I guess it is fair to say that that many people cannot lose that amount of money without having to reassess whether they will have a holiday this year or be eating meat pies. I don't really know, but I would anticipate there would be some detrimental effect on domestic and international tourism. The law of averages would seem to dictate that. I have not raised the subject formally with Bob Doyle but I would anticipate that, if there is a need to increase our segment of the international or domestic market to take account of any small or large decrease in visitation to the Territory, we will address that through our programs. However, it is a little early to speculate about that. At this stage, no one really knows. The stock market could improve rapidly in the next couple of weeks, and let's hope that it does.

Appropriation for division 20 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 27:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I submitted a number of questions to the minister in advance. The first was: what rate of tax is currently being paid by the Alice Springs Casino?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, a number of questions have been submitted to me by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SMITH: If they are numbered, that was question 6.

Mr COULTER: What is the rate of tax paid by the Alice Springs Casino? The answer is 8% of gross gaming profit per annum.

Mr SMITH: For the record, is that the same as Darwin?

Mr COULTER: Yes, it is.

Mr SMITH: My next series of questions under this broad heading concerns the Totaliser Administration Board. What was the turnover of the TAB in the 12 months to June 1987, how did that compare to the previous year, and what is the anticipated turnover for the next 12 months?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the turnover of the TAB in the 12 months to 30 June 1987 was \$22.562m, which is a variation of 21.6% on last year's figure. The turnover since the establishment of the link with VICTAB has increased dramatically. The TAB budget will be reviewed during the year in the light of the increased turnover. It has made a significant difference. To answer the question, turnover in the last financial year was \$18.557m and, this year, it is expected to be \$25.8m.

Mr SMITH: How much money was paid to the Racecourse Development Fund last year and how much is anticipated this year?

Mr COULTER: Last year, we paid out a total of \$338 415 and we anticipate paying \$387 000 this year.

Mr SMITH: How much money was paid into the Racing Industry Assistance Fund last year and how much is anticipated this year?

Mr COULTER: The amount paid to the Racing Industry Assistance Fund last year was \$300 000 plus a special payment of \$170 000 from accrued interest to meet the pre-existing interest commitments of the racing industry. The anticipated amount this year is \$400 000 plus an amount of \$120 000 from accrued interest.

Mr SMITH: This is a consequential question that arises from the answer concerning the Racecourse Development Fund. Did the minister say that the figure was \$338 000 last year and that it is anticipated to be \$387 000 this year?

Mr COULTER: That is correct.

Mr SMITH: There may be some misunderstanding here, but the budget figures for lotteries show revenue of \$86 000 for the Consolidated Fund whilst the budget proper states that the cost of administering lotteries is \$117 000. Does this mean that lottery activities, although they might be individually profitable, are costing us money to run?

Mr COULTER: My information is that the figures which have been quoted are totally unrelated. I am advised that the \$86 000 is revenue received from the soccer pools and the Tatts weekly sweeps and the \$117 000 is total administration and salaries of the Lotteries Section. Of gross revenue received by the Lotteries Trust Account, \$1.915m came from instant sports lotteries or 'the scratchies', as they are called. The net figure is equal to that amount less prize pay-outs and costs directly attributable, including advertising, ticket manufacture etc. Sports Lotto generated \$2.387m. Along with receipts from the Victorian Tatts and the Territory Lottery, gross revenue was \$4.967m plus \$86 000 in commissions.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I am not sure whether the minister will be able to answer this off the top of his head. The quarterly accounts relating to the Racing Industry Assistance Fund show receipts of \$335 000 for the quarter and expenditure of \$330 000 for the quarter, leaving a balance of \$130 000. What is the Racing Industry Assistance Fund used for, bearing in mind that the Treasurer previously indicated to me that the total amount of money that will be allocated to the fund this year is expected to be \$400 000. In the first 3 months of the year, the fund is obtaining receipts of \$335 000.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will obtain a breakdown of the figures. The Racecourse Development Fund is to develop facilities whereas the Racing Industry Assistance Fund pays for salaries and so forth. The payments are cyclic and are not only contributed to by the TAB. Revenue comes from other sources such as bookies' fees.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, can the Treasurer confirm that the turnover tax on the casinos in Darwin and Alice Springs is 8%?

Mr COULTER: That is correct.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer was not a member of the Assembly at the time, but I would like to refer him to the debate that took place in this

Assembly on 18 October 1983 when the present member for Fannie Bay was the Treasurer. I asked him a couple of questions in relation to turnover tax because, at that stage, the casinos were an innovation in the Territory. One of the chief justifications for them was that they would provide revenue for hospitals, schools and a variety of community facilities.

Mr Perron: That was never the prime justification. Never.

Mr BELL: In that case, the member for Fannie Bay might like to explain why they were introduced. The fact of the matter is that, in revenue terms ...

Mr COULTER: I know what you are saying and, if you want me to answer the question, I will.

Mr BELL: I had no intention of speaking in this particular debate but when the Treasurer said that the turnover tax was 8%, a few bells rang in my mind - no pun intended. Some would say that they ring all the time and that I hear nothing else, but let us not be facetious. Receipts from casino taxes and fees in 1982-83 were \$1.735m. I note with considerable concern that, less than 4 years later, the figure is about \$400 000.

I suggest that a few of the old hands like the member for Fannie Bay, who is the only member of the front bench who was a minister when the casinos were introduced, might like to get up and talk about this matter. With due respect, the member for Casuarina is no longer on the front bench. I know he sometimes feels as if he is when I give him a solid grilling but, in case nobody has told him yet, he is not. Neither is the member for Port Darwin. He is not waving at me though.

I want to know why, in terms of revenue from the casinos, the Northern Territory is getting about \$400 000 a year less, which is about 25% ...

Mr Coulter: Even I can explain that to you.

Mr BELL: I would like you to get up and justify the reduction of the turnover tax from 20% 4 years ago to 7% now. Many Territorians would like to know why Federal Hotels was able to pay a 20% turnover tax and make a far more ...

Mr Manzie: Come on.

Mr BELL: The member for Sanderson says 'come on'.

Mr Manzie: Come on and get it over with.

Mr BELL: I am sure it is a source of embarrassment to the poor old member for Sanderson. Perhaps he can tell me when Federal Hotels took over. Was he a member of the Cabinet which took the decision to knock off Federal Hotels?

Perhaps the Treasurer wants to comment. I dare say that he will sit there and ignore my question, just as he ignored those about Block H at Finniss River. I would like to place on the Assembly record my disapproval of the fact that the turnover tax has been reduced from 20% to 8% overall. Mr Chairman, you will recall that the concession was given to the Alice Springs casino. Its turnover tax was reduced to 15% because its accommodation was not profitable. I am sure that the member for Fannie Bay will corroborate that, although he will not get up and talk about it. A concessional rate

of 15% was good enough for the Alice Springs Casino 4 years ago, but that was twice the rate of the turnover tax which now applies under the new arrangements. I ask the Treasurer why are we receiving \$400 000 less from our casinos than we received 4 years ago.

Mr COULTER: The answer is very simple. There is a different tax regime in place. The present tax is based upon a sliding scale in relation to turnover. As I said in my speech in reply to the second-reading debate, the Northern Territory government today stands to recoup more than it ever could have recouped under the ...

Mr Smith: Rubbish!

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition says 'rubbish'. He has a crystal-ball mentality and thinks he can see into the future to predict what revenue will flow to the government. Let us wait and see what happens. I believe things are heading in the right direction and I have great confidence that one day we will achieve substantial incomes from the casinos in the Northern Territory.

One of the things that is crueiling casinos everywhere is the taxation regimes applied by governments. I think the taxation regime that was planned for Sydney was something like 33%. Is it any wonder that the project did not get off the ground? I understand that Jupiters on the Gold Coast pays 18% or 19%. The Queensland minister responsible has received many submissions to reduce that level of tax because the casino simply cannot provide the necessary shows and entertainment, as well as pay for the upkeep of its various features. I would like to make a prediction: both the New South Wales government and the Queensland government will be unable to sustain their current rates of tax on casinos for much longer. I believe that New South Wales will reduce its tax ...

Mr Smith: To 8%?

Mr COULTER: I am not sure what the figure will be but I think the Townsville Casino pays less than Jupiters, although I am not sure of the exact figure. I know that the Queensland government has various tax scales for casinos and I believe that both will pay less in the very near future.

Mr BELL: That is pathetic. Mr Chairman, the Treasurer has explained absolutely nothing apart from stating the obvious, which is that we now have a different tax regime. I would like to hear from the Minister for Industries and Development.

Mr Coulter: Just ask me the questions.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the Treasurer has not been here quite as long as I have, and he does not have quite the same historical perspective on what has happened here. I suggest to you, Mr Chairman, that we have a Minister for Industries and Development. He is a member of the front bench and he has taken a keen interest in the development of the Territory, as have many other members, particularly those of us in opposition. Perhaps he can get up and explain why a different regime has been put in place. Why is it that we were able to charge a 20% turnover tax 4 years ago while now we are able to charge only 8%? Is the Minister for Industries and Development able to do that? No? I have given him his opportunity and I want to place it on the Parliamentary Record that the Minister for Industries and Development has refused to stand up and explain why a 20% turnover tax was all right 4 years ago whilst now we

are able to get only 8%. I think that is one of the more extraordinarily cowardly demonstrations I have seen on the part of the ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: The honourable member is sailing a little close to the wind.

Mr BELL: Cowardly? I withdraw the word 'cowardly', Mr Chairman. Let me find a more appropriate sobriquet to describe the behaviour of the Minister for Industries and Development. I think 'spineless' is a bit closer in terms of accuracy.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Much closer.

Mr BELL: Much closer? In terms of accuracy, yes, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Withdraw.

Mr BELL: Withdraw 'spineless'?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Unreservedly. The lateness of the hour - tempers will be fraying.

Mr BELL: Goodness me, Mr Chairman, my vocabulary is being tested here. How am I to describe the behaviour of somebody who is asked a direct, simple, factual question relating to ...

Mr Coulter: He has not withdrawn. He is questioning the Chair.

Mr BELL: I have withdrawn 'spineless', Mr Chairman, for the benefit of honourable members. How am I to describe the failure of the Minister for Industries and Development to stand up in this Assembly and defend decisions that he has been involved with in 10 years of self-government? He led the charge to establish casinos in the Northern Territory. He led the charge to have Federal Hotels removed from the management of the casinos. The Minister for Industries and Development led the charge in installing the subsequent variety of ownership and management arrangements. I suggest that the Minister for Industries and Development has a responsibility to the Northern Territory and this Assembly, for the purposes of good government, to explain to us exactly why turnover taxes have been reduced from 20% to 8% over 4 years. In 1982-83 and 1984-85, it was 20%. Why? He must know. I find it absolutely staggering.

I will redirect the question to the Treasurer. Can he explain why turnover tax has been reduced from 20% to 8%?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the member for MacDonnell is clearly wasting the time of this House in trying to resurrect a debate which has taken place several times in this Assembly in the recent past. It is all recorded in Hansard and the issue he is raising has nothing to do with the budget. If he was asking how the budget figure for casino taxes was arrived at, one could say that he was legitimately using the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill to examine the proposals put before parliament by the Treasurer. But he is not doing that at all. He is merely resurrecting matters which have been fully debated on previous occasions. He can talk about these matters ad nauseam during an adjournment debate if he wants to. If he genuinely wants to know the answers to his questions, I refer him to Hansard. The issues are spelled out there several times, quite clearly, in syllables even he would understand.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, apart from a plethora of arguments by assertion, the Minister for Industries and Development has not told us all that much. He is trying to tell me this matter has nothing to do with the budget and I have to reply that it has everything to do with the budget. The Minister for Industries and Development should know better than any other member that there is a need to raise as much revenue as possible in all areas of the budget and that this is one area where revenue is well below an acceptable level.

He referred to statutory tax rates. Mr Chairman, I suggest that statutory tax rates that apply with the casinos, particularly in view of the comments made by the Treasurer in respect of the proposed 33% rate in New South Wales and the 18% rate at Jupiters Casino, are more than apposite subjects for debate in this context. As far as I am concerned, the Minister for Industries and Development did not even address the question of why there has been a reduction in the Northern Territory. I think that is pathetic! I intend doing whatever I can to explain to people out there that the initiative of the CLP government in introducing casinos into the Northern Territory, basically because of the mismanagement of this crowd over here, because of the jobs, jobs, jobs for the boys philosophy that these blokes adopt, has caused us to be unable to raise the revenue that we ought to be able to raise.

Mr Chairman, there are some other questions I wish to put in respect of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission that I believe are appropriate here, but I will leave it to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to raise those in the first instance.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to go back to the question of the taxing schedule for the casinos. I asked a simple question of the Treasurer and received what I thought was a simple answer. In answer to a subsequent question, he proceeded to qualify that answer so I will ask the question again: what is the taxing rate for the Alice Springs and Darwin casinos, is it a flat rate or is it a rate based on a sliding scale and, if it is based on a sliding scale, what are the details of that sliding scale rate?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, it is a statutory rate of 8% of gross gaming profit per annum. It applies to both the casinos, in Alice Springs and in Darwin. There is a provision in the agreement, should the casinos reach a turnover figure of a certain amount, that casino tax would then be ratcheted up on that turnover.

Mr BELL: You mean increased?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, let me address the member for MacDonnell's previous question on these casinos to try and get it over to the public. In his own area, in the southern region of the Northern Territory, in Alice Springs, we now have an operator running a casino at a profit, for the first time since it was built. The casino will undergo a \$15m development program commencing in March next year. In that development will be an auditorium to seat 1500 people. That is the type of development that has occurred through these taxation regimes that we have put in place. I would have thought that the development that will occur as a result of those facilities becoming available would be of tremendous importance to the member for MacDonnell, and it will occur as a result of that taxation regime that is in place.

I do not think he understood what I said about the New South Wales casino and the Jupiters Casino on the Gold Coast. The first does not exist yet, and one only has to look in the papers to see the problems that the Labor Party of New South Wales has had to face on its entry into casino management, operation

and construction. Look at the suit that has been put on it as a result of its development in that particular part of Australia.

The casino on the Gold Coast is in trouble, financially, as a result ...

Mr Smith: Rubbish! That is not true.

Mr COULTER: I can show the Leader of the Opposition letters that the management committee of that particular casino has written to the Queensland government in an attempt to have that taxation regime reduced. They are citing the taxation regime which they are having to endure on the Gold Coast as one of the biggest factors holding the development back.

Mr Smith: The casino is not in trouble. It is still making a profit.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, if the Leader of the Opposition has information about whether it is making a profit, I would like to see the information that he has so that I can table it in this Assembly tomorrow. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that the information I have suggests that that is not correct.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of the Treasurer, let me place on the record what is happening in New South Wales. I agree that New South Wales does not have a casino, but it certainly is not because there are not enough willing participants who want to have a go at it. It is not because there are no people who want to run a casino at Darling Harbour and who are prepared to pay the 33%. It is because, for reasons that I do not fully understand, the New South Wales government has not been happy with the applications that it has had, because it wants a squeaky-clean operation.

Mr Coulter: Well, what about the applicant it had?

Mr SMITH: The reason was that the government received some adverse police reports on the company's operations elsewhere - in America, I believe. As I understand it, in the second case, the government had one applicant short-listed, and I think it was the crowd involved in the Perth casino. Again, because of unfavourable police reports on some of its operations somewhere or other, that applicant was finally scrubbed off the short-list as well. The government is back to taws. Let me make it clear. The reason why there is no casino in New South Wales is not because the government there cannot find someone to pay the 33% tax rate; it is because it cannot find someone to meet the exceedingly high standards that it insists on.

Let us get back to the problem we have in the Northern Territory and the attitude of this present government to the present casino operators compared to its attitude toward the previous operator, Federal Hotels. Don't let us kid ourselves, Mr Chairman, that Federal Hotels was thrown out because it was doing an inadequate job; it was doing everything that the Northern Territory government had asked of it at the time when it tendered for and won the licence. What happened was that the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, got a flea in his bonnet about making the casino an international hot spot and attracting the high rollers from all over the world to it. He went out seeking another operator who, in his view, could do that better. We saw the result of that, didn't we? In 1983, 1984 and 1985, we saw the casinos paying next to no tax to the Northern Territory government. In fact, we had one glorious quarter when the casinos gave \$5000 to the Northern Territory people. In that year, we collected from the casinos something like \$60 000, and it cost us \$500 000 to collect it because we had to employ casino inspectors. We

paid out \$500 000 and we got \$60 000 back; that was the great deal we got from chucking Federal Hotels out.

Mr Coulter: Are you happy with this year's returns?

Mr SMITH: In its last year, we received close to \$2m from Federal Hotels and the minister asks if I am happy with this year's returns.. No, I am not happy with this year's returns. If Federal Hotels had been there, we would be getting \$4m gaming tax and, on the figures before us, we are getting \$2m from the present operators this year.

The minister says that the operator in Alice Springs is doing very well, and he is. He has made quite significant changes, but he is not reinventing the wheel. Very early in its regime there, Federal Hotels said it wanted to put in extra accommodation, and the Northern Territory government made it very difficult if not impossible for it to do that. The key to making a success of the Alice Springs operation is to increase the accommodation. When the history of the first few years of self-government in the Northern Territory is written, the expulsion of Federal hotels will be seen as a major mistake. There is no doubt about that.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the Treasurer advise this House of the number of vehicles confiscated last year under the liquor legislation, the amount of money raised through the sale of those vehicles and the amount of revenue he expects to raise through vehicle sales this year? I have given him notice of this question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, last year \$66 000 was raised. We have no idea how much will be raised this year.

Mr EDE: How many vehicles?

Mr COULTER: I have no idea. The question actually related to income from the sale of vehicles, not the number of vehicles sold. I will obtain that information for the member.

Mr EDE: I have enough information to go on because I know the sort of prices these vehicles fetch at auction. Individuals or communities are lucky if their vehicles, originally purchased for amounts between \$5000 and \$10 000, raise \$1000 at auction or 10% of their original value. They are worth no more than that because the system ensures that they are locked up in police yards for prolonged periods. The engines are not turned over, the oil coagulates and drains out, the diesel or petrol evaporates and there is a build-up of water vapour. The tyres, of course, are slowly destroyed and the vehicles lose their value over the months. If people manage to beat this heinous legislation and get their vehicles back, they find that they are worth about 10% of their original value.

Does the Northern Territory government then say that it will give some compensation because it recognises what a particularly foul and evil piece of legislation this is? No, it allows people to suffer those losses without realising what an enormous impact this legislation has on the economy of a community. Substantial energy goes into the raising of the capital necessary to purchase those vehicles.

Mr Collins: A lot of those vehicles are rubbish.

Mr EDE: Let the member for Sadadeen, who knows nothing and never has, get up after me and make his inane comments for the Hansard record. The man is a nong. Many communities are impoverished because of this legislation.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the honourable member for Stuart of standing order 64 which says, in part: 'No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words against this Assembly or any member of the Assembly or against any House or member of another Australian Parliament or against any member of the judiciary or against any Northern Territory statute unless for the purpose of moving for its repeal'. Obviously, the member for Stuart is not moving for the repeal of legislation. In alluding to previous debates regarding that legislation, he is very much out of order.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am endeavouring to demonstrate that this particular provision in division 27 takes an enormous amount out of the community and puts very little into the government's pocket. I cannot discuss the morality of the legislation or how heinous it is. I cannot go into that because standing orders do not allow it, Mr Chairman, and you have very rightly pulled me up for it. I do believe, however, that I can attack it on an economic basis by pointing out that the removal of essential capital from those communities does not make any significant contribution to the government's coffers because there is a massive depreciation in the value of the vehicles during the period of impoundment. Given the ridiculously low amount of \$60 000 which was realised last year through the sale of those vehicles, I hope that the Treasurer will have no hesitation in forgoing any similar amount in the future when we next discuss the legislation.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to make a couple of points in support of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I made the allegation in this Assembly last week that the government was using the relevant section of the Liquor Act as a revenue-raising measure. I find it very interesting that the figure of \$60 000 was mentioned by the Treasurer today. I don't expect him to be aware that, 5 years ago, the figure was less than \$10 000 or about one-sixth of the current figure. Bearing in mind the comments I have already made about reductions in casino turnover tax, I suggest that the massive increase in revenue from this particular measure is quite remarkable. My claim that the Territory government's motives were malign when it rejected a private member's bill last week is enhanced by the figure given to us by the Treasurer. I do not expect him to comment on that. I expect that he will want to hang his head in shame.

As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, members opposite do not appreciate that these vehicles service communities that have no means of public transport apart from fairly cheap, old vehicles that keep going.

Mr Collins: They are sometimes used to carry grog. It is as simple as that.

Mr BELL: I am not objecting to the principle of the legislation and, if the member for Sadadeen had listened to the debate in this House last Thursday, he would have realised that my point was that the punishment should fit the crime. In the context of this debate, I am suggesting that it is not an oversight on the part of the Northern Territory government that the punishment does not fit the crime. I am suggesting that, quite consciously, actively and malignly, the Northern Territory government is using this particular section of the Liquor act as a blatant revenue-raiser. I think that is unconscionable.

Appropriation for division 27 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, again I have presented a series of written questions to the minister. I do not wish to proceed with the first one and I will start with the second. I hope that does not confuse him.

Mr Coulter: You are right on cash balances?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am right on cash balances.

Mr Coulter: You do not want to talk about interest rates going down and so on?

Mr SMITH: I know what you are going to say. I thought it would not be terribly enlightening for anyone so I will miss it.

At Yulara 2 years ago, the Territory government purchased around \$40m worth of assets to reduce capitalisation of interest charges. This year, it is increasing its commitment from \$7.5m to \$8.5m for what it says is the same reason. How does the Treasurer account for that, and what does he predict the commitment to Yulara will be next financial year?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, at the moment, the resort is still not providing a sufficient return to allow a reduction in the principal and, therefore, a reduction in interest, and this is consistent with the projections for the project. Honourable members will be aware that we are under extreme pressure, especially from the Minister for Tourism, to increase the size of Yulara rapidly. This government has to meet the commitments that it has already entered into.

As for the second part of the question, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that the pressure is mounting from caravan park operators, hoteliers and the Minister for Tourism to have further development at Yulara. The commitment for next financial year depends entirely on the returns generated. At the Four Seasons, we have some 98% occupancy and the Sheraton is running at something like 74% occupancy. It seems probable that next year's expenditure will be of the same order or magnitude as this year's or perhaps slightly lower. However, I warn the Leader of the Opposition that we are under intense pressure to develop the Yulara resort further and that will be the subject of debate in this Assembly. Certainly, it will be the subject of Cabinet discussion over the next 4 or 5 weeks.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I am puzzled. In the Treasurer's own words, Yulara is operating extremely successfully with the Four Seasons running at close to full capacity, the Sheraton is doing pretty well and campgrounds and bunkhouses are doing good business. At the same time, he says that the reason why we had to put in extra money is that we are not getting the profits out of Yulara that we had planned for. My comment is that, if you are operating close to capacity and you are not realising the profits that you had anticipated, there is something seriously wrong. I want to know what has gone wrong. Were the initial projections wrong? Was the government overly optimistic? If the initial projections were wrong, were they wrong because they underestimated the number of people who would come? Were the projections in terms of the costs to the operators wrong? Were the projections in terms of returns that the operators wanted wrong?

Mr COULTER: To the contrary, it is what has gone right that has caused this situation. The Leader of the Opposition has walked around for years canning the development. We do not have a magic wand that we can wave over Yulara and it will turn good overnight. The Leader of the Opposition would be able to look back at occupancy rates at the Sheraton in particular. Those occupancy rates were extremely low. The rush of people to Yulara has resulted from the marketing proposals that have been developed and some of the actions which the Northern Territory has taken. In particular, Investnorth has been involved heavily in marketing activities recently for both of these hotels. At that time, it was unrealistic to expect the hotels to cover the high costs of providing services and all the other infrastructure at Yulara, especially with the occupancy rates as they were at the resort.

The story has now changed and this success has been building up gradually. The Leader of the Opposition will remember my saying that it was difficult to obtain a bed there, and the member for Stuart raced out of the Chamber to the telephone. He came back saying that he could book as many beds as he liked. On a number of occasions recently, the opposition has sought to demonstrate all is not as well down there as people claim. I can assure you, Mr Chairman, that the tide has turned and the occupancy rates are very high. We are optimistic that the level of government support required will not be as high next year.

However, I warn that we may be involved in a major development in that region. I understand one of the problems relates to infrastructure. If a 200-bay caravan park is established, which is being suggested, we may have to bring water from Curtin Springs to Yulara, a distance of 70 miles. We cannot expect the caravan park to pay for that infrastructure. There is a cost that has to be met for that type of development. Let's hope that the high occupancy rates are sustained throughout the next 12 months and that we can open up even more tourist facilities there to meet our financial obligations on this particular project.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I will make a comment rather than ask a question. It appears that we have a resort that is doing extremely well but, no matter how well it goes, we will have to put more money into it. That seems to be what the Treasurer is saying. Perhaps the only answer is to increase the accommodation facilities that we have there. Certainly, everybody has been conscious that Yulara was badly planned in the sense that there is a major hole in the market there - a lack of 2 or 3-star motel accommodation - that certainly needs to be plugged. Extra camping and bunkhouse accommodation is required.

It is quite clear that the government does need to look seriously at expansion of facilities there. The government has our support for expanding the facilities but I want to make it clear that, as usual, we will take a very close look at the financial arrangements that the government has entered into. I would hope that the result of any increased accommodation units at Yulara will be decreased financial commitment required from this government. Because the resort is so popular, that should be possible.

Is the government still trying to sell its equity in the Alice Springs Sheraton and what does the government anticipate its loan commitments will be to the Alice Springs and Darwin Sheratons next financial year?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, honourable members will be aware of the Northern Territory government's commitment to the Alice Springs Sheraton. If we have our historian listening to the speakers out there, no doubt he will be in with

his past copies of Hansard to give us chapter and verse of how the Alice Springs Sheraton was financed in the first instance. The government is not actively trying to sell its equity in the Alice Springs Sheraton at present. Clearly, it is open to realistic offers and may I suggest that we have had people expressing interest in this building. It is probably one of the nicest hotels in the Northern Territory for the amount of money that was outlaid to develop it. It has been indicated previously to the House that the sale of the government's interest in 1989-90 would return all the government's funding. A sale beyond that date would progressively return interest.

It appears to me, Mr Chairman, that we have taken all the stick on this particular development. We have been pistol-whipped for the amount of money we have put into it and we are not in a hurry to pull out unless a realistic proposal is put to us that enables us to recoup our money. With this particular hotel, we are in a very good position to recoup our money. It was never really at risk at any stage and I am satisfied that somebody will turn up with the money to buy it in the not-too-distant future. Indeed, we have had inquiries but we are not actively trying to sell it at this stage.

In terms of the prospect of sale of the Alice Springs Sheraton, the forward projections are commercially sensitive. However, it can be said that the government's loan commitments will depend on room occupancy and the rate per room, 2 vital ingredients in running a hotel. Given that both are improving, it is reasonable to expect that the allocation next year will be less than it was this year.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I come to the set of questions concerning the employer superannuation-related liability. If I read the budget figures correctly, \$16.2m has been set aside this financial year for that purpose. What government assets will that money be invested in?

Mr COULTER: The bulk of the funds will be used to acquire investments producing a commercial return. Some of the funds will be used to meet the emerging costs of superannuation. We will be looking at those areas that will provide us with that income stream and the commercial returns that are available.

Mr SMITH: I am sorry, the Treasurer has managed to confuse me.

Mr COULTER: Some superannuation payments are becoming available that we have to meet.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I can't put my finger on it precisely, but my understanding of the budget papers was that that \$16.2m would be spent in the purchase of government assets. Is the Treasurer saying that the government assets will give government a commercial return or is he saying that the money will be invested in the commercial market and that government will get a commercial return?

Mr COULTER: We are talking about assets that are income-producing and we are looking at commercial returns on those.

Mr Smith: On the purchase of government assets?

Mr COULTER: On the purchase of assets that we will be investing our money in, yes.

Mr SMITH: That is a good try but I don't think that the Treasurer knows the answer to the question. Can I put the question again, Mr Chairman? Would the Treasurer confirm that the \$16.2m the government is looking at is to purchase government assets, as the budget papers so clearly point out?

Mr COULTER: The major asset that will be purchased with this money will be Northern Territory Housing Commission stock, I should imagine, similar to that purchased last year.

Mr Smith: You are going to purchase more mortgages?

Mr COULTER: I was not prepared to lock myself into any particular asset. If something became available to us that was more exciting than that, we would probably have a look at it. Housing Commission stock would be the major stock that we would be interested in.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, that leads me to my next set of questions. What rate of interest did the - I think I know that - 14.1%.

Mr Coulter: Right, 1% above the Commonwealth 10-year bond rate.

Mr SMITH: What is the rate of interest paid by the mortgagees whose mortgages have been passed from the Housing Commission to the Superannuation Fund, and who pays for the difference between what the rate is and the 14.1% that the Superannuation Fund is obtaining for its investment?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the interest rates vary. The bulk are in the vicinity of 10% to 11%, I understand.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, if the Superannuation Trust is obtaining 14.1% and the mortgagees are only paying 10%, who is paying the difference?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the answer is fairly simple. We are.

Mr SMITH: 'we' being the Housing Commission or 'we' being the Northern Territory government?

Mr COULTER: 'we' being the Northern Territory government.

Mr SMITH: All right. Mr Chairman, my next question is how much does paying the difference amount to per annum on that \$15m investment?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will need a few minutes to determine that. I understand that 10% to 11% is being paid. I do not know how many mortgages are at 10% or how many are at 11%. I will have to have some time to answer that question.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I understand that. While the Treasurer is getting that answer from his computer bank, I understood him to say, this morning, that total employer superannuation-related assets were \$53m. I may have that wrong but I thought he said that \$53m had been set aside to meet employer superannuation-related liabilities. If that is the case, I know where \$15m is. I think I know where \$16.2m might be going but, if my figures are correct, where is the other \$22m?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will have officers obtain that answer for you in a few moments.

Mr SMITH: Turning to the Employees Superannuation Investment Fund, my first question is: has the board for the Employees' Superannuation Investment Fund been established yet and, secondly - and the Treasurer may have touched on this as well this morning - of the \$4.3m that I understand is in that fund, where is that money invested.

Mr Coulter: Is this a new question?

Mr SMITH: Yes, it is.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I will supply that information in the course of the committee stage.

Mr SMITH: I am moving away from superannuation but promising to return. For the Territory Loans Management Corporation, it shows that there will be administration costs of ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The Territory Loans Management Corporation.

Mr SMITH: Is that a separate division, Mr Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes, that is division 29.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the Deputy Under-Treasurer is Chairman and Director of Ivy Louise Pty Ltd. What on earth is Ivy Louise Pty Ltd, and what does it do?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, Ivy Louise Pty Ltd is a shelf company that was set up for the construction and the operation of the natural gas pipeline from Mereenie to Yulara. With a name like that, it is no wonder that the development did not proceed. In fact, we will run LNG out to Yulara now. We were talking about running a pipeline out to Yulara, but the cost was somewhat prohibitive so we opted to go for LNG. That is one of the reasons why the stripping plant at Alice Springs is being set up. Poor old Ivy Louise did not get off the ground.

Mr Chairman, I will answer the Leader of the Opposition's question regarding the cost per annum for the difference in mortgage interest rates etc. That cost was approximately \$0.5m and \$38m is invested with major professional fund managers such as AMP, ANZ, Colonial Mutual etc. The board has been constituted and \$4m is in the bank.

Mr SMITH: I want to ask a question about the Territory Insurance Office and I guess this is the appropriate time. I am not trying to be dramatic but, in terms of the major crash on the stock exchange in the last 10 days, can the Treasurer assure the people of the Northern Territory that the Territory Insurance Office has invested wisely and has sufficient assets to protect policy holders? Obviously, it will have suffered some monetary loss. It would be a miracle if it had not.

Mr COULTER: I did ask Treasury some days ago to advise me of the position of a number of companies in the Northern Territory with which the government is involved. I am happy to advise the Assembly that Treasury advice is that the exposure of these companies is very marginal. It would appear that the investments of the Northern Territory government and, indeed, the Territory Insurance Office, are such that we are fairly well protected in terms of the collapse of the stock exchange. I would be prepared to provide a briefing for the Leader of the Opposition if he requires further details.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I gave the Treasurer notice of a request that he provide details of recurrent and capital provisions for all communities apart from those established under the Local Government Act. This covers a gamut of communities including community governments, unincorporated communities and communities incorporated under the old Associations and Incorporations Act and the federal government's Associations and Aboriginal Incorporation Act. I would firstly like to receive details of funding from federal government and Territory government sources. Obviously, funding of essential services, such as water supplies, covers a wide range of communities, many of which are unincorporated. At this stage, I will not follow up the funding for connection to mains for water and power which I earlier took up with the Minister for Lands and Housing.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, is it the wish of the honourable member for Stuart that I read this into Hansard? Quite a number of Aboriginal communities are involved.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Does the honourable Treasurer seek leave to have the document incorporated into Hansard?

Mr COULTER: Yes.

Leave granted.

REPLY TO QUESTION ON APPROPRIATION BILL
BUDGET PAPER NO 4.5 - DIVISION 25

This morning's question from the opposition reads as follows: 'Can the Treasurer provide details of recurrent and capital provisions for all communities apart from those established under the Local Government Act in terms of: (a) funding from federal government; (b) funding from Territory government sources; (c) funding for essential services such as water supplies; and (d) funding to connect housing constructed by Tangentyere to mains, water and power'.

Both the federal and Territory governments supply untied operational funds to 56 local governing bodies throughout the Territory for the provision of municipal-type services. Seventeen of these are established under the Local Government Act, and I can provide details for the other communities which receive these sources of funds and are not currently established under the Local Government Act. This information is taken from the 1987 reports of the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission; I will be tabling those reports later this week.

DARWIN REGION

	<u>COMMONWEALTH</u>	<u>NT</u>
Adelaide River	39 295	170 045
Belyuen	44 272	197 660
Gunbalanya (Oenpelli)	81 734	298 088
Jabiru	34 842	40 370
Kardu Numida (Port Keats/Wadeye)	105 572	384 561
Maningrida	76 232	277 265
Minjilang (Croker Island)	36 151	161 908
Nauiyu Nambiyu (Daly River)	51 607	246 735
Peppimenarti	34 842	159 456
Warruwi - (Goulburn Island)	46 106	184 545

EAST ARNHEM REGION

Galiwinku	121 290	362 576
Gapuwiyak	55 013	178 145
Milingimbi	57 895	184 037
Milyakburra - (Bickerton Island)	7 859	32 255
Numbulwar	66 539	270 663
Ramingining	39 819	144 451
Umbakumba	41 915	187 483
Yirrkala	100 857	251 387

KATHERINE REGION

Dagaragu/Kalkaringi	70 993	298 801
Ngukurr	71 255	259 679

ALICE SPRINGS REGION

Amoonguna	27 768	112 628
Aputula (Finke)	25 673	131 019
Areyonga	29 340	134 873
Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)	32 484	140 504
Imanpa	22 791	102 562
Iwupataka (Jay Creek)	17 552	72 703
Kaltukatjara (Docker River)	56 061	256 070
Ntarrria (Hermannsburg)	80 686	320 447
Papunya	62 872	246 752
Pmara Jutunta	19 124	50 876
Santa Teresa	74 922	341 253
Ti Tree	10 741	17 759
Urapuntja (Utopia)	57 633	209 370
Walungurru (Kintore)	42 439	154 367
Willowra	26 983	112 160
Yuendumu	88 545	322 615
Yulara	9 955	5 045

The above untied funds from both Commonwealth and Territory governments do not distinguish between recurrent and capital expenditure. This is at the discretion of the local governing bodies themselves. There are, of course, other sources of specific purpose government funding from both governments which also flow to these communities. Because of the various stages of program formulation and implementation by both Territory and Commonwealth agencies, it is not possible at this stage to provide a comprehensive response that integrates both general and specific purpose funding for 'all communities' as requested.

This reply relates to Parts (A) and (B) of the above question. Briefings on (C) and (D) will be provided by the Power and Water Authority.

Office of Local Government
27 October 1987

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I do not have the information from the Power and Water Authority at present, but I give the member for Stuart an undertaking that I will provide it during the course of these sittings.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I asked the Treasurer for this particular information because I wanted to highlight the difference in approach between the Northern Territory government and the federal government, which I find quite disturbing. For example, local government bodies of the type I am discussing received from the federal government an increase in their allocation of some \$0.25m or 10% whereas the increase from the Territory government was only 0.4%. That is an overall reduction in real terms. Those who are interested in municipal councils will have even less joy.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I wonder if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is referring to material which relates to the Grants Commission. As I have said, I will be tabling the pertinent report later in the week and I believe it would be improper for me to respond before that happens.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order but the Treasurer need not respond if he believes that the tabling of the Grants Commission documentation is relevant.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there is no joy for municipal councils in these figures. In spite of the fact that the federal government has increased their allocation by some \$326 000 or 11%, the Northern Territory government has reduced their allocation by \$1m, or halved it. The councils have their own problems in terms of raising revenue although I heard the Deputy Lord Mayor of Darwin, Dr Gurd, saying this morning that he was not particularly concerned about the losses which the Darwin City Council has incurred. I have not yet been able to ascertain the views of the other municipal councils but I can assure the Treasurer that the reductions he has imposed on communities and councils which are not incorporated as local government bodies are quite draconian.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Chairman! The Deputy Leader is quoting from a particular document. Standing order 256 says: 'A document quoted from by a member, not being a minister, may be ordered by the Assembly to be laid upon the Table; such order may be made without notice immediately upon the conclusion of the speech of the member who has quoted therefrom'.

Mr EDE: Wait till the end of the speech. There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: There are people here who are interested in the document. The member could quote the source at the start of his speech.

Mr Ede: Sit down and I will table it when I finish.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order but, as the Treasurer has asked for the tabling of the document, I would request the member for Stuart do so after concluding his speech.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, if he asks me to do so at the end of my speech, I will be quite happy to oblige.

Some of the reductions have led many communities to believe that the more federal government funding they receive, the more the Territory government takes from them. In fact, the Territory government is using the federal government as a milch cow and as an excuse to reduce its own funding. Ali Curung in my own electorate, which was able to justify to the federal government a 23% increase in its allocation from federal sources, suffered a 15% or \$60 000 cut from the Northern Territory government. At the end of

the day, it ended up some 10% worse off in money terms than it had been before it started.

Mr Coulter: Have a look at ours and see how we ended up.

Mr EDE: Certainly, you were not cut by the 15% that you cut from the Ali Curung Council.

Mr Coulter: We have poured millions into Ali Curung.

Mr EDE: Poured millions into Ali Curung! Mr Chairman, the millions of dollars that have been put into Ali Curung by the Northern Territory government have been merely for the maintenance of services.

Mr Coulter: What about the bitumen road? What about the electricity line that runs from Tennant Creek?

Mr EDE: What about the electricity line? The community was quite happy with the electricity supply it had before. It was finally getting some local employment there. It finally had somebody trained to operate it. As soon as the Aboriginal person obtained his ticket, the government closed the local power station because it decided to run a line from Tennant Creek. Many people wondered whether there were some other payouts in that one and whether some people wanted to assist some roadhouses along the way rather than the community at the end of it. That was the only justification for it.

Jay Creek has seen a reduction of 25% in its funding from the Northern Territory government - nearly a quarter of its budget was slashed despite the fact that the federal government increased its funding levels by 18%. It was unable to maintain the way completely in the face of the brutal attacks by the Northern Territory government on its funding. How would the Treasurer be able to cope with a 25% cut in his funding? He would be out there slashing his wrists and yelling about all sorts of horrendous implications for the Territory. There are horrendous implications for that community in cuts of that nature. It is quite ridiculous.

There are cuts for all the communities. Lajamanu has had \$17 000 cut from its funding by the Northern Territory government. Unfortunately, that almost balances the amount of the increase in funding by the federal government but it still means that there has been no real increase there. In fact, it has gone backwards in real terms and only has the same amount in money terms that it had the previous year.

This was the community that actually received a letter from the former Department of Community Development saying that, because it had received untied funding, the department was cutting back its funding by the same amount. I can obtain a copy of the letter for the Treasurer if he attempts to dispute the idea that, when people receive federal money, the Territory government takes it from them. Let the Treasurer attempt to dispute the fact that that is the policy of his department.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Chairman! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition undertook to quote his source and to table the papers.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I ask the Treasurer to move that the member for Stuart table the papers he quoted from.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, he has to be shamed into it. I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to table the papers and quote the source so that all members can be assured that he has not quoted selectively. He has suffered at times from selective amnesia and continually quotes those parts of documents that serve his own purpose and his own needs. I also ask that he table the letter that he referred to in his speech.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I table those documents. I would like them back so that I can continue quoting from them. As I stated, I can obtain a copy of the letter. I did not say I had a copy of it. The Treasurer, who has suddenly taken an interest in standing orders, will realise that I must actually have a copy of it to be able to table it. I have in fact to quote from the document. Quoting is repeating a form of words in a document. Discussing the contents of the letter is a different thing. However, as the Treasurer would know, it would not be possible to obtain that letter for him tonight. I hope the print quality of the document which the Treasurer will table in his own good time is better than that of my documents. I hope he will address the substance of the points I raised rather than simply engage in irrelevancies as he has done to date.

Mr Chairman, I would like clarified whether the Treasurer has any intention of answering the points in my question. If he does not intend to do so now, does he intend to take that matter up when he tables the Grants Commission report? I would like a commitment from him either now or in the next couple of days that he will address the subject.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I wish to remind the Treasurer of his remarks this morning when he said that there was a reduction of \$22m in semi-government borrowings. I believe that was the figure he used. I would like to know where he got that figure of \$22m that he referred to in his reply to the second-reading debate.

It really concerns me that, as a matter of political style, the Northern Territory government continues to berate the federal government so frequently and so obtusely. The federal government has rather more difficult fiscal problems to deal with than we have to deal with in the Territory. I hinted at my feelings in this regard when I was speaking earlier in the committee stage about questions raised by the lands and housing division.

I draw to the attention of honourable members the series of headlines that we have had in the NT News. Today's headline is 'Shares Tumble'. Stocks and shares are losing value dramatically and have lost value dramatically over the last week and a half. The complex psychological reasons why that has happened around the world are not easy to understand. Suffice it to say the federal government has difficulties with foreign exchange and with complex decisions involved in working out what sort of foreign borrowings are responsible. Those are issues that never have to be addressed by us in this Assembly.

I suggest that, with the sort of current account deficit that this country is facing, a little bit of national spirit is in order. I appreciate that the Territory has particular problems. We have a responsibility to develop our resources to the best of our ability in the context of a national economic strategy. Mr Chairman, I do not believe that those objectives are enhanced by the sorts of comments that we so often hear from the Treasurer, put in the crudest terms. He shoots off this figure - 'oh, I only knocked off \$22m in our semi-government borrowings'. I do not know whether the Treasurer understands. I do not pretend to have any deep understanding of these sorts of fiscal matters. It is not an area I have had to study. I would hope that

the Treasurer would understand it better than I do but, judging from his comments, I could be excused for imagining that he understands it far less. I presume he is aware that the reduction in amounts of semi-government borrowings is related to a national strategy to combat the difficulties we are having with a current account deficit. The cowboy mentality that the Treasurer insists on displaying in this Assembly really is most surprising.

To return to the specific question, the honourable minister mentioned a figure of \$22m this morning and I refer him to page 1 of Budget Paper No 2 where the semi-government borrowings transferred to the Consolidated Fund have dropped from \$24m to \$17.52m. I would be interested to know where that \$22m figure comes from and whether it is available to the hoi polloi on the backbench?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, it always amazes me to hear the member for MacDonnell become an apologist for the Labor Party that he represents. I would take my hat off to both - and I do not wish to give them the kiss of death - the previous Minister for Mines and Energy in the federal government and the present minister, in terms of their commitment to honouring agreements such as the NTEC operating subsidy, which was returned this year, although it was drastically cut last year.

We have heard the member for MacDonnell talk about international finance and the international stage and, recently, we have heard of the Prime Minister advocating in Geneva that the false tariff barriers have to go and that people can no longer hide behind protective measures. I will give him one to take down to his colleagues in Canberra. He might like to remind the Prime Minister of one of these barriers: the \$33 per pound floor price that exists on uranium. If he talks about the 'national interest' and 'mining our resources', I would ask him to sit down with that great advocate of nuclear power that has come upon the Northern Territory, the honourable member of the House of Representatives for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon. Let him sit down with Mr Snowdon if he wants to talk about developing our national resources and getting this national warm inner glow that, all of a sudden, has come upon the member for MacDonnell and the member of the House of Representatives.

Mr Chairman, let us start at home in the Territory, and let's abolish our floor price and have free open market forces prevail. Let's get on with the mining of uranium and then see what happens. If the member wants to speak about national spirit, I remind him once again of that previous minister for resources in the Labor Party for whom I have great admiration. I am talking about Rex Connor who really did want to get on, who had national pride and who walked about proclaiming that, if he was given 10 years to implement his policies, we would not have to pay taxes in this country. I share the types of sentiments that he professed and the visions that he had. I believe that they are attainable. I am working hard to complete a national pipeline grid at the moment.

If the member for MacDonnell talks about national pride and the need to get things done on a national basis, let him come with me and do some of these things, because they can be done, and most of that development starts here in the Northern Territory. I have expounded on that at some length, Mr Chairman. I share those sentiments, but let's get rid of this attitude that prevails with the member for MacDonnell. He really does not understand the world that he lives in and the opportunities that are available to him right here and now.

As I said, the operating subsidy was returned, but last year saw the removal of the NTEC operating subsidy granted under the agreement that was entered into at self-government. There are a number of other things that we have been left with as part of this Commonwealth legacy. It is not only the Labor Party. Parties of either political persuasion were good at using the Northern Territory as a social playground. They gave us a Woden hospital, with windows we couldn't open, and an oil-fired power station which was closed down and that we are still paying off. Let's not forget those things either, and simply adopt this clear-slate approach whereby everything is okay. The effect of cutting down that electricity subsidy had to be funded. There was a \$22m reduction in the semi-government borrowings, and \$10m of that was a general reduction - not the \$2m mentioned in the second-reading debate by the member for MacDonnell. In fact, he said that the \$2m increase did not take into account certain Commonwealth payments, which we talked about, and the semi-government borrowings.

That was the point that I was making in my reply this morning to the second-reading debate. Of course, we had to fund the NTEC operating subsidy that was not met by the federal government so let's not sit here this evening and talk about what a good fellow everybody is and all this national interest that needs to be considered. I agree that a number of things are wrong with Australia at the moment, but some of them are caused by the market forces that have been stifled by the policies of not only the federal government that happens to be in power now in Canberra, but the government before it as well. Jabiluka, that \$15 000m deposit, was left lying in the ground because Doug Anthony, God bless him, could not sign an export licence agreement to get on with the job.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I am sorry. I did not realise what I had started. I have one simple question: does the honourable Treasurer accept that the reduction in semi-government borrowings was a necessary part of a national economic strategy?

Mr COULTER: No.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to point out that the minister undertook to answer the questions that I raised in A and B at least as far as telling me that he was not going to answer them now, but that he would when he tabled the Grants Commission report or whatever. He stated that he would do that in his summing up. He did not do so and I ask if he would let me know now.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I flatly refuse to comment on a paper that I intend to table in this Assembly. I made that point quite clear. Unlike the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who has a direct hotline through to Margaret Reynolds in Canberra and can get hold of information and distribute it at his will, I have an obligation to and respect for this Assembly. I have given notice that I intend to ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I refer to standing order 62. The Treasurer is making allegations and assertions regarding the federal Minister for Local Government implying that she provided me with privileged information. That is not the case, and I request that he withdraw it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: He made the assertion that she broke privilege.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I point out that, from the facsimile on the front here, it is very clear where the information came from.

Mr EDE: Regarding point C, the funding for essential services such as water supplies, I gave the Treasurer notice of that question and I ask him if he will provide me with the information.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I ask the honourable member to read Hansard. He will see that, in my answer to that question - and he does travel in and out of the Assembly from time to time ...

Mr Ede: I was here the whole time and you know it.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, if he was here all the time, perhaps if I ask him to read Hansard in the morning he will be able to read - obviously he cannot hear - the answer that I gave to that question, and how I would handle questions C and D. I did speak about the Tangentyere Council and the fact that the Power and Water Authority would be providing the information on both those points that he made. I do not have that information at this stage.

Mr EDE: If the honourable Treasurer would read Hansard, or understand what I am saying, I told him that I no longer required an answer to D, but I requested the answer to C. His statement was that he believed he could not separate it out from the information that he had.

Mr Chairman, I am asking him if he will provide me with an undertaking to go through the funding levels and, at some stage, provide me with a breakup of the provisions being made for essential services and for water in communities.

Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 26:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would ask that the Treasurer provide us with some detail. In the past, I recall one notorious year when a previous Treasurer used this funding to purchase some casinos. I would ask him to advise us, for the record, what use this fund will be put to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, there is an explanation in the explanatory papers. I do not deny the right of any member to ask questions but I have great difficulty in determining who opposite has responsibilities for what and to whom briefings can be provided. There seems to be something like 7 opposition spokesmen on financial matters, and I do not deny them that right. Once again, if they could read the explanation on the appropriation, which is item 26, it spells out quite clearly what the Treasurer's Advance is to be used for.

Appropriation for division 26 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 29 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 46:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, once again, I have given the minister advance warning by providing him with written notice of my questions. It is unfortunate that the civility that encouraged me to provide him with that has

not been returned in the tone of his answers. For the purposes of attempting to elicit information, I will return to the questions and ask him if he could advise on the plans, if any, and if those plans have been developed, for the way in which he intends to pursue the introduction of user-pays for power and water on Aboriginal communities.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, a decision has been taken to commence charging for electricity, water and sewerage on communities with effect from 1 October 1987. Honourable members will be aware that this move has been mooted for some considerable time and electricity meters have been installed in communities for this purpose. Given the magnitude of the task, it is proposed to implement charges progressively in 2 stages. In stage 1, town camps presently bulk-metered will be converted to individual metering in consultation with local representatives. Electricity meters which have been installed in 51 communities will be checked, with priority being given to commercial users. Government departments, including houses occupied by government employees and commercial users - for example, stores, roadhouses etc - and electricity used for water pumping will be billed from 1 October 1987. Standard NT tariffs will apply.

For the information of honourable members, it is considered that 85% of all electricity consumption on communities is by government, its employees and commercial consumers. Existing contracts for operation and maintenance of Power and Water Authority equipment will be extended, if possible, to include collection of account data, meter reading, billing, cash collection and disconnection. Otherwise, a new agent will be appointed for these purposes or Power and Water Authority staff will undertake this work.

Standard tariffs will also be levied for water and sewerage, where appropriate, with effect from 1 October 1987. As no water meters exist on communities, the first quarterly bill in January 1988 will be on the basis of assessment. Again, priority will be given to government and commercial facilities on communities. Meters will be installed on these premises as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman, stage 2 of this particular program will involve consultation with the Office of Local Government and the Power and Water Authority to determine the optimum way to bill domestic consumers on communities. It is proposed that stage 2 will be fully implemented by 1 July 1988.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, can the Treasurer assure me that, when he is talking about assessment, he is not thinking of applying some assessment method to private individuals in communities?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, the briefing that I have regarding assessment was not clear as to whether that would be commercial. Certainly, priority will be given by the government to commercial facilities on communities and meters will be installed on these premises as soon as possible. Mr Chairman, my interpretation of that is the overall communities at this stage.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, what the Treasurer just said doesn't mean anything: 'the overall communities at this stage'. Is he or is he not saying that he will provide an assessment method to decide on the charges that will be applied to private citizens on communities?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I believe the manner in which we will implement this assessment will be very similar to the way in which we assessed electricity consumption on communities. I will await further details on the

assessment of what it actually costs to provide water to those communities, and the full details will be worked out by the Power and Water Authority and the joint working party that has been established to investigate it. I could provide this Assembly with a great deal of detail about that assessment, but I am not in a position to provide the honourable member with that information tonight.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, I have written to the minister about the installation of meters in communities and problems with disconnections. Can he comment on these matters?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am well aware of the problems that may occur in communities in relation to disconnections. However, it is a fact of life that services offered have to be paid for. I can assure the member for Arafura that the people who carry out disconnections for the Power and Water Authority in Darwin and Alice Springs are not terribly well-liked and that the resulting hardships are not particularly nice. It is not peculiar to outstations and communities. We are well aware of the commercial utilisation in areas where there are bakeries, stores and roadhouses, but the fact is that these services have to be paid for.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer referred earlier to a previous assessment in relation to power. As I understand it, the purpose of that assessment was to determine the extent of power consumption among the various groups and was not for the purpose of determining the actual dollar amount to be paid by people in the communities. However, if his garbled reply to my earlier question is any indication, he is now talking in terms of the assessment being a basis for water charges during the first stage.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of the member for Stuart, let me describe how we arrived at the user-pays system and the token amount which we ask communities to contribute towards the fuel bill. The billing for electricity was to be a token payment towards the cost of fuel. The fuel bill in those days was in the vicinity of \$7m. We asked for a contribution of about \$1.5m, and it may have even been less.

We are now talking about the level of water consumption. I see the member for Stuart is getting out his calculator. I would not hold to those figures exactly. It may have been \$1m towards a \$6.4m fuel bill, but I can assure him that the amount was token in terms of the overall cost of providing services to the communities.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, the Treasurer still has not understood a basic point of philosophy. What he was doing was asking individual members of the community to pay a percentage of the community's total fuel bill. That percentage, by whatever calculation, covered more than 15% of total fuel consumed in the community, that being the percentage consumed by individual community members. He said himself that 85% of electricity is consumed by government agencies. He was asking individuals in the community to subsidise the use of electricity by government agencies.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, government facilities are for the benefit of the people who live in those areas. We are not talking about open towns. It is rather like the people at the solar village asking the government to give them a generator and water service and then not letting anybody in. We are discussing the cost of providing services to closed communities. One requires a permit to visit them.

The costs of providing electricity to those communities are high. The stores and bakeries on the communities are commercial entities which consume much electricity. The cost of that electricity has to be met. Unfortunately, the price of bread or meat may increase and that is why the government took the decision to phase in charges over a period. It has taken time and we are still phasing it in. We are suggesting that the process will take more time and that the commercial facilities, the high-utilisation areas, will be the first hit in terms of being metered and charged commercial rates. We will then work back to the domestic uses in residential areas and I believe that the assessment on water consumption will follow the same pattern.

Mr TIPILOURA: Mr Chairman, who will carry out the functions of disconnection, reading meters, collecting rents and so forth in communities?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I am working on this at present and several options are available. Perhaps, in some instances, officers from the Power and Water Authority can do it. The member for Stuart talked about Billy Boy Foster, or it may have been his son, who was the powerhouse operator at Ali Curung. There may be opportunities for local people to do this work. We have talked about creating employment in Aboriginal communities and there could be an opportunity for the work to be carried out on an agency basis. Community governments may wish to take up that possibility. At this stage, the possibilities are open and include private agencies, individual community members and community government councils. The options are still being investigated.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, members on this side of the House have never rejected the user-pays approach, provided that the means of metering, collection and disconnection, together with any subsidies or rebates, are the equivalent of those applying in the larger urban centres.

It is important that we obtain a commitment from the Treasurer that he does not intend to distort the relationship between the Power and Water Authority and the individual consumer through measures such as bulk metering of the community or groups within the community, telling them that their funding is to be reduced by a specified amount which they have to raise from other sources. He would never attempt to do that with the Alice Springs Town Council or the Palmerston Town Council.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, that particular philosophy worked very well. We told the communities that anything they collected was theirs to keep as revenue. It worked.

Mr Ede: It did not work. You are talking rubbish!

Mr COULTER: It did not work in those places which made no contribution at all to those services. I can assure the honourable member that a number of communities across the Northern Territory are contributing to those services and are very happy. Some of their contributions and the degree of responsibility being shown are worthy of considerable community pride. They have not stopped there. They have considered the problems of wilful damage to buildings and have established local rules.

Mr Ede: Stick to the subject.

Mr COULTER: I am sticking to it. We are talking about the user-pays principle and people contributing towards maintenance costs, especially where there is wilful damage. We have heard about the chuck-in funds, which are not

legal, but which show that there has always been a degree of responsibility in relation to these services in Aboriginal communities. The north and south camps at Elliott and the community at Daly River are examples. The cost of services in those places is extremely high and steps taken by those communities are a credit to them.

Let us not have this nonsense that it did not work and was irresponsible. It did work on many communities. Revenue was raised and, in some cases, there were agreements in relation to reductions in town maintenance and public utility funding. Some communities entered into an agreement to work fewer hours. They worked within their budgets and they managed very well.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is a load of absolute balderdash. I travel around those communities and I know about the pain and suffering that occurred at places such as Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Ali Curung. Every community in my electorate had problems. I received letters and representations from people at Borroloola and other communities in the Top End. I presented signatures here from people in areas ranging from Victoria River to the South Australian border. Those communities said that it was unjust and inequitable. The Treasurer talked about people keeping moneys they collected for electricity and calling it revenue. He simply reduced their funding and told them that they could attempt to make up the shortfall by collecting fees for electricity. I challenge the Treasurer to tell me how many communities were able eventually to raise sufficient funds to compensate for the cuts that he imposed on them.

He spoke about communities working fewer hours. The standard of services had already been substantially cut through erosion of funding year after year. That has cut communities so close to the bone that there are now real problems with maintaining a basic standard of public health. When people in those communities say that they will cut back on the number of hours they work, they do it because they have no alternative. They are not doing it out of the kindness of their hearts or as a result of a decision to allow their communities to degenerate to the extent that they are public health hazards. They are doing it because the Treasurer imposed this system on them without any discussion and without any attempt to be equitable and give them the same sort of deal that is worked out for Alice Springs or Tennant Creek or wherever.

For some peculiar reason of his own, because he read a book somewhere, the Treasurer decided that he would set up his own system of chuck-in.

Mr Coulter: It is well regarded by Aboriginal communities, as you know.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, chuck-in is something which is done for a social purpose by a group of people who have a relationship with each other and obligations to each other. In these communities, people had to chuck in an amount which, if they were to overcome the cuts that the Treasurer imposed on them, would have meant that they were subsidising the school's electricity, the police station's electricity etc. That is not something that is requested of the good citizens of Palmerston or Darwin or Alice Springs.

Mr Coulter: They pay full tote odds.

Mr EDE: People have said they were happy to pay the same as they would be paying if they were in town if all the deals were done the same way.

Mr Coulter: That is what we intend to do.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I am asking the Treasurer to tell us is that it will be the same and that community governments will not be forced to become the debt collector or have to undertake the disconnections, which is something that no town council would take on. Does the Treasurer intend to give the people in these communities a commitment or not?

Mr Coulter: I have given it to them.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, no commitment has been provided. If the Treasurer will stand up and say that he has provided that commitment, I will be happy. Once again, I ask the Treasurer to provide a commitment to treat community governments or unincorporated communities or communities incorporated under other legislation in the same way as he treats ... Is that an interjection?

Mr Coulter: Just listen, that is all. Be calm and it will happen. I have already given you the answer to what you are asking. Do not embarrass yourself.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, is the answer that I have a commitment that they will be treated the same way or not?

Mr Coulter: I said so when I first started it. You would have heard it if you had listened.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I hope that that interjection is being taken up because, obviously, it is the best that I will get out of the Treasurer. I will take it from that interjection that he is giving a commitment to this Assembly that those communities and their municipal organisations will be treated in exactly the same way as town councils are. I will be holding him to that commitment.

Appropriation for division 46 agreed to.

Appropriation for divisions 47 and 45 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 23:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have a number of questions of which I have given the minister notice. On 13 November 1986, in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill last year, the then minister stated that 12 companies had signed letters of intent as a result of work done by consultants employed by the Trade Development Zone. How many of those companies have lodged business plans with the Trade Development Zone, how many of those companies have located in the zone, and how many of the remainder still intend to locate in the zone?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, of the 12 companies that had signed letters of intent, 1 has lodged a business plan and is located in the zone and a second is expected to do so in November. Subsequently, a further company has signed a formal agreement and lodged a business plan and has located in the zone as well. I point out to honourable members that all 4 buildings initially constructed in the Trade Development Zone are now fully occupied.

Of the balance of the 12 companies that signed letters of intent, 1 company has withdrawn its proposal pending further investigation and 4 of the letters of intent have lapsed due to a time provision contained in the letters of intent. Should these companies renew their interest, the offer by the Trade Development Zone Authority is open to renegotiation.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, 3 have made commitments of one sort or another, 1 has withdrawn and there are 4 whose letters of intent have lapsed. What has happened to the other 4?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, those are the 4 who are permanent occupants of the zone now. The current situation is that 4 companies are now operational in the zone, 4 agreements are being negotiated now - that is, letters of intent that are being negotiated into agreements - and 6 letters of intent are still on offer.

Mr Smith: That makes 14.

Mr PERRON: Discussions are occurring with a number of other companies. Those discussions have not yet reached the letter of intent offer at this stage.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, my next question is slightly different. On the same day last year, the previous minister stated that there had been 14 signatures for the zone and a firm commitment date had been obtained for 11. For how many of those 11 are the commitment dates still valid?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, there has been considerable slippage in the dates for establishment by companies in the zone. It is taking longer than anticipated to put the companies in place. Much of this delay can be attributed to immigration procedures in Hong Kong where Australian immigration officials are under severe strain to process the number of applications they are receiving for people to come to Australia generally.

Other factors which have contributed to this slippage are things such as equipment lead times for the companies which have to order new equipment once they agree to come here and the locating of key personnel in the Territory. Depending on their circumstances, companies from overseas are permitted to bring in some key personnel and supervisors. These persons are required to conduct individual negotiations with the Department of Immigration because they are not always allowed permanent immigration status. They are allowed here for varying periods depending on the scarcity of their skills and training programs for their replacements.

We have also found, by way of experience, that investors are working to their own timetables and not to our timetable. An example of this is a confectionery manufacturer whom honourable members will have heard of from time to time. We have spoken of a confectionery manufacturer as being interested and having received letters of intent etc. This gentleman will be making his fifth visit to Darwin in the next few weeks to place a bond for the construction of the factory in which his confectionery manufacturing equipment will be installed. Originally, we had expected this particular manufacturer to be in operation by October this year. That is an example.

It has been the experience of the zone authority over the past 18 months that the period of time taken from initial contact with a prospective zone tenant to his actually taking up residence is in the vicinity of 2 years. During that period, there is a great deal of toing and froing from all sorts of quarters depending on the complexity of the process. Whether the intending manufacturer is seeking business migration or not is significant in this matter. For example, until such time as business migration is cleared by the Australian Immigration Office in Hong Kong, obviously the proposed tenant in the zone is not prepared to order any equipment for his factory. That sort of factor has resulted in considerable delay in getting these people into the zone and operating, as compared with our original projections.

Honourable members will bear in mind our oft-repeated phrase that the Trade Development Zone is a long-term facility. We said all along, as did the Leader of the Opposition when the legislation was debated, that it would take a long time and a great deal of hard work and follow-through by the government in order to have the zone up and on its feet in a big way. In fact, personally, in light of what I have learnt in the last 6 months, I am satisfied that we are making reasonable progress with the Trade Development Zone. We also have the disadvantage that there are no other zones operating in Australia from which we can learn how long it is likely to take and plan accordingly. We were perhaps over-optimistic in terms of the numbers of people we thought we could have in the zone within a short period.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, what fees were paid to consultants for the last financial year and what fees were allocated for consultants this financial year?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, a total of \$431 000 was paid to consultants in 1986 for retainers, expenses, success fees and the cost of TDZ seminars in various locations, against a budget of \$460 000. The amount allocated in this budget is \$770 000.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have a question following on from that, and the minister may not know the answer to this. In relation to the 4 firms that had signed letters of intent that have now lapsed, is it accurate to say that one or more consultants would have been paid a spotting fee for those 4 firms?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I believe that is so.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how many firms is it anticipated will set up in the Trade Development Zone this financial year? Of the \$2.7m under the heading 'Marketing', how much is for incentive payments and allowances to zone operators and how much is for marketing? Under the 'Administration' heading, provision has been made for \$500 000 to fund returns to developers who will be providing new buildings for zone tenants. What will that money be used for?

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the authority is reluctant to commit itself on specific numbers of companies starting up in the zone and I think honourable members would be mindful of the reason for that. The indications given previously were based on genuine expectations of the companies at the time. I can advise that, over and above the 4 companies already in place, formal agreements and leases have been signed with 2 companies. Letters of intent are in hand and 6 letters of intent are on offer.

The Leader of the Opposition asked about the \$2.7m under the heading 'Marketing'. He wanted me to break it up into incentive payments and allowances for zone operators. Mr Chairman, I am not prepared to provide the breakdown of the Trade Development Zone's marketing budget in this sense. As has been the subject of debate in the Assembly before, the government feels it is not in the best interests of the Trade Development Zone or the Territory to provide details of incentives, which is beginning to be what happens once you start providing breakdowns like this. We intend to adhere to the important principle that these matters are commercially confidential.

The Leader of the Opposition's last question was about the \$500 000 to fund returns to developers. Due to the tight budgetary situation, it was not possible to fund future factory development, at least in this financial year, in the Trade Development Zone by appropriation, which would have been the most desirable option. The situation of funding by appropriation allows the Trade

Development Zone Authority to collect a rent from those properties, such rent thereby creating income for the authority which would enable it to move more quickly towards economic self-sufficiency. However, because of budgetary constraints, we could not appropriate funds for further factory development. Therefore, the authority must go into the commercial marketplace to fund factories this financial year. The \$500 000 has been allocated to meet the initial returns to developers on a commercial basis.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I rise to express my concern about the minister's failure to answer the question on marketing. The question was carefully phrased so that the commercial dealings between individual firms and the Trade Development Zone would not be known as a result of his answer to the question. I believe the people of the Territory have a right to know how that figure is broken down. In fact, the minister has already accounted for \$770 000 of it by saying that that is a fee for consultants so all that is left is a sum of about \$2m. I would not have thought that it would have prejudiced the commercial confidentiality of any of the firms if the minister had provided a global figure which indicated the breakup between incentive payments and allowances and marketing.

Mr Chairman, I ask the minister to reconsider his answer on that particular point. Essentially, what I am trying to obtain is a picture of how the zone is operating in its third year, whether we are making progress, whether we are starting to get a return. An answer to that particular question is important in that sense. Basically, it divides the sum of marketing up between going out there and searching for new firms and the provision of support to firms that are already established in the zone. In the past, I have voiced some reservations about the levels and nature of that support, but that certainly is not the intent of the question. I wish to know how much of the money is to be devoted to seeking new firms and how much to supporting existing firms. That is important to assist the opposition to make an overall assessment of how the Trade Development Zone is progressing.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I am not prepared to go beyond what is provided on page 6 of the explanatory booklet in relation to marketing and related incentive payments to intended zone operators. I point out to the honourable member that the Trade Development Zone is not really in its third year. In fact, if I recall rightly, Mr Chairman, the first sod at the Trade Development Zone was turned in March 1986 by yourself. If that date is correct, that puts us in the vicinity of about 1½ years and that is certainly not a long time. As I mentioned, it will take a long time to get all these things in place and, at some later stage, we can sit back and decide whether it has been successful or not. The Leader of the Opposition himself, in the second-reading debate on the legislation, concluded by saying that the Trade Development Zone had exciting potential: 'Hopefully, we can all say, in 10 to 15 years, that it has been one of the most farsighted things that this government has introduced'. He was a strong supporter of it at that time, but I think his faith has weakened somewhat in the more recent past.

In the second-reading debate on the Appropriation Bill, I mentioned that judgments on the Trade Development Zone should not be made too early, that the government had to get in there, knuckle down and follow through, and that it was not a place for the faint-hearted in so far as government decision-making was concerned. One had to have the courage to get in there, put it together and follow through. If we were guilty of anything, we were guilty of being a bit enthusiastic in our early announcements about the rate at which people would take up occupancy in the zone, and our anticipation of the problems that they would encounter in doing so.

Unfortunately, that has put a bit of a damper on it in some people's eyes but I repeat that, in my view, it is one of those things we must follow through strongly. We are now in what might be called full flight in the zone. We have the facilities there to show people and we certainly did not have that for the first group of visitors. To date, we have had 12 groups from Asia, totalling some 157 people, all of whom have paid for their fares and accommodation to come here, having become interested in the trade zone through our respective agents in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore. Marketing and the holding of seminars is an expensive business in these big cities. We need to interest them in the zone, to follow through and to return several times to urge them to make up their minds. In answer to the honourable member's question, we feel that it is preferable not to provide the breakdown that he is asking for.

Appropriation for division 23 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 90:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have heard some ballpark figures. These may be incorrect, but I would like to ask the minister whether the ballpark figures are correct because they seem phenomenally high. The department base moved from Knuckey Street to Minerals House and is now preparing to move to the Milatos Building. I have been told that the cost connected with telephones in those changes has been over \$0.25m. I ask him to comment on that.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the figure sounds rather high to me, although I know that changes in telephone systems where they involve PABXs are frighteningly expensive. Telecom has a strange rule that you can connect through various other PABXs if you are within so many hundreds of metres of one. The Harbour View Building happens to be a few metres beyond the range and that means it is required to have a separate telephone system at astronomical cost. I was somewhat outraged when that was pointed out to me. I was told that those were the facts of life. In this case, we took a PABX that suited our requirements from another government department which had ordered one in excess of its needs. I am relying on memory here.

The moves by some sections of the department from one building to another and then again to the Harbour View Building was necessitated by the fact that, after the extensive changes to the administrative arrangements in March this year, quite a number of departments were split up and amalgamated in a different way and there was a need to quickly move those that one could under one roof. Because the Department of Industries and Development was destined to go into a large new building, it had to get out of the way of a number of other departments which were to take up space occupied by it. We ended up with the rough end of the pineapple in that we had to move a number of administrative units twice. That was unfortunate and very expensive. I cannot give the honourable member specific dollar figures, but they are frightening sums of money. One would want to move as little as is reasonable in this business.

Mr EDE: I would certainly agree with the comments of the honourable minister about moving as little as possible because I was given a similar figure for the Department of Mines and Energy. Its move cost some \$200 000.

Mr Chairman, I would like the minister to give an undertaking that, at some stage, he will give us a progress report on the BTEC campaign.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I would be pleased to advise the Assembly on that. Perhaps a short ministerial statement might be appropriate to advise the member. The campaign is consuming enormous sums of money, as anyone who looks at the budget papers will be aware. The Northern Territory is consuming by far the lion's share across Australia. We will be one of the last areas to be cleaned up in Australia because of our remoteness and inaccessible areas. The last few animals will be very expensive. I will provide such a statement, perhaps at the next sittings.

Appropriation for division 90 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 55 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 38, 39, 35 and 36:

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have provided a number of written questions to the honourable minister. I may have some supplementary questions. If his answers are full and frank, we might be able to get through this with a minimum degree of pain.

The first question I would like to ask relates to the Darwin Institute of Technology. What courses offered in 1987 will not be offered in 1988 or have had minimum student number levels applied to them or have been marked for full cost recovery or have their assigned intake reduced or have restrictions placed on their development?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member for prior knowledge of the problems he has and the questions he wishes to raise in relation to this matter. I certainly hope we can get through them in a spirit of cooperation.

What courses offered in 1987 at the DIT will not be offered in 1988? These will be the Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Biology), the Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Chemistry), Building Technology, the Associate Diploma of Engineering (Electrical), the Certificate of Construction Practice, the Post Certificate in Micro-processors, the Electronic Servicing Certificate, the Post Trade Certificate in Industrial Electronics and the Associate Diploma of Arts (Ceramics).

What courses will have minimum student number levels applied to them? Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Cartography), Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Emergency Care), Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Environmental Biology), Associate Diploma of Architectural Drafting, Associate Diploma of Engineering (Civil), Associate Diploma of Engineering (Electronics and Communications), Associate Diploma of Engineering (Mechanical), Advance Certificate of Tropical Horticulture, Certificate Building Inspectors and Foremen, Certificate Builders Administration and Practice, Certificate in Industrial Safety and Post Certificate Computer-Aided Drafting 1A.

What courses have been numbered for full cost recovery? Post Trade Certificate in Diesel Engine Mechanics, Post Trade Certificate in Gas Fitting, Post Trade Certificate in Plumbing and Draining, Journeymen Registration, Post Trade Certificate Program Controllers, Post Trade Certificate in SAA Welders, Post Trade Certificate in Welding (FCAW), Post Trade Certificate in Welding (MAA Pipe), Post Trade Certificate in Welding (MMA Plate), Post Trade Certificate in Welding (TIG), Post Trade Certificate in Welding (Welding Supervisor), Post Trade Certificate in Welding (Fuel Gas), Post Trade

Certificate in Welding (Automatic), and Post Trade Certificate in Liquid Petroleum Gas for Internal Combustion Installation.

What courses have had their assigned intake reduced? Associate Diploma in Library Practice, Associate Diploma in Fashion Design and Associate Diploma in Child Care. In addition, there is to be reduced teaching in linguistics, reduced musicianship in TAFE music courses and reduced intake and reduced electives available for the Aboriginal Task Force students.

What courses have had restrictions placed on their development? Associate Diploma in Information Systems, Associate Diploma in Banking and Finance, Certificate in Retailing, Certificate in Office Automation, Certificate in Office Automation (Supervision), Certificate in Cockery and External Certificate in Real Estate.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, that is certainly bad news for students seeking to pursue any of those courses next year. I would like to proceed without comment at this stage.

What new fees or charges are to be paid by DIT students in 1988?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it is worth while to note that, in respect of the first questions, only 8 courses will not be held next year.

The charges to be paid are the TAFE administration charge which will be the same as the tertiary charge - \$263 for TAFE associate diploma courses or the same equivalent courses as the tertiary level administrative fee - and \$50 for other TAFE courses, except those supported by outside grants. Exemptions from payment of the charge will be in accordance with guidelines applying to those higher education administrative charges. There will also be charges for the cost of materials to be used in some advanced education courses and in most TAFE courses except apprenticeship courses. These charges will be detailed when all the approvals have been obtained.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, for the benefit of the Treasurer, I am quite prepared to table this document that I am about to quote from if he asks me to do so. I believe the minister, being a conscientious minister, probably already has a copy. I quote from page 36 of 'Skills for Australia' prepared by the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training and the federal Minister for Employment Services and Youth Affairs. When referring to the general recurrent program in that document, they state: 'As an adjunct to those grants, the Commonwealth decided to selectively relax the prohibition on charging of fees in TAFE. This relaxation will be limited to those courses which are undertaken for the purpose of upgrading skills and income, at the request of industry ... The prohibition on fees will remain in relation to that great majority of TAFE courses which involve the initial acquisition of skills by young people'.

Obviously, the minister would be aware of those restrictions. Can he assure this Assembly that he has complied with those guidelines in relation to the courses which are funded from the federal government?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I can most assuredly give an undertaking that all the guidelines and requirements of the federal government relating to funding have been complied with.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, on page 18, we find salaries for teaching and non-teaching activities. We find that teaching areas have taken a cut of some

\$277 000 whereas the non-teaching areas have an increased appropriation of \$665 000 and there is a massive increase in institute overheads of some \$741 000. In view of the minister's oft-stated principle of keeping down administrative components in order to increase the amount of funds available for teaching, I ask him to run briefly through what leads to this massive increase in non-teaching funds and the very substantial reduction in the teaching area.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the institute received a \$640 000 reduction in its TAFE allocation. That reduction was applied to the 1986-87 expenditure of \$14.594m. In other words, the basic funding was reduced by 4.4%. In the concluding stage of formulating the Territory budget, the institute had a further cut of \$34 000, fixing its TAFE budget at \$14.369m. In other words, the total cut was \$674 000.

In order to absorb the funding reductions, the institute implemented cuts in its administrative area totalling \$542 000. I think honourable members realise that the institute itself runs a very lean organisation in terms of the ratio of non-teaching staff to teaching staff. It has probably a far higher ratio than similar institutions in the rest of Australia. I think it is around 9:1 whereas the average in the rest of Australia is 4:1. It certainly operates far more effectively in terms of the ratio of teaching staff to administrative staff.

Through the measures relating to the use of air-conditioning, plant, telephone and postage and renegotiation of insurance premiums, the institute has been able to limit the estimated 1987-88 overheads expenditure to \$2.86m which is an 8% increase over last year's amount but, in real terms, represents a cut of \$150 000 or about 5%. It is important to note that these comments relate strictly to the TAFE program at the institute, whilst the balance of the administrative and overheads budget relates to advanced education programs which are funded by Commonwealth grants for advanced education. Moneys from those grants cannot be expended on TAFE teaching programs. There has to be that differentiation in the allocation of expenditures on overheads.

Mr EDE: The minister said that the ratio of non-teaching to teaching staff was 9:1 whereas in other places it is usually about 5:1.

Mr Manzie: I said it was 4:1.

Mr EDE: I am not quite sure how he works that out. I certainly cannot see how ours could be 9:1. The figures on page 18 indicate that our ratio is a bit less than 3:1. I wonder whether he could clarify that.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, my advice is that it is 9:1, but I will check that and find out exactly where we stand. I believe we are 4 times better than the national average, but I will get the details.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have a general question on division 35 which relates to the Department of Education itself. Can the minister provide details of the retention rates from primary schools through to Year 12 for 1985 and 1986 and those projected for 1987 and 1988?

Mr MANZIE: The figures from Year 7 to Year 12 probably will be misleading because it is compulsory for people to stay until Year 10. Years 11 and 12 are the important ones.

Mr Ede: It skews the figures in comparison with the rest of Australia.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, there are problems with people shifting and leaving but the figure for 1985 is 31.2% and the 1986 figure is 35.2%. We are looking at 41.6% for 1987 and 47% for 1988. In comparison with all states of Australia, since self-government we have increased our retention rates by 53%. They were certainly dreadful at 22% in 1979 and our rate is still the second-lowest in the country. I think the Tasmanian figure is about 30%. We are certainly improving. If we can continue to improve our retention rate, it will certainly be beneficial for the Territory although it will cause many problems in terms of numbers of students at the higher levels. We are certainly aiming, however, at keeping people at school for much longer.

Mr EDE: My next question relates to the problem which I raised in an adjournment debate last week. Student numbers at Casuarina Senior High School now exceed 1300. The government originally acknowledged that 1000 was an appropriate number of students in terms of manageability. Can the minister advise what plans the government has to overcome this problem?

Mr MANZIE: I have some details which I intended to relate in tomorrow's adjournment debate, which probably would be more appropriate in terms of the time available. I would like to clarify that, although that figure was presented, the government never accepted it. Certainly, we had more than 1300 students at Casuarina at the commencement of this year although I can assure honourable members that that number did not over-extend staffing and facilities. Our plans to address changing patterns in senior secondary education, which are evident all over the country, will certainly be of interest to everyone. Retention rates and changes are under way, particularly as a result of the removal of the dole for those 16 to 18 years old.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I look forward to that adjournment debate with interest.

I ask the minister to explain the establishment levels in the Curriculum Assessment Branch and the reductions that have led to a number of staff becoming over-establishment.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the branch was extensively reorganised during 1986-87 after the development of the core curriculum. Prior to the reorganisation, there were 66 staff members. Excess staff continued to be employed within the branch until suitable positions became available elsewhere, either in the office area or the schools. In the 1987-88 budget, 46 staff have been provided for.

Mr EDE: I would like an explanation of the reduction of \$19 000 in assessment costs, given that the government has often stated that it has a commitment to increasing the degree of assessment at various levels within the school system. On the one hand, the government says that it will increase the level of assessment and its extent yet, at the same time, the funding is being reduced.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, that apparent contradiction is related to the fact that the assessment of certification of Year 12 students is subject to a memorandum of understanding between the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia and the Northern Territory Department of Education. Minimum savings of \$19 000 are to be achieved from a reassessment and rationalisation of travel. Definitely, there will be no reduction in the level of assessment and certification of Year 12 students.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would also like to be advised of the projected cost of developing curriculum materials related to statehood. I would like to know at what levels this material will be taught and the extent to which it will be introduced in 1988 and 1989. For example, do we intend to have a broad curriculum in place next year for Years 6 to 12 or is the intention to start with Year 6 and then develop the curriculum over time as those students move through the system?

Mr MANZIE: Earlier this year, a departmental coordinating committee reported to the Education Advisory Council Committee on Statehood. The report recommended a number of proposals constituting an educational package on statehood issues. At this stage, only those items which can be covered from existing resources are proceeding. We certainly have not been able to provide any additional resources. A working party of the Social and Cultural Education Subject Area Committee has been formed to identify available teaching resources to form the basis of an expandable resource package for teachers and students and to develop a teachers' guide to NT statehood. This will indicate how and where statehood issues can be dealt with appropriately in the existing curriculum, suggest teaching strategies and detail support resources such as references, speakers and organisations. The costs involved in this work only relate to funds for relief teachers to replace teachers involved in committee work. These amount to approximately \$1000.

The major cost item will be the printing and distribution of the package and the guide. We certainly cannot provide detailed costs until the materials are available in early December. Printing is done in-house, however, as the honourable member is probably aware.

In terms of when statehood will be taught, it appears that the issues can be introduced most appropriately in Years 5 to 10. Key points relevant to statehood already occur in the existing syllabus in Years 5, 7, 9 and 10. These involve, for example, education about the Constitution and state and Commonwealth rights. NT statehood issues will be introduced as an expansion of those topics. Statehood will not be a separate topic. It will be integrated with existing SACE topics.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in respect of the Facilities of Administration Branch, the dreaded administrative overheads issue rises again. I see that additional positions were created as a result of a review and that some of those were offset by reductions under 'other activities'. I would like the minister to explain that. If administration has been increased at the expense of some other areas, it is hard to believe that the department is becoming leaner and tighter.

Mr MANZIE: I can assure the honourable member that there is no blow-out in administrative costs. The 3 additional positions were created in order to maintain and develop the government accounting system for the department. We are required to keep our financial systems up to date. If we don't, we are taken to task by the Auditor-General. A number of administrative positions have been abolished elsewhere in the department to offset the increases required. The 3 positions abolished are: the estimates officer for planning and coordination; the stenographer-secretary for special programs; and, the stenographer-secretary for university development.

Mr EDE: In the same area, there was a net increase of over \$1m in the capital works program. I am told that this was offset by a reduction in capital items of some \$94 000 and a department vehicle purchase of \$316 000. Can the minister provide details of the capital works program?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the increase is covered in the minor new works area which works out to about \$1.2m. I have a breakdown of the expenditures which I can make available to the honourable member. It is rather complex in terms of the question which has been asked, which is a confusing one. The answer I will provide is that the increase of \$1.17m in the provision for capital works, minor new works, is not net of the reduction in capital items which cover plant and vehicle.

Mr EDE: It is confusing because, if capital works are included under the divisional item, they are not generally related to the capital works program. We must therefore be talking about a different program.

Mr MANZIE: The amount actually relates to the following: \$100 000 for partitioning, \$188 000 for transportables, \$128 000 for mobiles and \$966 000 for minor new works, a total of \$1.482m. From that, we subtract a cash allocation of \$100 000, giving an actual total of \$1.382m.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, under standing order 225, I move that the committee report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Motion negatived.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, moving on to the Personnel Branch, I note from the budget papers that additional recruitment expenditure has been caused by an increase in Northern Territory Teaching Service turnover rates and increased costs. In light of that, I would ask the minister to provide details of the increased costs and also the turnover rates for 1985-87 and any projections that the government has for 1988. I would also ask him to advise on overseas recruitment in 1986-87, and any that is planned for 1988.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am very pleased that the turnover rates are getting better. In 1985-86, they were 24% to 25%. In 1987, they are down to 17% at this stage. We are hoping that that will continue and we will end up below 20%. Next year, we are looking at the possibility of achieving the same level of about the 20% mark. Recruitment costs have increased. Obviously, as prices rise, recruitment costs rise and the figures are: for 1985-86, \$428 000; for 1986-87, we are looking at \$1.088m; and, for 1987-88, the costs are estimated at about \$1.05m.

Overseas recruitment for 1986-87 has been nil. In relation to 1988, we are having discussions with education authorities in Alberta, Canada. No commitment has been made. We have just been putting our toe in to test the water. One of the very pleasing things regarding our recruitment position is that we have increased the number of Territorians undergoing teacher training, and we hope that 100 teachers will graduate in the near future. That is the only way we will decrease our teacher turnover because, obviously, the people causing the turnover rate are those from interstate. Apart from the member for MacDonnell, who has made the Territory his home, and the Leader of the Opposition, there are a number of people, not only in the teaching profession but in all professions who, if they can obtain a suitable position at home interstate, they do so, and that is to our disadvantage.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, moving on to planning and coordination, I notice that there was quite a substantial reduction in the allocation for Management Information Services. I noted earlier that the minister talked about increases in other areas because of the need to comply with the Auditor-General's requirements. I see that there has been a reduction for Management Information Services and I hope that he is not offsetting one against the other. It will be to his eternal damnation if I catch him at it.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, heaven forbid! I can assure the honourable member we will ensure that that never happens.

The cut in the information systems allocation has reduced the ability to meet requests for expansion of the department's office automation schools administration system. It has caused a slowdown in the development of new applications. The impact has been lessened by the fact that the cut follows a period of very high development since 1985, that saw the implementation of administrative systems in approximately 60 schools and TAFE institutions, and an office automation system which links and provides basic word-processing communication and personal computing facilities to the department's offices in all the major urban centres. The management information system has very little to do with the GAS system or the financial reporting system and therefore I can assure the honourable member that that is one area where we will not upset the Auditor-General.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, regarding 'Schools North', there are obviously a number of questions because we come to the sharp end at the coalface. First, would the minister explain the reduction of \$749 000 in school supplies for the Schools North area?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the reduction reflects a 20% cut in the total allocation for schools and for school programs. I could add that that will be offset by an increase in funds available to schools as a result of their increase in the dollar-for-dollar scheme. Hopefully, that will allow schools with initiative to pick up the shortfall and even improve on the former situation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I note that an establishment grant to new schools, less grants made in 1986-87, is \$471 000. Can the minister advise what new schools will come on line during this period?

Mr MANZIE: The 'new schools' covers additions to existing schools as well as new schools in the literal sense. Provisions are made for additional full-year or part-year costs of services to the following: the Katherine East Primary or MacFarlane Primary; Moulden Park; Casuarina extensions in respect of the library, motor mechanics and the technical area; Nhulunbuy library; the Berry Springs and Nightcliff High transportables; Darwin High; Sanderson High stage 2; Ludmilla Special School; and Block F at Driver. Establishment grants are proposed for urban Aboriginal units for the Casuarina Secondary College, Darwin High, Sanderson High and Katherine High and extensions to schools and new outstation schools, the buildings funded under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Capital Grants Program.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like some advice on the cessation of the electricity subsidy. Does this mean that there will no longer be a subsidy paid to the school councils and that they will have to raise the funds themselves to pay for their electricity?

Mr MANZIE: No, it does not mean that at all, Mr Chairman. The subsidy was in addition to the payment of electricity. The program commenced after the cyclone when buildings were dilapidated and the costs of air-conditioning were astronomical. We also had a situation where most schools were air-conditioned for 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. These buildings have been repaired and we have instituted the system whereby schools pay their own bills. Most have installed time clocks and the subsidy has been phased out. By the same token, this only worked for urban schools and therefore benefited certain schools rather than all schools. At the moment, all schools have the

opportunity to gain the benefits by being cost-effective in their use of electricity. The subsidy has now been removed totally.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, moving on to page 44, 'Schools-based Staff Costs'. It refers to a reduction in staff numbers giving a saving of \$494 000. Could the minister indicate the actual numbers of staff cuts and the types of functions these staff performed in the schools?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, public service staff are being cut by 27. These are auxiliary positions and they are over-establishment or special-needs staff. Teacher staff in Schools North will be reduced by 34 positions. At the secondary level, the new student-teacher ratios produced a small increase in the number of formula positions to which each school was entitled. At the same time, additional and non-formula positions for resource teachers, counsellors, and teacher-librarians were abolished, resulting in a net reduction in total staffing. The teachers affected were all in the Band-1 level and were engaged in classroom teaching, resource, counselling and library duties. The effect of these reductions on students has been minimised by combining or rationalising small classes, increasing teaching loads to departmental recommended levels, small increases in class sizes and the allocation of support duties to formula staff.

At the primary level, staff reductions occurred only where the number of teachers at the school exceeded the formula entitlement. In other words, staff numbers were brought into line with entitlements based on current enrolments. The teachers affected were all at the Band-1 level and engaged in classroom teaching duties and, in each case, internal reorganisation was possible to avoid disadvantaging students. Therefore, it is difficult to quantify the cuts in relation to effects on students. The most immediate effect has been increased workload on the remaining advisory staff but there comes a point at which the reduction in advisory support services certainly must affect the quality of the service delivered to students. It is important to remember that staff student ratios in the Territory are still very good and that, in fact, our schools are staffed better than those anywhere else in Australia.

Mr EDE: I am not quite sure the minister understood the question. I thank him for his answer because I intended to ask about Northern Territory Teaching Service staff. My question related to the Northern Territory Public Service.

Mr MANZIE: 27 was the first one.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, my next question relates to the number of students boarding and taking courses at Kormilda or taking courses elsewhere over the last 3 years. I would like to get some idea of how the numbers have moved. I would also like to know the amount that has been spent on maintenance in 1986-87, what is planned for 1987-88 and a comparison of the cost per student in 1986-87 and planned for 1987-88.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, over the last 3 years, the average number of students, including boarders, attending high school was 205. In 1986, it was 221 and, in 1987, 180. The average number of boarders attending high school was 36 in 1985, 42 in 1986 and 37 in 1987.

The average student cost in 1986-87 was \$13 800 and the estimated cost for 1987-88 is \$15 000. That does not include administrative overheads amounting to approximately 20% of direct costs but does include costs incurred

by Kormilda College students attending Darwin high schools. It is worth while noting that, currently, one ex-Kormilda student is pursuing a BA course through Deakin University.

Repairs and maintenance expenditure in 1986-87 was \$96 170. In 1987-88 so far, \$17 000 has been spent but the amount budgeted for urgent minor repairs etc is \$290 000.

Mr EDE: I heard some hazy rumours today that some momentous decisions have been made regarding the future of Kormilda College and that things will start happening very rapidly in a matter of weeks. If that is the case, can the minister undertake to make a full statement to this Assembly in the next couple of days as to what will occur? If not, can he give me some undertaking that we will receive some advance warning of when things will start to move?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I made a statement to this Assembly a while ago explaining how the arrangements for Kormilda were proceeding. The process this year was the establishment of a board and the school becoming an independent government school in terms of operating with its own board. I will provide information in an adjournment debate of where we are at. I can assure the honourable member that he really should not rely on rumours. He should not hesitate to ask me because there have been some pretty unfortunate rumours. Aboriginal students will continue to be encouraged to attend Kormilda. Not only that, the post-primary training area will be continued. There will be some exciting changes and we are looking forward to what the future holds in terms of Aboriginal education and secondary education in Darwin as a result of those changes at Kormilda.

Mr EDE: In respect of 'Schools South', I presume that the same answer will be given as regards school supplies. I would like some indication of which schools establishment grants will be provided for during 1987-88.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I do not know if I have the schools listed for 'Schools South'. I will have to obtain the information for the honourable member.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like the details for Yirara that I requested for Kormilda. Could he advise on the number of students boarding and taking courses at Yirara or, alternatively, taking courses elsewhere over the last 3 years, the cost of maintenance etc and the cost per student in 1986-87 and 1987-88?

Mr MANZIE: At Yirara, the average number of students attending high school was 182 in 1985, 204 in 1986 and 197 in 1987. The average number of boarders attending the high school was 11 in 1985, 5 in 1986 and 25 in 1987. The average per-student cost in 1986-87 was \$15 187 and \$15 500 in 1987-88. That does not include the administrative overheads. The repairs and maintenance cost in 1986-87 was \$204 682. In 1987-88, \$11 000 has been spent so far and we have budgeted for another \$75 000.

I can now supply the information on establishment grants for 'Schools South'. In terms of post-primary facilities, we have Papunya, Borroloola, Lake Nash and Willowra. Homeland centre grants will be Nicholson River, Alcoota, Mount Swan and Bonya. There will be library grants for Tennant Creek High and Sadadeen Secondary College and a music grant for Alice Springs High.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, pursuant to standing order 225, once again I move that the committee report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Motion negatived.

Mr EDE: In respect of English as a second language, I would like the minister to detail the effects on the program of the cuts in staff positions. I believe the cut is of the order of \$235 000.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the cuts to the former ESL positions were implemented across primary and secondary schools, affecting both the new arrivals program and the general support program and, in all, 12 positions were abolished. To reduce the adverse effects on the program, several strategies were used: the amalgamation of primary intensive units; sharing the ESL teachers across 2 schools where ESL needs were reduced; flexible use of staff in secondary intensive English units; and flexible use of general support staff in Darwin high schools. No centres outside Darwin were targeted for losing ESL positions. The 16 extra Band-2 ESL Aboriginal education positions introduced this year to assist mainstream teachers in addressing ESL were unaffected by the cuts. We have been able to make the cuts without affecting the programs.

Mr EDE: Turning to student services, the minister knows that middle ear infection is in epidemic proportions in many communities around the Northern Territory. Some surveys have shown that a number of children are affected to the extent that they require some mechanical assistance. That can be as high as 75% to 80% in some communities and has a substantial effect on the children's ability to learn. In view of that, how will the student services activity cope with the cuts that have been imposed on it?

Mr MANZIE: The staffing cuts to students services were made in the regional offices of Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. The reductions were made in guidance and special education advisory teachers rather than in the schools. No special units in primary or high schools suffered reductions in staff. Similarly, advisory services in the hearing and visually impaired areas were fully maintained, as were all the therapy positions. The gifted children's program was not affected either.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in effect the Special Programs Branch has been abolished. I am not sorry to see the back of it because I always thought of it as being a unit to try to promote the minister's image, as I recall the original advertisements. My enjoyment did not last very long because, when I had a look around to see where everything had disappeared to, I found that, in 'personnel' on page 37, there was a reference to 7 positions allocated from the 'special projects pool'. That may or may not be part of that. Certainly, on page 39, 'Planning and Coordination' has \$175 000 which came out of special programs. On page 40, we have a reference to another \$130 000 from special programs. It would appear that there have been no savings but, in fact, an increase of some \$230 000 in the cost of providing the service to the minister or whomever.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am very glad that the honourable member raised this. Obviously, he has had a quick look through and he thought he had found something that was done sneakily. I can assure the honourable member that the functions of special programs were transferred to the Planning and Coordination Policy Secretariat. The full-year cost of those functions is \$590 000. The costs shown on pages 39 and 40 relate to part-year's costs incurred by the branch prior to its cessation. The \$237 000 provided under personnel relates to 7 special projects pool positions against which staff were carrying out short-term tasks. Those 7 positions in personnel have since been transferred to other branches. I can assure the honourable member that I do not think that they were really enhancing my reputation.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, if I cannot get rid of that one, I am sure that this is one that should be disposed of: the University Development Unit. The activity states: 'The unit is responsible for investigating the feasibility of establishing private university facilities in the Northern Territory'. We have allocated \$149 000 to it. Given that we cannot get 40 full-time students into our current University College, I find it rather weird that we are putting nearly \$150 000 into looking at the feasibility of establishing another one.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, the unit was transferred to the department in 1986-87. Actually, it was disbanded after the preliminary estimates for 1987-88. Both staff positions have been abolished. The occupant of the A5 position has been transferred elsewhere in the service, as the member knows, because I went through that. It was one of the 3 extra positions that we had. The director of the unit is about to retire in December. The funds originally allocated to the unit have been reserved to cover his lump sum termination payment. Unfortunately, the director's salary to December and his termination entitlements are expected to exceed the total allocated for 1987-88. However, Mr Chairman, we will have to find those extra amounts. I will have to try to do something about it or speak nicely to the Treasurer.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, there is concern in the community regarding the possibility that TAFE colleges will put their staff on contracts. Can the minister inform members whether this is likely to occur?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, as the honourable member is probably aware, there are a number of staff positions in the TAFE area which are already under contract. They are mainly in the trades area. Actually, it is quite an effective way to spend the TAFE money. In terms of a large number of TAFE courses, it is impossible to contract staff. They work under awards and there is no way that that can be changed. Certainly, we use every opportunity we can to contract staff wherever possible because it does allow the money to go further, and it allows a far more effective contribution by tradespeople outside to play their part in teaching young students.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, under the financial subsidy scheme on page 60, we have the basic details of the scheme, but I would like to state my opposition to the cuts on the per-student basis and their allocation on a dollar-for-dollar basis. I think the minister cited the example of Ali Curung where somebody from the school council stated at a meeting in Tennant Creek that he thought the school was doing fairly well out of the dollar-for-dollar scheme. In fact, that particular individual is well known for the lack of effort he puts into fund-raising out there. It creates a problem in those communities which are working from a very low financial base. I have stated this argument time and again. I ran it in the second-reading speech, and I will not canvass it at that length here. I would like to know what proportion was allocated to rural schools in 1986-87 so that I can get some indication of where the money is going.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, was the honourable member at that meeting in Tennant Creek? If he was, he would realise that I was publicly castigated by that particular gentleman for having the audacity to suggest that we might be looking at ways and means of not doing that, or what would happen if we looked at such a thing.

Mr Ede: That was nothing to what he copped when he went back to the community.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I was attacked and roundly condemned for that. It was pointed out that the Ali Curung School community had raised \$10 000 out of the dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme, and I thought that was very effective.

Mr Chairman, the amount of money available for rural schools was \$149 712 and the figure for non-rural schools was \$426 000. In other words, 26% against 74%. Actually, less than 25% of our enrolments are actually in rural schools so we are providing slightly more in terms of the subsidy to our rural area than the percentage of students actually in the schools. That is indicative of the good work that is done by people in the rural areas. I would just like to place on record that the best example of fund-raising in the dollar-for-dollar scheme by any school in the Territory was actually by the Milingimbi School which raised a vast amount of money and is to be congratulated for that work. That was a couple of years ago, but it was an excellent effort.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I have asked the honourable minister to provide me with the levels paid to individual, independent schools in 1986-87 and 1987-88. If these are extensive, I would be quite happy to have them simply incorporated into the Hansard.

Mr MANZIE: I am quite happy about that and seek leave to incorporate that in Hansard, Mr Chairman.

Leave granted.

1986-87

	Grant- in-aid	Per capita	Student Hostels
St Andrews Lutheran	-	58 399	-
Marrara Christian School	-	604 508	-
Alice Springs Christian Academy	-	20 461	-
Yipirinya (A/S)	-	64 424	-
Living Water Lutheran (A/S)	-	17 438	-
Seventh Day Adventist	-	14 234	-
Sacred Heart Primary (Berrimah)	-	89 675	-
St Josephs (Katherine)	-	51 500	-
St Johns	-	1 094 693	-
Alice Springs Catholic High	-	275 901	-
St Pauls	-	324 145	-
St Marys	-	344 444	-
Holy Spirit	-	401 480	-
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (A/S)	-	400 543	-
Holy Family Primary	-	253 714	-
O'Loughlin College	-	50 625	-
St Philips (A/S)	-	-	-
TOTALS		4 066 184	

1987-88 figures will not be available until early 1988 when final enrolments are known.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, for the national education councils that the government is involved in, there seems to be a very substantial increase from \$15 000 to \$105 000 this year. On the face of it, these straitened times lead

me to wonder whether we should reassess whether it is absolutely essential that we remain on all these national bodies or whether perhaps we may be able to take out some form of associate membership in order to contain costs.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I too wonder sometimes whether some of these ministerial groups and councils are worth while. However, I can assure the honourable member that, quite often, it is really the only opportunity that we have of making our point to federal ministers and also of gaining from the experience of ministers in other states. The reason for the increase in this item of expenditure is the fact that we didn't make any payments to the Australia Education Council in 1986-87. Actually, we made the payment right at the end of June 1986 and therefore we did not pay at all last year.

To the Australian Council of Education Research, we contributed \$7000. That is part of a pro rata contribution that all Australian states make. Our share of payments to the Annual Council of Tertiary Awards was \$37 000. Even though it would be nice to be able to use that money in the Territory, it is a responsibility we share with the Australian states and, in the long term, we certainly benefit from our membership of various councils.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would like to move, pursuant to standing order 225, and I intend doing so every 15 minutes from now until we rise this evening, that the committee report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion negatived.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, in relation to the Alice Springs College of TAFE, can the minister explain the reductions in the tourism and hospitality area and the external studies area?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, while the number of students undertaking external courses was sufficiently large, this college provided tutorial assistance at no cost to students or to the host institution. With the reduction in funding levels to the college since the start of 1988, we will no longer be supplying tutorial assistance free of charge. That does not mean that external studies have been reduced. What it means, quite simply, is that students in Alice Springs who are enrolled in external subjects will be required to study in that mode unless the host institution or the students themselves make a financial contribution sufficient to cover the cost associated with tutorials. We will no longer supply free tutorials.

Mr EDE: How many students applied from interstate to attend the Alice Springs College of TAFE?

Mr MANZIE: There were 23 for the School of General Studies, 2 for the School of Trades and Technology and 23 for the School of Tourism and Hospitality. The number of unsuccessful interstate applicants is unavailable. We think it would be pretty small.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, moving on to Batchelor College, I would like some explanation of the reduction in the community management program and of alternative plans to keep the community management course going. Given the amount of correspondence I have received on this, the explanation might be lengthy in which case I would be quite prepared for the minister to make it the subject of a speech in an adjournment debate or of a statement later in these sittings.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, at this stage there has been no reduction in the community management program. We are having very promising negotiations with the Office of Local Government and the Department of Employment, Education and Training regarding funding for the course. At this stage, we are hopeful that we will not have any problems.

Mr EDE: I intended to ask a question on the progress of RATE in the Alice Springs annexe but I have received some replies from my discussions with the federal minister. Rather than continue to conduct a debate in the public arena on the possibilities of cuts in that area, it might be advisable if the minister and I got together. That would enable me to advise him of matters other than the basic problem of his being offside with the federal minister because of his public comments. I have some other matters to bring to his attention which may clarify the situation for him.

In relation to the Katherine Rural College, can the minister advise me of the number of students attending courses and boarding, the number recruited from interstate and the cost per student.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, before I cover that, I cannot leave the RATE issue without comment. I believe that the Remote Area Teacher Education program is vitally important. The fact that the federal minister is upset because I said something in public is no reason for me not to be concerned. I had a commitment from the previous federal minister and many matters were in progress. I have certainly asked for support from every possible source, including federal members of parliament, Aboriginal organisations and student organisations around the country. Any loss of funding for the RATE program will be detrimental to our whole progress in Aboriginal education. I am certainly very pleased to hear the member for Stuart indicate his support for that program and I hope that he can give more assistance. I also hope that the Leader of the Opposition will play a part in ensuring that the commitment of the previous federal minister is adhered to. I certainly do not apologise for making a public comment because I believe the matter is very important.

In 1986, the Katherine Rural College had 94 full-time and 125 part-time students. All full-time students were boarders and the average number of boarders at any given time is between 55 and 60. Full-time students do not necessarily attend for the whole year. The number of students recruited from interstate was 7, the cost per student was around \$12 063.

Mr EDE: How many vehicles does the department control and how many have been replaced this year?

Mr MANZIE: The departmental fleet, including TAFE and Commonwealth-funded vehicles, comprises 161 vehicles. That includes school vehicles. The department will replace 28 vehicles and TAFE will replace 3. In comparison with some departments, the Department of Education has a fairly low number of vehicles.

Mr EDE: I was quite disappointed at the lack of detail in the report on the University College. Can the minister advise how many full-time, part-time and external students were enrolled in 1987 and what the expectations are for 1988?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, in relation to the lack of detail provided, the honourable member should be aware that the University College is established by a separate act of the Assembly. Under the act, the college is required to place before the Assembly an annual report, including a balance sheet and

accounts audited by the Auditor-General. Full details are made available to members of the Assembly through that process. The first report was actually tabled on 14 September.

There are 64 full-time and 160 part-time students. Together with 8 external students, that gives a total of 232, 3 of whom are postgraduate students from interstate and 11 of whom are postgraduate students from overseas. We do not know how many enrolments we will have for 1988 but, at this stage, we have 124 new applications for admission, which is more than we had received at this time last year.

Mr EDE: How many of the students in those categories applied for enrolment from interstate and overseas?

Mr MANZIE: Of this year's 124 new applications, 30 are from interstate and 81 are from overseas.

Mr EDE: I was referring to those who are currently enrolled in 1987. How many of those come from interstate or overseas?

Mr MANZIE: Fifteen, 3 of whom are postgraduates from interstate, and 11 who are from overseas.

Mr EDE: What level of subsidy, on a full-time student equivalent basis, applies to students at the college?

Mr MANZIE: We certainly do not supply any subsidy to any student. At an overall cost of \$6.7m and with 232 students, the average expenditure on the university averages \$29 000 per student. In 1987, we charged each overseas student \$4500 and, in 1988, the fee will be \$6000 for arts and \$7500 for science. Those fees are set at the same level as those applying elsewhere in Australia. We want to ensure that we do not drive people away but, in terms of the national trend towards charging overseas students, we will be able to look at encouraging more students from overseas. Obviously, the greater the participation, the greater the facility. A tertiary institution is made great by the numbers in and the diversity of the student body.

We also have to consider that, if we can attract more Asian students, we have the prospect of building better trading relationships. After spending 2 or 3 years in the Northern Territory, those students will have contacts with Territorians and it will be far more effective and efficient. In future, we should be able to have much closer ties with our Asian neighbours.

Mr EDE: At \$75 000 each, it is fairly expensive.

Mr Hatton: How much?

Mr EDE: It takes them 3 years to do a course.

Mr Hatton: This is the first year. Next year will be cheaper and the third year will be cheaper still. It will be cheaper than the ANU in 3 years; you wait and see.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask what external study courses will be offered to Territorians in 1988, and declare a personal interest.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, external courses are not offered directly by the college. Students resident in the Territory may, with the approval of the

relevant Dean of the college, seek enrolments through the college as external students of the University of Queensland in any course offered externally by the University of Queensland.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask a general question of the minister as I have had a few representations from communities that I am involved with in relation to positions that are being held by adult education assistant workers in those communities. We have lost one at Milingimbi recently, and I believe the minister has written to us advising us of that situation.

The community has expressed concern because those positions have been there for at least 10 to 15 years. The department is taking people away from those areas and transferring them to communities such as Katherine or Nhulunbuy. Concern has also been expressed to me from Argurugu and Umbakumba. These people were educating mature people in the use of banking facilities, the hospital etc. Will the government reinstate some of those positions in those communities? Milingimbi is a classic example which I believe the honourable minister is very much aware of. I would like him to comment on this.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, in terms of literacy production workers, we have stated that we are closing some centres down if they are providing services in the same language group. We are also looking at cutting down and rationalising many of the programs that we are running. We have the development of community education centres in a number of outlying areas where we will be providing not only facilities, but staff. We are increasing our TAFE programs and programs that relate to the actual development of the communities themselves. It is worth while pointing out also that we are expanding the ability of the Open College to provide courses to all the outlying communities where we have educational personnel.

Because of the changes being made, and the fact that we do have less money, it is an unfortunate fact that, in some areas, there may be reductions in staff and, at this stage, a reduction in the sort of services that are available. Hopefully, as the Open College principle develops, it can service areas where there is a need. It may be that Milingimbi is an area where that can happen.

Appropriations for divisions 38, 39, 35 and 36 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 70:

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, there have been rumours in Alice Springs that the hospital there is not being maintained in the manner in which it normally would have been maintained. I can appreciate that, in the tight financial circumstances in which we find ourselves, this may indeed be true. I would ask for an assurance from the minister that the medical side of the hospital and the service that is provided to Centralians and the many visitors who end up in the hospital from time to time will be maintained.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, certainly the health standards at the Alice Springs Hospital have not been affected by the budget this year. The cash for the 1987-88 repairs and maintenance is, in fact, the same as that for 1986-87. Repairs and maintenance are carried out by the Department of Transport and Works. There are also internal hospital maintenance staff who carry out specific maintenance projects within the hospital. There has been no cut back in maintenance in the Alice Springs Hospital, and standards are definitely being maintained.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I request the minister to advise in respect of the variation of 10.79% for the Alice Springs Region Hospital.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I would like to touch on the variation overall in the budget, and no real conclusions about the government's directional priorities can be drawn from an examination of the differentials in growth in the funding either to the functions or, for that matter, the differentials in gross to the various regions. I have said in this House, when talking about the \$5m cutbacks to the Health and Community Services budget, that we would be searching every nook and cranny of the department's responsibilities to try to find efficiencies so that, whilst there would be cutbacks in dollar terms within the department, in fact, we would endeavour to maintain the quality of services right across the board. I believe that we have achieved that goal and more efficiencies will be maintained or found throughout the year as we proceed.

Of the \$194.5m-odd allocated to the Health and Community Services budget this year, salaries and payments in the nature of salaries make up some 59.5% of that total allocation. With regard to the apparent growth rate of some 8.3% over last year's indicative figures, if you take away the growth rate after the deduction of the national wage case and the nurses' career structure costs, in fact there is only some 2.5% increase in dollar terms and, in real terms, it could be said that there is a reduction overall.

As I said, salaries make up a major component of the increases, and the 2 major components within that area are the nurses' career structure costs and the May national wage case, costing in excess of \$10.5m in 1987-88, and the new initiatives in such areas as rural work venues, the AIDS teams and, of course, the very important psychiatric services that we will be providing this year. These have been offset to a significant extent by the efficiency measures effecting staff reductions of some 160 employees in 1987-88.

The other significant area is 'other services' and these include: specific purpose payments to programs jointly funded by the Commonwealth; grants-in-aid; financial and material assistance, including pensioner concessions; the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme; and sponsorships and payments to councils etc.

This growth may be attributed to a large number of factors including full-year cost of the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme. That was \$800 000 as a part-year cost in 1986-87. Of course, the full-year cost this year is \$2.4m. New initiatives, such as respite and residential care programs and the cost-shared program in the Medicare Teaching Hospitals Program has increased from \$300 000 in 1986-87 to \$1m in 1987-88. As I said, we are looking to efficiency measures. We are looking at the nurses' career structure, new initiatives, cyclical expenditures - for example, the capital equipment replacement programs - all of the things necessary to provide the very high levels of service that the 4 former departments now combined into the one Department of Health and Community Services have been providing for the people of the Northern Territory for many years. I believe that the budget relating to my department is a very efficient one and the management of that department will ensure that the efficiencies are maintained throughout the year to an extreme.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, I ask the minister to check a story which I told him earlier in the day. Information was given to me that Aboriginal health workers who have far less training than many of the nursing sisters who have looked after people in the bush in the past - and some of them are still doing

so - are actually paid a higher amount and that is causing some dissension in the ranks.

Mr DALE: I have been unable to check the detail of the specific question that the honourable member has asked but I will endeavour to do so.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, pursuant to standing order 225, I move that the committee report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Motion negatived.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, could the minister advise me about the variation in respect of the salaries in relation ...

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the nurses' career structure and the May national wage case will cost in excess of \$10.5m this year.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, could the minister explain to me the variation in respect of administrative and operational expenses for 1987-88?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, the amount we are talking about is miniscule and I will have to find the detail for that.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Chairman, I seek advice from the minister concerning the 44% variation in respect of property management from 1986-87 to 1987-88.

Mr DALE: Once again, 44% is a very large percentage but the base figure is only \$400 000. There is no real growth, with the exception of inflation and the full-year cost of arrangements that were entered into late in 1986-87.

Mr LANHUPUY: Can the minister explain the variation of 12.67% in respect of equipment replacement in the Katherine region?

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, a great deal of that relates to the Medicare Teaching Hospitals Program. It is a triennium funding arrangement and that will be the final amount. It is the end of the program and nothing will be going into it next year.

Mr LANHUPUY: I have a general question concerning health workers in the Katherine area. I have been advised that the Aboriginal Institute for Health in Katherine is being restructured and that the minister is considering transferring that branch from Katherine to Darwin.

Mr DALE: Mr Chairman, I have spoken many times about the fact that I am looking at every single aspect of the department. I have also stated publicly that I have held an inquiry into the provision of health services, particularly throughout the Katherine region. Community health services and the tuition of people providing services are certainly under my scrutiny at the moment. The report will be with me shortly and the outcome of that report and my decision will be known shortly.

Appropriation for division 70 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 13:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have given notice of these questions to the minister. How many positions have been reclassified upwards since 19 March 1987 and do those reclassified positions include 8 new E4 positions

in the Department of the Chief Minister, 2 new E5 positions in the Department of the Chief Minister and 3 new E1s in the Conservation Commission?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, the first part of the question concerning the number of positions reclassified is not readily answerable at present. It is the subject of a review which is investigating instances where classification creep might have taken place. We have asked departments and authorities to come forward with that information. Given the complexity and the time available, I have not been able to obtain all that information, but it will be available over time.

The second part of the question is whether those reclassified positions include 8 new E4 positions in the Department of the Chief Minister. There has been an increase from 6 to 8 E4 positions in the Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH: From 6 to 8 or from 6 up to 8?

Mr McCARTHY: There were 6 and we now have 8. Those 2 positions are those of the Chief Electoral Officer and the internal auditor. Ministerial staff are now included in the Department of the Chief Minister and this involves a substantial increase in the number of E4 positions. There are no new E5 positions in the Department of the Chief Minister. In fact, there has been a reduction in those positions.

Mr SMITH: I am sorry. Could the minister repeat what he said about ministerial officers?

Mr McCARTHY: The ministerial officers have been included in the Chief Minister's department's MSL. There are no new E5 positions within the Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the minister forgot to answer the Conservation Commission question. Perhaps he might approach that.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you want me to answer it now?

Mr SMITH: I will give you the next one and you can attach the answer to that.

How many apprentices and trainees are there in government departments and how many of those attended school on a full-time basis last year?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, going back to the latter part of the previous question about 3 new E1 positions in the Conservation Commission, in fact there are 4 new E1 positions; 2 positions in the Bushfires Council were reclassified from A8 to E1, and approved prior to March 1987. The other 2 positions are a result of the transfer of functions of both environment and heritage to the Conservation Commission.

On the question about apprentices and trainees in government departments, as at 26 October 1987, there were 145 apprentices in training in government departments and authorities. In the corresponding period last year, 177 trainees were employed in government departments and authorities. In reply to the second part of the question, 38 first-year apprentices have been employed in the Northern Territory government in 1987 and 33 of these have come direct from school. 71 first-year trainees have been employed in 1987, with 49 coming direct from school.

Mr SMITH: How many A1, A2 and A3 positions have been lost as a result of the departmental restructure?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, 30 A1 positions have been lost, 16 A2s and 32 A3s. That is a total of 78.

Mr SMITH: What are the numbers of apprentices this year as compared with the same period last year in the following areas: Education, Transport and Works and the Power and Water Authority?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, in the Department of Education, there are 8 apprentices this year as compared with 5 last year. In the Department of Transport and Works, there are 40 as compared with 61 last year. In the Power and Water Authority there are 67 as compared with 64 last year. A total of 14 apprentices were transferred from the Department of Transport and Works to the Power and Water Authority.

Mr SMITH: What action has been taken on areas of waste identified by the Northern Territory Trades and Labor Council earlier this year?

Mr McCARTHY: That is a good question because all of the action has been taken by the government.

Mr SMITH: I would have thought that was appropriate.

Mr McCARTHY: We did have some guarantees from the Trades and Labor Council back in June, Mr Chairman, but it has been rather tardy in coming to any sort of agreement on the things that it did agree to at that particular time. The joint working party representing the Trades and Labor Council, Treasury and PSCO was established to develop strategies to achieve savings in areas identified by the Trades and Labor Council. The on-appointment air fare has been abolished. The TLC identified positions of accounts examiners and RTMs for abolition to achieve identified savings of 37 positions in this area. A detailed proposal was requested from the TLC but has not been received to date. That has been the subject of a considerable number of meetings with the TLC's nominated representative but it is still not forthcoming with those positions that it promised us it would find.

An item referred to the task force on the centralisation of management services, to consider the feasibility of and to identify changes to the Treasurer's Directions and the Financial Administration and Audit Act, had the following results: cash pays eliminated; cheque pays eliminated, except where banking facilities are inadequate or there is electronic transfer; executive structure identified and implemented; non-standard contracts of employment renegotiated to standard form when up for renewal; purchasing practices reviewed by the task force and the report is due on 1 November this year; and all consultancy agreements now require specific ministerial approval. There are further proposals in relation to accounts management, by-law 54 procedures and review of consultancy proposals - and those are being developed for implementation as soon as possible. I have had some proposals in respect of consultancies and I think these are still being considered.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, how much is it anticipated that the nurses' anomaly pay claim will add to the salaries bill this financial year ...?

Mr Hatton: You have that.

Mr SMITH: That was only for the Department of Health and Community Services.

Mr Hatton: That is where the nurses are.

Mr SMITH: I take your point.

How much will the \$10 increase that came into effect in March add to the salaries bill this financial year? How much will the proposed 1.5% salary increase add to the salaries bill?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, again the answers are very easy. The nurses' anomaly pay claim has been given, although the figure that the Minister for Health and Community Services gave earlier also included the cost of the \$10 increase and so on. The nurses' anomaly pay claim is \$7.5m, the \$10 increase, which came into effect in March, has added \$7.5m in 1987-88, and the proposed 1.5% salary increase, if it comes into being, will add a further \$4.9m to our salaries bill.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I want to make a general comment as a result of receiving that information. I am somewhat concerned about the employment opportunities that will be available for school leavers as a result of the information that has been supplied tonight. I am particularly concerned by figures on the labour force released by the Bureau of Statistics over the last couple of months. I know they need to be treated with some caution but, put in simple terms, what has happened in terms of unemployment figures in the Northern Territory over the last 2 months, according to the Bureau of Statistics figures, is that the unemployment rate has increased from 5.5% to over 13%. To put that another way, the September figure was over 13% unemployed in the Northern Territory, and the figure 2 months earlier was 5.5%. Quite clearly, one needs to treat that figure of 13% with some severe reservations. There was a new sampling process in place and I know the Bureau of Statistics has some reservations about the figure. However, sampling errors do not go anywhere near explaining a difference of 6% or 7% in unemployment figures. Even though you might not accept the figure of 13%, it is quite clear that there has been a significant increase in unemployment in the Northern Territory in the last couple of months.

No one knows what the level of youth unemployment is because the figures are not provided on a regular basis. However, if our situation is consistent with that in the rest of Australia, the youth unemployment level is higher than that of other sectors of the work force. Not only is that a matter of concern in itself, but we have found tonight that we are faced with a double whammy. Firstly, there has been a reduction of 78 positions in the A1, A2 and A3 range, which is the range we would expect school leavers without additional qualifications to move into. Secondly, we have finally put to rest the great lie that was run in the March election campaign about the number of school leavers that this government takes on at any one time and the number of apprentices and trainees. The figure is about 81.

During the election campaign, the government was claiming that it had over 200 or 300 apprentices and trainees. We find that there are 81 apprentices and trainees currently employed by the Northern Territory government who attended school full time last year. In other words, they could have been classified at the time that they took up those positions as being school leavers. There is likely to be a maximum of 81 positions next year, and possibly fewer because it is quite clear that there is a trend towards fewer apprentices being taken on. Add to that the indication that there will be

fewer A1, A2 and A3 jobs available and it appears that school leavers will have a more difficult time finding jobs in the Northern Territory Public Service in the next 12 months to 2 years. I recognise that the public service is not the only prospect that school leavers have, but certainly it is an important prospect and it is a matter of concern that so many jobs have been lost in those 2 areas over the last few months. I would ask the minister to comment on that.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I would love to comment on that. The Leader of the Opposition has again shown that he is quite prepared to distort facts and play around with figures. The figures that I was asked for and the figures that I gave were related to apprentices and trainees, but did not refer to all of those other school leavers who go into the public service, though not as apprentices or trainees, and there are considerably more. It does not include the 51 Aboriginal people who do a trainee course within the public service and are eventually absorbed into the public service.

Mr Smith: 51 of them?

Mr McCARTHY: There are 51 this year.

Mr Smith: They will do a trainee course and be absorbed into the public service?

Mr McCARTHY: They are absorbed into the public service in almost all cases.

Mr Smith: I would like to see some evidence of that.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, I might ask the Leader of the Opposition to talk to his mates in the TLC and ask them to talk about allowing the government to employ some people under the Australian Traineeship System and get an agreement on an award for them. The TLC has been dragging its feet for a long time.

He referred to the unemployment figures. Not only do we have a new system of sampling, as he admitted himself, we also have seasonal workers leaving the work force at this time of the year and a whole range of other factors. Mr Chairman, as you are aware, those figures do change quite easily.

Mr Smith: It has never been up to 13% before.

Mr McCARTHY: We know quite clearly that that figure is an anomaly. Obviously, it is an anomaly and it is an obvious result of the sampling system that was used. It is easy to use these sorts of figures and members opposite know as well as anybody that they are wrong.

It is quite clear that the Territory government is doing a great job in employing school leavers and we will continue to do so if we are given the opportunity and if the unions give us a fair go to have schemes up and running. Next year, we will certainly be able to employ school leavers. There is a downturn right across the country and my colleagues are very concerned about the problems that they are likely to have in relation to employing apprentices, but we are doing everything we can.

We have an office responsible for labour. It is my duty to ensure that the Ministry of Labour and Administrative Services really does the job of employing people in the Northern Territory. We are working hard to establish

our employment and training group, in combination with the Aboriginal Development Division, to have people employed. We are concentrating particularly on that large percentage of our population which is Aboriginal. I become rather annoyed when the Leader of the Opposition distorts the facts and figures in the way that he has done tonight.

Appropriation for division 13 agreed to.

Appropriation for divisions 12 and 81 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 60:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, pursuant to standing order 25, I move that the committee report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Motion negatived.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, assuredly the people of the Northern Territory can give thanks for a hard-working opposition.

Mr Coulter: Wait until they find out about your endeavour to get out of work.

Mr BELL: The Treasurer probably put in an hour or two while he was being asked a few questions whereas opposition members have had to concentrate since this debate started 9½ hours ago. Most members of the opposition have been putting in rather more effort in this debate than any of their government counterparts has actually managed to do. Mr Chairman, if I become a little testy, I trust you will bear with me.

Let us start off with the massive reduction in capital works. The Minister for Transport and Works will recall that, during my second-reading speech on this bill, I indicated that I wanted some clear reasons on the prioritising of capital works - which ones get knocked off and which ones do not and why? That is obviously important in the light of the massive reduction of \$28.66m in the capital works vote.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, the honourable member requires a broad-brush indication of the approach adopted. Before coming to capital works, one of the important areas that the government had to make appropriate allocations for was repairs and maintenance. That is quite simply a necessity. It pays to maintain the assets that you already have in a proper state so that they can continue to be usable and do not deteriorate beyond a reasonable level.

I am sure the honourable member does not wish for me to indicate to him again the reasons why we do have limited funds. The priorities in respect of roads are based initially on those works that are partly completed. The second priority is the completion of those works of major importance that relate to the highway system. In that regard, the government has continued to place priority on having the Stuart Highway completed for obvious reasons. It is the main artery for freight and, as is becoming more obvious these days, for caravaners and holiday makers. The second priority in the highway system is the Barkly Highway. Work is almost completed on that second most important road in the Territory across to Queensland. Work is being continued there in an endeavour to have the highway system completed at the earliest possible time.

It is important to note that the overall highway program has fallen behind for a few years now, despite the significant input from the Territory government. This resulted from Hon Peter Morris' failure to meet a commitment for the Accelerated Stuart Highway program. We all recall the \$15m he said he would spend on the Stuart Highway. From memory, he spent about \$1.5m before he packed his bags and went home.

The next priority in the highway system is the Victoria Highway providing the link across to Western Australia. That is an absolutely massive task. To meet Australian national highway standards, the cost would be in the order of \$200m. Last year, we managed to make a start on that road system. We hope to be able to find some funds in the not-too-distant future to complete the next section close to Katherine itself. What the Department of Transport and Works is doing to make its dollars go further is reviewing the standard of proposed construction of the Victoria Highway, hopefully to reduce that capital cost to about \$120m and still provide a road of an acceptable standard.

In regard to other works, we have given priority to roads that have developmental potential: tourism-related roads to Kings Canyon, Litchfield Park, Kakadu Highway etc. Those roads will help in the development of our tourism industry. There are a number of roads that require attention because of safety concerns, particularly some urban roads and intersections in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr BELL: I am not sure that answers many questions. To ask a more specific question, I am aware of the report on capital works in progress and new works contained in the annual report of the department. Will the minister table the design list of capital works for 1987-88?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, at this stage, the design list has yet to be approved. It would not be proper for me to indulge in pre-emption. Once it has been through its proper processes, I would be more than happy to provide the honourable member with a full briefing as it would be my normal inclination to do.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, since the minister raised the question of road funding, I notice that there has been a decrease of 6.9% in Commonwealth funding to the Territory through the ALTP and the ABRD. I notice with some concern that the decrease of 6.9% from the big bad Commonwealth compares rather favourably with the 21.2% reduction in road funding from the Territory government itself.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, honourable members would note that I have not been bleating about percentage cutbacks from the federal government nor from the honourable Treasurer in regard to road programs. The reason is quite simple.

Mr BELL: It would be embarrassing.

Mr FINCH: It is not at all embarrassing. If you wish to take any statistic in isolation, naturally you can paint a dark story if you are that way inclined. I would rather think a little more positively. If you look at the track record of the NT government's road program since self-government, you can see that we have been able to come a long way in providing an appropriate road infrastructure in the Northern Territory even though we still have some distance to go. Like many other governments in Australia, we have had to set our priorities. This year, some areas of the Transport and Works budget, particularly some road programs, have had to be cut back. That has been a fairly sizeable amount but we have been able to minimise the impact of that. I do not feel embarrassed about it at all.

I am quite confident that we will be able to find ways of spending our money wisely. We are looking at ways of carrying out works more efficiently and we are reviewing standards. I mentioned one project on the Victoria Highway which involves the saving of \$70m through raw engineering initiative. These challenges are being met head-on by the department. I am delighted to say that the improvement in departmental morale, which was always good, has come about through meeting the new challenges of a new day.

Mr BELL: I have a number of points to raise, Mr Chairman. The Minister for Transport and Works has rather excited my curiosity. Could he be a little more fulsome in his explanation of the 'raw engineering initiative' on the Victoria Highway? The sheer machismo of it appeals so much to me that I really feel that honourable members would benefit from a more fulsome explanation.

Mr FINCH: What is contemplated is a reduction of the hydraulic standards of the highway where we have very high flooding. Put simply, we are reducing the 50-year flood design requirement for all of the bridges and culverts to a more realistic level which will involve an assessment of a maximum number of outages per year. That will quite dramatically reduce the length, size and diameter of bridges and other structures. A half day per year outage is quite acceptable to the travelling public. It is in that area that departmental staff have done well. They have not quite finished their report yet but the federal Minister for Transport was quite amenable and, in fact, quite impressed by such raw initiative.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, what the minister seems to regard as 'raw engineering initiative' strikes me as simple cost-cutting. I suggest that his explanation demonstrates extremely raw political initiative. Lower design requirements always cost less money.

In his comments in relation to relative amounts of money, the minister rather obfuscated the question of the relative amounts committed to road funding by his government and the federal government. He slid fairly easily over the percentages committed by the 2 governments. His merciful attitude to his own decision is certainly at odds with his attitude to those of the federal government which were made in the context of the same economic constraints.

As I said earlier, it is about time a few members of the Northern Territory government paid heed to the old adage that they should do as they would be done by. This is a perfect example. We have heard the minister complaining and whingeing about the big, bad federal government in relation to the Olgas road and so forth. My studies of the budget make it abundantly clear to me, as in this case, that the Territory government has reduced its funding in these areas far more dramatically than the Commonwealth government has. This is a clear example.

I would like now to pass on to an item on page 9 of Budget Paper No 2: the vote for the excision of pastoral leases. I think this occurs elsewhere but I have noted it here in the Department of Transport and Works vote. I would like some explanation of what that \$791 000 is for.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, before answering that question, let me say that I have not bagged the federal government about its reductions in ALTP or ABRD. Let me put the member for MacDonnell member straight about ABRD. He seems to believe that the funds belong to the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating. Let me remind him that those funds come from the motorists of Australia, from

the 2c per litre fuel levy. The money does not belong to the federal Treasurer; it belongs to the people of the country. It is supposed to be used to complete the national highway system in recognition of the bicentenary.

Mr BELL: People chuck in a couple of cents whenever they buy a gallon, do they? It is all pursuant to federal legislation. Don't talk nonsense, Fred.

Mr FINCH: Whilst I was previously prepared to be most kind about the federal government, let me arm the honourable member with one small thought that he might like to put constructively to his federal colleagues. The previous minister determined that at least 10% of ALTP moneys should be held through to 1989-90 to apply a formula for distribution to the states and the Territory. This really disadvantages the remote areas whose roads are not yet up to scratch. The presumption of the formula is that every kilometre of road constructed in the Territory is constructed to the optimum standard. The honourable member knows that that is quite untrue, not only in the Northern Territory but in Western Australia, north Queensland and western New South Wales. I would like to seek again the cooperation of the shadow spokesman on transport and works in raising this with his federal colleagues. Will the Cameron formula be applied to the total distribution of Commonwealth funds in future years? That reduction might have only meant a reduction of \$500 000 in the ALTP in this current financial year but, if it were applied across the board, it would amount to \$5m or \$6m.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned the Oilgas road. I have not been talking about the funding as much as the fact that the ANPWS has made no decision on the alignment. The road should proceed. When this business started 7 years ago, funding would not have been a major question. It was a question of approval of an alignment. The honourable member should be embarrassed because, as a member of the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management, he has failed to promote an early decision which is not only in the interests of tourists but also in the interests of his constituents at Docker River. We had the ridiculous suggestion today by the federal Minister for Tourism that a monorail should be built there.

Mr Bell: That is not true, Fred.

Mr FINCH: He did. I heard the debate.

Mr Bell: You say a lot of things in question time that you should be embarrassed about too, Fred.

Mr FINCH: The federal minister was suggesting that a \$100m or \$200m monorail would be nice and environmentally acceptable. The fellows at Docker River will scramble on to a monorail with their 44-gallon drums.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Chairman! I suggest that the debate has rather gone off the rails. If the Minister for Transport and Works can point out to some allocation in the capital works program for a monorail in the Uluru National Park or anywhere else in the Northern Territory, I am quite happy to discuss it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I was trying to demonstrate quite simply that the honourable member becomes extremely sensitive when I mention federal funding. In answer to a question by the Leader of the Opposition the other day about our attitude to funding in ANPWS parks, I said that we have an extremely

positive attitude to our involvement with works related to tourism, although I am quite delighted to inform honourable members that I hold some hope that there will be at least a cost-sharing arrangement for the Coinda Road and, hopefully, even on the Cahills Crossing road. That is the sort of cooperation that we should be proceeding with. I would certainly like to allay the fears of the member for MacDonnell who seems to become extra sensitive every time one mentions the word 'Commonwealth'.

Let me talk now about the pastoral leases because I too was surprised to see such a figure there. \$791 000 was received from the Commonwealth and it relates to provision of essential services on Aboriginal land excised from pastoral leases. It has been held in trust until finalisation of qualifying expenditures and the transfer of functions. I understand there is also some carryover to Transport and Works. The previous year's expenditures were undertaken by the Department of Community Development and the administrative arrangements were transferred over on 19 March 1987 to the Department of Transport and Works.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would like to pursue that question. I must admit I am rather bemused by the various arrangements for these essential services on excisions and so on. They seem to have passed through about 3 authorities in the space of less than 2 years. I will make this comment in passing, and I am not talking about essential services on proposed excisions or excisions from pastoral leases that have already been carried out. Therefore, to some extent, I am going beyond the original question. I have received representations from various quarters about the difficulties experienced with the provision of essential services by way of private engineering firms rather than by departmental staff. I would be interested to hear from the minister, or indeed from anybody else on the government frontbench who wants to fill me in, exactly why it has been moved from the Department of Community Development to the Power and Water Authority.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I think the honourable member is referring to Aboriginal essential services, principally water, power and roads. Roads will include items such as barge landings, airstrips etc. Under the new administrative arrangements, rather than roads and related activities being operated through a Department of Community Development and a Department of Aboriginal Affairs-type activity, they have been moved into the appropriate functional department. Thus, power and water are provided through the Power and Water Authority and roads, other civil works, airstrips and barge landings etc are provided through the Department of Transport and Works. We have been able to consolidate the expertise within government in terms of the functions and performances of government and it is part of the general policy of our government to mainstream the Aboriginal-related functions into the various functional departments throughout government.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, to allay the fears of the member for MacDonnell, the delays in expenditure have absolutely nothing to do with consultants at all. Probably he would be surprised and concerned to know that the reason the department was able to spend only \$139 000 out of its \$791 000 related to the finalisation of the titles to the excisions. The delay there has resulted in a postponement of the expenditure of the money. It is as simple as that.

Mr BELL: History repeats itself. I remember exactly the same argument being put forward in relation to the siting of caravan schools on pastoral leases, but I digress.

I was interested in the Chief Minister's comment and I am aware of the policy decision. I happen to disagree with it. I understand the policy decision seeking to functionalise the provision of services to the Territory community, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal communities or not. For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I would point out that, as I explained both in the second-reading debate and elsewhere when I was addressing the subvention for the Department of Lands and Housing and the Housing Commission, in economic terms, it does not make sense because, for all sorts of reasons, those communities are outside the economic mainstream.

By attacking the policy of functionalising the provision of those services, I realise I leave myself open to the charge of seeking to somehow hold back the development of Aboriginal communities. Some would say we are seeking to adopt a paternalistic policy. I would point out to both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Transport and Works that they should forget the social and cultural considerations if they want to look at the cold hard economics of Aboriginal communities in terms of provision of services, and any other sort of economic indicator they might choose. On that basis alone, there is justification for not functionalising them.

What I suggest is that, in providing services on a functional basis for sparsely-populated, widely-distributed areas, there is a serious danger that that will be far more expensive than doing it on the basis of a holistic consideration of the sort of services a government ought to be providing to a community. I do not think that that should necessarily fly in the face of other government objectives in terms of the development of local government, for example. In fact, it may very well go hand-in-hand with it, but I don't believe functionalising across departments is in the best interests of my own electorate. Does the Chief Minister wish to comment?

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to comment. I would remind the honourable member of an answer to a question given during the committee stage in respect of my own departmental functions when the member for Stuart asked about NTCAP and whether it is continuing. I made the point then that the work of NTCAP is now dealt with through the Coordination Committee and coordination functions have been regionalised. For example, there is a Regional Coordination Group and a Coordinator of Government Services in the Alice Springs area. There is no reason that we cannot adopt the sort of approach the honourable member is referring to by having work done on contract or, in many cases, by the communities themselves. I am sure that the honourable member would be aware that a number of the services are still provided by contractors.

The preparation of documentation, tendering and the coordination of those functions can still be carried out through the Power and Water Authority and the Department of Transport and Works, coordinated through the Coordination Committee. We will not be losing the ability to coordinate the provision of services within particular communities. We can also maintain the internal advantages of using the resources available within the functional department to carry out the works required by government.

Mr BELL: Earlier in the committee stage, the minister referred to the need to ensure that public assets are not degraded. He referred to the importance of repairs and maintenance. I note with some concern that there is in fact an 11.5% decrease in the repairs and maintenance vote for 1987-88 in comparison with 1986-87 expenditure. Can he explain that?

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, what needs to be done is to compare each year's allocations for repairs and maintenance in respect of functions common to both. The repairs and maintenance functions for the Department of Education and the police force have been transferred to them, and consideration is being given to doing the same in respect of other government bodies. If you compare apples with apples it can be seen that, in public works, the difference is \$770 000 in relation to an amount of \$6.6m and, in respect of roads, there is a difference of only \$370 000 in \$23.27m.

While I am on my feet, Mr Chairman, I will correct a small matter in my previous answer. I mentioned \$139 000 as being the amount that had not been expended. In fact, that amount still remains to be spent on 2 projects which have yet to be finalised, one in Katherine and one in Tennant Creek. I do not know exactly what pastoral leases they are. The balance of that \$791 000 was spent last year by Community Development but is being paid for in toto by the Commonwealth.

Mr BELL: I note the minister's explanation. However, I draw to his attention the fact that the explanation offered of the variation in the budget paper bears absolutely no relation to the comments he made. Far be it from me to suggest that the honourable minister is telling anything other than the 24 carat truth but if, as he says, the reduction in the repairs and maintenance budget is because some of that money has been moved out to the police or the Department of Education, I would expect that to show up in the explanation of the variations. It certainly does not appear to. The explanation for the variation on page 13 makes absolutely no reference to it, as is the case in other budget papers which give explanations in relation to such shifting of responsibilities. There is no reference to responsibility for repairs and maintenance being moved out of the Public Works Division to the police or the Department of Education.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, on page 17 of Budget Paper 4.1, which relates to police, one can see that the repairs and maintenance budget goes from zero in 1986-87 to \$840 000 in 1987-88. I could not understand where the member got the percentage figure he used in relation to variations in repairs and maintenance. The departmental summary in relation to repairs and maintenance, which appears on page 7, shows figures of \$29.922m and \$28.782m, a reduction of \$1.14m. That is nowhere near the percentage cited by the honourable member. Page 7 indicates quite clearly that the repairs and maintenance budget is almost identical this year.

Mr COULTER: The repairs and maintenance allocation for the Department of Education has increased by \$866 000. There are many other examples which can be given to the honourable member but, if he had taken the time to read the explanatory notes, he would know that himself.

Mr BELL: The unctuous manner of the Treasurer is almost beyond bearing. I take the point.

The minister referred to the summary of appropriation by subdivision on page 7. I note that, across the department, repairs and maintenance has not decreased markedly. My figure for the 11.5% decrease comes from the public works activity where we see that the 1986-87 expenditure was \$6.651m while the estimate for 1987-88 is \$5.881m. That, according to my trusty calculator, is a reduction of 11.5%.

Mr FINCH: Just to put the honourable member's mind at rest, if he refers back to page 9, he will read an explanation which may clarify the matter for

him. After taking into account the transfer of the repairs and maintenance components, the figures for each year are very much in line.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I thank the minister for drawing my attention to the remarks on page 9 and the exclusions contained therein. Although I would not have automatically associated the 2, I appreciate his drawing that to my attention.

The only other point I wish to make relates to salaries and allowances for the Roads Division. I notice that the figure has decreased, in contrast to the salary and allowances figure for every other activity. I presume that is because we are building fewer roads.

Mr FINCH: That is correct.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would like to be enlightened about a couple of matters. In Table 136 of the federal government's Budget Paper No 4, there is a tied recurrent item of \$46 000 for urban flood mitigation. I am unable to find any notation of the receipt of that in Budget Paper No 2 or indeed expenditure in Budget Paper No 4.12. I am wondering if urban flood mitigation is the responsibility of Transport and Works.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, matters pertaining to water were transferred to the Minister for Mines and Energy under the Power and Water Authority. Flood mitigation comes under the authority and it would show up in that budget.

Mr EDE: I was unable to find it there either, but I will not pursue it.

I presume that aerodromes have something to do with the honourable member knowing his interest in that regard. Could he explain what has happened to \$142 000 which the federal government allocated for the Aerodrome Local Ownership Plan which again appears as a tied recurrent item in Table 136? I have been unable to find it in this budget paper. Possibly he will be able to tell me where it is and explain why it does not appear as a specific purpose payment recurrent from the federal government in Budget Paper No 2.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I am not aware that the federal government's ALOP figures would come to the Transport and Works budget. If it were not a local ownership held by NT, the funds would not have come to us. They would have gone to some local government body or whoever was involved. As far as I am aware, it does not come into the NT budget at all.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, possibly he could investigate that a bit further because road transport is an item where he has reduced what he says is the Commonwealth payment to the Northern Territory from \$51 000 1986-87 actual down to a nil allocation in 1987-88. My very basic perusal shows that the federal government has actually allocated \$183 000 for that item. Obviously, it could be included in any number of items in the Roads Division. If the Commonwealth is offering \$183 000, why is it not being taken up?

Mr Finch: What was the program?

Mr EDE: Interstate road transporters, a recurrent item under Transport and Works in Budget Paper No 2 of this government. It was shown as \$51 000 expenditure in 1986-87 with a nil estimate for 1987-88. The federal government allocation for 1987-88 is \$183 000.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, I cannot give the honourable member any explanation for that and neither can my officers at this stage. I will provide the information tomorrow.

Mr EDE: On page 14 of Budget Paper No 4.12, we see the capital works roads allocation of \$36.170m. Looking at the Commonwealth's Budget Paper No 2, combining the Australian Land Transport Program and the Australian Bicentennial Roads Development Program, the federal government's total allocation in those 2 areas was \$39.8m whereas we are talking about \$36.17m. Is there another \$3m which the minister may be able to devote towards the Tanami road?

Mr FINCH: At this time of night, I am not prepared to make any commitments to the Tanami road but I have not tucked away \$3m either. The honourable member is looking at the capital works road program and assuming that all ALTP and ABRD funds go to capital works. In fact, by arrangement, some of those funds go to other items such as salaries. There is also a local government road payment which may come out of that. It is a mandatory figure that we have to transfer across. ABRD funds can go towards the Transport Division. Of the ABRD and ALTP allocation, probably only something like \$28m or \$29m goes directly towards the capital works program. The balance is from the Territory. We do put something into the program.

Mr EDE: That could explain it if the figures for money received by the Northern Territory matched the moneys that the federal government was saying it would allocate. There is a discrepancy of over \$3m between what the federal government says it will give and what you are saying you will receive.

Mr FINCH: Mr Chairman, there is a simple explanation again. The federal government withholds 10% of ALTP funding. We understand that we are likely to get the greater part of that \$3m but it was not allocated at the time the budget was brought down. Our figure is 90% of the ALTP projected program. The federal minister holds the 10% back and distributes it as he likes later.

Appropriation for division 60 agreed to.

Remainder of bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise first of all to provide an apology from members of this side of the House to the hardworking Legislative Assembly staff, Hansard staff and others for what I believe to be an abuse of their goodwill and their good nature in the exercise that we have just undertaken. I know that they have no objection to working long hours when it is required. In fact, it is part of their expectation when they take on jobs like this that, on occasion, they may be required to work long hours. But tonight, it is simply because of the government's pig-headedness that they have been forced to work extremely long hours. Some of them, as we all know, particularly the Hansard staff, will be here until 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning and then we expect them to front up again at 10 o'clock and start the working day again. And, for what reason, Mr Speaker? That is what I would like to ask.

Let us look at what we have on the agenda for the next 2 days: 5 bills are left. There is the Statute Law Revision Bill, and we all know how long that will take. We have the Juries Amendment Bill, the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Amendment Bill, the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment Bill, the Parole of Prisoners Amendment and the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Bill. There are 5 bills to occupy us for the next 2 days and we are still here at 12.30 tonight. It is the government's pig-headedness that has kept us here this long and the government deserves to be condemned. It would have been most appropriate for the government, earlier tonight, in consideration of the staff here and in consideration ...

Mr Coulter: You are holding them up now.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am sure they will not mind being held up for an extra 10 minutes after they have been held up for this long.

Mr Speaker, this prolonged exercise tonight was completely unnecessary. In the next 2 days, we will find ourselves struggling to find enough to keep us occupied. It would have been much more appropriate if the government had broken the committee stage into 2 and tackled half tonight and the other half either tomorrow or on Thursday. But, no. For some reason that I do not understand - and I invite the Leader of Government Business or any other member opposite who might understand the reason to tell us - we have been forced to do it all tonight. I think the staff of this Assembly might well appreciate an explanation as well. On the face of it, there appears to be no explanation for the unnecessary suffering that the government has caused to so many people through this pig-headed action today.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I did want to go home but, regardless of the time we adjourned, I had intended to make some comments in this evening's adjournment debate. There are a number of issues that opposition members only have the opportunity to raise in adjournment debates and I am afraid that I make no apology for making use of this one. I will endeavour to be as brief as I possibly can.

Mr Speaker, you will have seen the headline 'Guivarra Not Guilty' that appeared in the NT News on 15 October 1987 indicating the end of a particular court action that had been unsuccessful. I am not aware of all the circumstances surrounding the particular incident that resulted in this unsuccessful prosecution of Transport Workers Union officials. However, I am aware that complaints were laid by Mr Morgan of the bus company involved, and by the TWU officials.

The first point that I want to make this evening is that I would like the Chief Minister, as minister responsible for police, to verify whether a complaint was laid by those TWU officials at the Palmerston Police Station soon after this incident occurred and whether that complaint was pursued. If it was not pursued, why not?

Mr Speaker, honourable members may be aware of the operation of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act whereby union officials, who have negotiated particular awards, are permitted to enter particular work places to inspect wages books etc. This process would be familiar to the Chief Minister given his background in industrial relations. I understand this was the nature of this particular visit and a fracas developed in which I understand not only the TWU officials and the proprietor of the bus line, Mr Morgan, were involved but also officials from the Confederation of Industry and Commerce. I

understand also that the view amongst many of the people concerned was that it was an industrial relations issue that had basically got a little out of hand.

However, I noted with some concern, not so much that the prosecution went ahead, but that the prosecution went ahead to an extent that costs in the vicinity of \$3000 were awarded against the Crown. The question arises about the merit or otherwise of that prosecution having been proceeded with. That is the second question I would like addressed by the Attorney-General as well as by the Chief Minister.

The Attorney-General and the Chief Minister will recall an incident I drew to the attention of the House, where 4 people were held up at gunpoint by a police officer. They had been drunk in charge of a motor car. It would have been quite appropriate to charge them with DUI and to slap a defect notice on their motor car, but they should not have been held up at gunpoint. Charges were not preferred in that particular case.

Mr Manzie: Have you ever heard of police being shot? You were there, weren't you? You know all about it. You are supposed to be the shadow Attorney-General and you behave like a 2-year-old.

Mr BELL: I can see the lateness of the hour is starting to get at the Attorney-General too, poor chap.

I raise that particular incident by way of comparison. In respect of the first incident, it seems that the prosecution was carried out with some alacrity. The second incident, particularly in terms of respect my constituents have for the due processes of law, should have gone to court. It did not. That strikes me as a glaring difference.

Mr Speaker, I would like the Chief Minister, firstly, to investigate the laying of that particular complaint at the Palmerston Police Station by Mr Guivarra and Mr Hearne. I would like him to find out why that particular complaint was not pursued. Secondly, I would like some clarification of the government's policy in respect of prosecutions. I understand that, in this particular case, there were real problems with going ahead with this particular prosecution and that, from the outset, it did not have a chance of success. I would like some clarification on the government's policy in respect of prosecutions such as this.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

TABLED PAPER
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Third Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the third report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Publications Committee Fourth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the fourth report of the Publications Committee and move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Road Safety

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, today I would like to address an issue of continuing concern in the Territory and the entire developed world, that of road safety.

It is no exaggeration to say that mankind has developed a passionate relationship with the automobile. It is about a century since the internal combustion engine set the first motor cars in motion and fulfilled one of man's greatest dreams - the reality of the horseless carriage. Unreliable as they were, when those pioneer vehicles first spluttered into action, they marked the dawning of one of the most profound periods of social change experienced by mankind.

Although the first motor vehicles were exclusively the playthings of the rich, it did not take the authorities long to realise that this new mechanised phenomenon was a force to be reckoned with and kept in check. On both sides of the Atlantic, early road safety legislation was frequently ludicrous. Britain's Red Flag Act of 1886 was one of the earliest examples of bureaucracy attempting to rein in the spirited stallion. In Tennessee, early road safety legislators demanded that a week's notice be given before a motor vehicle trip was undertaken. Without any doubt, by the time the first of Henry Ford's landmark model Ts was built in 1908, the job of the road safety legislator had begun in earnest.

Australians took a little time to warm to the motor vehicle. The Dunlop trials, which began in 1905, showed that in the car Australians at last had a reliable answer to the tyranny of distance that had for so long shackled national development. Whilst it was not the first motor vehicle entry into the Northern Territory, in June 1924 a car first made the transcontinental crossing from Sydney to Darwin. Now, little more than 60 years later, there are about 10 million motor vehicles in Australia and a similar number of licensed drivers. As of 30 June 1987, about 90 000 motor licences were held by Territory drivers.

The social revolution that has accompanied the rise in the status of the motor vehicle, both worldwide and here in Australia, has a distinct and dark

down side, as we are only too well aware. It is estimated that, since the invention of the motor vehicle, as many as 20 million people have been killed in car accidents. Hundreds of millions more have been horribly maimed. Sadly, this shocking carnage has bypassed neither Australia nor the Northern Territory. Quite apart from the tragic impact these unnecessary deaths and injuries have on the community, there is also a massive cost in lost production and property damage, and a staggering level of third-party insurance and motor accident compensation claims.

In cold hard terms, the Territory's fatal accident rate is 2.5 times the national average on a per capita basis. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is totally misleading to judge our overall road accident picture on the number of fatalities alone. I say this not just as a reflection of my inbuilt suspicion of statistics as such. That number is misleading for a number of plainly logical reasons.

For a start, we have a small statistical base which tends to provide grossly distorted figures for the Territory in just about every area one could care to mention. That is not to say that things are rosy in road safety terms in the Territory. Far from it. Sadly, 63 people died on Territory roads between the start of this year and 30 September compared with 47 in the same period last year. It is, however, essential to look at the facts and statistics that together make up the complete road safety picture in the Territory before making any judgments.

As I mentioned earlier, it is misleading to reach conclusions about the Territory's road safety situation simply by using road fatality figures as a guide. It is even more dangerous to assess the situation by simply comparing annual fatality figures. Injury data takes longer to become available than that concerning fatal accidents which, of course, increases the temptation to rely on the use of the number of fatalities as the guide to our road safety situation. Given the nature of modern medicine, there is often only a slight margin between death and critical injury as a result of road accidents. It should be not forgotten that the Territory's vast distances often mean that medical help takes a relatively long time to reach accident victims. In the case of a serious accident, every minute is often precious for a victim fighting for survival.

By 30 June this year, 605 people had been injured on Territory roads compared with 667 people in the same period of the previous year. There was actually a reduction, therefore, in the number of people injured in road accidents in the Territory during the first half of the year. There is no denying that, like the rest of Australia, we have a serious road accident situation. It is apparent, however, that the situation is significantly better now than it was in the 1970s, on a per capita, per vehicle or distance travelled basis. For instance, if we were to compare the situation in 1986 with that in 1971, a period of 15 years, an improvement is clearly discernible. It is well worth noting that Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed that the Territory population increased from 122 800 to 154 421 during that time. That represents a 25.75% increase over 15 years, which, of course, makes any improvement in road accident figures all the more commendable.

The figures do not show the upsurge in the number of southern visitors using our roads in recent years. It is encouraging to note that, in 1971, fatalities in the Territory per 100 million kilometres were 9.5 compared with 5.5 last year. The level of motor vehicle fatalities per 100 000 population in the same 15-year period has continued to decline. In 1971, fatalities

per 100 000 were 54.4 and last year the figure amounted to 47.9. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you can see, a number of measures can be applied to assess road accident statistics. It is rather sad that, because of past statistical records, I am not able to use other measures such as the accident-rate level.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that the Territory is essentially a rural area, which means that major distances must be travelled by a substantial proportion of our drivers. This means that, when our figures are compared with national statistics, they will appear to be higher. When compared with other Australian rural areas the Territory accident situation is on a par with the national picture, not that such comparisons should give us the slightest cause for complacency. There is still much that can be done and will be done to further wind back our road accident level.

The additional difficulties caused by our unique demographic composition will have to be addressed if we are to make a greater impact on this problem. The Territory has a higher proportion of those groups which, nationally, come within the high-risk categories for road accidents. We have a high proportion of young, single male persons. It is an unfortunate truth that young single males drink considerably more than other groups in the community and comprise the road-user group most at risk. All research, both here and overseas, shows that young males between 15 and 24 form the highest risk group when it comes to road accidents. In fact, traffic accidents are the largest single cause of death for this group Australia-wide. It is certainly no coincidence that the major bubble in what was proved to be a steady improvement in our overall road accident record in the past 15 years occurred in 1975, the year after cyclone Tracy, when Darwin was inundated with young males who took part in the reconstruction program. Fatalities per 10 000 vehicles shot up from 12 in 1974 to 20 in 1975, which is more than double our current level. Fatalities per 100 000 leapt from 42.1 in 1974 to 71.2 in 1975.

Apart from a high proportion of young single males, the Territory also has a high proportion of Aboriginal people who, largely because of the historically poor communications with outback areas in the Territory, have not been subjected to the same level of road safety education as the rest of the community. The Road Safety Council is already taking significant steps towards greater education of Aboriginal Territorians on matters pertaining to road safety. However, it is a major task and I intend to ensure that it is given closer scrutiny.

Because of the high proportion of Aboriginal people in the Territory, one of the major problems confronting us is the high numbers of people who ride in the backs of trucks and utilities. Because of the financial structure of Aboriginal communities, it is only natural that vehicles with a greater carrying capacity are favoured, such as trucks and utilities. In many cases, they represent the only form of transport available. This tendency to purchase utilities, trucks and 4-wheel drive vehicles, which have a high centre of gravity, has had some sad consequences. We have moved to tighten up laws governing the carrying of passengers in the open space of vehicles. The initial responsibility for safety will be placed on the driver. It is intended that new traffic legislation will come into effect early next year. It will include a number of measures which will help to ease this problem. It is proposed to include in new regulations a requirement that all passengers be seated and that no parts of their bodies protrude from vehicles. I intend to write to leaders of Aboriginal communities to advise them of the proposed changes and to ask them for details of any difficulties these changes may cause. At this stage, I am certainly not in favour of banning people from

riding in the backs of utilities and trucks as I believe any gains on the road safety side would be vastly outweighed by the social detriment. I am hopeful that our initial legislative steps will contain the worst excesses in this area.

We have also been studying the New Guinea experience where similar difficulties have long existed as a consequence of people riding in the open space of vehicles. Details have been obtained from PNG and, although they concentrate on the use of larger vehicles, they may have some application in the Territory. For instance, a special permit is required for a vehicle to carry more than 8 people. The licensing of a vehicle is conditional on certain features, such as the fitting of a roll bar. A maximum passenger limit is also applied in these cases. The administrative and technical costs of applying such a law would be considerable and it is now a matter of weighing these up against the likely benefits.

Arrangements are in hand for the setting up of a representative working group, chaired by the Department of Transport and Works to examine the problem of people riding unrestrained in open vehicles but, just to put the vehicle statistics into perspective, while 18 people were killed as a result of riding in open-space vehicles from 1 January 1984 to 30 September 1987, 113 people who were not wearing seat belts were killed in Territory road accidents in the same period.

Although alcohol is the major cause of accidents in the Territory, failure to wear a seat belt is the most prominent feature in accidents involving fatalities. It is worth noting that, in the year to 30 September 1987, only 3 of the 7 people who have died while riding in the backs of vehicles were Aborigines. There have been 2 more fatalities resulting from people riding in the open space of vehicles since 30 September. The problem is not restricted exclusively to a single racial group, as is popularly believed, nor is it the most significant factor in the high level of serious injury and death in the Territory's rural areas.

Despite the sometimes emotional arguments that are aired about people riding in the backs of trucks, it is clear that we have an even bigger problem in the Territory with people failing to wear seat belts. As I have mentioned, failure to wear a seat belt is the most prominent cause of death for those killed inside vehicles and this situation still exists despite years of education on the value of wearing seat belts and the threat of fines.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the new legislation affecting riding in the back of utilities and trucks will place greater responsibility on the driver to stop the vehicle if an unsafe situation arises, as well as providing for penalties to be directed against passengers. Apart from the propensity for certain elements within our society to favour utilities and trucks, the Territory also has an abnormally high proportion of 4-wheel drive vehicles. These vehicles, despite their growing popularity, have a higher centre of gravity than a conventional motor car and consequently are far more unstable, even at lower speeds. The Road Safety Council has been active in drawing public attention to the inherent problems with 4-wheel drive vehicles and I will be encouraging advertising campaigns to focus even greater attention on the nature of these vehicles and their safe use.

The high level of 4-wheel drive vehicles registered in the Territory is just one of the consequences of the geographic aspect of road safety in the Territory. Our long distances and our energy-sapping climate clearly play their role in our level of road accidents. Given our climate and the vast

geographic expanse, it is unwise for a driver to have even a single beer, as even that small amount of alcohol is enough to cause drowsiness on those long trips. This brings me to the question of alcohol-related road accidents.

Alcohol is still the major factor in serious accidents in the Northern Territory and, because it is the major cause of road accidents, it is a factor that I will continue to address with vigour, regardless of any public backlash. As all members of the House are aware, recent amendments to the Traffic Act have served to further strengthen legislation relating to drink driving. These changes will be reinforced by provisions in the new Traffic Act when it commences. Amongst the most important of these changes, I believe, is the new zero alcohol limit pertaining to younger and learner drivers. Honourable members would be aware that these changes are necessary to allow younger and less experienced drivers to develop their skills free from the constraint of alcohol. I believe such legislation is also important in helping to build a correct attitude to safe driving amongst the young.

We have also made every effort to remove legal loopholes. The recent tightening up of the drink-driving legislation, although accepted by the community at large, has unquestionably upset certain elements. Many of those opposed to the tougher line against drink-drivers, all too often use the word 'draconian' to describe new legislation that has been put in place to combat that most lethal of social menaces, the drunken driver. If these people believe that we are guilty of introducing draconian measures designed deliberately to limit personal freedom, they might like to ponder the types of penalties faced by drink-drivers elsewhere. In Norway, for instance, a first offence brings a 2-year loss of licence and a mandatory 21 days in jail. In Sweden, category 1 drink-drivers, those with a blood alcohol reading greater than 0.15, lose their licences for a minimum of a year as well as being jailed for between 1 and 2 months. In fact, the Swedes regard drink-driving as such a serious problem that licence applicants must prove they are of temperate habits. In fact, reports on licence applicants are provided by social welfare and the police. The Japanese have gone as far as establishing special jails for driving offenders where 30% of the inmates are drink-drivers, many there on their first drink-driving offence.

At the risk of appearing flippant, I would say that, after noting the types of punishment available elsewhere, we in the Territory still have a long way to go before being open to allegations of forcing draconian drink-driving measures on the community. I am pleased to say that the government's line against drink-drivers has been supported by honourable members opposite.

When people question the wisdom of the government in cracking down on drink-drivers, one needs only to quote a simple figure to support the government's case: 65% of all road deaths in the Territory last year were alcohol-related. Unfortunately, the figure will be similar this year. There is no escaping the fact that the drunken driver runs a far greater risk of having an accident than someone who has not been drinking. It is clearly the worst possible kind of intrusion on the civil liberties of others to have innocent road users subjected to the extra risk caused by drink-drivers. The 1980 McLean Report showed that a driver with a blood alcohol reading above 0.08 was about 6 times more likely to be involved in an accident than a person who was not intoxicated. A person with a blood alcohol level of greater than 0.15 is more than 30 times as likely to have an accident as a sober person.

Before people jump to too many conclusions, let me assure you that I am definitely not flagging any intention of reducing the permissible blood

alcohol limit for drivers from the current 0.08. When confronted by these types of figures, no responsible government can simply sit back and do nothing. The government has acted and I am pleased to say that the action is paying dividends. If random breath testing saved only a single life, I think we could say that we had received a handsome dividend in return for our efforts.

Those who suggest that the end result of random breath testing is that so-called decent citizens are being treated like common criminals are completely out of touch with community attitudes. No matter how decent the citizen might think himself, he abrogates all claim to the title 'decent' once he takes it upon himself to drive while under the influence. There is nothing decent about a drink-driver, regardless of his station in life. Ask the thousands of Australian families who have either lost or had loved ones maimed by these so-called decent drink-drivers.

The interesting thing about random breath testing is that a recent national survey conducted on behalf of the Federal Office of Road Safety showed that support for random breath testing was running at 95%. The survey found that the level of community support in the Territory was consistent with the national average. Furthermore, 59% of Territory respondents regarded alcohol as the major cause leading to road accidents. This was 18% higher than the average national response to the same question. There is no getting away from the fact that random breath testing is currently our most effective weapon in deterring people from drink-driving and let me stress that deterrence is what it is all about.

Our random breath testing program continues to expand. At the urban level in the Territory, and let us not forget that is where the majority of our population lives, random breath testing appears to be succeeding. Like most of the Australian states, we face a major dilemma with our rural roads. We have more than 20 000 km of roads in the Territory and the majority of these roads are in our rural areas. There is simply no way that these roads can be policed effectively by random breath test units. If we can deter the majority of Territorians from driving while under the influence of alcohol, I believe random breath testing will have proved a resounding success.

In the period to 30 September this year, there have been 11 fatal motor vehicle accidents in our major urban centres. I have not included in this group pedestrians who were the victims of fatal accidents, as I intend to deal with them separately. Unfortunately, I cannot complete the picture with statistics for injuries because the figures for the period to 30 September have yet to be collated. Of 11 fatal urban accidents, 6 deaths have been alcohol related. In the first 9 months, to 30 September this year, there had been 19 072 random breath tests in the Territory. A total of 413 drivers were found to have a blood alcohol reading of greater than 0.08%. Changes in the new Traffic Act, which are based on New South Wales and Tasmanian provisions, will allow police a greater flexibility to pursue random breath testing. Experience elsewhere indicates that greater flexibility for police increases the impact of random breath testing and this is what we are striving for. In the full 12 months of 1986 there were 17 131 random breath tests, resulting in 414 positive readings.

It is encouraging to note that in the period to 30 September this year, there have been nearly 2000 more random breath tests than in the whole of last year and yet 1 less driver was found to have exceeded 0.08. Let us not forget that random breath testing is designed to act as a deterrent and it seems that the deterrent factor is beginning to take hold. As I have mentioned already,

the application of random breath testing on our vast network of rural roads is simply not practical. A total of 45 people have been killed on rural roads in the period to 30 September this year. Once again the figures are incomplete but, of the fatalities, 19 were alcohol related. This figure includes a pedestrian with a blood alcohol reading of 0.164.

Alcohol is only part of a wider problem concerning substance abuse and driving. Given the growing use of illicit drugs in our society, not to mention the effect on drivers of a wide range of prescription drugs, I have instructed my department to monitor the advances in drug testing equipment and suggested legislative moves in this area. I believe it is inevitable that one day we will have to test drivers for levels of substances other than alcohol. Random testing stations would seem the most logical way to go for drug testing because it is now abundantly clear that there are a good many drivers on the roads whose reflexes have been impaired by other substances, legal or otherwise.

As I have mentioned, a wide range of factors contribute to road accident statistics in rural areas, a major one being speed. The penalties for traffic infringement notices have been increased substantially. I deliberately avoided including accidents involving pedestrians with the earlier general road accidents statistics. This is because it is becoming abundantly clear that pedestrians - particularly Aboriginal pedestrians - comprise a group which requires more attention.

The recent publicity surrounding the level of pedestrian accidents on Bagot Road serves only to emphasise this point. It seems the problem involving Aboriginal pedestrians is as much a social one as it is a technical one. Bagot Road epitomises this dilemma. In the case of Bagot Road, there is a range of technical options among which part of the solution to the problem could be found. Quite frankly, however, the high level of alcohol involved with pedestrians knocked down on Bagot Road in recent years suggests that there would be difficulties in getting the pedestrians we are trying to help to use a crossing or an overpass.

In the period to 30 September this year, there were 8 fatal accidents in Darwin. Of these, 5 involved pedestrians, 4 of whom were Aboriginal people. Further, 4 of the 5 pedestrians had positive blood alcohol readings, the lowest being 0.173 and the highest 0.351. In fact, of the 9 pedestrians killed in the Territory in the period to 30 September 1987, 7 were Aboriginals. Clearly, the government and the Aboriginal community will have to work in concert to overcome the completely unnecessary waste of human life. In the case of Bagot Road, where 3 people were killed and 26 injured between 1 January 1984 and 30 September 1987, officers of the Road Safety Council have held talks with the Bagot community about the problem. It can only be hoped that the community itself will make a concerted effort to alert people to the potential for alcohol-related pedestrian accidents on Bagot Road in particular.

In dealing with a topic such as road safety, where the lives and deaths of human beings are the most commonly used denominator of success or failure, it is very difficult to ever be seen to be winning. Yet, despite the tragic human cost to the Territory I believe we can pinpoint definite areas of success. Let us not forget that, without each of these successes, no matter how minor they may appear on the surface, our road toll could very well be significantly higher.

Heavy vehicle safety is an area where the government is winning. The Territory has a higher standards of safety in this area in Australia. Through amendments made to the Motor Vehicle Act in 1982, we have become the first Australian state or territory to adopt into legislation for all heavy vehicles, including road trains, the set of safety standards laid down as the national code for heavy vehicles. This was possible largely by virtue of the fact that the government was able to work with the assistance of the NT Road Transport Association. The close working relationship between the government and the association, along with the principle of self regulation, have proved key elements in the high safety standards enjoyed by the Territory in this area.

Another Territory success story has been our approach to motorcycles. The combination of our motorcycle education establishment, known by the acronym METAL, and our 3-tiered approach to licensing, has put the Territory at the forefront in motorcycle safety in Australia. METAL is designed to provide drivers with the all-important basics of motorcycle skills from which a sound approach to riding can be built. Our unique, 3-tiered licensing structure prevents inexperienced individuals from riding motorcycles which are too powerful for them. Riders can only progress from the 260 cc limit to the 600 class or the open class after passing tests or completing training courses, whereas in the states riders can graduate automatically to a higher class after holding a licence for a set period of time. METAL also ensures that riders planning to step up to more powerful machines can first learn how to handle them.

Legislating to remove technical defences for drivers facing traffic offences is, I believe, also a plus. All too often in the past, offenders were able to escape conviction for serious driving offences because of loopholes in the law. In addition, the Territory is involved in the national plan to revise the nature of the road safety curriculum at schools with a view to establishing the best possible safety education course for the young. As our entire road safety strategy is based on prevention, such a course is naturally an integral component in our battle to make our roads safer places.

In closing, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make an appeal to the media. For the road safety message to be delivered clearly, we need the support of the media and, because of the limited number of media outlets in the Territory, it is imperative for the sake of road safety that the media accepts its responsibility in this area. I will be writing to Imparja in a bid to gain its support in delivering the road safety message to the people of the outback when it commences broadcasting. I believe it is essential that Aboriginal people, who might not have been greatly exposed to the concept of road safety, are given every chance to learn what is, after all, a set of survival skills. I hope that every Territorian is prepared to take on board that set of all-important skills which have become such a central part to life in the latter part of this century.

Even more important is the aspect of attitude, be it amongst drivers, pedestrians or pushbike riders. The government can do everything in its power to ensure that road users are covered by appropriate legislation. Given technological advances, we are now better able to assess particular trends and specific trouble spots accurately. Despite improved technology and new legislation, our road problem will continue as an open wound without the correct community attitude because, in the end, road safety boils down to that one single quality: attitude. The introduction of zero alcohol limits for young drivers was a move deliberately designed to affect community attitudes. I am pleased to say that it appears that community attitudes are beginning to change, but it is happening slowly and we still have a long way to go.

We have covered some - and I emphasise 'some' - of the aspects and components that influence our road safety statistics and our road safety situation. This government will continue to address matters as they evolve, and I look forward to support from honourable members of the House in this regard.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Minister for Transport and Works for this particular statement in relation to a matter of deep concern to, as I think he said in his statement, everybody in the developed world. I am concerned to place on the record of the Assembly the opposition's bipartisan support for whatever initiatives may be available and or necessary in order to reduce the carnage on the roads. I think the minister's statement gave an interesting longitudinal perspective on road safety problems, and the problem of the sheer number of people who have died on roads around the Territory and around the country.

Obviously, there is a limit to what governments can do in that regard. Governments can build safe roads and have sensible legislation to ensure that only roadworthy vehicles are driven on them, and that those roadworthy vehicles are driven on them in a safe way, but there is a point beyond which governments cannot go and where road safety is a matter of luck, good judgement and individual responsibility. However, that is in no way intended to suggest that governments should cease to be very zealous in ensuring that their side of the bargain is kept through the provision of adequate roads and appropriate legislation, and it is worth noting that, in this legislature, we have recently been through the exercise of replacing our Traffic Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with respect to the honourable minister's statement, on a more specific basis, I think it is worth mentioning a couple of things that I did notice on the way through. The minister made reference to the acronym METAL - I think it is Motor Cycle Education Training and Licensing. I have not had the opportunity to see METAL in action in Darwin, but all the reports I hear about it providing a good motorcycle driver education are very positive. I have never been a motorcycle rider myself, but I have been surprised by the relative lack of restrictions applied to it. To put it in a more positive frame, I suppose rather than a lack of restriction, the problem has been that there has not been an appropriate way of educating and training motorcyclists. I can remember looking at it at one stage and thinking that it was all a little bit easy when you could just front up to the Motor Vehicle Registry, get a permit to ride a motorbike, and you were away.

Mr Collins: It depended on your desire to stay alive.

Mr BELL: To stay alive, yes.

If any kid of mine pursued that course, not only would I have sleepless nights, I would probably attempt to exercise some parental authority and hunt round for somebody who might try to dissuade him from riding motorbikes. More seriously, I would put him in touch with somebody who was an experienced motorcyclist who could give some real training. For that reason, I heartily endorse the efforts of METAL. I understand that the METAL operation is to be extended to Alice Springs. I have received representations from some of the people involved in the proposal to set up the training and licensing arrangement in Alice Springs. I understand that the Northern Territory government has provided some assistance, although there is concern amongst some of the organisers that money has not come through yet. I trust the

minister will pick that up and reassure those people in Alice Springs that the training and licensing arrangement will apply there.

I noted the minister's use of statistics and the alarming fact that the accident rate in the Territory is $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the national average on a per capita basis. That is something of which none of us can be proud and it should provide reason for an investigation of its cause. The minister said that the number of fatalities has decreased. He cited the 1971 figure that fatalities per 100 million kilometres was 9.5 compared with 5.5 last year. Is that figure correct? Is that 100 million kilometres or 100 thousand kilometres? I mention that in passing.

The statistic for fatalities per 10 000 vehicles in 1971 was 17.4 compared with 9.4 last year. That sounds a note of encouragement. He went on to say that in the last couple of years there has been an increase. The figures he quoted related to the 9 months to September this year. This year's figure was 63 whereas that for the corresponding period last year was 47. One is forced to return to his original comment that these statistics possibly are not particularly useful. The causes of accidents are probably more important.

The minister referred to Aboriginal communities and the problems there. I have 2 points to make. One of them relates to the use of open vehicles and the other to the context of the minister's comments. I was particularly heartened by the honourable minister's comment that, because of the financial structure of Aboriginal communities, it is only natural that vehicles with a large carrying capacity, such as trucks and utilities, are favoured. I very much appreciated the perceptiveness of that comment. I have made the point myself in this Assembly. In last night's committee stage debate I said that, because of the economic structure of Aboriginal communities and their position in relation to the means of production, there are enormous differences in terms of goods and services available. I was heartened to see that a minister in the CLP government has finally internalised my understanding of that situation.

Any consideration of transport in Aboriginal communities has to take into account that they are poor in terms of goods and services and are not serviced by any type of public transport. Because of that, the use of open vehicles is prevalent. The minister said that these vehicles are a source of considerable risk. I would be very interested to hear any statistics concerning the number of fatalities suffered among passengers in open trucks. My subjective impression is that more injuries and deaths may occur among young fellows who get boozed and drive old, often unroadworthy vehicles. My experience is that, when several families travel around the bush in the back of a truck, 9 times out of 10 they are very careful about who drives and how fast, and so on. This observation is essentially subjective and I am just putting it forward as something worthy of investigation. While I know there have been accidents in these circumstances, I would venture to say that they are not as statistically significant as, for example, single-vehicle roll-overs in conventional vehicles.

The minister suggested that he would be continuing his road safety campaign. I did appreciate his indication that he would seek to use the remote commercial television service to get the message across. Honourable members will recall him saying that he would be writing to Imparja in a bid to gain its support in delivering the road safety message to the people of the outback, when it commences broadcasting. I certainly hope the minister will be able to use an RCTS broadcast via the satellite to get the road safety message across but, as he should know, that matter is very much in the lap of

this government. I might say in passing that the Northern Territory government's confidence in Imparja's capacity to produce a service worthy of its assistance seems to be growing. I certainly hope that the minister is able to get his message to the bush by means of the Imparja service.

Another matter which should not be ignored in this context was raised by the minister in response to a Dorothy Dixer in this morning's question time. It is, of course, the imbroglio of the bus facilities in Bradshaw Terrace. Quite clearly, the safety of the travelling public in that vicinity is at stake. I am aware that there is a significant body of opinion which says that arrangements concerning the bus stops in Bradshaw Terrace are not safe, and that proposals put forward by the Transport Workers Union in a very positive vein have been the subject of savage calumny on the part of the Minister for Transport and Works.

I am aware that there has been a considerable exchange of correspondence between the various interested bodies: the Darwin City Council, the Department of Transport and Works, the Darwin Bus Service, the Transport Workers Union, and Lend Lease Agencies Pty Ltd who operate the Casuarina Plaza. Obviously, they are concerned that there be a safe and expeditious passage of bus passengers and vehicles in that vicinity.

I draw to honourable members' attention the most recent edition of the 'Northern Suburbs Billabong' and its leading article written by Mr Alastair Betley, 'The TWU Proposes a Bus Option'. I suggest that, rather than savaging the Darwin City Council and the Transport Workers Union, the minister should take on board the proposal that the Transport Workers Union has put forward. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the proposal from the Transport Workers Union.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: As that particular plan indicates, as well as the issue of safety for people in the vicinity of Bradshaw Terrace, there is also the question of their protection from the elements, particularly with the wet season coming on. There is concern that the interchange has not worked in that regard. I understand that Lend Lease Agencies Pty Ltd is particularly keen to see passengers dropped off in front of K Mart. It seems to me that the government has won out in this regard and that the Darwin City Council, Lend Lease Agencies and the TWU have been able to come to some agreement whereby, as that diagram indicates, the buses would come in off Trower Road and drop off passengers outside K Mart. Passengers would exit on the ANZ Bank side rather than having to travel through the rain across to the Casuarina Interchange.

Mr Dondas: What do they do when they have done their shopping?

Mr BELL: I will just point out to the member for Casuarina that I presume that, as a conscientious local member, he already has seen this proposal, particularly since the Transport Workers Union sent its relocation proposal to the department in January this year.

Mr Dondas: I just asked you what they do after they do their shopping.

Mr BELL: Within that area, as any of us who has done any shopping out there will know, there are pedestrian crossings. People will simply go across to be picked up between the ANZ Bank and K Mart.

Mr Dondas: That is where they are picked up?

Mr BELL: They are dropped off on one side and picked up on the other, in the same area.

Instead of heaping all sorts of calumny on various bodies involved in what is basically a safety issue, the minister should treat the proposal far more seriously than he has done. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw to your attention correspondence from the manager of the Darwin Bus Service. He expressed concern about the future of Bradshaw Terrace as a major bus stop and referred to the alternative proposal by the TWU, the locating of a safety fence along the Bradshaw Terrace median strip adjacent to the crossing area and the installation of a properly-designed pedestrian crossing in Bradshaw Terrace. He also commented on the erection of bus shelters on the lower end of Bradshaw Terrace and the funding of the traffic management study that the minister referred to earlier. He concluded his letter by referring to the safety issues that have already been identified. I suggest that those are the sort of issues that need to be taken seriously by the minister.

With those comments and suggestions, I commend the statement made by the minister. Road safety is an issue that is deserving of continuing government concern. We consider that high priority should be given to issues connected with the safety of our roads and the appropriateness of relevant legislation. I assure the honourable minister that he will have my support and that of the opposition for any constructive proposals in that regard.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 55)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to present this bill to the Assembly. It is legislation which has been sought for some time and, whilst the principles which gave rise to it appeared on the surface to be somewhat routine, underlying complexities contributed to extended delays which have received critical comment from some sources. When first conceived, the intention was to amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act so as to enable some of the more common species of Territory wildlife to be taken by people without the need to obtain a permit from the Conservation Commission. The examples which were given at the time included common reptiles and birds such as galahs and cockatoos. I am pleased to say that the amendments contained in this bill will enable this to happen with the making of appropriate regulations and the inclusion in the regulations of a list of those species which may be taken and kept without permit. The regulations will be prepared so that they may be made immediately following the passage of this bill through all stages.

As a lead-up to the formulation of the regulations, the Conservation Commission has been seeking the assistance of community groups interested in the keeping of native wildlife. For example, aviculturists have been consulted in relation to the drawing up of the necessary schedules. Because the amendments to the act and the regulations will represent a change to existing conditions for the keeping of wildlife, a moratorium or an amnesty

period may need to be declared to enable people to make the necessary arrangements to obtain new permits if required.

While these amendments enable a considerable relaxation of regulations for the most common species, there is a corresponding need to tighten controls over rare, vulnerable and endangered species. The bill introduces a new category of specially-protected animals. Again, the regulations will incorporate a schedule listing such animals and will include species regarded as rare, endangered or otherwise in need of special consideration. Those animals which are the subject of international agreements to which Australia is a party will be included. An important feature of the bill is its recognition of the significance of specially-protected animals by providing for the penalties for offences committed in respect of them to be double those normally applying under the act.

Mr Speaker, one of the important issues covered by the bill is the ownership of wildlife. Previously, there has been no formal recognition of ownership. The common law position regarding ownership of wildlife needlessly complicates regulation of trade in wildlife in so far as that is sometimes very difficult to determine who actually owns the particular wild animal. The bill seeks to correct this by vesting ownership in the Crown from the time that the animal is taken from the wild and will include the progeny of such animals even though they may be born in captivity. In promoting more liberal and sensible utilisation of wildlife, involving greater access to the capture and legal possession of protected species, it is important to clarify Crown ownership. The bill does, however, make provision for the transfer of ownership from the Crown.

It is necessary to declare ownership in situations where protected animals are permitted to be kept for aviculture or on farms where commercial products may be the eventual outcome. For example, this will apply when dealing with crocodile farms and their products. Whilst the crocodiles are in the farms, they will remain the property of the Crown but, when slaughtered for skins and flesh, a permit will allow sale of those products. A sale in accordance with the permit will constitute a legal transfer of ownership, with the transferee then having the legal right to those products.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that this bill will be well received by all groups concerned with the conservation of wildlife as well as by those who keep and breed animals in captivity. It represents a necessary removal of some of the red tape previously encountered by people wanting to keep a cocky in a cage, for example. It also recognises that there are some animals that deserve special protection, particularly if we are to preserve them for enjoyment by future generations of Territorians. I am pleased to recommend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 75)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

During the passage of the original Juvenile Justice Bill in this House 4 years ago, an assurance was given that the legislation would be reviewed

after it had been in operation for 2 years or so. The purpose was to ensure that any shortcomings and difficulties being experienced with it would be rectified. The Juvenile Justice Act commenced in April 1984 and the bill now before us embodies the outcome of a searching and thorough review of the act by the Juvenile Justice Review Committee.

Mr Speaker, before I go on to explain the nature of the bill, I would like to pay tribute to the Juvenile Justice Review Committee, led by the Chief Magistrate Miss Sally Thomas, for its work. It is particularly appropriate that I do this now because one of the legislative amendments proposed is to abolish the review committee and to establish boards of management instead. I am represented on the review committee along with the Attorney-General. We are well aware of the task that was before the committee in meeting its responsibilities under the Juvenile Justice Act. We also know those responsibilities have been discharged capably. On behalf of the Territory community, I wish to thank members of the Juvenile Justice Review Committee for their efforts, dedication and concern.

The Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill does not set out to reframe legislation relating to the treatment of young people who become involved with the criminal justice system. Quite deliberately, it does not touch upon or disturb the underlying spirit and philosophy of the law in that area. Instead, this bill is proposing a set of practical amendments which have evolved from people's direct experience of the Juvenile Justice Act in its operation for just over 3½ years. These contributors include magistrates and other people in the courts areas, legal aid services, police, community organisations working with young people, people in various government areas concerned with administering the act and juvenile justice staff throughout the Territory who deal directly with young offenders and crime at the juvenile level.

Such wide-ranging input to the review process, reflecting so much interest and concern, make me especially confident about the worth of the amendments proposed in this bill. Before going into the bill more closely, let me outline some its main effects. Children will be afforded similar rights to adults during the course of investigations. A broader range of sanctions will be available to the Juvenile Court. The community service work scheme for juvenile offenders will be strengthened. There are better provisions for dealing with breaches of court orders, remission of matters between the Juvenile Court and other courts, disqualification from holding driving licences, medical treatment and testing of juveniles in custody, heavier penalties for absconding and allowance for the Juvenile Court to take other offences into account.

Mr Speaker, clauses 5 to 13 are concerned with replacing the Juvenile Justice Review Committee with 2 boards of management, 1 in Darwin and the other in Alice Springs. The duties and functions of the boards are set out, including members taking over the official visitor role in relation to detention centres.

There has always been difficulty in ensuring the Juvenile Court and its facilities are separated adequately from other courts, as required by section 21 of the principal act, especially in smaller, remote communities. Clause 14 refers to the requirement for separation. It is doubtful that separation serves any real purpose nowadays.

Clause 15 will enable police officers in charge of police stations to be authorised to lay complaints against juveniles. As the principal act

presently stands, complaints or information against a juvenile cannot be laid unless an authorised officer has consented, yet only sergeants first class or higher can be authorised. In some localities, the police officer in charge of a police station is below that rank. He will now be able to be so authorised. As well, the provision in section 24 for a person, not being a member of the police force, to be authorised by the minister, is being repealed. Clause 16 adjusts section 25(4) of the principal act as a result of changes to the Traffic Act. This is a technical amendment.

Section 31 of the principal act is about identifying material and taking identifying material off or from a juvenile. Identifying material includes prints of the hands, fingers, feet or toes, voice recordings, photographs, handwriting samples or material from the body. Section 31 was reviewed in the context that children should at least be afforded similar rights to adults in the course of investigations. As the principal act stands, some children are treated less favourably than adults.

Clause 17 amends section 31 so that a magistrate's approval is required for every occasion where identifying material is taken from the body of a juvenile, regardless of the seriousness of the offence or the age of the juvenile. As well, provision will be made for access to a magistrate to express objection.

Clause 18 amends section 32 of the act to provide for a written authority by the Juvenile Court or a magistrate for a juvenile charged with an offence, but not granted bail, to be detained in custody in a detention centre. A minor amendment to section 46 of the principal act is needed to remove overtones of detention where, in fact, supervision is intended. Clause 19 provides for this.

In relation to section 53 of the principal act, clause 20 proposes a range of amendments which will significantly broaden sanctions available to the Juvenile Court. These include: provisors for imposing a combination of penalties; more effective good behaviour bonds; bringing community service work orders into line with the adult scheme operating under the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act; increasing the period of detention which can be ordered from 3 or 6 months, depending on age, to 12 months regardless of age; power to impose sanctions contained in other acts, for example, cancellation of a driver's licence or disqualification of a juvenile from holding a licence to drive; and, provision for court orders to continue in force for periods specified in the orders, notwithstanding that the offender concerned turned 17 during that time. Participation in a project or program approved by the minister becomes a sanction in its own right, instead of being a condition of probation. There is also provision for juveniles who turn 17 during detention to continue their sentence in a detention centre, but not after they turn 18.

Clause 21 inserts a new section 53A into the Juvenile Justice Act, giving the Juvenile Court power to order disqualification from holding a licence to drive a motor vehicle. This might arise where the court is satisfied that the juvenile is not a fit and proper person to hold such a licence.

Clause 22 introduces 4 new sections into the principal act concerned with referring proceedings to appropriate courts, where a person before a Court of Summary Jurisdiction is found to be a juvenile, or a person before the Juvenile Court is found to be an adult. The legal mechanism for referring matters to the other court is set out and provision is made so that referred proceedings are not invalidated.

Clause 23 amends section 65 of the act to give detention centre superintendents broader powers to allow detainees to be absent so that they can participate in other treatment programs such as wilderness work camps or placement on a cattle station. In terms of the amendment, the detainee can be absent from a detention centre in the custody of, or under the supervision of, a person authorised by the Director of Correctional Services.

Clause 24 will allow for the powers of the superintendent to be delegated to the person authorised by the Director of Correctional Services. Previously, this has involved taking the matter back before a court. Permission for a detainee to be absent from a juvenile detention centre will always be subject to the terms of the court order under which the juvenile is detained.

As the Juvenile Justice Act presently stands, it provides for appointment of official visitors for juvenile detention centres. Their function is to inquire into the treatment, behaviour and conditions of young offenders under detention. Centres are to be visited at least once every month with the minister being given a written report on each visit. Until now, only magistrates have been able to be appointed as official visitors and there are difficulties in maintaining regular inspection visits because of other demands upon them. The magistrates have carried out this responsibility with commendable interest and sincerity. Their commitment to this extra responsibility to society has been exemplary, but it is now proposed that members of the boards of management take over the official visitor role on the same basis as has applied to date. Clauses 25 to 28 amend the principal act accordingly.

Clause 29 inserts a new part in the Juvenile Justice Act - part IXA, medical treatment. Briefly, part IXA gives juvenile detainees access to a medical practitioner on request. It also provides for a detainee who is ill to be removed to hospital on the order of either the Director of Correctional Services, a doctor or the court. As well, the act will require a detainee to submit to a medical examination or treatment in circumstances where his life is endangered or his health is seriously affected by refusing examination or treatment. This requirement also applies when the life or health of any other person is endangered or is likely to be seriously affected through refusal. At the same time, a juvenile detainee who is subject to this requirement has the right to a second medical opinion where practicable.

Under the new part IXA, a juvenile received at a detention centre is to submit to a blood test and other tests for the purposes of determining his or her current medical condition. Reasonable force may be used if necessary. Other provisions relate to notifications in the event of a detainee's illness or death.

Clause 30 adds a new section to the principal act so that other offences may be taken into account in the Juvenile Court. The new section 90A provides for section 396 of the Criminal Code to apply to proceedings under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Finally, the Juvenile Justice Act is being amended so that a detainee guilty of absconding from a detention centre will face a much heavier penalty than previously. At present, the penalty is 28 days detention or imprisonment additional to and following the original period of detention or imprisonment. Clause 31 increases the penalty for absconding to up to 90 days extra detention or imprisonment. This follows a suggestion by magistrates.

Mr Speaker, the amendments put forward in this bill are timely in the light of variations in administrative arrangements which saw the Juvenile Justice function transfer first from the Department of Community Development to the Department of Correctional Services in January 1986, and then to the Department of Health and Community Services earlier this year. There has been more than 3 years experience of the Juvenile Justice Act in actual operation, developments in the area of offender treatment programs for juveniles, including programs in remote localities and it is some years since the juvenile justice legislation was originally prepared.

Mr Speaker, the main benefits of these amendments will be: enhanced operational and administrative efficiencies; updated powers for the Juvenile Court and more streamlined operations; a strengthening in custodial and diversionary programs for young offenders; clarification of areas of uncertainty and anomalies in the act; and, wider provisions for the rights of juveniles coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Mr Speaker, in the Northern Territory, we are fortunate to be able to regularly overhaul our legislation to keep pace with the times and with changing social values. It is important to me that legislation like the Juvenile Justice Act, which directly affects our young people and their progress to adulthood, should be kept in a modern and advanced state. There are some provisions that could not be finalised for this bill and they will form the basis for further refinement of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 60)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

In recent years, academic wisdom has highlighted the logical inconsistency in the standard commencement clauses which were previously used widely in acts. These clauses simply provided that the act would commence on a date to be fixed by notice. However, it was obvious that the very section so providing, and the title to the act, had to commence before the declared date if it were to be possible to commence the remaining provisions. There was a general movement throughout the Australian jurisdictions to accommodate that wisdom by use of the long-form commencement, a movement the Territory could hardly resist in light of our constitutional document, the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, which had already recognised that practice. For that reason, most Northern Territory acts have a long-form commencement, providing that the enabling provisions commence on assent and the other provisions commence on notice in the NT Government Gazette.

Mr Speaker, the need to adopt the long-form commencement provision in bills can be avoided with the inclusion of an appropriate general provision in the Interpretation Act. Clause 2 of the bill proposes the inclusion of such a general provision. It provides that the necessary enabling provisions commence on the date of the Administrator's assent or, where the matter is reserved for the Governor-General, on the notification of his assent. The clause also provides that a general reference to the commencement of the act

is a reference to the commencement of the last provision in the act remaining to be commenced, so that there cannot be an argument raised about competing commencement dates. Other jurisdictions have included appropriate provisions in their Interpretation Acts, the most recent being New South Wales which passed a new Interpretation Act this year.

Section 7 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act requires that the Administrator is to declare his assent. The Interpretation Act refers to the giving of assent by the Administrator. Clause 2 corrects this misdescription. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

FOREIGN JUDGMENTS (RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 69)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This bill is concerned with the enforceability in the Northern Territory of judgments given by courts outside Australia in circumstances where the defendant has not voluntarily submitted to the jurisdiction of that foreign court to deal with the case. The issue of the enforcement in Australia of foreign judgments obtained in such circumstances has been under consideration for some time by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. The bill is based upon model legislation that has been prepared following the standing committee's detailed consideration of that issue.

As the law presently stands, foreign judgments may be enforceable in Australia under reciprocal enforcement of judgments legislation which exists in the Territory and all states or, alternatively, such judgments may be enforceable at common law. The Foreign Judgments (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act of the Northern Territory, which is similar to legislation in the Australian states, ensures that, if a foreign judgment is to be enforced in the Territory under the act or at common law, certain conditions must be met.

One of the major conditions that applies to proceedings under the act and at common law is that the foreign court must have exercised a jurisdiction that is recognised by our courts. Both under the act and at common law, a foreign court's jurisdiction in respect of an action against a person may be recognised if that person voluntarily submitted to the jurisdiction of the court, for example, by entering an appearance and arguing the case on its merits. However, the situation can arise in which a person may enter an appearance in a foreign court, not to contest a case on its merits but for a limited purpose, such as to contest that court's jurisdiction or to invite the court, in its discretion, not to exercise its jurisdiction.

The bill is designed to ensure that, in such a situation, the person appearing is not to be taken, for that reason alone, to have submitted voluntarily to the jurisdiction of the foreign court. Thus, in those circumstances, if the foreign court proceeded to hear the action, any judgment subsequently obtained against that person could not be enforced in the Territory simply because an appearance had been made for such a limited purpose.

The bill amends the act in relation to proceedings under its provisions in 2 respects. An appearance by a person only for the purpose of inviting a foreign court, in its discretion, not to exercise its jurisdiction, is not to be regarded as a voluntary submission to the foreign court's jurisdiction. Similarly, an appearance only for the purpose of protecting or obtaining the release of property, which is or may become subject to a type of restraining order known as a Mareva injunction, is not to be regarded as a voluntary submission to the foreign court's jurisdiction. The bill also amends the common law so that the principles which are used for the determination of the question of voluntary submission under the act are also applied to proceedings at common law.

The bill will ensure that persons who only wish to enter appearances in foreign court proceedings for certain limited purposes, such as to contest the court's jurisdiction, will not thereby render themselves liable to have any subsequent foreign judgment forced against them in the Territory. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 50)

Continued from 21 October 1987.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on this bill. Of course, it is a housekeeping matter. Bills similar to this come before this House from time to time. In the past, generally they have been bills which have cleansed our statute books of a number of old and irrelevant acts of parliament. Whilst this particular bill does not undertake such a task, it does tidy up and bring into line a number of pieces of legislation which require some modification at this time.

For example, it corrects omissions resulting from the passage of uniform companies legislation and the structuring of the Power and Water Authority. When the Power and Water Authority was created some months ago with the restructuring of the administrative services of government, a number of acts had to be modified to incorporate the new terminology. Where reference was made to NTEC in legislation or regulations those had to be modified to read 'Power and Water Authority'. That is the sort of thing we are talking about.

Clause 2.2 allows for retrospectivity to apply in such matters back to 1 July 1986, although I hasten to add that these various modifications have no effect on the rights that had been established in the various acts.

Another example would be the Companies (Administration) Act which has been changed by the removal of the authority of the Remuneration Tribunal in establishing the sitting rates of company auditor boards. These rates are now struck under the Remuneration (Statutory Bodies) Act. It is just another minor modification of the sort which comprises the ongoing business of government. A couple of days ago, we were given a further schedule of amendments which have been incorporated into this bill. I will run quickly through some of them: amendment of the Food Act, amendment of the Local Government Act, and further amendments to schedule 1 and schedule 2.

Mr Speaker, with those few words I would like to confirm that no major adjustment to legislation is encompassed in this bill. It is just a tidying up process.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, in closing this second-reading debate, I must thank the member for MacDonnell for raising 4 small but very important matters in relation to the bill.

Firstly, he asked for an explanation of the removal of schedule 6 from the Juries Act. I must say, on reflection, that removal of schedule 6 from the Juries Act was not meant to remove all forms of the juror's oath from the schedule, but only the form that was the subject of recent comment by Mr Justice Asche who, in a case in the Supreme Court, pointed out that the particular form pertained to the question of whether an accused person was fit to plead. Since the passing of the Criminal Code, it is a matter for a judge alone and the jury has no role. In consequence, I will be moving the necessary amendment to confine the repeal to that form only. I am grateful to the honourable member for bringing the matter to my attention.

He raised a point in relation to the reference to the Magistrates Act. Actually, that involved a clerical error and the reference should have been to section 4(1)(b) and not to 4(1)(a).

Another matter related to section 21(d) of the Unit Titles Act, which deals with 3 situations where the unit entitlements and unit plan may be changed, namely: in a subdivision of units, in a consolidation of units, and in a conversion of units or parts in the common property. These situations affect the relative liability of the unit owners, and they are mentioned in the heading to the section and in the introductory words. However, the last of them was inadvertently omitted from paragraph (a) and it is equally important that a proposed notice of conversion should be accompanied by the same information about unit entitlement as is required to accompany plans of subdivision and conversion.

The last point that needs clarifying was in relation to the open season on ducks and geese, which is no longer provided for by the Territory Wildlife Regulations. For the benefit of the honourable member - and I was not aware that he is a keen duck hunter - it is now declared by gazetted notice under the act itself and the relevant schedule to the regulations originally relating to the regulation 2, which was repealed on 27 June 1983. As a consequence, this schedule serves no purpose and its removal was overlooked at the time. I wish the honourable member much luck in his duck shooting in the desert of central Australia.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

New clause 2A:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 20.1.

New Clause 2A agreed to.

New clause 2B:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 20.2.

New clause 2B agreed to.

Clauses 3 and 4 agreed to.

Schedule 1:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 20.3.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 20.4.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: I move amendment 20.5.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I want to point out a small problem that has been drawn to my attention in a briefing note that was passed across to me. There is no problem with the amendment itself. Section 13A of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act has the title 'Director of Social Welfare May Notify Birth'. The section refers to the Director of Social Welfare appointed under what will now be the Community Welfare Act. Do we have a Director of Social Welfare? It is not a big point but it is one of the problems with legislation that specifies public service positions, the titles of which change in order to fit in with the whims of the government of the day. As has been said to me by people who are in a position to know, there is a tendency to immortalise in legislation the titles of some people in positions of power in the public sector.

Mr Dale: What are you talking about?

Mr BELL: Presumably, you are the minister responsible for the Community Welfare Act. There is no Director for Social Welfare pursuant to the Community Welfare Act, is there? That is a problem that ought to be chucked in the file for the next Statute Law Revision Bill.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I am not sure what the honourable member was getting at but I can assure him that we do not have a Social Welfare Act. At least, we are coming closer to what we are trying to aim for.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

See minutes for amendments to schedule 2 agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

JURIES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 61)

Continued from 23 September 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the bill has been considered by the opposition and we note the general issue involved, which concerns the exemption of certain classes of people from the responsibility of being 1 of the 12 good men and true. These classes include members of this Assembly and other people involved in the legislative process or the administration of justice such as police officers, practising barristers and solicitors and prison officers. Also exempted from jury service are those persons who are

incapacitated to the extent that they are unable to discharge the duties of a juror.

Mr Speaker, we note that this bill adds an additional category of exemption, that of the Ombudsman and his staff. We note that the rationale for this amendment is that the Ombudsman and his staff are formally or informally involved in the legislative process and the process of the administration of justice and should be exempted for the same reasons that those previous classes of people are exempt.

The only query we have - and it is not a substantial objection - is worthy of comment. I have no difficulty with the exemption of the Ombudsman, but I wonder about the exemption of his staff. Because of his position and the matters that he may have to deal with, it is appropriate that the Ombudsman not be a juror. I wonder about the blanket requirement that his staff be so excluded. I can see the rationale for an investigation officer being exempted. However, I am not really sure that a secretary in the temporary employ of the Ombudsman need necessarily be so exempted. My understanding is that the bill does exempt the Ombudsman's staff. To take that argument to its logical conclusion, one would exempt anybody who worked for a law firm. One would exempt a person employed as an electorate secretary of a member of this Assembly and people who were civilian employees with the police force, I would imagine. I wonder about the establishment of a precedent on this basis and I would appreciate the thinking of the government in this regard.

With those comments then, Mr Speaker, I have no hesitation in indicating the opposition's broad support for this amendment.

Mr SMITH (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in this debate, but I rise to follow through the point raised by the member for MacDonnell. I guess it is a matter of conflicting principles that have to be worked through and, of course, one such principle goes to the very essence of democracy and the very essence of what jury trials are about, which is that the widest possible range of people within our community ought, as part of their democratic rights and obligations, to be entitled to serve - indeed obliged to serve - on juries. A second and conflicting principle is that there are people who are particularly closely connected with law-making procedures who should not, for that very reason, be on juries.

Mr Speaker, it is true to say that the range of people who are eligible for jury duty has been widened quite considerably over the last few years. At the time when I was secretary of the Teachers Federation, it was proposed that teachers, who were previously exempt, should sit on juries. There was some concern within the federation about upset to classes and school programs in general. Thankfully, the government said that school teachers had a prime commitment to the democratic system that we all enjoy, part of that being to the jury system and to ensuring that juries comprise a wide cross-section of the community.

Mr Speaker, having made those comments, the point that the member for MacDonnell makes is a valid one. Although we on this side of the House can see a valid argument for the Ombudsman - or the Ombudsperson as the position probably should be called these days - to be exempt from jury duty, there are quite valid reasons for stating a strong position that the staff of the Ombudsman should not necessarily enjoy that privilege. As my colleague so rightly said, the logical extension of providing exemptions for the staff of the Ombudsman would be a similar exemption for the civilian staff in the police force, electorate secretaries and all sorts of other people who work

closely with law makers and law enforcers. I think the member for MacDonnell raised a significant point and I would invite the minister to respond to it.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, in relation to comments expressing concern regarding the Ombudsman's staff, I can certainly understand the reasoning behind it. In terms of the concept of our jury system, where one is judged by his peers, we certainly have a duty to ensure that as wide a cross-section of the community as possible is used to select members for jury service. In terms of the Northern Territory Ombudsman and his office, the number of staff is quite small. They have a heavy workload and any matter being investigated by the Ombudsman would involve the knowledge of the staff. Given that situation, I think it would be unfair to expect a person to be judged by somebody who might possibly be involved in any such investigation.

As a result of quite detailed study regarding the situation, it was decided that, to prevent anything unfair occurring in our jury system, the Ombudsman and his total staff would be exempted by the provisions of this bill. I can assure the honourable members opposite that there is no intention to try and narrow down the number of people that are available for jury duty, only to provide a situation where we can be sure that those that do sit on juries are not in a position possibly either to prejudice a trial or prejudice the outcome of a trial. I think honourable members will be aware that, in circumstances such as those they alluded to, in relation to staff in a lawyer's office or civilian staff in a police station, there would be a problem of suitability for jury service if those people were actually involved in work which touched on particular legal situations. There have been cases in the past where mistrials have actually occurred when, half way through a trial, it has been found that a jury member did have some connection.

Again, I think that we should make sure that our peer system of judgment is spread as widely as possible but, by the same token, we have to make sure it is fair to everyone. My mind will not be closed to the situation regarding the Ombudsman and his office staff or to the general matter raised by the opposition. However, in the present circumstances, when the Ombudsman's office is so small and covers such a large number of cases, I think that this is the preferable way to go.

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.

DISCHARGE OF BILL
Superannuation Amendment Bill
(Serial 71)

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in explanation, the Superannuation Amendment Bill (Serial 71) contains a clause which appropriates moneys and should not have been introduced prior to a message from His Honour the Administrator having been received. Mr Speaker, if leave is granted, I will move that the bill be discharged from the Notice Paper and, following the receipt of a message from His Honour the Administrator, it is my intention to seek leave to reintroduce the bill and to have the second-reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Motion agreed to.

URANIUM MINING (ENVIRONMENT CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 66)

Continued from 23 September 1987.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this piece of legislation. The minister has discussed with me a particular instance which arose in the uranium province and could not be dealt with because of the restrictions of the act. The bill before the House allows certain inspectorial powers to be managed via regulation.

Because of the nature of the uranium mining industry and its politically sensitive nature, the opposition feels that inspectorial powers should be as flexible as possible to facilitate the safeguarding of the environment in and around the uranium province. The inspectors' powers should be as flexible as possible and, optimistically, the uranium industry within the Northern Territory will continue to develop a reputation which may disabuse people of the notion that the industry is environmentally unacceptable. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to support this bill. I have spoken previously in the House about the uranium industry and Australia's further involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle, which is inhibited by the perceived dangers of the nuclear industry. Until such time as governments have demonstrated that they are concerned and that they have appropriate legislation and regulations to deal with any problems in the nuclear industry, the debate on the further involvement of the Northern Territory in the nuclear fuel cycle will not proceed very far.

In recent weeks, we have seen the collapse of the Australian share market. We have seen a collapse in our dollar's exchange rate. These events have been heavily influenced by our negative terms of trade, which are largely the result of Australia's past reliance on trading commodities rather than services. In this day and age, there is potential for nations to provide global services. One such service which Australia could provide is the long-term storage of nuclear waste or nuclear waste products.

What militates against Australia's future involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle is the public perception of the dangers inherent in the industry. Until such time as we have appropriate and enforceable legislation and regulations, I believe the debate will not proceed.

The intention of this piece of legislation is to expand the enforceability of the provisions of the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act. We have to do that in order to overcome the public perception of the dangers of the nuclear fuel cycle and, with that in mind, I support the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, one of my favourite topics is the mining of uranium in the Kakadu area. I have said before and I will say again that it is about time we all started to shout from the rooftops that uranium mining at Ranger is carried out in a manner which is environmentally very acceptable. We should be proud of the way mining is carried out there.

The Ranger Uranium Mine was annexed out of the Kakadu National Park. It is on the edge of the Magela Creek system, a very sensitive area which is part of the park. Mining is done in a manner which is very sound environmentally. Each year, \$6m is spent by nearly 200 officers of the Office of the Supervising Scientist in monitoring activity at Ranger. In addition, officers

of the Department of Mines and Energy keep a very close eye on what goes on. In fact, in terms of control of activities in the area, the officers of the Department of Mines and Energy have generally demanded a higher standard than the officers of the Office of the Supervising Scientist. That may surprise many people, but is a fact of life. I believe those officers are so diligent because they do not want people who are ideologically opposed to uranium mining to have any substantial cause to knock the industry and try to get rid of it. Some people in this country are very keen to do that.

Unfortunately, the media will grab hold of any alleged incident and blow it up. The people of Australia as a whole cannot go out to the region and see things for themselves and have them explained. The media seizes on a break in the line taking waste material from the mining process and depicts that as a cause of huge environmental damage. That is nonsense, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is time we spoke up and informed the people of Australia of the truth. Unfortunately, our media always tend to go for the hard luck story and the bad luck story. It seems that many in the media have an ideological opposition to uranium mining. It is time we jumped up and down and got the true picture across to the people of Australia.

I was informed by a very reliable source through Michels Warren that the federal government derived \$89m last year through charges on the uranium industry at Ranger alone. That is a considerable contribution to the economy of this country yet it is only a drop in the bucket in terms of the potential contribution of the uranium industry. I will chase up my friend and ask him to give the figures to me. That figure does not include the contribution made by the employees of Ranger. I will give the figures to the Leader of the Opposition because he is a doubting Thomas on this particular matter.

We have a horrendous international debt. With the crash in share prices, perhaps we are coming to a view of the real world. I have spent time over the last couple of weeks with various business groups in Darwin and the picture that they paint is one of considerable concern. They live in the real world. They do not have their snouts in the public trough. They know what is going on and they are very concerned. The Territory could do a great deal to help Australia trade its way out of its problems. It is not simply a matter of selling the uranium oxide. We must have the political courage to explain to the Australian people the advantages, the dangers and the ways in which the dangers can be channelled. Motor cars are dangerous instruments if they are handled wrongly but none of us would be without them. Used properly, they add greatly to our lifestyle and to the whole economy. That could be the case with uranium.;

The initiative must come from Canberra but we have to get in there and convince people. Perhaps, if a recession does hit us, the federal government will be forced to examine its assets and how to realise them. One course will be to take our uranium and enrich it to the 3% which is the level of uranium 235 necessary for reactors in nuclear power stations but way below the level of enrichment required for nuclear weapons. We should provide the nuclear rods for the people overseas and take the spent rods back. Members may have seen film of containers rammed by a freight train, as a result of which the train was wrecked and the containers left undamaged. Thus, it is possible to make containers for the safe transport of this material. We could separate the high-level radioactive waste from the low-level radioactive material and store it in this Territory using the synroc process.

Three years ago, \$20 000m was spent around the world on the storage of waste products from nuclear reactors. If we could not get 50% of that market,

we would not be trying. The world is looking for safe places. If we had the courage to do it, we could be making a great contribution to helping this country out of its financial mess. I look forward to the day when maybe somebody in Canberra will have the courage to go to the people. We must counter the nonsense and the fear campaigns that people who oppose uranium mining perpetrate, and the media cover. We must get the message across that the uranium industry would make a great contribution to the Territory and to Australia. In these straitened times, we cannot afford to ignore this material that has great potential for us.

The amendment before us is quite straightforward. As I understand it, people who enter a uranium area illegally and commit illegal acts cannot be dealt with by the police if they get out before they are caught. This will correct that anomaly so that such people who are caught later may be properly charged, as they should be. It has my full support.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, having been a fellow member of the Sessional Committee on the Environment with the member for Sadadeen, I am aware of his views on the nuclear energy industry. I must admit that I was not expecting to hear those views put forward today. I feel some obligation to agree with some of the things he said and to disagree with others.

The question of mining uranium is essentially a practical one and there are huge practical problems with it. Since I have had the opportunity to visit the mine on a couple of occasions, I agree with him that the mining of uranium at Ranger is done in an environmentally sensitive fashion. I am quite sure that the companies who invest in the mine feel at times that the stringent requirements are irksome. I am sure they feel at times that they are over-regulated.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL: I take on board the interjection from the Treasurer. It is exactly that sort of cowboy 'hear, hear' mentality that will restrict development of all sorts in the Northern Territory. If this Assembly and the ministers within it cannot be trusted by other governments in Australia or elsewhere, it will not enhance the processes of resource development. It frankly makes my blood run cold when I think of some of the responsibilities that fall on some of these frontbenchers. My concerns are focused by interjections like that.

I take the strongest possible issue with the member for Sadadeen in relation to his motor car analogy. I seem to have to make this point time and time again. He says that because human beings have been adjusting to living with dangerous commodities for years, they can adjust to living with this dangerous commodity. That is the essence of his argument. His analogy is a false one and I will explain why. He said we have become accustomed to using motor cars. We have a few accidents, but we have become used to living with them. The fact of the matter is that, at any time, we can choose to do away with motor cars. An individual can stop using a motor car. Unfortunately, the nuclear energy industry is quite different. Now that mankind is committed to the storage of nuclear waste, there is no backing off. You cannot go anywhere on the earth's surface where you are not potentially in danger from that nuclear waste.

Mr Coulter: Are you in danger where you stand? Your argument is nonsense. Where is your authority? You have shot yourself in the foot.

Mr BELL: I frequently feel I am in personal and imminent danger when I am in the proximity of the member for Sadadeen and the minister for mindless energy.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will withdraw his last comment.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise if my comment caused offence. I know how thick-skinned the minister is.

Mr Manzie: He would be a cheap politician if he was not costing the taxpayers \$50 000 a year.

Mr BELL: To make life easier for all of us, I will withdraw my remark unreservedly. I will pick up the interjection from the honourable Attorney-General. I must admit I was rather surprised to hear him refer to his colleague as a cheap politician. I venture to say that quite a few people would be inclined to do the same thing.

Nuclear energy is one of the most demanding issues of our time. I heartily endorse the stringent measures involved in the mining of uranium in the Territory. One matter of some concern to me relates to the Commonwealth Office of the Supervising Scientist and I would like some explanation of it. Why is the Office of the Supervising Scientist, which is set up to monitor the mining of uranium in the Alligator Rivers region, sited some 2000 miles away in Bondi? One can only assume that supervising scientists and their staff prefer the waves of Bondi to the wetlands of Kakadu, a question of dubious taste as far as I am concerned. Perhaps scientists are in thicker supply down there. I was very concerned to hear that the majority of the OSS staff are stationed in Sydney and not where their job is and I will put that on the public record. There may be some innocent explanation. It is not an issue I have been in a position to pursue with a great deal of vigour. I certainly noted it, however, when Dr Terry Gardner of Ranger Uranium Mines brought it to my attention during our most recent visit. I fail to see any reason why the Office of the Supervising Scientist should not be based in the Territory. I am quite prepared to accept that the Commonwealth government has a role in monitoring uranium mining, and that is probably where I part company with the member for Sadadeen and the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Mr Collins: I did not say that it should or should not. I just did not raise the subject.

Mr BELL: I am pleased to hear that the member for Sadadeen is at least equivocal on the point because, as I said before, the nuclear energy industry is controversial and we are well and truly hooked into it. We must not be blinkered by the economic benefits that flow from it. We have to bear in mind that it is one of the great issues of our time. It touches all our lives and it will touch the lives of our children and our children's children. Its implications extend over a scale of thousands of years.

I am aware that the amendments to the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act will not necessarily affect the future of the nuclear energy industry. However, when I hear comments like those of the member for Sadadeen, I feel that a reply is warranted. I am prepared to be proved wrong but my judgment is that, if there is a recession, the demand for uranium will fall rather than increase. I think the member for Sadadeen's argument that every cloud has a silver lining is suspect.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to the discussions about uranium mining during this debate and during the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I think we have come a long way in this Assembly when the member for MacDonnell questions the location of the Office of the Supervising Scientist, particularly the Bondi annexe. That could be the turning point in debate on the uranium issue in this House.

The member for Arnhem said in his speech on the Appropriation Bill that mining should proceed and the member for Arafura mentioned the prospects of uranium mining and said that we should capitalise on available markets by becoming firmly involved in the uranium fuel cycle. That is 3 out of 3, which is not bad. The opposition spokesman on mines and energy, the member for Nhulunbuy, would probably also support uranium mining which would make 4 out of 6.

The opportunities for the Territory will be the subject of a debate in this Assembly, I think, in the not too distant future and, once again, we will discuss the full implications of the nuclear fuel cycle and the mining of uranium particularly. It is pleasing to see those types of issues being brought forward by the opposition, and being brought forward in a constructive manner that is supportive of the way that we on this side of the House believe that that industry should develop.

Some of the other issues that have been touched on during this debate in terms of the wider implications of the nuclear fuel cycle are the reprocessing facilities etc that have been mentioned, and the fact that we would be leasing rods not exporting rods and that that might provide a loophole in the federal act that would enable us to do that. That is worth noting. Perhaps we can develop those at some later date. Really, at the moment, we are talking about washing trucks.

As was said in the second-reading speech, the Uranium Mining (Environment Control) Act has been in place now for some time. However, we have come across a situation where it has become difficult for us to prosecute subcontractors, not so much for operating illegally on the mine site but perhaps for legally carrying out some duties on the mine site and not following the necessary procedures. Having operated on the mine site, there is a provision that vehicles must be hosed down prior to leaving the site. There are special wash-down bays and all members who have been on the Sessional Committee on the Environment would have been out there and seen the process. The process is very costly and time consuming, but it must be done. It has been carried out to the letter of the act by the mining company. There was one particular instance when a vehicle left the site without actually going through that process and, really, that is what this amendment is about today.

I thank honourable members for their contribution and discussion of some of the wider-ranging issues which have been canvassed during this debate. I am grateful to have had that opportunity. As I said, I am particularly grateful for the support which is coming from the opposition on some of these issues. I will say again that, if it has come to the attention of the member for MacDonnell that the Office of the Supervising Scientist at Bondi is a bit of a roort, then I think we have come a long way, for a roort it certainly is, Mr Deputy Speaker. The sooner we do something about it, the better it will be.

We must recognise that, in the Northern Territory, there is a mining regime and there is a conservation regime. They are already in place and responsible to the Northern Territory government. The sooner Canberra realises that and we are allowed to get on with managing our own affairs, the better it will be for everyone.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 65)

Continued from 24 September 1987.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell). Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill has been the subject of some deliberation on our part. We note that the bill amends both the principal act and the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Amendment Act 1986 which has not yet commenced operation. We note that the purpose of the legislation is to remove the necessity to prescribe forms and certificates in the regulations and to replace it with a power that will reside in the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the minister to make decisions about requisite forms. This is done via the addition of a definition of what constitutes a 'prescribed' form.

The 1986 amendment act took the forms out of the act and placed them as regulations. That amendment act has not yet come into force and the government has decided, it would appear, that there is no need to prescribe such forms as regulations. The opposition has no problem with this and the bill will enjoy our support.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is nice to hear of support for this bill. Hopefully, as time goes by, we can find a number of areas in different pieces of legislation that have passed through this House where we can remove some of the prescribed forms and red tape that we seem to enshrine in legislation automatically, and so make things considerably easier and more effective. I do thank the opposition for its support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed; bill read a third time.

PAROLE OF PRISONERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 63)
CRIMINAL LAW (CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 64)

Continued from 24 September 1987.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would say to the minister responsible for correctional services that the opposition supports this

legislation. As we understand it, it provides an option of release into home detention under the previous provisions for conditional release of prisoners so that the previous provisions related to supervision and a requirement to obey reasonable directions continue to apply.

Under the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Amendment Bill, clause 6 provides for compensation for injury which is in line with provisions relating to people on community service orders and basically is calculated on their normal pay, if employed, or on the average weekly wage if the person is unemployed.

Clause 7 details home detention orders. Basically, the decision to impose home detention is with the court. A basic power is granted to the courts to make decisions in relation to the home detention of such people for periods up to 12 months. The court will set conditions for those people who are on home detention orders so that they may leave their homes only when directed to do so by the court and to ensure that offenders comply with the terms and conditions specified in the orders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, orders may also be made where a director makes a report stating that the home detention order is not likely to inconvenience or put at risk persons on the premises or in the community generally, and that is reassuring to people who have concerns. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, we have in the Northern Territory a very great number of people who are sent to prison for very minor offences. The opposition believes that this legislation will certainly help those people to rehabilitate themselves. As long as they do the right thing by the community, this will be preferable to their being kept in prison.

Offenders may be released on bail or held in custody while awaiting the director's report. We certainly welcome that, especially in relation to Aboriginal communities. At Groote Eylandt, at times people have had to wait up to 3 weeks in a very small, confined area before being brought to Darwin to face the courts. It is interesting to note that a person in breach of a home detention order may be summonsed or arrested and the order revoked or amended. This is supported by the opposition.

Field officers no longer exist under the act and paid or unpaid surveillance officers are provided for. Personally, I have some concern about this. If people are placed under a home detention order, there can be surveillance of a specific house. I note the legislation takes into account the concerns of people within a house or a community. The community must be aware of the nature of the surveillance involved. Surveillance officers have the power to enter and search the place where an offender is supposed to be residing and to require such tests to be carried out as would determine whether an offender is in breach of an order. No action would be taken against him if he can establish that he was not acting out of ill-will or for an improper motive.

Amendments are also made to the community service orders provisions to exclude orders for restitution, compensation or estreatment of bail. This is to prevent people who have to pay compensation to a victim avoiding the obligation through community work. I have experienced that sort of problem in outlying communities, mainly where breaking and entering offences occur as a result of petrol sniffing. Sometimes the teachers in these communities are concerned about personal belongings, such as boats or vehicles, which they intend to take back with them when they complete their term of employment in the community. Usually, the kids responsible for offences go to jail without paying compensation to the victim of the crime.

There have been examples of this at Angurugu. A classic example is where a student from Umbakumba might break into a teacher's place, take a vehicle and wreck it on the road between Umbakumba and Angurugu. The teacher would try to obtain compensation but, under the existing law, would have no hope of obtaining any. Usually, that teacher would turn to the Groote Eylandt Land Trust or other Aboriginal organisations in an effort to recover the damages. I welcome the amendments and the opposition supports the bills.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bills. This is one of those topics which has become very popular in the community at the moment. A week or so ago, Four Corners ran quite an interesting program which addressed the difficulties particularly in the south with regard to our prison system in Australia. Indeed, the honourable minister was a guest on that particular program. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to watch the entire program. However, I watched it long enough to be able to ascertain what it was aiming at. It featured a number of very eminent people from around Australia, along with prison officers and ex-prisoners. A whole range of issues were canvassed and discussed at length. That raised the profile of the problems being experienced in our prison system in Australia.

In Australia's southern states, prisons have been in existence for well over 100 years. We all know of Boggo Road in Queensland, Yatala in South Australia and Stuart's Creek in Townsville. The problem is that many of the facilities that we are using today have been there for 100 years. They are totally antiquated. Not only are the facilities antiquated but so are the attitudes of some of the correctional services departments in southern states which have to look after the interests of the various prisoners confined to those institutions.

I am very pleased to say that, in my opinion, the Northern Territory is leading Australia in the introduction of a range of innovative approaches to handling this problem of the confinement of prisoners in our institutions. The old attitude of sentencing somebody to jail and slamming him in the cooler for a week or 2 or longer is really outdated in certain instances. There is no doubt that, for a range of capital offences, there is no option but to confine people to jail and that that is where they rightfully should be. However, there is a range of minor offences where it is more appropriate for offenders to be confined in some lesser institution or involved in some type of rehabilitation program without lessening the obligation for those people to pay their debt to society. Over the last several years, the Northern Territory has been leading Australia with its innovative approaches to this particular problem.

For example, we have developed the Beatrice Hill facility near Adelaide River. I understand that the prisoners have reconstructed most of that facility themselves. It is a completely different environment to Darwin Prison. A number of juvenile prisoners are confined at Shady Camp. In fact, there was an excellent article in the Sunday Territorian very recently concerning a prison officer there, a Mr Nuku. I met this gentleman some time ago and, from memory, he is a Fijian. He is in charge of that particular facility and has undertaken a whole range of youth training programs to try to develop the characters of the young people who have been confined to that facility. I was quite saddened when I recently read about how one of those people had escaped from that facility. I use the word 'escaped' but they are hardly locked up. The young man went on the run and allegedly committed another crime at an adjacent cattle station.

Today, we have to consider not only the appropriateness of rehabilitation programs but the cost of imprisonment. I understand that, in the Northern Territory, it costs about \$90 per day per prisoner. The figure mentioned in the Four Corners program was higher than that and it heartens me to think that we have been able to keep the cost here at \$90 per day, which tends to be less than the ballpark figure in the states. I have read the minister's second-reading speech which quotes a figure of \$100 000 per cell for the construction of prison facilities. That is an enormous cost when one thinks in terms of building a block of 20 or 30 cells. Furthermore, those cells have to be maintained and serviced. I am told that those costs amount to \$92 per day. That is taxpayers' money. We should be developing innovative programs which will provide appropriate punishments without incurring massive costs.

As the minister pointed out, many prisoners are jailed for minor offences. Most of them are only imprisoned for a short period of several weeks or months. I understand that, in the Northern Territory, 60% of our prisoners are confined in jail for 12 months or less, which means that people are being cycled through those institutions quite regularly.

This legislation introduces a totally new concept for the Northern Territory, and I refer to home detention orders. As I understand it, a magistrate will be able to sentence offenders to a period of home detention. Outside working hours, offenders will be confined to home. People so sentenced will be able to continue to work in their normal jobs but, outside work, their movements will be restricted in accordance with the terms of the order. I understand that supervision in such cases will be quite strict. That is very important because there is no point in merely sentencing somebody to home detention and then forgetting all about them; we must ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the order. The magistrate may also order the offender to participate in an appropriate rehabilitation program. For example, a drink-driver who has lost his or her licence could be instructed to participate in a program which would hopefully ensure that that person did not commit the same offence again.

The minister said that, where appropriate, Aboriginal offenders will be confined to outstations. In other words, a condition of their home detention order would be that they go away from their normal community and are confined on an outstation. I can recall a debate in this House some 12 months or more ago when the use of Aboriginal law in sentencing such people was raised in reference to events at Angurugu. On that particular occasion, the proposal was that young offenders from Angurugu be confined on Bickerton Island under the control of an elder of their community. Now I am not sure how far we have gone towards implementing that type of proposal but the amended act will make it possible for a magistrate to sentence Aboriginal offenders to confinement on outstations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the use of home detention orders will have considerable financial advantages. I spoke earlier about a cost of \$92 per day for confining a prisoner in one of our penal institutions. The cost of confining a prisoner under a home detention order is approximately \$15 per day. The scheme certainly has many advantages. Offenders sentenced to jail frequently have wives, who may not be working, and children who need support. The offender is unable to earn sufficient money to support his family whilst serving his sentence and the family is forced to use the welfare system, which is an added cost to the taxpayer. Not only, therefore, is there a cost of approximately \$92 per day for the person confined to jail, but there is an additional cost of \$100 or more per week to support his family. The community has to bear many hidden costs because of our existing penal system.

The home detention system will eliminate the effect which the prison system has on new offenders, particularly young offenders, through peer pressure. All sorts of horrendous statements were made on the Four Corners program in relation to alleged practices in our jails. We heard about abuses of all types being perpetrated on prisoners. I will not go into any further detail but it is not hard to imagine what scars this sort of treatment would leave on the character of a new offender after a period of several months. Under this particular system, new offenders will not be exposed to that sort of pressure. That is a very good thing indeed. It eliminates the situation where exposure to hardened criminals can have an influence on the character of new and frequently young offenders.

I think home detention is a very appropriate punishment for minor offenders. It certainly affords considerable advantages to their families and to the community at large, and it offers considerable potential savings to the taxpayer. I compliment the minister and Correctional Services for introducing this innovative concept. I support the bills.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem has advised that the opposition supports this legislation and he went through its various provisions.

We have just heard the member for Jingili deliver a rehash of the minister's second-reading speech. While that did occupy some valuable time, it indicated that the minister's speech writer is giving value for money by covering 2 members.

In the Northern Territory we have a very high imprisonment rate. That is admitted by everybody and cannot be doubted, as it is shown in the figures of the Institute of Criminology. I want to go beyond those figures as such to talk about some of the dangers which arise from them, apart from the very obvious ones of social disruption and cost.

It seems to me that there are a couple of basic reasons why jails can be regarded as places to be feared. The obvious one is loss of freedom. I believe, however, that the major one is the shame and embarrassment that is part and parcel of a jail term for the average person. When a person goes to jail, it is probably an experience he has never had before. His relations have usually not experienced it and it is normally unknown in the family. Perhaps it is something that Uncle Dave, the horrible black sheep of the family, once experienced when he was young. Generally, an offender who is sentenced to jail finds himself in an unreal and unknown environment, which has a degree of social stigma attached to it. That occurs because it is an abnormal situation. It is not the norm for a person within that group to be in jail.

However, Mr Speaker, consider the situation that can develop if, for example, imprisonment rates within a community go beyond a certain level so that it is no longer abnormal to have spent a term in jail, to have had a brush with the law which has led to short or long-term imprisonment. In that case, in that community that becomes the normal situation: it is something that has happened to all your relations including your parents, and most of your brothers and your sisters. It is the normal situation. That situation creates reverse pressures. It creates pressures to conform. There is no stigma attached to imprisonment and that part of the fear of punishment no longer exists. There may still be the lack of freedom and problems associated with that. But a large component of it, the actual fear of standing out from the group, is not there. The fear then is that you will stand out from the

group in a different way. It is my belief that, in various communities in the Northern Territory we come very close to that situation at times.

I have talked to magistrates and judges who have emphasised to me the need for alternatives. They say: 'I fined that person the first time. I was determined I would not send that person to jail. He looked like a person who really could make something of his life. I fined him. I put him on a good behaviour bond. I have done this, I have done that and I am at a loss. What am I going to do? There is nothing left but jail'. Magistrates and judges are looking for alternatives, for ways that they can try to keep people out of jail, yet still solve the problem and get them to realise that they must obey the law.

But let us look at that from a different perspective. If spending time in jail is the norm in some communities, it may be necessary to develop a deliberate policy which keeps people out of jail, so that the experience of going to jail will again become abnormal and a punishment which will have suitable status in terms of obeying the law. Jail needs to be a place to be feared so that it can be used, when all else fails, to reinforce the law. That is the major reason for giving this legislation my wholehearted support. I believe that it provides another option to assist us in breaking down the acceptance of institutionalisation, so that we can keep the incarceration rates below a certain percentage and get back to the norm.

There is an aspect to the legislation that worries me although I think it can be overcome. It is possible that the legislation could end up being applied in a disproportionate way to the people who are better off, to those who have secure homes in a fairly standard urban environment. It may be that that will fit better with the officials who are appointed under the provisions of the legislation and who have the duty to look into the circumstances surrounding offenders' families and their local communities. They may say: 'That is a good house. It is a stable house. The offender owns most of it, his mortgage is pretty low, it is in a good neighbourhood and home detention is therefore appropriate'. On the other hand, people who are far poorer and have no house, may find that they end up going straight to jail, because they are unable to satisfy the terms of this provision. I am worried that the application of the legislation may develop in that way.

I hope that my reading of the bill is correct. There appear to be options for use of the provisions in both community and outstation situations and I hope that they will be exercised, in consultation, of course, with the other residents of the outstations and communities involved. It is important that other residents feel happy about it. It is very obvious that a person who has been involved in a serious incest problem should not be sent back to the family home under a home detention order. I do not believe that would happen, although I am not quite sure about the approach to such matters. On the face of it, that would certainly seem to be abhorrent and I believe it would not occur. An outstation or a community should not be forced into attempting to handle a person who has committed a very serious crime against that outstation or community. Other members of the community may feel that they are unable to accept that person back and give him the support and the rehabilitation that are needed to help him come through the period of home detention in a positive way.

Of course, there are many other types of offences that people commit, not least of all in Alice Springs, such as the stealing of vehicles. These would possibly fit very well into this situation. I would hope that not just the home detention orders provided for in this legislation, but community service

orders as well, will be used in the case of such offences and also expanded into bush communities.

I have noticed the excellent effect that community service orders are having in Yuendumu, one of the communities in my electorate. People who are there who have done something wrong are seen by the rest of the community and by themselves to be repaying the community in a very direct way for the wrong that they have done it. The 2 elements are important: the repayment is direct and the offenders are seen to be making it. In many ways, justice is being seen to be done and the offenders have an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves back into the community by gaining some pride in a concrete achievement. In one case I know of, people on community service orders made changes to a building that was no longer needed for its original purpose, so that it became a support centre. The materials were scrounged around the place and labour was provided under community service orders. It was something that people became quite proud of at the end of the project and the offenders felt that they really had done something for their community. They were able to have the positive feeling that they were actually doing something within the system. They did not have to continue to operate outside the system, in an unlawful way, to gain notoriety. They could gain themselves prestige and kudos by working within the system of law that we have.

With those minor worries and the hope that the scheme will be expanded out bush, I give the bills my wholehearted support.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the Northern Territory we have a problem with overcrowding resulting from the number of people we have in our penal institutions. However, one thing that we can be very proud of is the innovative approach and the commitment of the Northern Territory government and its Correctional Services staff in tackling that particular problem. The manner in which the Northern Territory goes about facing those issues has set standards and a pattern for the rest of Australia to follow.

Honourable members will remember that the Northern Territory was the first area in Australia to introduce compulsory AIDS testing for its prisoners, and everybody will remember the problems that came about as a result of that. People criticised the system. Various arguments were raised in an attempt to demonstrate that it would never work. It was said to be too draconian and we were told we could not force people to accept it. Suddenly, people like Dr Pennington, who was then the head of the Australian AIDS Task Force, came out in favour of what the Northern Territory government was doing, and the pattern started to change.

There have been a number of other areas in which the Northern Territory government been a pioneer in its approach to correctional services, particularly in respect of juvenile offenders. Honourable members will remember the debate that took place in this Assembly when responsibility for the Juvenile Justice Act was taken from the Department of Community Development and transferred to Correctional Services. Honourable members in this House said that it would never work. Certain sociologists or would-be sociologists told us that it would be too draconian and that we would have all sorts of problems. Those prophets of doom and gloom travelled throughout the community, ringing bells and calling out, 'Bring out your dead'. The transfer of that responsibility has been an unqualified success. It has set the pattern and other people throughout Australia are looking at similar innovations.

The Juvenile Crime Task Force was set up to examine these issues in Alice Springs and Darwin. The member for Sadadeen spoke about Helen Daff and Giles House. People told us that it would not work and that, if we put prison officers in charge, the kids would have all sorts of problems. We established the juvenile wilderness camp. We had a few problems at first because, of the first 8 juveniles sent there, 7 ran away. The one who did not run away had fallen off a motorbike and hurt himself.

Mr Dale: No, he was hungry. He cooked himself a big breakfast.

Mr COULTER: He certainly did not move and he only had a couple of weeks to go before he was to be released anyway.

We have had our problems but we have been prepared to face the challenges. Once again, I pay full credit to those officers of Correctional Services who have taken on the problems in the Northern Territory. This legislation provides the courts with an extra sentencing option in the form of home detention orders.

I have had the opportunity to travel extensively throughout Canada and America. A tour was set up for me by the previous head of Correctional Services in Canada. I have been in and out of more prisons than most people in Canada and America. In fact, I think I visited 38 prisons there in the same day. I was very glad to get out of some of those. One in Prince Albert in Canada is called the SHU. This is a special prison set up to handle people who have killed in jail. It is not a pretty sight; those people are really caged up. There are guard dogs and guards with shotguns and it is a very frightening experience to walk into such an institution. We went to the Last Chance Ranch in Florida to have a look at the juvenile camps that were set up there. There are 40 000 prisoners in Florida and that is about equivalent to the total prison population of Canada.

The juvenile camp that I spoke about was established principally for people who had been charged with first degree murder or what they call 'strong arm hold-up' where they had shot somebody in a hold-up. The detainees were all under 17 years of age. It was realised that putting them in prison with hardened criminals was not the answer as they simply learn skills from the more hardened criminals. The average stay at the wilderness camp that I visited was about 2 years. In fact, some of those kids were returned to the streets in that period. It is a big risk, but the risks have to be taken. I read somewhere that Oscar Wilde was quoted as saying: 'If an idea is not dangerous, it is not an idea'.

In Miami, there is a problem in relation to drugs. As members will realise, it is not far from Cuba and drugs are imported through Miami. One of the innovations in that area was home detention or what they called community control orders. I will read out the definition of a 'community control order' in that particular place:

This sanction permits courts in North America to require that an offender enter into an undertaking to live in a given residence for a specified period in addition to or in place of any other sanction. This residence may be in the offender's customary residence or any other residence or hostel, but not a prison or other penal establishment.

This sentencing option is strictly enforced. Offenders may not leave their residences and are not allowed out even on special occasions, like family

outings, marriages and funerals. I had the opportunity of speaking to officers who patrolled some of the built-up areas in Miami. I can assure honourable members that, although it is not quite as frightening as the SHU in Prince Albert in Canada, it can be a fairly scary experience to walk in these particular communities.

Parole officers or probation officers walk into these communities to check whether the kids are at home or not. They do it on a random basis. One officer, a young lady, told me of a very interesting situation. They usually walk in groups of 3. She had walked into this particular community and was seen as a stranger. The crowd gathered round her and threatened her. The person on the community control order was indeed at home. He saw what was happening from his balcony. He recognised his guidance officer, raced down the stairs, made his way into the crowd in no uncertain manner, put his arm around the lady and walked her back up to his residence. It was a turning point for that particular district. That lady was welcomed from then on.

You need nerves of steel to do that sort of work because, when those people pat you on the back, they are looking for a place to put in the knife. Many people would not put themselves in that position, but there are dedicated officers who believe in the rehabilitation of people. Their commitment to these kids is unswerving.

One of the devices available in relation to home detention is the security bracelet. We do not intend to introduce these in the Territory but I showed the Attorney-General some brochures on them. The security bracelet is placed on the offender and he has to wear it throughout the duration of his sentence. That bracelet is connected to a computer in his residence. If he goes more than 50 m from his residence, it sounds an alarm at the local police station and they pick him up. The bracelet can be worn on the ankle or the arm and it really does work. It may be suggested that such devices are too harsh and too humiliating and I am not sure about that.

We have to find ways of avoiding putting people into prisons, not only because of the drain on taxpayers' money but because prisons should be used as a deterrent for intractable offenders. In the case of people sentenced under home detention orders, I believe we should be looking at ways and means of controlling them. I understand that the security bracelet is virtually connected to a transponder, which is connected to the telephone. It is fairly easy to operate and virtually foolproof against tampering.

To return to the subject of Aboriginal communities, I have sat down with a number of Aboriginal people in various places which have notoriously high crime rates. When an offender on an Aboriginal community goes to prison, he is not the one who suffers most. It is usually the women and kids who go without tucker as money is raised to pay for court cases, bail or whatever. The offender usually goes off to prison where he lives in relatively luxurious conditions, is fed well, has blankets, is looked after very well and does not have to do too much work. Meanwhile, back at home, mum and the kids are in real trouble in trying to look after themselves.

One community, which the member for MacDonnell would know, gave an example of how people who get bashed have to pay the price. I visited a community where the people were asked whether they thought it was a good idea that there be retribution for crimes committed in their community. The women said yes. Remember that many cases involve domestic violence, where women suffer severely. These women knew all about striped suits and the ball and chain. They wanted offenders identified very clearly. They said: 'Put them in those

uniforms with the arrows on them. Put the ball and chain on them and make them go out and dig the garden'. That was the type of punishment that they wanted for offenders of that kind.

It reminds me of the debate about the Liquor Act. It has been called 'draconian' and 'unworkable'. Cars have been forfeited, but let us not forget that the traditional owners originally said: 'Take the cars from them'. They are still saying it today. I think about 70% or 80% of our crime is alcohol-related and, in that context, an incident which occurred in the electorate of the member for MacDonnell is relevant. On this occasion, the men were sitting against one wall and the women were sitting against another. We were talking about grog-running. The men said: 'All this grog-running has to stop. There is too much of it. It is creating too much disharmony in the community and we want it stopped immediately. Bring in the police'. They had their say and then the women had theirs. One woman stood up and pointed to the men. She said: 'You see these men sitting here? They are the biggest grog-runners in this community. They use the council truck and they put it in the sand in the back'. She really let them have it, and she really wanted the punishment to fit the crime. That community wanted the cars stopped and impounded.

If we are going to bring in this type of legislation, and if we are going to go to the Aboriginal people, we have to be prepared to give them what they want. My experience as Minister for Correctional Services was that they want harsh punishments to be imposed and they want them to be policed by people in the community to make sure offenders work and pay for the crimes which they have committed against the community. As a government, we have to make sure that we can come up with the goods as required by the community.

The home detention system can work. It will have some problems and we will be criticised because of them. In some cases, we will be told that the system is unworkable.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Don't forget the victim.

Mr COULTER: That is what I am saying in relation to the Aboriginal communities. In that instance, victims are demanding that crimes be paid for. Offenders do not pay for their crimes by spending time in jail in Alice Springs. It serves no purpose at all.

Another problem relates to the amount of time parole officers spend travelling around communities looking for Aboriginal offenders. We will have to develop different strategies. Parole officers travel many thousands of miles each year to communities, to check on people on parole. When they arrive, they are told that the person has just left and will be back next week. The offender may know that the parole officer is coming on a particular day and so he avoids having a drink during the preceding week. We really need people on the spot, people who are prepared to do this work. As was pointed out in the debate on the Appropriation Bill last evening, it is a pretty brave man who will go out and disconnect the electricity or the water on a community. It would also be a very brave man who would be prepared to supervise people on home detention in Aboriginal communities.

Mr Ede: It would be a lot easier.

Mr COULTER: It would be easier than disconnecting the power and water, I agree. I think the member for Stuart would agree that we have to find solutions to those problems.

I congratulate the minister responsible for correctional services on bringing this bill to the Assembly. I wish him luck with its implementation. I also wish Correctional Services officers all the luck in the world. I know that they are committed and are determined to ensure that this legislation will work. Some people will probably abuse the system in the initial stages, but we have to start somewhere. We have to develop these programs. As I said at the beginning of my contribution to this debate, there are many things in the Northern Territory that we cannot be proud of. These include our crime rate, our rates of imprisonment and the percentage of Aboriginal people in jail. However, the Territory can be proud of its innovative approach to tackling the problems it faces. I wish the minister well. I believe that he will come under some criticism from certain quarters but I ask him to take heart from the fact that penal reforms undertaken in the past by the Territory government and its Department of Correctional Services were criticised. I commend the legislation.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate.

I would like honourable members, particularly the Chief Minister, to note that I have not seen 1 overseas prison. I certainly have seen prisons in every state in Australia and I can assure honourable members that we have a great deal to be proud of despite the fact that I acknowledge very quickly that our prisons are not absolutely ideal in every respect.

I want to record some statistics to begin with. In the Northern Territory, 95% of all prison inmates are male; 40% have never previously been in prison; 33% are married; 70% are Aboriginal; 74% were unemployed at the time of committing their offence; 15% are under 19 and 52% are over 25; 60% have committed alcohol-related offences; 34% are in jail for fine default or estreatment of bail and average 7 days imprisonment; and 64% serve less than 3 months in prison.

The Northern Territory's prisons are at Alice Springs, Beatrice Hill, Gunn Point and Darwin. I will make some comments about these prisons, which might be interesting in comparison with the prisons covered in the ABC program 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind'.

At Alice Springs Prison, we have never doubled up on cell accommodation for either adult or juvenile prisoners. All cells at the Alice springs jail have toilets, hand basins and running water. Dormitory blocks in E, F and D wings accommodate 4 persons per dormitory. Each dormitory unit has a flush toilet, hand basin and running water.

At Beatrice Hill there is no single-cell accommodation. There are six 4-prisoner cells and a ratio of 5 prisoners to each toilet and hand basin. In the dormitory, there is a ratio of 6 prisoners to each toilet and hand basin. All are regularly inspected by the visiting medical officer and all have been passed as acceptable according to designated health standards.

Gunn Point Prison Farm is established as a farm and accepts inmates on an honour basis. There is no lock-up facility at the Gunn Point Prison Farm. Up to 60 prisoners are accommodated. There are 10 single rooms and I am told that, generally, they house the cooks who are the early risers. The remainder are accommodated in dormitories. They have ablution blocks available 24 hours a day, and they are located at either end of the dormitories or within a short walk. Toilets, hand basins and showers with hot and cold water are available at any time.

The Darwin Prison has never doubled up with males, only in the female unit which has a 2-tier bunk system in each of the 10 cells. The average occupancy of the women's prison is 10 and on occasions when this is exceeded, as at present, we double up. Currently, all women prisoners are accommodated in Darwin. The annexe at the Alice Springs Prison has been closed temporarily.

All single cells in the Darwin Prison have toilets, hand basins and running water. The women's unit cells also have showers, just like a motel unit. The dormitory blocks have a ratio of 5 prisoners to 1 toilet; all of which are flush toilets. All dormitories have hand basins in the same ratio and all have running water.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to place those statistics on record. When you take into account some of the horrific facilities shown on that program, 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind', you can see that many of the conditions that we have in the Northern Territory are far more acceptable than those in southern states. But, we do not let the matter rest there. We can see the mistakes that have been made down south, where buildings more than 100 years old are still being used to house prisoners.

The statistic that this particular legislation addresses is that 64% of convicted prisoners serve less than 3 months. It is about time that society had a look at what it wants so far as certain offenders are concerned. One of the great things about 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind' was that it opened the eyes of some of us who sit back and think that that terrible person who committed a certain offence should be behind bars. We now know what 'behind bars' can mean. There are places that are probably unfit for any human being. If they are to hold wrongdoers, then surely they would have to be the worst possible wrongdoers, and the pressure of numbers within those establishments certainly should be lessened. We are able to take advantage of the mistakes that have been made down south - mistakes that will have unavoidable financial consequences unless the lead of the Northern Territory government is followed in terms of some of the innovative moves we are making. This legislation is certainly one of those. It does cost \$100 000 per cell unit to build a prison. It costs \$92 per day to keep an inmate in prison, whether he be a rapist, a murderer, a drink-driver or a fine defaulter.

We have already introduced legislation relating to community service orders that caters for the fine defaulter. The amendments in these cognate bills take into account some anomalies in that legislation. They relate to cases where people have been required to make financial compensation or where there are bail estreatments in place. It was never envisaged by the legislation that those people be given community service orders to work off the value of that particular requirement of the court. If you default on your bail, it is obvious that the condition on which that bail was granted was that either you pay up or you go to jail. That is the condition that is put in place by this particular amendment.

Mr Speaker, we need to go 1 step further to address the 64% who are serving less than 3 months. Having seen 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind', does society really want the drink-driver to be placed in a concrete jungle? We are referring to the family man who drank too much alcohol, drove his car and probably put society under some threat. Mr Speaker, I think not. I believe that the requirements of society today will be satisfied by this home detention legislation for a number of reasons.

The first and most obvious is the financial aspect. It will not cost the \$92 a day necessary to keep this person in prison; it will cost about \$10 a

day to supervise him under a home detention order. Remember that 95% of persons sent to prison are male and that 33% of them are married. It is reasonable to assume that many of them have young kids. That family has lost the breadwinner. As a result, the family is very likely to be placed under the welfare system which will cost the taxpayer even more money. As the honourable member for Stuart said, the stigma that attaches itself to the members of that family is something that they will probably take a long time to get over. Moreover, that person has probably lost his job if, in fact, he was not one of the 74% who were unemployed at the time of the offence. When he has finally paid his debt to society by living in one of those concrete jungles for some 3 months, society has not gained anything other than that it has kept him out of the way for a while.

If society wants to address the problem of a person who drinks and drives on the streets, it can do that via this legislation. The court can order that that person be detained in his home or within his community for all periods other than those specified within the order. In the main, one would envisage that that would be for the person to go to his place of employment. It could also require the person to undertake counselling through a service such as Alcoholics Anonymous. I believe that society will be satisfied by the provisions in this legislation.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart mentioned his concerns about whether or not Aboriginal people will be adequately catered for under this legislation. I can assure him that they will be. In fact, proposed new section 19B of the Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act says:

- (1) A court shall not make a home detention order unless -
 - (a) it receives a report from the Director stating that -
 - (i) suitable arrangements are available for the offender to reside at the premises or place specified in the report;
 - (ii) the premises or place specified in the report is suitable for the purposes of a home detention order; and
 - (iii) the making of the home detention order is not likely to inconvenience or put at risk other persons living in those premises or at that place or the community generally; and
 - (b) the offender consents to the making of the home detention order.
- (2) For the purposes of making a report under subsection (1), the Director may take into account the views of those members of the community who, in the opinion of the Director, may be affected by the making of the home detention order.

This government has been innovative in its approach to the penal system. We have not introduced the community service orders or this legislation without first putting in place a number of things. The concerns of the member for Stuart have been alive in the mind of this government for some time. Some time ago, we introduced the Aboriginal Community Justice Program whereby the courts of the Northern Territory can go out to the communities, involve themselves with the elders of the community, take advice from those elders and take the necessary measures in relation to the offender prior to perhaps placing him on a community service order or a home detention order or using some other available option.

We also have the Aboriginal Community Corrections Program which is operating in Groote Eylandt. This is quite a unique project which is funded jointly by the federal government, the Northern Territory government and, more importantly, by the community itself. This is a tremendous step in the right direction and demonstrates that the communities are taking on board their responsibility and demonstrating their concern by providing an adequate service so far as the offenders are concerned. The courts are given appropriate information on the people placed before them and the offenders are properly informed of the circumstances under which they will have to front the court.

Mr Speaker, electronic devices are definitely a thing of the future so far as home detention is concerned. That is a little bit further down the track, but we are looking at that at the moment.

Under proposed section 19G of the same act, the surveillance officers have powers to enter and search premises or require an offender to undergo tests, including tests for alcohol or any other drug in the bloodstream. I want to place on record here that that is a very privileged, if I might use that word, power for people in that position. I am sure that police would like to have a similar power under the same circumstances. Let me say that it is my intention as minister to ensure that all surveillance officers are well and truly briefed on their responsibilities to that power and that it will only be exercised under certain circumstances. Those circumstances will be put in place administratively.

Mr Speaker, I think I have covered most points. I want to say that this is not the end of the road as far as we are concerned in relation to Correctional Services. The next thing that will probably come to the fore, apart from the juvenile justice amendments that I introduced today, is that I intend making the juvenile wilderness camp concept available for female inmates. Many people are rather horrified about that concept but, as the Treasurer said, we are facing up to our responsibilities in the penal system with a great deal of courage. I assure honourable members that we will be introducing that system with the assistance of some very capable people within my department.

There is one thing I must touch on. In that program on television the other night, I believe that prison officers were shown in a very poor light indeed, and I do not believe that the program depicted the morale or the standing of prison officers generally throughout Australia. I can say, without any fear of contradiction, that it certainly did not depict the attitude or the integrity of the prison officers within the Northern Territory system.

I am looking forward with a great deal of excitement to the future, in which we can provide the best penal system in Australia. Of course, rural venues are coming up in the not too distant future and it is almost a matter of 'look in next week for the next vital chapter in the development of penal services in the Northern Territory'.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Speaker, I would like to present a report to the Assembly tonight on my recent overseas visit to Singapore, Greece, Cyprus and London. It is a lengthy report and, to save the time of honourable members, I seek leave of the Assembly to have the report incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF MINISTER, HON STEVE HATTON
ON OVERSEAS VISIT OCTOBER 1987

I wish to report to honourable members on my recent overseas visit. On this visit I was accompanied by my wife, the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister, my press secretary and the Director of Protocol. A leading member of the Darwin Kalymnian community and a member of the Darwin Cypriot community also accompanied me to Greece and Cyprus. On this part of the trip, the party was also accompanied by the Honorary Consul for Greece in the Northern Territory.

SINGAPORE - 6 OCTOBER 1987

During my stopover in Singapore, I met with the Australian High Commissioner to Singapore and the Trade Commissioner. I also had the opportunity to meet with a group of Singapore businessmen and the Trade Development Zone Authority's consultant in Singapore.

The High Commissioner gave me a briefing on the current economic situation in Singapore. Last year Singapore experienced a severe economic downturn with negative growth following many years of sustained high positive growth rates. Singapore has recovered strongly this year with growth rates back to about 6.5% per annum. This recovery has been led by the manufacturing sector, particularly electronics (for the United States market), refining and ship repair. Tourism has remained strong and current tourism levels to Singapore are about 3.5 million per annum of which Australia contributes about 10%.

Although small, (its population is only 2.5 million), Singapore is a highly sophisticated financial centre and plays an extremely important political, financial and trade role in South-east Asia. It is particularly important to Australia because it is the largest single market for Australian horticultural produce (half of which is re-exported to other Asian markets within 24 hours), and there remains significant potential for greater sales by Australian exporters. In the High Commissioner's view, Australia has yet to demonstrate that it has the capacity to take full advantage of market opportunities in Singapore.

The High Commissioner noted that Singapore's success had been aided by a remarkably flexible political regime which was willing to implement sharp policy changes when appropriate in response to changing circumstances or perceptions. In discussions with the High Commissioner and the Trade Commissioner I found the following points of particular interest to the Northern Territory.

Singapore provides excellent market opportunities for our horticultural industry, melons and tropical fruit. The strong foreign interest in Singapore with major countries competing for the market means that the Northern Territory will need to investigate the market carefully to identify appropriate niches.

There is scope for tourism cooperation. Singapore is experiencing a rapid growth in tourism, especially from Japan. Airline capacity between Singapore and Australia is a major constraint. Currently, in the peak season, there is no availability of seats. Singapore Airlines is seeking to expand capacity on the route but is experiencing difficulty in its negotiations with Qantas. (Honourable members may recall that similar problems were raised by Garuda during my recent discussions in Indonesia).

There is interest among Singapore investors in aquaculture, especially for tiger prawns. I have arranged for this interest to be followed up through the Trade Commissioner.

There is considerable interest among Chinese businessmen in Singapore in Australia's business migration program. I have confirmed through the High Commissioner the Northern Territory's interest in participating more fully in the business migration program and he has undertaken to advise the Northern Territory government on specific opportunities or when relevant inquiries are made. The Trade Commissioner has been given specific Northern Territory contacts in the Department of Industries and Development for follow up.

There would appear to be a need for general promotion of the Northern Territory in Singapore as an investment market and to encourage greater interest in development prospects here. The promotional efforts of the Trade Development Zone Authority and the Tourist Commission have clearly had some impact, but the level of general business awareness of the Northern Territory in Singapore needs to be boosted. We need to raise the Territory's profile based on a careful study of realistic market and investment opportunities. There are opportunities for more diversified Northern Territory exports into Singapore, but limited and costly transport links are a major constraint.

The Australian High Commission in Singapore also covers parts of east Malaysia and Brunei. The High Commissioner suggested that there may be opportunities in Brunei in the meat and general food export areas, particularly selling halal packs for army rations following Brunei's liberalisation of procedures for defence purchases. I noted the extensive contacts we have made in Brunei and the growing interest in Brunei in Territory building and construction technology and products, with our experience in tropical construction techniques.

I also emphasised to the High Commissioner the Territory's interest in promoting Darwin as a focal point for trade between South-east Asia and the rest of Australia.

During my discussions with Singaporean businessmen, I was encouraged by the interest that was shown in the Northern Territory. At least 2 of these businessmen have made firm commitments to visit the Northern Territory to examine general investment and development opportunities.

ATHENS - 7 OCTOBER 1987

On my way to Kalymnos, I took the opportunity to meet with the Australian Ambassador to Greece and representatives of the Greek government for general background discussions. The Australian Ambassador confirmed that general relations between Greece and Australia are excellent. The Greek government is clearly very appreciative of the way in which Greek people have settled happily into Australia and there are currently no issues between the 2 countries. The Ambassador indicated that it was likely that 1 or 2 Greek ministers would be visiting Australia during the bicentennial year and I asked him to register our very strong interest in having a Greek minister visit Darwin.

I had the opportunity to meet with the First Deputy Speaker of the Greek parliament and also present at this meeting was the member of the Greek parliament for the Dodocanesus Islands (which include the island of Kalymnos). These discussions highlighted the close ties between Greece and Australia and the Deputy Speaker returned to this theme several times. He was well aware of the size and importance of the Greek community in the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin.

The parliamentary representative for Kalymnos explained how the Kalymnians living in the Northern Territory are making a very important contribution to the continued survival of Kalymnos, especially following the closing of the waters off North Africa to the Kalymnian sponge divers. I emphasised that the Greek community had made, and was continuing to make, a vital contribution to Northern Territory development. I noted its contribution in a number of industries, particularly in building and construction. The Deputy Speaker expressed the hope that even closer ties would be developed in the future and highlighted commerce and tourism as 2 important areas for cooperation.

I also met with the alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs who again emphasised the strong and close ties between Australia and Greece and the very friendly relations which exist. He suggested this was a basis to promote even better bilateral relations. The minister indicated that the Greek government was interested in teacher exchanges between Greece and the Northern Territory. Such exchanges were already in place with New South Wales and Victoria and the development of a program with the Northern Territory is to be actively pursued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I again took the opportunity to emphasise the important role of the Greek community in the Northern Territory and I suggested that the bicentennial year would be a very suitable time for a visit to the Northern Territory by a Greek minister. The minister indicated his support for such a visit and has agreed to pursue the suggestion.

Following the meeting with the minister, I had the privilege of meeting with His Excellency Mr Christos Sartzetakis, the President of Greece. The President outlined his views on the regional political situation and also expressed his appreciation of the close and friendly ties between Greece and Australia.

I was also the guest at an official luncheon hosted by the Minister of the Aegean. The minister's responsibilities cover the Greek

islands and the luncheon was also attended by senior Greek officials from that ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of the Australian Embassy. The minister had visited Australia earlier this year and was impressed by the multicultural nature of Australian society. The minister outlined the current regional political situation, including Greece's concern at the state of relations with Turkey. I took the opportunity to emphasise to those present at the lunch the valued role played by the Greek community in the Northern Territory.

KALYMNOS - 8-10 OCTOBER 1987

My visit to Kalymnos was at the invitation of the Mayor and people of Kalymnos and the delegation was received as the guests of the Mayor of Kalymnos. I wish to express my appreciation to the Mayor and the people of Kalymnos for their generous hospitality and kindness to me and all the members of the Territory delegation. The reception and the treatment we received while on the island were overwhelming and I have no doubt that we all have extremely fond recollections of our time there. I also wish to express my thanks to those Northern Territory Kalymnians who were on the island at the time of our visit and who contributed so generously to our transport arrangements and whose hospitality was quite magnificent. I believe the visit was extremely valuable in strengthening even further the relations which exist between Kalymnos and the Northern Territory and the goodwill which exists between the 2 regions is very gratifying.

On arrival in Kalymnos, we were greeted by the Mayor and a number of other officials. The very large crowd which was present for our arrival gave us a most enthusiastic reception and it was clear from the outset that the visit would be extremely productive. The program for our stay in Kalymnos included several lunches and dinners hosted by the Mayor and other leading Kalymnians as well as visits to all parts of the island and several more formal meetings.

I was received by the Bishop of Kalymnos, His Grace Bishop Nectarios, at his residence for a very moving ceremony honouring the links between Kalymnos and the Northern Territory and honouring me with an award from the Orthodox Church. The Bishop explained the work of the orphanage which has been set up by the church. It currently has 40 children from Kenya. It provides training for these children in such fields as electronics maintenance and repairs, which ensures that the children have good job opportunities when they leave the orphanage.

I also met with the Prefect of Kalymnos, who is the representative of the Greek government on the island. He outlined the structure of district administration in Greece. The region of Kalymnos has a population of 30 000 and a major effort is being made to promote both economic and social development. The current priorities are ports, airports, roads, electricity, water and sewerage. Tourism continues to be a major source of income and new efforts are being made in the fishing industry, with an emphasis now on modern techniques. Exploration of water supplies is continuing, particularly to supply the nearby islands which have insufficient water. The prefect also noted the severe problems facing the region, including its proximity to Turkey.

At an official reception hosted by the Mayor of Kalymnos, I presented the Darwin Kalymnos Sister City plaque on behalf of the Lord Mayor and the Darwin City Council. At this reception, I had the opportunity to meet a large number of Kalymnians with friends or relatives in Darwin. At an official dinner hosted by the Mayor there was a further opportunity for general discussion and an exchange of gifts.

Our stay on the island included a visit to the village of Vathis, which is the agricultural centre of Kalymnos. Fertile soil and adequate water supplies have enabled citrus orchards, market gardens and grape vines to be established in a very picturesque valley setting. I also visited the museum in Kalymnos, which was established as a gift to the city from a wealthy Kalymnian businessman. This museum houses archaeological finds from Kalymnos dating from prehistoric times, books and manuscripts, some of which date from the 10th century, icons from Russia from the 16th and 18th centuries and pottery from Venice from the era of the crusades.

I was escorted by His Grace the Bishop to the Monasteries of Saint Savvas and Saint Catherine. At the monastery of Saint Catherine, I met with Father Kyprianos, a former priest from Darwin. I also visited the Church of the Virgin Mary in the oldest village on Kalymnos. This beautiful old church contains the oldest paintings and icons on the island, many of which date from the Byzantine period.

On my departure from Kalymnos, I had a brief stopover on Kos where again I met a number of Greek Territorians. I had a brief opportunity to visit the ruins of the crusader castle in the city of Kos and the site of the world's first hospital, built by Hippocrates.

CYPRUS - 11-13 OCTOBER 1987

My visit to Cyprus was as a guest of the government of Cyprus and I wish to record my appreciation for the invitation and for the excellent program arranged for the delegation.

The Australian High Commissioner to Cyprus gave me a very helpful briefing on the current situation in Cyprus. He emphasised the strong links between Cyprus and Australia and noted the significant Australian commercial interest in Cyprus, particularly because of its strategic position in the Middle East. Cyprus has excellent communications and transport links with all parts of the Middle East and is the major focal point for commerce in that part of the world.

The tourism industry is booming and tourist numbers are currently about 1 million per annum. The major tourism focus to Cyprus is at the lower end of the European market, with an emphasis on budget package tours.

The High Commissioner noted the importance of foreign military forces to the economy of Cyprus. There are some 2500 in the United Nations Forces on the island and 4000 British forces in their sovereign bases. Included in the United Nations forces are Australian Police who operate in the United Nations buffer zone. The High Commissioner suggested there could be an opportunity for Northern Territory meat exporters in Cyprus. The British forces supply meat for the Middle

East region through an annual contract and there may be an opportunity for Northern Territory exporters to win this contract.

I met with the Acting President of Cyprus, His Excellency Dr Vassos Lyssarides. The Acting President is also President of the House of Representatives. He intends to visit Australia next year and has expressed a strong wish to visit the Northern Territory. His Excellency noted the strong links between Cyprus and Australia and gave me a very comprehensive briefing on the current situation in Cyprus. The government of Cyprus is concerned at what it sees as signs of Turkish expansionism and at the program of Turkish emigration to northern Cyprus. The government of Cyprus is looking to the international community to pressure Turkey to observe the United Nations resolutions, including a complete withdrawal of Turkish forces from the island.

At the subsequent meeting with the Minister of the Interior, similar concerns were raised. Of particular interest at this meeting was a discussion of tourism opportunities, and the minister made the strong suggestion that Qantas should operate through Cyprus as this would greatly enhance tourism both ways between Australia and Cyprus.

During the visit to Cyprus, I received a delegation from the Committee for Missing Persons. The committee claims there continue to be over 1600 persons missing since the Turkish invasion. The committee believes that some of these persons are still alive and has made representations to the United Nations to try to solve the problem. I also received a delegation from the Pan Cyprian Committee for Refugees which is seeking an international conference and a withdrawal of foreign groups from the island.

I also met with the Deputy Mayor of Nicosia, and learned something of the history of the city and the difficulties of administering a divided city. The city officials are working with authorities in Turkish-occupied Nicosia to ensure power, water and sewerage are available. I had an opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Australian United Nations Police Force in the buffer zone adjacent to Nicosia Airport. There are currently 19 members of the Australian Federal Police serving with the United Nations forces. They operate as a civilian police force in the United Nations buffer zone to investigate and police incidents in the zone, provide escorts through the zone and look after the welfare of enclave communities on both sides of the zone.

I also visited the new tourist centre of Ayia Napa. This centre has been built since the capture of Famagusta by the Turkish army and is now the centre for tourism from northern Europe. I viewed the deserted city of Famagusta from a border point. Famagusta was the largest city in Cyprus before the 1974 invasion and the major port and tourist centre. I also met with the Mayor and councillors of the Paralimni region which extends from Famagusta to Ayia Napa. While in Cyprus, I visited the Cyprus Archeological Museum and the Makarios Foundation.

Following the high level of interest in the Northern Territory which was conveyed to me, both by the Australian High Commissioner and ministers and officials of the Cyprus government, I have undertaken to provide a television-standard videotape for Cyprus television to

show the achievements of the Cypriot community in the Northern Territory and to provide general information about the Territory. I have also undertaken to provide the Australian High Commission with general information about the Territory because of the strong interest in such material which the High Commissioner has reported to me.

LONDON - 14-16 OCTOBER 1987

In London, I had a very interesting visit to the Central Office of the British Conservative Party where I met with a senior representative of its Research Department. The department employs about 20 people and there are several other departments as well. The Research Department has a more limited role while the party is in government. Its main function is to keep backbenchers informed and to provide them with briefings for parliamentary debates etc. The office also produces a range of extremely interesting literature, and I have arranged for some of this to be placed in the library of the Legislative Assembly.

My principal interest was to discuss privatisation. The British Conservative government has led the way on privatisation following early pioneering work by the United Kingdom Centre for Policy Studies. The implementation of privatisation is largely a matter for relevant ministries within the government, but the program is monitored by the central office. I was told that privatisation is seen by the British government as a long-term objective. It started with a number of small companies (except for British Petroleum, in which case the initial sale of shares was conducted by the Labor Party - although recently the Conservative government has undertaken a second tranche of share sales) including a company producing radio isotopes; a national freight consortium which has been sold to its employees; subsidiaries of Austin/Rover (formerly British Leyland) which has also been sold to its employees; Associated British Ports; British Cable and Wireless; and a number of other companies.

The first sell-off of a major corporation aimed at the general public was the privatisation of British Telecom (1984). The government sold 51.2% of the shares. The government has retained an Office of Telecommunications to carry out essential regulatory functions. The second major sell-off was British Gas. This privatisation exercise demonstrated the importance of proper marketing for a successful sell-off with a major national television media campaign. The government maintains an Office of Gas for the essential regulatory functions.

It was explained to me that the original objective of privatisation was reform of state industry because of its poor performance. While this continued to be an important objective, the government was now conscious of a second major benefit, namely helping promote share ownership for small investors and getting ownership of British industry into the hands of the British public. The success of the program against this objective is obvious. In 1979, there were 3.5 million adult shareholders in Britain and, at the beginning of 1987, there were 8.5 million adult shareholders in Britain. The figure is probably now closer to 9.5 million. There has been considerable emphasis on share ownership by employees and 99% of the employees in British Gas have become shareholders in the company,

whilst the corresponding figure for British Telecom is 96%, and for British Airways 94%. Privatisation has also helped considerably in creating an improved industrial relations climate in the United Kingdom.

It is extremely important, if the companies targeted for privatisation are to be sold off effectively, for a program of rationalisation to proceed prior to the sell-off. The British experience has been that privatisation is not effective until it is clear that the companies concerned are in a position to operate efficiently. The major corporations have undergone significant rationalisation and restructuring, not only after privatisation, but also prior to the sell-off for this reason. Almost without exception, the privatised companies have performed extremely well after the sell-off.

The British government gave a specific election commitment to move to privatise water and electricity in the United Kingdom. It was explained to me that privatisation of the water function is well advanced but that a regulatory function would be separated and kept within state control. Electricity is the largest and most difficult privatisation issue to be faced by the government. The Electricity Corporations have combined assets totalling 35 billion pounds. The principal issue is to avoid simply turning a public monopoly into a private monopoly. The government has said it will not privatise the electricity industry as a single monolithic organisation.

I also discussed nuclear energy with the Conservative Central Office. The British government continues to be committed to nuclear-powered electricity. Nuclear power is considered by the government to be economic and secure. Britain is moving away altogether from oil and the issue for future power generation will be the balance between coal and nuclear power. Disposal of nuclear waste is not regarded as a problem.

On general reform of the civil service, the British government is continuing with a 2-pronged policy to reduce the number of civil servants and to make the civil service more efficient. One specific reform is the introduction of competitive tendering for a number of local authority services.

Whilst in London, I visited the Northern Territory Tourist Commission Office. The office is extremely busy and there is a high level of interest in the Northern Territory. There is a particularly high level of interest from Scandinavian countries and I believe that there may be advantages for the Territory in raising our profile there. There is again a problem with airline capacity and also hotel capacity, particularly at Yulara. I explained the steps which were being taken to improve the availability of accommodation at Yulara.

I was advised of the interest by the French automobile manufacturer, Citroen, in filming its European advertising campaign at Uluru. In recent years, Citroen has filmed at a monastery in Tibet and on the Great Wall of China. I understand that some difficulties have been raised and I hope that these can be resolved. Such a campaign would be a major boost for Territory tourism. Also in London I had discussions with firms in the transport and freight industry about opportunities to expand their interests in the Northern Territory.

Honourable members may be aware that it was my intention to make a short visit to the nuclear reprocessing facility at Cap La Hague on the coast of France. Unfortunately, the severe storm which hit the south east of England prevented that visit. I hope that there will be an opportunity at some time in the future for me to make that visit.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I congratulate the honourable Chief Minister. Speaking briefly, without having read his report, it is certainly my view that it is important that ministers of the government and members of the opposition travel regularly and extensively to catch up with what is going on. You will never hear us criticising legitimate trips. I am sure the Chief Minister's trip was a legitimate one, and I look forward to reading his report.

Mr Speaker, tonight I want to raise 2 matters relating to the St John Inquiry. I raise this matter in the light of some concerns which have been expressed to me over the past few days, particularly after the appearance of Mr Tom Pauling QC on last night's 7.30 Report. Unfortunately, Mr Pauling's comments on how he intended to handle the inquiry have raised a number of concerns, particularly among serving ambulance officers. I think it important that I spend a few minutes spelling out those concerns in the hope that Mr Pauling will take them on board and attempt to come up with a format for the inquiry which will allay them.

What particularly concerned people about Tom Pauling's comments last night was that, first of all, he gave a very clear impression that it was going to be an in-house inquiry. In other words, it would not be a public inquiry. In fact, he gave the impression that he was going to talk to people individually about matters they wished to raise, rather than in an open forum. That concerns people.

Secondly, there is considerable feeling, even at this stage when Mr Pauling is inviting submissions, that the terms of reference are still very vague. I would have thought that an experienced practitioner like Mr Pauling could not expect to get away with terms of reference which refer to 'those allegations raised in the 7.30 Report and subsequently on ABC Radio'. That seems to be the general tenor of his terms of reference at this stage. He has an obligation, as does the St John Council, to spell out quite clearly and precisely what the terms of reference of his inquiry are so that people are clear as to the extent and nature of the inquiry. Without addressing that matter any further let me say that, while I accept that salaries and other terms and conditions of service are not legitimate aspects of an inquiry by Tom Pauling, he needs to spell out his terms of reference quite clearly.

The other specific weakness of the inquiry is that Tom Pauling said last night that he had no power to order people to produce documents. Quite clearly, that is the case. It relates to a major concern which cannot be allayed while the inquiry is an in-house one. There is no privilege. Mr Pauling cannot require people to give evidence under oath and, of course, he cannot require people to produce documentation. What he needs to say, to give some credibility to this inquiry, is that he has open access to the files of St John and that is obviously something that the St John organisation itself can ensure. Without open access to the files of St John, Tom Pauling can forget about getting to the bottom of the matters which are concerning ambulance officers and others. It is important that he make a very clear statement about whether he has access to all the files that he requires from the St John organisation.

Mr Speaker, I am commenting on this very briefly because there is one other matter that I want to cover. I have stated my major concerns and I will conclude by spelling out what I think Tom Pauling has to do in the next few days to ensure that he has the confidence of those people who want to present evidence to him. First, he has to provide firm terms of reference for the inquiry. Secondly, he has to provide a guarantee, or St John has to provide a guarantee, that the report of the inquiry will be made public, and that it will not be an in-house document for the St John Council to ignore or implement as a matter of choice. Thirdly, he needs to gain an assurance from St John, and make it public, that he will be able to examine all relevant St John records, with him making the decision as to which records are relevant and which are not. Fourthly, he needs to provide to serving officers of St John a guarantee that the information that they give him will be held in confidence and a guarantee that there will be no action taken against them if they take up the option of providing information to this inquiry.

Those are the minimal things that he needs to do. Many people are saying that the only way to get to the bottom of the allegations made about St John is through an inquiry under the Inquiries Act. In my view, that would be preferable but I accept that the decision has been made for an inquiry to be conducted by Mr Tom Pauling QC. He now has the job, together with his fellow commissioners, of ensuring that the inquiry is as free and as open as possible, so that we can get to the bottom of the allegations. Only by giving those assurances and by running a free and open inquiry with a public report, will he satisfy those people in the community who have a genuine concern about what has been happening and those who want to make actual representations to the inquiry.

Mr Speaker, the second thing that I want to speak about this afternoon is the reported takeover bid made by Sherwin Pastoral Properties for the Australian Agricultural Company Organisation. I have spoken previously in this House about the Sherwin group and its influence in the Northern Territory. Currently, it holds 41 494 km² of prime Territory pastoral property. If its takeover bid for AACO is successful, it will add another 21 275 km², giving the Sherwin Pastoral Group a grand total of 62 769 km² of pastoral land in the Northern Territory. I am concerned about that, because the Crown Lands Act currently provides that 1 person can hold up to 12 950 km² without permission and up to 20 000 km² with the permission of the minister. Mr Sherwin, through his company's structure, has been able to avoid that restriction and controls almost 41 000 km². In my view, the law would be failing badly if it could not prevent the amount of land controlled by the Sherwin organisation increasing by 50%.

I object to this for 2 reasons. Firstly, I do not believe it is appropriate that a single individual should control so much of the pastoral land of the Northern Territory. Secondly, I object because of the way the Sherwin empire has developed and because of the objectives of the Sherwin empire. Peter Sherwin has made no secret of his desire to control stock routes with strategically-placed properties which use regional rainfall and feed-growth patterns to move cattle eastwards to the lucrative saleyards of Queensland and New South Wales. It is instructive to note that the pattern of purchase roughly equates with the paths of what were originally proposed as bicentennial events: the Northern Territory great cattle drive to Longreach, and the now-abandoned proposal by the Cattlemen's Association to run a mob from the Longreach yards to Wagga.

With the purchase of these new properties, it is conceivable that a bullock, bred on one of Sherwin's Victoria River properties and fattened on

one of the Barkly properties, would be moved through the stock route via properties like Avon Downs, Headingly and Wolga and then via the Georgina, Diamantina and Cooper Creek properties, to finish in properties in New South Wales. Not only is that conceivable, it is what is likely to happen.

One might ask what is wrong with that? The implication is that the movement of cattle makes money. In this case, the result for the Northern Territory is that the use of a Territory resource does not result in a benefit for the Territory. Although it can be argued that a cattle movement which can end up as far away as the Wagga Sales is traditional, the Sherwin process accelerates it and prevents the development of a Northern Territory sale and slaughter industry. In other words, Sherwin is accelerating a trend that has been developing in the past few years. For Territory feed, Territory water and Territory soil, the Territory gets very little practical return at all. The cattle are turned off and sold elsewhere.

As I understand it, Sherwin has recently moved the headquarters for his Northern Territory properties from Mount Isa, which was bad enough, to Brisbane. He buys all his stores centrally outside the Northern Territory. We are getting very little indeed from this great cattle baron. Unfortunately, we are seeing a return to the great colonial mentality that was a feature of life in the Northern Territory for far too long. In other words, people can come in, rip off our resources and earn their profits elsewhere. This is a classic example of that. Our grass is eaten, our water is used, in some cases our soils are degraded, whilst the practical value to us is very limited because the stock are turned off outside the Northern Territory.

I would like to ask the minister, in his absence, whether he is aware of the proposed takeover and whether he has been approached by the Sherwin group to indicate the attitude of the Northern Territory government to the takeover. Further, what is the attitude of the Northern Territory government to this proposed takeover?

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak briefly tonight on this morning's reports concerning the proposed Uluru monorail and the announcements made by the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife service, Professor Derrick Ovington.

It is interesting to note that the member for MacDonnell told us yesterday that the suggestion that the monorail was to be constructed was a pipedream and a bit of a joke. Today, none other than the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has come out in full support of the proposal, backed by Mr Brown, the federal Minister for Tourism. It is also interesting that the member for MacDonnell is a member of the management board of the park and that it has been known for a year or so that the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has been in favour of this proposal.

I will read into Hansard some of the comments that Professor Ovington made this morning. He commenced by saying: 'At present we have an old road which has been there for many years and is run down and it has to be replaced by something else. An awful lot of people that visit the Ayers Rock Mount Olga National Park want to go to the Olgas, but are deterred from doing so because of the road'. That is a fascinating admission, given that we have been trying to get this admission from the federal government for years. We now have the director of the service admitting that people are not going to the Olgas from Ayers Rock because of the state of the road.

The director went on to make another comment. He said that a problem existed. 'You might solve this by constructing a new road that would cost somewhere between \$6m and \$8m. Of course, the construction of the new road will have a big environmental impact on the park.' This statement implies, of course, that the impact of the construction of a monorail would be either limited or, indeed, in the director's words: 'would have very minimum environmental disturbance'. I do not know what he is going to do. Perhaps he will construct it in Canberra, where this delightful bureaucratic decision came from, and roll it out at the Olgas without damaging any part of the environment. I would have thought that anyone with a little practical knowledge would realise that the construction of a monorail would cause a disturbance compatible with that of the construction of a dual lane road. That might be difficult for someone like the professor to realise, given that he is isolated in Canberra. He is obviously not very familiar with the topographic features of the park.

If the monorail is to comply with his standards, which would limit its above-ground height to 1 m or 2 m, it would have to follow the troughs of sandhills, which would require considerable additional distance to be traversed between Ayers Rock and the Olgas in order to ensure that the visual impact was absolutely minimised. That is totally impractical and, quite apart from any real environmental considerations, conveniently overlooks the factor of cost.

The professor has said that a road would cost \$6 to \$8m and that it would not satisfy our needs, so we would be much better served by a monorail, which could cost in the order of \$100m or more. Certainly, the professor was not brave enough to indicate what the costs of a monorail might be. It is fascinating to contemplate these considerations of cost when we have been told for a number of years that we cannot even have a toilet at Ayers Rock for the convenience of the people making the climb. If the director's view is not irrational, I would like someone to tell me what is.

The Minister for Transport and Works pointed out this morning that the proponents of the monorail have conveniently overlooked the need for a source of power to run it. Certainly, the existing power station at Ayers Rock would not be adequate to service its requirements. As we would all know, monorails are usually run by electricity. On top of the cost of constructing the monorail, we would have to pay for the construction of a power station.

The rangers at Ayers Rock would have been pleased, at least initially, to hear the professor say that the problem of managing visitor numbers might be solved if a monorail were constructed. Referring to the visitors, he said: 'When they get to the other end, they would go there as groups so that you could handle them better from the ranger point of view and give them a better experience'. It seems that we are about to enter the sheep race tourism stakes. We are going to shuttle these people onto the monorail and hurry them on because we do not want to keep the ranger at the other end waiting for too long. Presumably, they would then have a quick look and take their photographs - if they have the necessary approvals, of course. They would probably have to indicate what they intend to use the photographs for. They would then be hustled back into the carriages for the trip back to Ayers Rock. It sounds like a very pleasing experience from a visitor point of view, I must say.

Some people, dare I say it, might care to have a look around on the way to the Olgas, as they do now. You have the opportunity to look through the sandhills, if you wish, to observe some of the wildlife. Of course, these

opportunities would be lost with the introduction of a monorail service. I think the ranger staff at the park would quickly realise the difficulties of such a proposal and the suggestion that visitors to the park could be handled in such a way.

The existing road system that traverses the area between Ayers Rock and the Olgas provides services other than the transport of park visitors. It provides access to other areas of the park for environmental management, control of bushfires, controlled burning, vehicle movement, emergency services equipment and so on. We should not forget that the road system also provides access to important utility services such as bore water resources.

Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity tonight to make a few comments on the proposal put forward by the good professor. I think that it is a classic case of bureaucratic dominance from Canberra. We are told that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is the best service in terms of park operation in Australia. Unfortunately for it, and fortunately for us, it has only been able to get a toehold in the Northern Territory. I do not know how long we will have to put up with it, but perhaps once the people of Australia are confronted by projects like the proposed monorail link from Ayers Rock to the Olgas, they will quickly wake up to the fact that they are being done in the teeth. If we are lucky, they might invite the Conservation Commission to manage Uluru again and perhaps even take over the management of Kakadu. Clearly, the Canberra-based management of ANPWS is out of touch with the real requirements. We might be able to get back to a more rational and useful utilisation of our national parks.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this government often talks about how it sets standards for the rest of Australia and how it leads Australia and the states and how all eyes are upon the Territory. Indeed, with programs such as the home detention scheme and community service orders, it does rank at least equally with the more progressive of the states. I will not go as far as the Treasurer, who has lately begun to dream that we are leading the world, but I will talk about one area where an attempt was made to do something.

Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and what he said to this House on Tuesday 22 September this year regarding the Aboriginal Development Division. He stated:

Aboriginal employment in the Northern Territory is a model for the rest of Australia. As I mentioned earlier, the Aboriginal Development Division of the Employment and Training Branch in my department has been recognised Australia-wide as a model for the rest of Australia. In fact, many representatives from departments in other states have come to the Northern Territory to look at what is happening here because such things are not happening elsewhere. The Australian Public Service enrolls people in the intake system that we have and it believes it to be excellent.

Good stuff, Mr Speaker!

Mr McCarthy: True, true, it is an excellent idea.

Mr EDE: Let's have a look at what it does. It runs the group intake scheme through TAP, which stands for Training for Aboriginal People. Last year, some 51 people got started. I think some 21 are still in permanent employment from that intake. After a hiccup this year when it was due to start in April and actually commenced in July, some 60-odd got started and some 37 positions have been organised for people coming through that program.

The division also runs a basic skills course on a 1-off basis for TAP people, such as literacy workers in the communities. It monitors those groups. It does not have much more involvement than that, but it monitors the groups and helps people if they have any problems. The division also monitors the job situation around the Territory and uses its networks to inform people and ask whether they would like to come along for half a day to talk about whether the basic skills course is suitable for them, how they would go about applying, what is involved in particular jobs, what sort of qualifications would be appropriate and so on. Its career development work is quite excellent. It has a central information centre there where people are able to go and talk about the development of skills and careers they would like. I believe it had some 87 calls last month from people who wanted either to get into jobs or to improve their careers. In fact, CES has taken to referring people that it finds difficulty in placing to the division saying: 'You have the contacts and skills in this area. You have a better knowledge of the TAP system than we do, and we think that you ought to become involved in this particular situation'. Also, advice on TAP is provided to private enterprise and on how employers who take on Aboriginal people can receive the benefit of the financial incentives that are available, in terms of increasing employment amongst Aboriginal people.

Mr Speaker, the division is involved in some excellent programs. Earlier, I heard the minister interjecting: 'It's true. It is an excellent idea'. But what is the future of the division? Speaking in an earlier debate, on the same day as that when the remarks I quoted earlier were made, the minister spoke about the future of the division. He stated that: '... the old Aboriginal Development Division has been incorporated as an autonomous unit into the Employment and Training Division'. Mr Speaker, the warning bells should have rung then, but the word 'autonomous' gave us comfort. We thought of the skills that had been developed, of the autonomy, the group force and the enthusiasm that had enabled that unit to develop those proposals and to have the feeling of security within itself to adapt and go out to Aboriginal people. Even though those Aboriginal people may realise that eventually they will be working in something which may be an alien environment, they feel they will be assisted in the process by people who know both worlds - the situation they are in at the moment and the situation they are going to.

The warning bells did not ring then, Mr Speaker, but they are clanging loud and long as we see now what is actually happening. The division lost its divisional status and has eventually resurfaced as a unit within the Employment and Training Division. However, it is involved in much more than employment and training. It conducts a personnel service, as I explained earlier. It is heavily involved in equal opportunities work and it does a lot of industrial relations work for all divisions within that branch of the department. If it is to develop as it was before, it should be linked directly to the commissioner, with the status of a division, even though government may have retained the original proposal of an E3 heading it up.

It has had to bear some rather strange insults in recent times. For example, when it was putting on the second group intake recently, there were 63 students and the only accommodation available for the training sessions was a classroom suitable for handling some 18 students. When it was pointed out that this made things extremely difficult, the answer was that there was a big yard outside and they could use that. Of course, that is okay for Aboriginal people. They are used to sitting down outside. The fact that they could not use the whiteboards and all the lesson materials seemed to be of no consequence to those who felt it was okay to chuck the students out into the yard. These sorts of things have started to make work in this area more and more difficult in recent months.

Already we hear that one very senior staff member is to finish up soon, while others are saying that they will not take up the position when it is vacated by the person who is leaving, because they do not want to head up a sinking ship. They can see that the driving force that has been part and parcel of the unit, and which has to be there to make an organisation like that work in our bureaucracy, is going to depart and they don't want to be part of trying to lead a sinking ship.

Mr Speaker, I ask what has happened to the 20% goal that was trumpeted about so loud and so long, the goal of 20% employment for Aboriginal employment in the public service by 1990? We would have had great difficulty in achieving that goal, but there was some hope as long as the division existed, placed very highly in the correct department with good access to the Public Service Commissioner and able to continue to process large numbers of people through into the public service every year. As well as processing people through, of course, the division's staff were very interested in processing people upwards, in helping people gain skills and develop confidence so that they would not stay for 20 years at the A2 level, but would actually progress up through the system. That would mean that Aboriginal people would not just remain at the bottom levels in the public service, but would be represented at all levels.

It would appear now that not only will we certainly not have 20% in the various levels but that we will not even meet the 20% overall, because of the way this division is being killed off. It makes me wonder: why is the government doing this, after it has trumpeted it so loud and long around Australia? This division should be one of the shining jewels in the government's crown; it should be something that it can hold up whilst saying: 'Look, this is what we are achieving'. But it is not. The unit is being frustrated every way it turns. It is being downgraded. It has lost its status. It is losing its ability to operate. The only reason I can see for that is that it is different. The people in it do not conform to the public service norms which people feel so comfortable with by the time they come to be bosses in that service. It dares to be different. It is a driving force and not simply a bureaucratic tool. It fights for the people who are trying to find employment. It goes out into the community and says: 'Become a public servant. Get operational. Get yourself involved'. Because it actually goes out and fights rather than worrying about covering its back and conforming to the bureaucratic niceties which seem to be more important, people are becoming frightened of it.

What the bureaucracy is trying to do is squeeze it into a nice little shape so that it fits into a nice neat little hole. That way, the organisational chart will look neat and tidy and everybody will be able to say that in this public service there is no wind, no ruffles, and no little storms. That, Mr Speaker, is when it will cease to function. When the bureaucracy has squeezed the unit into a nice little round peg to fit into a nice little round hole, it will no longer be able to speak for or talk to the people who are its clients, the people who are outside the work force and are trying to become involved. It will no longer be able to talk to them because it will have nothing in common with them.

Mr Speaker, what is the official reaction in the department as to why this is so absolutely essential? What do the bosses give as their reasons? I am only repeating here what I have heard, but I am repeating it because I want to know. I want the minister and the Chief Minister to tell me whether a political instruction was given about how it would be handled, so that it would end up with its status squeezed until it was brought into conformity.

That is what I have been told. I have been told that the Public Service Commissioner is saying that it is not his problem or his fault and that he was given that political direction on how it was to be handled. I am repeating that here because I am hoping that the minister will be able to assure me of the real situation, assure the unit's staff about their future and assure Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory divisional status will be restored to the unit so that it can get on with fulfilling the function which it was set up to perform in the first place.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart is talking about divisions and is intent on maintaining the divisions that he would like to have between Aboriginals and other Australians. He is intent on maintaining those divisions and establishing things totally for Aboriginal people when, in fact, Aboriginal people are very much a part of the Northern Territory and when their requirements in respect of employment and training are very little different from anybody else's.

Mr Ede: No special programs?

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, if the member for Stuart had listened fully to what I said previously about the establishment of the functional areas of my responsibility, he would know that what I have at this stage is not a department but a series of functional areas which I am trying to develop into something that has some real teeth. Because I can see the need to have that strength I have incorporated, through the Public Service Commissioner, Aboriginal employment and training. That is a very rational and sensible way to go.

The member for Stuart said that the Aboriginal development area was operating in an office that handles personnel services, equal opportunities and industrial relations. Within the Office of the Public Service Commissioner we have such divisions, and why shouldn't they be just as effective for Aboriginal people as they are for the rest of the community? I am working hard to develop, within the Ministry of Labour and Administrative Services, a very strong functional area for that labour component. To my mind, employment and training is the big part of that function. Incorporated into the single area of labour would be industrial relations, personnel services, equal opportunity and Aboriginal development. They are all labour oriented and they all have a part to play within that function.

The member for Stuart said that the students in the Aboriginal development area did not have enough space to work in and that the staff of the unit no longer have faith in their ability to do things in an autonomous manner. I have made it quite clear in previous debates in this House that the unit is an autonomous unit within the Employment and Training Division.

Mr Ede: You downgraded it.

Mr McCARTHY: It has not been downgraded, Mr Speaker. It is an autonomous unit within the Division of Employment and Training and the member for Stuart is getting his information from 1 person in the department, who has an axe to grind in this regard. I have no worries at all about the way this particular division will go. It is a very important unit within the Division of Employment and Training and it will maintain its importance under my direction.

The concern that I have with the Aboriginal Development Division is that its scope is not wide enough at present because, of the 63 students in the

recent intake, there was not 1 whom I could identify as having come from an Aboriginal community outside the urban areas. I want to make sure that that unit gets teeth out in the Aboriginal communities such as Naiyu, Wadeye, Maningrida, Yirkala, Kintore and Papunya. I want to make sure that it gets out into those communities and actually provides employment and training for those people. That is the direction I am taking.

Mr Ede: You have reduced the staff numbers.

Mr McCARTHY: I have not reduced the staff numbers. The Aboriginal Development Division is just the same division as it was before but it is incorporated into the employment and training area. It will have much more strength because it has the backup of all the areas. It will have access to expertise to obtain funding from the Commonwealth. Quite substantial sums of money in respect of employment and training are available from the Commonwealth this year and we are working hard to ensure we that we get our share of it.

I am determined that a very large part of those moneys will go to the Aboriginal communities for employment and training and I am talking about the 22% to 25% of this population that is out there in the bush seeking work. Many of the people who are coming into these employment training schemes currently, in the public service, were probably able to get a job under the normal criteria. Many could actually have obtained a job without this training. I am concerned about those people out there that really do need the Aboriginal Development Division.

There has been no downgrading in any way, shape or form of the Aboriginal Development Division. It is strong, it is an important and it is a unique division that will retain its autonomy within the employment and training area and will continue to do the things that we expect of it.

Mr Ede: It had an E4 before.

Mr McCARTHY: There was no E4 in that role.

Mr Ede: An acting E4.

Mr McCARTHY: There was an acting E4. In fact, that is exactly why the member for Stuart has it in front of him. It has come to him because of sour grapes.

Mr Ede: I have not met the lady!

Mr McCARTHY: It has all come out. I said I could have named the person, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ede: I have not spoken to her.

Mr McCARTHY: It is unfortunate that he has brought this matter to the Assembly. I knew about it already. He has brought out into the public arena that somebody within that area is suffering from sour grapes.

Mr Ede: Lots of people have spoken to me, but not the boss.

Mr McCARTHY: I think that is unfortunate because it is not going to make it any easier.

Mr Ede: Not the boss.

Mr McCARTHY: I have the ability to sort that particular problem out and it will be sorted out. We will continue to operate. We have strengthened it the unit and it is now a part of the labour component of my responsibilities. Employment and training is the major function under my control; it is the teeth and the strength of the department. Industrial relations is there to support it, personnel services is there to support it, equal opportunities is there to support it, but employment and training is the strength of what I hope in future will become the Department of Labour and Administrative Services. If the member for Stuart has a problem with that, I think the Territory is fortunate that he is not handling this job.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, it certainly is disappointing to witness the behaviour of the member for Stuart. He has admitted to this House that he has been listening in some strange places. He runs in here with the first little allegation that is thrown to him and it becomes the big issue. Chicken Licken is not in it when it comes to the sky falling down.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the major topic I wish to talk about tonight, I want to refer to some allegations that were made in the House last night during the adjournment debate by the member for MacDonnell relating to Frank Guivarra, the Transport Workers Union official. The member alleged that there was something improper in the Attorney-General allowing the prosecution of Mr Guivarra to proceed. In fact, it was improper for the member for MacDonnell to suggest that the Attorney-General was the person who should be making a decision on that. For me to do so would be political interference of the worse kind. I think that all members should castigate the honourable member for even making the suggestion. Obviously, he is confused about the system of prosecutions.

We were all aware that he wanted to know why the Department of Law was prosecuting. For the benefit of the member, it is important that he should realise that the Department of Law acts under the direction of the Commissioner of Police in all matters in the court of summary jurisdiction. The police decide whether or not to lay charges and the police decide whether or not to proceed. The Department of Law does not make that decision, nor do politicians. I think that any inference that politicians should in any way be involved in prosecutions is mischievous and improper. I certainly hope that he does some homework and discovers how our system works in this country. The Department of Law's Prosecutions Section may well provide advice on various matters but it does not have the final say. I think it is fair to say that the honourable member has shown all Territorians that his idea of criminal justice is that, firstly, you look after your mates because they are never wrong and, secondly, you do not let a court decide on criminal charges but you send them over to the Attorney-General so he can decide. Thank goodness the days of Stalin are long gone. We should all be aware that people like the member for MacDonnell would like to bring them back.

Tonight I wish to talk mainly about issues in the education portfolio which were raised in the third reading of the Appropriation Bill last night. I am disappointed to see that the member for Stuart has again left the Assembly, but that is normal behaviour for him. He likes to throw unfounded allegations around and make a lot of noise, like hot air blowing in the wind. Then he leaves the Assembly and we do not see him again.

The issue I wish to deal with is the matter of student numbers at Casuarina Secondary College. In doing so, I would like to point out to

honourable members that the member for Stuart's conduct in the matter provides us with a very interesting study in personal standards. The member for Stuart has said repeatedly that, should I have a dispute with the federal government over education issues, I should go to him first rather than talk to the media. Indeed, he repeated that call last night during the committee stages of the Appropriation Bill. He also asked me if I could supply the Assembly with more information about the situation at Casuarina Secondary College. I replied that I most certainly would do so in an adjournment debate. Consider my surprise this morning. I discovered that, on leaving the Assembly last night, the honourable member immediately put out a media release - a rather inaccurate one I might say - about alleged overcrowding at Casuarina.

I would like honourable members to consider that scenario just for a few moments. On the one hand, the member contends that the elected government of the Northern Territory should talk to him before talking to the media about any dispute we may have with the federal government over educational matters. On the other hand, he is perfectly free to say whatever he likes to the media, no matter how inaccurate it may be, without bothering to check his facts with the Territory government first. These vastly different standards become even harder to rationalise in situations such as this, where the honourable member was given a commitment that he would be given details about the issue. Honourable members should have very little trouble in finding an accurate term to describe this conduct by the member for Stuart. I will certainly resist any temptation to use unparliamentary language but I can assure the member for Stuart that he has a long way to go before he achieves any credibility.

The member for Stuart has done his best or, should I say his worst, to mislead the Territory public on this matter. He has tried to convince Territorians that Casuarina Secondary College is grossly overcrowded, that the government has broken a commitment on maximum student levels and that nothing has been done to find any long-term solutions to any potential overcrowding problems. In fact, he is wrong on all 3 counts.

The Casuarina Secondary College presently has 1184 students and is able to cope with that number. Indeed, honourable members would be aware that this government's policy ensures that Casuarina Secondary college is one of the best-staffed and best-resourced senior secondary colleges in the country. For the member for Stuart's information, the Territory government is aware that the increased retention rates which we are fostering - and which he is continually encouraging us to improve - have been pressured by changes due to the federal government's cessation of dole payments to young persons between the years of 16 and 18. That is putting pressure on the Casuarina Secondary College and the Darwin High School, and we are in the process of taking steps to prevent overcrowding.

The member for Stuart will no doubt be interested to know that these issues were discussed at a meeting 2 weeks ago between the Casuarina Secondary College Council, members of the Department of Education, myself and the member for Casuarina. It is interesting to note that the Teachers Federation went public the day after, adopting exactly the same stance as the member for Stuart took in the press today. That means 1 of 2 things to me: either he is ignorant about what is happening or he knows what is happening and is deliberately attempting to mislead Territorians.

I challenge the member to respond after he reads today's Hansard. He is not in the House now; in fact, neither are any of his Labor colleagues. I find it rather surprising that the media never mentions the fact that, almost every evening, the opposition departs from this House and is absent for a

number of hours of its proceedings. As I said, I challenge the honourable member to state whether he had any knowledge of that meeting before he issued his media statement last night. His response to that challenge will tell us whether he is acting in ignorance of the facts or whether he is deliberately distorting them. Either scenario is an indictment of him and of the opposition for appointing him shadow education spokesman.

To prevent any possible overcrowding next year, the Year 8 intake at Darwin High School will be modified, and the Year 11 intake at Casuarina Secondary College will be restricted to students from the school's designated feeder area. These restrictions, however, certainly will not apply to students who have brothers or sisters attending those schools. We will also ensure that students in the Nightcliff Junior High School feeder area will go to Nightcliff rather than to Darwin High School. We are quite sure that those few steps will enable any potential overcrowding at Casuarina or Darwin next year to be avoided.

I have already set in place a working party comprised of representatives of the Department of Education, the Territory Training Centre, the Darwin Institute of Technology, Casuarina Secondary College and Darwin High School, to consider our options beyond 1989 and how we might best utilise our facilities to cater for the type of student who will be continuing in our secondary colleges in the future.

The member for Stuart also made allegations about maximum student numbers for the secondary college. He was reported in today's NT News as saying: 'In 1985, the Northern Territory government said 1000 students was the maximum that could be accommodated at secondary colleges. Casuarina has had well over this figure for the past 2 years'. In 1985, the working party on high schools and secondary colleges recommended a maximum enrolment of 1000 students for secondary colleges. While noting this recommendation, the government decided that there should be flexibility so that additional resources could be allocated to meet schooling requirements in the most appropriate way. Cabinet made that decision in 1985, and it was announced publicly. In other words, the provision of adequate resources is more important than setting arbitrary limits on student numbers. I stress that, as I said earlier, the government has provided extensive facilities at both Darwin High School and Casuarina Secondary College to cater for the growth in student numbers and for the needs of those students.

Furthermore, even though staffing ratios have changed slightly this year, they are still the best in Australia. We confidently expect that student numbers at Casuarina next year will be 1250 or less. Numbers have exceeded 1300 at Casuarina this year, and that may happen again for short periods. 1986 ABS figures show that over 20% of Australian high schools have in excess of 1000 students, so it is not an abnormal situation. I believe that the statistics for this year will show marked changes in that area following the cessation of dole payments to 16 to 18 year-olds and Austudy payments to students at that level. The situation is certainly under control and strategies are in place.

I informed the member for Stuart that I would let him know what was happening and I also informed him that he was inaccurate in his assertions. Obviously, he realised that he would not be able to make a noise in the media when he heard the truth, so he ran off last night and made a fuss which actually got him some coverage. That will only last as long as the media remains unaware that everything he has said over the last 3 years has been untruthful. Those things include his comments some time ago about the cyanide

situation in the Tennant Creek area and the so-called sale of Yirara College and Kormilda. Recently, he said that the document, 'Towards the 90s', was a fait accompli which recommended payment by results. Actually, it is about time responsible members of the media woke up to the record of the member for Stuart and matched his statements over the last 3 years against the facts and noticed where he has been found to be wanting. I think that they will find, and they should express some concern about it, that he has been incorrect almost every time. I think it is time that members of this House looked very seriously at the behaviour, the comments and the goings-on of the member for Stuart. I think we have a duty to bring it to the attention of the public every time that he performs as he has this afternoon.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to comment on the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the inquiry which has been started into St John. He implied that a full and impartial inquiry into St John would be less than fair because the inquiry would not be set up to his liking. I believe that is a reflection on the integrity of Mr Tom Pauling, the Council of St John and all those interested in, helped by and employed by St John, who have the best interests of St John at heart. I say this because of my knowledge of the workings of St John. I have to declare an interest. I have a daughter who is employed by St John, but I do not believe that detracts from the credence of what I have said.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to comment on 2 letters that I have received from Telecom. I wrote recently to the Minister for Industries and Development regarding bureaucratic costs to small business and commented on the fact that the annual rental for a business telephone is more than the annual rental for a domestic telephone. I knew it was not within the minister's province to do anything about it, but I pointed out to him the discrepancy between these 2 charges. For the information of honourable members, the annual rental for a business service is \$234 whilst a residential service attracts a rental charge of \$138, so there is a substantial difference.

The Regional Manager for the Northern Territory for Telecom replied to me and said that he had received this inquiry from the minister. No doubt, he wrote a similar letter to the minister. The Regional Manager wrote that the rationale for this difference is that, as the business customer - meaning the man in business - is generally a heavier user of the Telecom network, rental and charges should reflect this usage. I do not know how Telecom has arrived at this stupid result. It is the most ridiculous reasoning that I have ever heard and bears no relation to realistic business operations. I believe Telecom is pricing itself - or pricing a lot of small businesses - out of the market: or perhaps they will not declare themselves as businesses. I am talking about very small businesses - perhaps they will continue to say that they have a residential installation.

If the same reasoning were applied in business, we would have a situation where which reminds me of a woman who goes to a supermarket - I am a bit old-fashioned about this although her husband can go with her if he likes - to shop for a family of 10. Although she may buy much more than the person who is shopping only for one person, we do not charge her more because the weight of her groceries is heavier in the trolley or on the floor, or takes longer to be paid for at the checkout counter. Of course we don't. Economy of scale comes into consideration and, if anything, the person who has bought a larger order ...

Mr Bell: This is drivell.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have had to listen to drive from you for a long time. You can go back to sleep again and you won't hear it.

Mr Bell: What is the relative cost of supermarket trolleys and telecommunication systems?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: What is the cost of the usage of a telephone? It is the same thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take it into the rural scene. Take the owner of a large station who is coming in to buy star pickets from Titans. He is filling an enormous order because he is going to put in a large quantity of fencing. Do we charge him more for those star pickets? Do we charge him more than I would be charged, if I went in with my ute, because my order would be smaller? Do we charge that station owner more because he has used the driveway with a heavier vehicle, and perhaps it might need repair more often? Do we charge him more for his star pickets because it has taken longer to process his order? Of course we don't, Mr Deputy Speaker. If anything, he would probably get his star pickets at a cheaper rate than I would get mine.

Exactly the same applies to Telecom's reasoning, which I believe is ridiculous in the extreme.

Mr Collins: Should apply.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, if it does apply. It should apply to Telecom's reasoning, but it does not at the moment.

Recently, a publication was sent to me in the mail, which I found very interesting. I would like to comment on one of the articles in it. It is in relation to the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Commission. It publicised its views recently on manual handling regulations for men and women who are engaged in heavy industry. As far as I can ascertain, it appears from this article that the view of this Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Commission is that there should be a situation of equal pay for equal work, and I heartily agree with that.

I believe in equal pay for equal work. It does not really matter what sex the person is who does the work. Whether it is a male or a female, it is the work output that is under consideration, and equal pay should be given for work of equal nature. The feminists have this as a prominent plank in their platform of equality. However, we find now that this is all front. Members of this group of people are one-eyed. They are completely partial in their views, and in their point of view. They want more than equality and men cannot see that. I have spoken of this before, Mr Deputy Speaker. You men are all being hoodwinked by women like this.

I refer now to the case of women accepting heavy manual jobs and working with men. I have no objection to this: everyone to their own taste, their own shovel or their own crowbar. Women on the land do it every day. On pay day, these women front up and want pay equal to that received by the men. This article indicates though, that they are refusing to work like the men. They are refusing to lift the heavy weights that the men do in the course of undertaking manual work in heavy industry. The women cannot do this, or they refuse to do it: I would say they cannot, because of their actual physical make-up. They object and they complain to their union for redress, these poor

little things. On the one hand they want equality but, on the other, they do not want it when it is given to them and they start to cry.

I cannot lift heavy weights, and that situation is the same for many women. I know my limits, but I would not go for a job in heavy industry that involved lifting heavy weights. If a woman wants equality in a job like that, that is exactly what she should get, and that includes the lifting of heavy weights if the men have to do it.

In July, the Hawke government agreed to an exemption until 1988 in relation to the implementation of the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act. For the information of honourable members, the Sex Discrimination Act overrides all federal and state laws which treat men and women differently. Because of these rabid feminists, the unions have obtained a concession from the Hawke government so that the rules applying to the lifting of heavy weights will not be implemented until late in 1988.

These women seek equality. They want to see sex discrimination done away with in jobs if women are doing equal work. But these women are not doing equal work and, therefore, I do not believe that they can claim equality. They wanted equality so I believe they should take equality. What they are really doing is preaching equality but practising inequality by saying that women are not equal to men. They are not: they simply have compensatory or complementary points of excellence which men do not have. I would say that greater intelligence is one.

Another matter I would like to touch on in the same publication is a report compiled by a working party established by the Minister for Health in Victoria and chaired by the socialist left MP for Ringwood, Mrs Kay Setches. The report describes the health system as being 'under the dominance of a male ideology' and as one which 'denies women justice'. I will quote from the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association Newsletter. Even this organisation says that 'this report reads more like a radical feminist diatribe about Australia's health system than an objective study'. The article goes on to say that the working party recommends that health study groups 'should be run by women, staffed by women and only be for women'. Clearly, the report ignores the fact that most of the health problems women suffer, reproduction-related matters aside, are problems which the rest of the community also suffers. The newsletter goes on to say: 'The main functions of the centres will be to act as a lobby for politicians and to act as a watchdog and advocacy group. Obviously, the prime function of the centres would be political. The report envisages the centres being run by sympathetic women, but who defines sympathetic? The overall tone and thrust of the report, however, is a cause for deep concern'.

The newsletter from the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association should give us food for some thought because not only conservative persons such as myself can see through these rabid feminists who want it both ways. Some other women, whose politics may not be the same as mine, are also beginning to see through them. It appears that more and more women are beginning to dissociate themselves from the views of these people. If the women are doing that, it is time the men did.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I may disagree profoundly with the member for Koolpinyah but I never cease to find her entertaining as well as provocative.

Before I get on to the substance of my contribution in the adjournment debate this evening, I want to pick up a comment from the honourable Attorney-General about responsibility for prosecutions. As the first law officer of the Northern Territory, in the final analysis, the Attorney-General is responsible for commencing prosecutions. That authority may be delegated under certain circumstances, but he is responsible for the police force and the Commissioner of Police operates subject to a statute of this Assembly. They may be administratively given powers to commence proceedings under the Summary Offences Act. I in nowise resile from raising the matter and I once again ask the Attorney-General to consider it. The fact is that this prosecution has cost the Crown \$3000 in costs awarded against it. Under those circumstances, I think that the decision to go ahead with the prosecution deserves some further investigation.

During question time yesterday, I raised some questions about the development of an area at Pine Creek by the uncle of the Minister for Lands and Housing and the President of the Country Liberal Party Branch in Alice Springs. Concerns about this have been drawn to the attention of the House by the people of Pine Creek. There is considerable concern in Pine Creek because the government has refused to allow development applications for the area, apart from that of Mr Sutton and Mr Keeler.

I want to place on the record my deep concern at the government's refusal once again to conduct land dealings in a manner that is perceived by the community as being fair and above board. The opposition believes that the land resources of the Northern Territory ought to be used to develop and provide services for people of the Territory. We believe that the access to those resources should be available on an open, competitive basis. The attitude in relation to these matters that has come to characterise this government has not been jobs, jobs, jobs, but jobs, jobs, jobs for the boys. That is a matter of concern to me and it is a matter of concern to the opposition, it is a matter of concern to the people of Pine Creek and it is a matter of concern to the people of the Northern Territory.

It is quite outrageous that an application of this sort, that will effectively take the ground from under the feet of many honest, hardworking people in Pine Creek, has been allowed to proceed in this manner. There should have been some sort of open call for expressions of interest. If this were the first time, one might be able to excuse it, at least in part. It is not the first time. You yourself, Sir, have commented on the arrangements with respect to the waterslide development in Alice Springs where no expressions of interests were called for. The basis on which that development went ahead was one that was characterised by backroom deals and not the sort of openness that we expect in a democratic society. The free enterprise system so beloved of the Country Liberal Party government is far from a free enterprise system. It is only a free enterprise system if you belong to the club and that club has written large over the door, 'Country Liberal Party'. If you don't belong to it, you cannot get anywhere.

Mr Speaker, the second matter of concern is the question of the minister's determination of this matter. I am advised that the minister is in fact making this determination pursuant to section 15 of the Crown Lands Act. In this particular case, I am rather interested in the powers that section 15 of the Crown Lands Act confers upon the minister. If the minister were entirely disinterested in this particular application, it would be a matter of concern. I draw the attention of honourable members to it.

Subsection (1)(a) seems to put restrictions on the minister: 'The minister shall not grant an estate in fee simple or a lease, other than a pastoral lease of Crown land, unless he has first invited applications for that estate or lease'. The Crown Lands Act seems to say that the minister has a responsibility to invite applications.

Subsections (2) and (3) seem to give the minister carte blanche. My initial investigations suggest that these subsections came in after self-government. I would be very interested to check that out. However, subsection (2) says: 'Where the minister so determines, he may grant an estate in fee simple or a lease, other than a pastoral lease of Crown land, without complying with subsection (1)(b) in relation to that land'. I see the Minister for Industries and Development is intimately acquainted with that. He is a former Minister for Lands and, I dare say, has taken an intimate and personal interest in that particular section of the Crown Lands Act. If the Minister for Lands and Housing can take any small degree of comfort in this matter he can rest assured that he follows in a strong party tradition of doctoring land deals.

Mr Dale: You are a powder-puff, aren't you; a dead set powder-puff, a little sheila.

Mr BELL: There they go!

Mr Speaker, I am thinking of writing a book, and I hope that the former Minister for Lands, the member for Fannie Bay, might contribute a chapter called 'How to doctor your gully'. I am quite sure he is acquainted with section 15.

The fact of the matter is that those powers are, in themselves, sufficient cause for concern. But when the minister has those powers to determine applications from people so closely related to himself by blood and by political aspiration, without inviting applications from anybody else, he has the responsibility to step aside.

The performance of both the minister and his colleague, the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, has been appalling in this regard. I suppose the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services is pretty keen to hang on to his job and so decided to knuckle under. Mr Speaker, you will recall media reports saying that the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services took exception to the Minister for Lands and Housing not removing himself from consideration of this application. I draw honourable members' attention to comments made by a reporter on the Territory Extra program yesterday, and I quote:

'Local CLP member, Terry McCarthy, says he is on the side of the Pine Creek locals and, as Mr Williams says, he has undertaken to ask Mr Hanrahan to step aside from the Pine Creek deliberations'.

I have very disappointing news for the people of Pine Creek. Their local member has knuckled under and refused to put the appropriate pressure on the minister to step aside. Furthermore, he is now suggesting that the minister's behaviour is quite appropriate. I am sure the people of Pine Creek will be deeply distressed to hear that their local member has behaved in that way and none of them will be more distressed than I am. We talk about constitutional development and the march towards statehood, but there is nothing that brings this Assembly into greater disrepute than a perception in the community, bolstered by facts like these, that this government is acting improperly in its land deals.

Mr Speaker, in the time that remains to me I want to make a couple of comments about the proposal for a monorail in the Ayers Rock Mount Olga National Park. It has been very interesting. We are all wearing each other's clothes, as it were, today. This opposition is saying that a positive development proposal ought to be considered on its merits, while born-again greenies like the member for Katherine and the Minister for Transport and Works, say that it is not to be considered because it will desecrate the environment.

My understanding of the situation that arose in relation to the comments of the federal Minister for Tourism is that yesterday he was served up a zinger by the former Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment. For the benefit of members opposite, a zinger is the reverse of a dorothy dixer. The minister has no idea that the question is coming. While the frontbenchers in this House use question time to deliver ministerial statements ad nauseam, I think that in this case the federal Minister for Tourism was very much thinking on his feet. I stand by my comment yesterday that we should not attribute too much to the proposal, although my personal view is that it should not be rejected out of hand. My constituents have listened to many interesting proposals from whitefellers and I think that, provided the monorail does not run over the body of the sacred goanna, they will see this suggestion as another peculiar whitefeller aberration.

Mr HANRAHAN (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, it is clear that the member for MacDonnell wishes continually to espouse in this Assembly the socialist dogma that he is renowned for. He believes that there should be no scope for initiative within any system of government. God help us if he is ever in a position to have any say or control.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, I will say once again that the proponents for the block of land have formally made application under the guidelines for direct sale. Cabinet has been notified of such an application through the normal procedures. I would anticipate that it will be at least 6 to 7 months before any of the factors relevant to that application come across my desk. I am aware that the concerns of the Pine Creek people will need to be addressed. They were aired recently at a public meeting attended by my colleagues, the member for Victoria River and the Treasurer. My research into the history of the particular block of land indicates that: there has never ever been a formal application for the land before; it has always been available; and, previously, infrastructure costs related to the provision of services were so high that nobody was interested in any way, shape or form in developing the block.

The Department of Lands will address, in the normal way, such matters as the realignment of the road, provision of services, building approvals and the various planning details that need to be taken into consideration. My policy is that I do not interfere with the town planning process nor do I seek at any stage to exert influence over it. The Planning Authority and various bodies in the Northern Territory do a commendable job.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, Jeff Sutton is married to my mother's sister Kay. They were both born in Alice Springs and are very successful people. They are good representatives of the town and are heavily involved in community affairs. I think it is a downright shame that the member for MacDonnell seems to take great pleasure and delight in dragging their names through the mud when all they have done is to make an application for land.

Mr Bell: All you have to do is step aside, Ray.

Mr HANRAHAN: I will address that issue when it comes across my desk in about 6 or 7 months.

For the further benefit of the ignoramus member for MacDonnell ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HANRAHAN: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

For the further benefit of the member for MacDonnell, who might like to use a big syringe to clean the wax out of his ears or shake his head to see if he can clear some space between them, I gave a commitment in the House and in the media yesterday that, when the matter does formally come before the government, when all the formal documentation and necessary procedures have been completed, the matter will be dealt with by Cabinet.

I have given a further assurance to the people of Pine Creek, both in this House and in the media, that their views will be listened to. One of the most critical elements in the development of that block and the future development of any other internal commercial elements in Pine Creek is the possible realignment of the Stuart Highway. That may need to take place anyway because of the strong possibility that the mine will wish to move the lake very close to the existing town boundary and also will wish to gain access to what is believed to be a continuing large deposit of gold in the vicinity of the existing highway.

All is in hand, Mr Speaker. Matters will be dealt with properly and in the normal manner because that is the basis of good government, not because of the ridiculous assumptions, criticisms and wild accusations of the member for MacDonnell.

I want to make some comments about the monorail proposal. Nobody has yet raised the real reason for the floating of the monorail proposition by Professor Ovington and John Brown. They wish to establish a totally controlled environment at Uluru National Park. I dare say that people on the monorail travelling to the Olgas will have access between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm. I wonder if it will run on Saturdays and Sundays? What happens when everyone goes on strike or the monorail breaks down? It is ridiculous that the federal government could contemplate what, on our early estimates, looks like an expenditure of something like \$113m to provide such a monorail in its cheapest possible form whilst it has shirked the issue of spending \$4 to \$6m to build a road.

One of the great advantages of coming to the Territory is that you are able, at most times of the day and on 365 days of the year, to travel at leisure through our parks in your car, perhaps towing a caravan or in compliance with the schedule of a bus tour. We do not want people being herded onto a monorail like cattle and told where and when they can go. I think it is possible that John Brown and Professor Ovington have done us a great favour. They have put on the national agenda the thing that we have been fighting for: the road. The public outcry is growing so strong throughout Australia, that I would go so far as to say that one of the outcomes will be the construction of a sealed road access from Ayers Rock to the Olgas. It cannot come too soon.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I will chime in on the monorail for a moment too. I believe that in the federal parliament this afternoon, in response to questions, the Minister for Tourism, Mr Brown, told the House that it was not possible to construct a road between Ayers Rock and the Olgas. The response from his predecessor, Mr Cohen, who was also in the Chamber, was 'bullshit'. Mr Speaker, I think that describes the project admirably. Perhaps I ...

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

Mr TUXWORTH: I was quoting, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr TUXWORTH: Perhaps I could refer to bull manure?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw the remark before continuing.

Mr TUXWORTH: I withdraw the word, Mr Speaker, and substitute bull manure.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr TUXWORTH: So all is not well within the Labor ranks about the future of the road between Uluru and the Olgas.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon I rise to touch on a couple of points relating to education in my electorate. The other day I raised in the House my concern that promises made by the government during the election campaign had been ignored by the Minister for Education and, indeed, the Chief Minister. In a later remark, the Minister for Education said that it was pretty unreasonable of me to use a big stick and bring these matters out like this, beating the government up for not honouring its promises. He went on to say that if I had paid as much attention to the educational needs of the children at the high school as I had to installing an aluminium running rail on the racetrack, we would all be better off. Well, I would just like to put a couple of things straight.

The establishment of the Tennant Creek racetrack, as with the show society and the pony club developments on the multi-purpose venue, did receive some government assistance, but the majority of it was built with the money, hard work and good will of most of the business people in the town. If the Tennant Creek racetrack happens to have an aluminium running rail, I would put it to you that the reason is that it would save maintenance and it was the most economic thing that they could do under the circumstances. The people in my town are used to doing things economically, because they have had to do most things for themselves. At the time, the remark might have been regarded by the minister as half-smart, and indeed it was, but it was very damaging to him because all of the people involved in building the racetrack will come to learn of his contempt for the efforts that they have made.

I would like to move on now to the issue of providing videos for children who study through the School of the Air. I have to be the first to admit that the treatment by the federal government of the Northern Territory in relation to finance has been appalling, vindictive, unreasonable and all those things. However, the fact remains that, without the funding for the videos to be provided through the education system during the next school year, many children will miss out on the curriculum which has been developed and used for

some time, and most of the curriculum material and lessons which have been put on video will have to be transferred back to paper or some other medium. That cannot be done for chickenfeed.

The facts are that, 5 years ago, the Commonwealth undertook to fund the video program with the Northern Territory government for a period of 3 years while the satellite was going up. After that time, the respective states were expected to put their School of the Air programs on the satellite or make their own arrangements. The satellite was delayed for all sorts of reasons, Mr Speaker, and you know about those. The Commonwealth extended its funding for a further 2 years.

The fact that the Commonwealth has cut its funding should be no surprise to anybody here, and the way that it sees it is perfectly reasonable. It pitched in for 5 years and made a pretty fair contribution, and now it is saying to the Northern Territory that we are on our own. Irrespective of the justice or otherwise of that, the fact remains that the children must have an education. Throughout the outback, they are locked into a system now of lessons and curriculum material being provided by video. They are accustomed to video loan schemes and video technology. Now the minister is foreshadowing to those people, the 400 children and the parents and governesses who work with them, that that system will stop because there is no more money and the Territory has no alternative system because the previous book system has been superseded by videos.

Mr Speaker, I can tell you that in the 2 Schools of the Air that we run in Katherine and Alice Springs, there are groups of people working furiously to put lessons and curriculum back into books in case there are no videos for the next school year. We have entered the realm of nonsense, and I think the minister should address the situation. His dilemma is that he has to find about \$148 000 for the next year to keep the program going. In a \$213m budget that should not be such a difficult job, but it will be difficult and I know that. However, if he does not do it, the alternative may be he will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars moving out of video technology and back into some other system.

I understand the minister's problems. Probably some are not his fault and probably some are. But, it is pretty hard to crucify 400 kids out in the bush, who do not have any other options, by withdrawing their video technology because of \$148 000. If that is the level of the government's commitment to the children of the School of the Air, we need to get it out into the open so that those people can understand where they are going and start to make arrangements for their future. The government cannot just chop and change like this.

The other issue that I would like to address today is the matter of the government battery. Over a number of years, the government battery in Tennant Creek has been developing as a tourist destination. It is very popular and tens of thousands of people visit it. However, it is really at the crossroads where it needs to become a full-time tourist facility or a full-time government battery. As honourable members in this House would know, the technology at the battery is so old, you would not want to foist it on the mining industry anyway because it would not do the job. That leaves the option for the government to get out of the battery now, as a battery concern, help the gougers make arrangements for alternative crushing systems, and enable the local people in Tennant Creek to take over the battery and make of it a proper tourist destination that will go from strength to strength.

I would think that the cost to government of running the battery would be in the order of \$0.25m a year. If it were any less I would be amazed. What I would propose to the government is that it transfer those funds and the battery to the Tourist Promotion Association or the Town Council of Tennant Creek, and tell them to run it as a tourist venture because it really is the end of the line so far as the government is concerned. There is considerable interest in the town for that to happen and, whilst many of the councillors are not quite sure how the mechanics of all that would work and might be a bit reticent about it, they are certainly very keen to sit down with the government and consider what options are available to them.

I have no doubt that, if the battery facility were handed over to the community of Tennant Creek for further development, with plenty of effort, work and promotion it could become like Sovereign Hill in Ballarat. I know, Mr Speaker, that you have been to look at Sovereign Hill. It is a period museum and exhibition for people who are interested in how goldmining was conducted 100 years ago, and Tennant Creek has the potential to develop such a facility on its own doorstep with the government battery.

I guess a proposal of this nature would involve several ministers, the town council and the Tourist Promotion Association, but I would like to say to the government that I am more than willing to help in any way that I can to try to obtain some resolution that will enable the battery to be managed locally and used for the tourist industry.

In saying that, I want to emphasise the necessity for the gougers to have some alternative facility. There is tremendous activity in the gouging sector at the moment with the small prospectors with their metal detectors, front-end loaders and jackhammers, going for their lives trying to find a few bucks worth of gold which is tax free and, hopefully, the big bonanza.

In the event that the government is prepared to consider giving the battery over to the people of Tennant Creek, it would also be very helpful if it could work with the people who operate crushing plants in the area at the moment, to ensure that gougers can get their dirt onto the grass and be paid for it at a reasonable rate, either after crushing or before it. Both systems work in most places. It is a great opportunity for the government to take a positive step and for the townspeople to join with the government to try to put in place an enhanced tourist facility, one that will not hurt the mining industry in the long term.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are several points that I wish to canvass in the adjournment debate this evening. My first comments relate to an area of land in the electorate of Port Darwin. The particular piece of land has been in the news on many occasions and is known as Frog Hollow. I have had a long association personally, one way and another, with Frog Hollow. My mother attended the primary school which used to operate there, as did my sisters and, later, my son. I was the Minister for Education when the primary school closed. Thus, I have had some relationship with that particular piece of land.

The future of the area is under consideration at present. There are many people who are concerned about the proposals that are being put forward. For the information of honourable members, it is my understanding that that area is in the process of being vested in the council. There has always been concern expressed by people in Darwin about the need to have open space and park land in the main city area. I tend to agree that we need to look very carefully at these issues, particularly when we could be put in a position

whereby we could lose the availability of that type of land. The council had thought of using the area as a car park, but I understand that that proposal is being reconsidered. Honourable members would be aware that the government is considering putting a road through that particular block from Cavenagh Street to Barneson Street and through to Tiger Brennan Drive to assist traffic movement out of the central business district. Both of those proposals are of some concern to me.

No one would deny that there are parking problems in the central business district of Darwin. I believe that there are a number of alternatives that could be looked at before we start to make final decisions. For example, it is obvious that many city parking spaces would be taken up by shop owners and their employees. Might I suggest that this could run into several parking bays. I think consideration could be given, in those circumstances, to sharing transport into the main city area. Apart from affording a considerable saving to the people concerned, it would also free up immediately precious car parking space in close proximity to their shops. If that suggestion is not acceptable, then perhaps consideration could be given to the shop owners asking their employees to park in areas away from the main city area. The employer could then arrange to have those people picked up and brought up into the shops. I think that type of proposal is reasonable. It is something that needs to be looked at and, as I mentioned, it could provide an immediate solution to a very serious parking problem.

I use that example, Mr Deputy Speaker, just to point out that there are alternatives which we need to look at very carefully before we make final decisions. If we look at the proposal that is being put forward in relation to the link road with Tiger Brennan Drive, no one is denying that there is a need to improve access into and out of the main city areas. Whilst we do need to look at the arterial road proposal, we must ensure that we make the right decision. I will be making further comment in relation to that particular proposal a little later on.

I raise those issues today because a number of public meetings have taken place of late and the government and the city council need to take note of what people are saying. They need to listen to what the issues are and how people feel in relation to them. The City Circle Traders had a meeting recently and they have very real problems in relation to the downturn in trade in the retail area in the central business district. I do not necessarily agree with many of the issues that were canvassed at that particular meeting and I will address that subject tomorrow night. There was also a public meeting to discuss the future of the Frog Hollow area. I urge the government and honourable members to listen to what people are saying.

Many of the meetings that people call are for the purpose of obtaining information. They want to know what is happening. They want to know what the proposals are. They are frightened because they do not know. One of the things that we must ensure is that government officers attend those meetings, not to take part in the debate but at least to give the facts where they are required. That is very important. They can also listen. Someone from the Minister for Industries and Development's office was overseeing the City Circle Traders meeting. I am not being bloody-minded about it; all I am saying is that we need to look very carefully at these issues, particularly when there are alternatives, before we start locking up areas in asphalt and concrete.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a number of reports and proposals for discussion circulating within the community at present. Those reports will

have an impact on the central business district. The Minister for Transport and Works mentioned this morning the need to develop certain facilities in the port area and there is a port development proposal circulating. Other matters are the Tiger Brennan Drive Planning Statement and the Darwin Central Business District Planning Strategy. It is very important that people obtain those reports, consider them and comment on them. Unfortunately, as honourable members would be well aware, it is very difficult to get people to do that.

The second matter that I wish to touch on relates to the Darwin City Band. The reason that I wish to raise this issue - and I have intended to raise it for some time - is that often when we hear a band, we think no more of it. We say: 'That was great. It was wonderful. We have really enjoyed listening'. People do not think of the effort and time that goes into getting a band or an orchestra to the stage where it is able to perform. I think it is important, on occasions, to acknowledge the effort that is put into developing bands or orchestras. There is also a need for us to promote and support such associations or groups, with a view to providing a goal for our children who enjoy and are interested in music. This is very important. Students learn music at many schools and members often attend concerts and listen to the wonderful performances of our young people. We have some extremely talented young people and they need to be encouraged. I believe it is important to provide some form of incentive to those young people. There is no doubt that groups like the Darwin City Band and Youth Orchestra serve that purpose. They give young people something to aim for in their own backyard, the Northern Territory. Without such groups, our young musicians will lose their initial enthusiasm.

The Darwin City Band has had a chequered history. There has not been one continuing band since the early days; there have been several. The success of the current city band has come about mainly, I believe, because the band leader, Doug Fitzjohn, is not only extremely capable musically but also has great enthusiasm. It is people like him who weld a team together and, in consequence, we are very fortunate to have a band that has developed extremely well. Another person who played a large part in forming that band is someone I played with in a jazz band some years ago. We have different political persuasions and his name is Brian Manning.

The present Darwin City Band was formed as a result of a public meeting organised in September 1981 by the then Lord Mayor, Cec Black. He organised a meeting with a view to seeing if there was enough interest in the community to re-form the Darwin City Band. With that in mind, a steering committee was set up. There was enough interest to commence band practices late in 1981. Those practices took place in a demountable adjacent to the Aralia Street tennis courts, and I think some members may remember that. There was a small core of approximately 10 to 12 players at that time. The re-formed band was different. The previous band was a genuine brass band. It had no reed instruments such as clarinets and saxophones. It was a straight brass band. The new band made its first appearance in June 1982 at the Bougainvillea Festival. From those small beginnings in Aralia Street, the band gradually reached its present strength. I will probably speak about that at a later date.

The Darwin City Band has had a great deal of support from many people and organisations in the community. Members would be aware that brass instruments are extremely expensive. I know that when the band was setting up, it applied to Ranger Uranium for financial assistance for the purchase of instruments from Boosey and Hawkes, the instrument retailers in Sydney. Ranger donated a sum of \$15 000. The Northern Territory government and the Darwin City Council

have assisted with further funding for instruments and I think that that needs to be acknowledged.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will have to complete my remarks in relation to the band tomorrow evening.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I could not let this evening go by without taking up a few points made during the incoherent ravings of the court jester of the opposition benches, the member for MacDonnell, who from time to time entertains or disgusts us with his socialistic comments.

What concerned me tonight was his support for this ridiculous suggestion of a monorail at Uluru National park. Had it been suggested by this CLP government or the conservative opposition in Canberra, he would be shouting from the roof tops. As we all know, he is a member of the Uluru Board of Management, along with many of his greenie mates. He would be really tearing the place apart if we suggested installing something as horrendous as a monorail. However, that is really not the issue that I want to take up.

For years now, we have been shouting and screaming and lobbying to have the Ayers Rock Mount Olga road upgraded. It would cost only \$4m to \$6m. The results have been totally negative. We have had a multitude of complaints from tourists and tourist operators. In fact, I was talking to a fellow over the weekend who told me that he rolled his car on that stretch of road about 18 months ago. Now, out of the blue, the federal minister and the Director of ANPWS start talking about spending in excess of \$100m to install a monorail. How ridiculous! All we need is a standard sealed road and that will be the end of the story. It would satisfy the needs of everybody.

Nobody has yet mentioned how the traditional owners feel about all this. Nobody has received their permission or found out how large a payment they might want to receive. Figures of \$300 000 and \$400 000 have been floated in relation to the payment made by a film company to shoot a few reels of film in Uluru National Park. Installing a monorail will be worth more than a few hundred thousand dollars. It will be worth considerably more than that.

As the Minister for Lands and Housing rightly pointed, there is a hidden agenda here and it is this: parks are not for people. Parks are for the environment, for flora and fauna. People should be very restricted in their access to them, and that is what the monorail is all about. The minister is absolutely correct.

I would also like to take up the member for Stuart's comments about alleged overcrowding at Casuarina Secondary College. That college happens to be in my electorate and I attended the meeting which the minister referred to earlier. The minister briefed the Casuarina Secondary College Council on what his department was going to do to address the overcrowding problem. There is no question that the council is fully aware of the situation and I was surprised to learn, from the minister's comments earlier, that the Teachers Federation came out the following day with a media release criticising the department and the minister. I have not seen the press release but it does concern me that information from a briefing given by the minister to a school council can be criticised the following day in the pages of the local newspaper. That really concerns me. I will take steps to acquaint myself with that particular press release, so I will not say any more until I am sure of my facts. However, it does concern me.

The residents of the Casuarina Secondary College feeder areas were fully aware when the senior secondary college system was introduced that there would be a degree of overcrowding in the first 2 years. That was because the parents and the council insisted that the Year 9 and 10 students who were attending the college at that time should be allowed to complete their secondary education at that particular school. That has been one of the major factors contributing to the overcrowding. Whilst accepting that point, there is no doubt that the attendance has far exceeded expectations and that is because secondary colleges in Darwin have been very popular. The people who argued against the introduction of the senior secondary college system 2 years or more ago, must be eating their words now.

Mr Collins: No, I am not.

Mr SETTER: I did not realise the member for Sadadeen was an opponent.

Nevertheless, the people who were opposing it at that time must be extremely surprised at the popularity of that system. It is that popularity that has taken the student population at Casuarina Secondary College up to the limits where it is now. From the meeting that I attended the other day, it was quite obvious that the attendance at the school had far exceeded the projections of demographers from the department. Even they were astounded, and that just indicates to me that the 'school buzz' must be around the community that the Casuarina Secondary College is the place to go. I am very pleased to note the minister's comment regarding restricting the intake for Year 11 in 1988 to the traditional feeder area for that college.

I would hasten to point out that a considerable amount of money, some \$5m, has been spent on upgrading that college in the last couple of years. It is a wonderful facility. Its popularity has created a number of pressures within that school community and overcrowding is one of them. These problems will be addressed by the government. They will be identified and funds found to solve them.

The other matter I want to speak about this evening is a tourist promotion delegation which is in Darwin at the moment from the Maluku region of Indonesia. The delegation came here last Friday and currently has a display in Shop 94 in Casuarina Square. This has been arranged with the support of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission which has offered some advice and assistance to the group. The Director of Tourism, Dr Oratmangun, is heading this particular delegation which is here to promote tourism to the Maluku region of eastern Indonesia. It is a very interesting region and I will give a little of its history.

Mr Perron: They have clear water there.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, they do. In fact, that whole area has some of the deepest water in the world, up to about 7000 fathoms. The average would be 3000 or 4000 fathoms. The island of Ambon and the island of Banda are the upper part of huge volcanic peaks, so you can imagine how high they would be.

It is an extremely beautiful area. The Portuguese first visited it in 1511 when they discovered spices, cloves and nutmeg. In fact, even today, the area is known as the Spice Islands. The Portuguese took the spices back to Europe. Of course, that was a bonanza in those days. They were quickly followed by the Spaniards, who came to the area in 1521, the Dutch in 1599 and the English in 1605. All of those countries have controlled the island of Ambon at some time. The island has a magnificent harbour which is one of the

best natural harbours in the world. The Indonesians have a naval base there. Indeed, there has been a naval base there since the Portuguese first occupied the area.

The province of Maluku consists of about 1000 islands which commence about 150 miles from where I am standing at the moment, and that is closer than Katherine. From there, they extend up past Ternate and to the east of the Philippines. The population of the area is about 1.5 million people. It covers something like 851 000 km². I would hasten to remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that only about 10% of that is actually land, but that is the area of the province.

Recent Indonesian government policy has been to develop the eastern provinces of Indonesia. Until a few years ago, the area was fairly inaccessible and it was only the yacht race that commenced 11 years ago to Ambon that started to build up our relationship with the region until today we have an excellent relationship with the people there. It has really helped them to come out of their shell as well. What has really pushed the issue was the devaluation of the Indonesian rupiah 12 or 18 months ago, and the fall in the oil price which has put the Indonesian economy under considerable stress. They are looking at other opportunities and one of those for that region is tourism. They have come here to promote Ambon and other places, like the island of Banda, as tourist destinations.

The island of Banda, or Bandanira as it is commonly called, is one of the most beautiful places to be found anywhere. It is 40 or 50 minutes flying time south-east of Ambon in the northern part of the Banda Sea. It has such things as a Dutch fort that dates back to the 1500s, magnificent colonial buildings, snorkelling, volcanoes - everything that you would ever want, you can find in Banda. I am quite sure that many people who traditionally take their holidays in Bali and, more recently, in places like Kupang, in future will be travelling to Ambon and the Maluku region.

Recently, I have had contact with the President of Merpati Airlines, Mr Soeratman, and I suggested to him that a direct flight from Darwin to Ambon would be very appropriate at this time because it would capitalise on the developing relationship with that region. Since the airline has been flying to Kupang in the last 18 months, there has been an enormous increase in tourism in that area. Now is the time to commence a flight to Maluku. Having said that, it takes 2 to tango. Our real interest is in attracting Indonesian tourists down here into Darwin and also other European tourists who would be coming from Europe - and many do - into that region. They could travel on to Darwin. There are enormous tourism opportunities for both Australia and Indonesia in that region. I will be doing all I can to encourage and assist them to develop.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do regret that I was not here when the motion to adjourn was proposed because I had hoped to put what I want to say today before a rather larger audience than is here now. I am glad that you are in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, because you were not around the traps when this happened and it might be instructive and, at least, of some academic interest to you.

At the last sittings of the Assembly, I asked the Chief Minister a question which related to a newspaper article in the NT News of 9 December headed: 'Here Is The Proof - CM'. It said:

When pressed strongly about his claim to have irrefutable proof, Mr Hatton reached for his office desk drawer and produced an official document detailing Mr Tuxworth's disloyalty. The document formed part of the parliamentary wing's case against Mr Tuxworth.

I asked the Chief Minister whether the official document mentioned there - copies of which were given to the member for Barkly, Mr Ian Tuxworth - was in fact a statutory declaration by one Jeffrey Kenneth Brenton of Lake Evella. As was his right, the Chief Minister said that that was party business and that he did not intend to answer.

I happen to have a problem in that I do not have a party. If I had, I dare say I would have raised this matter a long time ago. I would like to think I would have had the courage to do so a long time ago because, as far as I am concerned, the statutory declaration which was given to Mr Tuxworth from the Chief Minister's office is a load of nonsense. I would like to say here that that statutory declaration was not produced in the party room on 8 December. Indeed, no written documentary material whatsoever was produced. On 10 December, when I got a copy of the NT News, I was angry to read that passage in the newspaper article, which led one to believe that that document formed part of the parliamentary wing's case against Mr Tuxworth.

Looking back with hindsight, no doubt there were a number of people around who were quite happy to think, 'Well, Collins is no longer going to be part of the scene. We will get rid of him', and I can understand it if others may have been shown the document behind my back. Some of my parliamentary colleagues, and I certainly am not going to name them, have said that they have never seen the document - and I was really surprised when a minister said that. I thought that, if the party room had not seen it then surely Cabinet would have seen the document and would have discussed the important matter of getting rid of a member of the parliamentary wing. At least, I know one member of Cabinet - who shall obviously remain nameless - who did not see the document.

I think I should read out part of the sworn statement by one Jeffrey Kenneth Brenton, which I can only assume is the official document that the Chief Minister spoke about to Oscar Tamsen, the author of the NT News story. It concerns a conversation alleged to have taken place between Mr Brenton and Mr Lanhupuy. This is getting to the crux of it:

Mr Lanhupuy said that today Mr Tuxworth and Mr Collins would be making a statement in the House regarding the travel allowance affair. I said, 'Well, I hope that that is all over and that elected members get on with their respective jobs'. Mr Lanhupuy said, 'Well, it is not all over. Mr Tuxworth told Mr Collins that Paul Everingham was given a loan from Carpentaria Pty Ltd to buy a share in a hotel and motel in Alice Springs. Mr Tuxworth hates Everingham. He wants Bob to help him get back for what happened to him'. I said, 'How does Tuxworth know it was Paul Everingham's fault for what happened to him?'. Mr Lanhupuy said, 'Well, it can't be proved but Tuxworth knows it was Paul Everingham'. Our conversation finished when 1 of my staff walked into the office to begin work.

That is signed by Jeffrey Kenneth Brenton. The 'Mr Collins' referred to was Bob Collins.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that if you had been a member in the party room and had seen a copy of that document, it would have raised more questions

rather than convincing you that it was irrefutable proof of the member for Barkly's disloyalty to the party. I think if we had had that document and we had sat down for a moment, read it and contemplated it, we would have thrown it out as being nonsense.

I understand from Oscar Tamsen, who wrote the newspaper article - and this was well before I had seen the statutory declaration - that he had seen the document and read it and he mentioned in a further NT News article, or it could have been a Sunday Territorian article, that, in a sense, he was staggered. In fact, he did not believe that the members of the parliamentary wing had actually seen it because he did not believe that, if that had been the evidence that was put forward, we would have been so stupid as to vote in the way that we did. The point of the matter is that this was not given to us. If it had been, I am sure that I would not have voted as I did. Well, I would like to think that, although I must confess that under the pressure of the situation maybe I would have caved in. That is the only thing in my parliamentary career that I feel ashamed of, and I don't suppose parliamentarians bare their souls very often.

We had a party meeting on 1 December, just after the sittings. We were all called back on the Monday. It was a time when the honourable member for Barkly was grilled, to some degree. He was there, and gave his answers back and forth to certain accusations which were made. But, out of that meeting, I recall very vividly the summing up of the Chief Minister. I thought it was a very satisfactory result. Of course, members will realise that an election was coming up and members get a bit jittery when preselections are put on the line, as indeed they were. I remember the Chief Minister saying in summary, 'Well, I assure every one of you, and that includes you, Ian' - looking the member for Barkly in the eye - 'that you have my fullest support for your re-endorsement for the seat which you represent. None of us will be going to the media and we will bring any problems that we have into the party room, and we will thrash them out there'. There had been a lot of that going on - members talking to the media and running other members down behind their backs and getting stories into the media. To me, that was top stuff. It was a good consensus on the matter and I believe it was the real Steve Hatton. I like to think it was. He got my vote for the position of Chief Minister although, following his election to the Chief Ministership, he let me down somewhat on a matter of trust. Namely, I said to him that I felt I would be getting the chop as Whip for the party. I felt that in the air. I had not lobbied for it. I am afraid it is just not my nature to lobby. The Chief Minister responded, 'Well, you've got my vote'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I confess to a scurrilous thing. After the vote was taken and I was beaten, I was a little bit dubious about it all, so I gathered the torn-up ballot papers and I made jigsaw puzzles out of them. It was a very salutary experience for me because I ended up getting 3 votes. One was my own, naturally enough; one was from a member who was a minister - a handwriting check and also things that he said to me afterwards in condolence satisfied me that it was him; and the third was simply 'DC' printed in pencil, which was hard to follow. However, I am satisfied now that it was the member for Barkly. Maybe that was a scurrilous thing to do, but the truth of the matter is that I found that the Chief Minister's word was not what it ought to have been. I do not mind if he voted against me, but I do not like anybody telling me to my face that I have their support and then discovering it not to be the case.

On the Saturday following that meeting on Monday 1 December, it was a great surprise to me to learn from friends who had heard the radio that the

Chief Minister had called for the resignation of Mr Tuxworth. 'Either he has got to go or I have got to go!'. The word came through that I had to appear at a party meeting on 8 December. That party meeting was called, and let us recall what had happened. The very thing that I felt was good and would get the party right back on an even keel - the consensus of 1 December - was now lost because the Chief Minister had acted contrary to his own ruling. He had gone to the media. He had dragged it all out into the open. He had not consulted the rest of the party. He just behaved in a manner that was not in keeping with the ruling he had made when, I think, we saw the real Steve Hatton.

On Monday 8 December, I arrived only a few minutes before the meeting began and did not have time to talk to any of my colleagues about what was going on. The Chief Minister behaved in a manner which, in my book, was totally out of character. He normally let us say what we wanted to say while everyone else had to sit there and put up with it. On this occasion, he came in through the door and, before he even had his backside on his seat, moved for the suspension of Ian Tuxworth from the parliamentary wing. That was right out of character.

One other member started to ask a few questions but he was jumped on and withdrew somewhat. It was muggins me who wanted to try to find out what on earth had occurred between one Monday and the next. After much probing, I was told that nothing really new had happened. With hindsight, I see now that I should have moved to get rid of the member on 1 December because the member for Barkly had decided he had had enough of the nonsense and he did not appear, so that did not give me any ammunition. For 13 minutes, I kept things going and the vote was eventually taken. With great reluctance, I raised my hand. I regret that. It is not something I am proud of because, if this is the nature of the evidence that the Chief Minister had against the member for Barkly, then it is a nonsense.

I believe that things go deeper than this. I believe the real Chief Minister was the one who offered such good, healing and sensible words on 1 December. I believe very strongly that the Chief Minister was leant on in the intervening period. Paul Everingham had announced his resignation on 1 December, stating that he would not compete again for the federal seat. Mr Lewis, then chairman of the party, announced his resignation on the Friday. Then came the bombshell: Tuxworth has to go! I believe that we were railroaded, that we were put out on a limb by somebody who went to the media and used it in the worst possible way.

The upshot, of course, is that Ian Tuxworth is out and he is with the Territory Nationals. I have spoken to Jim Petrich in recent days. He said: 'I approached Ian Tuxworth in that period after the 1 December meeting to come and join the National Party'. Jim said: 'Ian said to me, "They have treated me pretty rough but I am a founding member of the CLP and I will stick with them"'. Then, of course, the acid had to come. The smell relates to a certain subject called Carpentaria. I dare say I was gingered into making this speech by a little comment from somebody, no doubt Mr Alcorta, in last week's Sunday Territorian. It said that people were worried about my raising the matter of Carpentaria and certain allegations about kickbacks. Mr Deputy Speaker, I see my time is running out. I will continue on another day and raise the matter of Carpentaria. The information will come out and, I believe, the day of reckoning will be at hand.

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 Message No 4 from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, pursuant to section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to amend the Superannuation Act in so far as the bill proposes the appropriation of Consolidated Funds for the purpose of the employer-financed component of the benefit payable under the Northern Territory government and the Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme under the Superannuation Act.

Dated 28 October 1987.
E.E. Johnston
Administrator.

PETITIONS

Community Education Centre at Batchelor College

Mr EDE (Stuart)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 45 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the government urgently review the functions of the Community Education Centre at the Batchelor College. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth their concern that the Community Education Centre at Batchelor College is in danger of going out of operation due to lack of funds. The centre is playing a vital role in training Aboriginal people to take on management roles in their communities. Without this training, self-determination is not possible. The courses being offered by the centre are developing a high reputation throughout the country for the excellency of concept and implementation. The petitioners therefore ask the Northern Territory government to urgently review the funding of the centre to ensure its continued existence, preferably in an expanded form. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Batchelor Dam Proposal

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 460 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the government reject the Batchelor Dam proposal. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that the proposed dam on the Finniss River near the town of Batchelor would result in economic, social and cultural hardship for residents and owners of this rapidly expanding and prospering area. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Northern Territory government reject the Batchelor Dam proposal without delay and commence a study of alternative water supplies for the Darwin region forthwith. Your humble petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 24 November 1987 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today's sitting be granted to the member for Arafura because of pressing commitments in his electorate.

Motion agreed to.

DISCHARGE OF ITEMS FROM NOTICE PAPER

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his cooperation with this motion. I move that the following orders of the day, Government Business, be discharged from the notice paper: No 19 relating to the Auditor-General's Report 1985-86; No 20 relating to the resignation of the former Minister for Labour and Administrative Services; No 21 relating to the April 1987 collapse of the Northern Territory Electricity Commission system; and No 22 relating to the June 1987 economic statement of the Treasurer.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Document Relating to Statehood

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Honourable members will recall that, on 24 September 1987, I laid on the table a discussion paper on the proposed state constitution for the Northern Territory, together with an information paper on options for a grant of statehood prepared by the Select Committee on Constitutional Development to promote community awareness and comment on the movement towards statehood by the Northern Territory. For the information of honourable members, I lay on the Table a further discussion paper on representation in a Territory constitutional convention. Mr Speaker, I move that the paper be printed.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Aborigines and Tourism

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Stuart:

Dear Mr Speaker

I wish to propose under standing order No 94 that this Assembly discuss as a definite matter of public importance the following: the need for the government to positively acknowledge the importance to the Northern Territory of current and planned initiatives by Aboriginal people in the field of tourism.

Yours sincerely
Brian Ede
Member for Stuart.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have brought on this debate in the Assembly today in an effort to restore some balance to the debate about Aboriginal involvement in tourism in the Northern Territory.

Members of the Territory public reading headlines in Territory papers have heard government members make false claims about alleged restrictions being placed by Aboriginal people on tourism. They have heard completely unbalanced or completely untrue stories about location fees being paid for filming on Aboriginal land. They have heard of supposed attempts to close off our national parks or other major tourist attractions. If that is all they hear, it is possible that they may feel that Aboriginal people are rejecting tourism outright and are not making a significant contribution to the industry. In this debate, we hope to counter that view in the public mind, to convince the government to take a far more positive approach to assisting Aboriginal endeavours in this regard and, even more importantly, to encourage it to promote the achievements of Aboriginal involvement in tourism so that all Territorians can feel confident about the total development of the industry.

The opposition is not alone in its fear that the attitude of some members opposite and their continued carping criticism of the relationship of Aboriginal people to many of our major tourist ventures will damage government and private enterprise efforts to promote those attractions. What must international or interstate visitors think when they come to the Northern Territory to enjoy a unique holiday experience, an outback alive with culture and steeped in a spirit that stretches back over 40 000 years? What do they think when they find headlines dominated by the simple-minded claptrap pumped out by the Minister for Tourism and some of his more dinwitted cronies, telling the public that the very attractions that they have come to see ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The language the member is using is in contravention of standing orders. It is impugning the minister and his staff.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I have not made any remark about the minister personally. The Minister for Education was obviously asleep as usual. For his benefit, I will repeat my remarks so that he will understand that there is absolutely no point of order. I asked what international or interstate visitors would think when they find local headlines dominated by the

simple-minded claptrap pumped out by the Minister for Tourism and some of his more dimwitted cronies, telling the public that the very attractions they have come to see are in real danger of being closed or unduly restricted.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: I will not repeat my remarks for a third time but I have real difficulty in understanding a minister who, on one hand, trumpets our tourist industry and, on the other, belittles and decries the efforts of people involved in that industry.

Aboriginal Territorians are working steadily towards the development of more and more resources for the tourist industry. They wish to provide not only a viable economic base for their own communities, but to educate Australians and people overseas about their way of life, their country and their relationship to that country. They wish to ensure that a high percentage of returns from the tourist industry comes back into the Northern Territory economy. They are attempting to get a return on their own endeavours. That is a positive contribution and that is what I wish to focus on today.

Mr Speaker, the history of Aboriginal input into the tourist industry has been a long and extensive one. Nowadays, that involvement is resulting in considerable investment and development of tourist infrastructure. That has not always been the case. In the early days, the involvement was more a matter of the usage of Aboriginal motifs and Dreamtime images by non-Aboriginal groups as a means of promotion. This evolved into specialised tours aimed at exposing tourists to Aboriginal people and smatterings of the Dreamtime cultures. In those days, tours were almost always under the control of non-Aboriginals and involved little or no direct Aboriginal participation. Aborigines were often passive participants in an industry which came dangerously close to actually destroying their interest in any further participation. Many people are aware of what has happened in parts of the United States where 'peace pipe and blanket' tourism has led to the Indian people becoming passive objects which are the focus of tourism. They are there as an attraction but are not involved in that attraction. The saying goes: 'When do the Indians dance?'

I am happy to say that today the focus of the industry has changed dramatically. At the leading edge of that change is the participation of Aboriginal people with equity. Aboriginal involvement in the tourist industry takes 4 major forms. The first form is direct initiatives manifested by on-the-ground tourist projects. The second involves Aboriginal equity and direct investment. The third is the ever-increasing research being conducted by Aboriginal bodies into the tourist industry. The last is the development of what has been termed cross-cultural education. Of course, that last form plays its part in the other categories that I have listed. I would like to draw the attention of this Assembly to some specific projects. A number of these fit into the first category of direct initiatives manifesting themselves as on-the-ground tourist projects. I will briefly introduce some of these. The next opposition speaker will mention others and expand upon some of those that I mention.

The first project is at Ipolera, an outstation west of Hermannsburg, where 2 tour buses a week arrive with people who are interested in participating in guided tours arranged by Aboriginal people. During those tours, they receive explanations of areas of cultural significance to Aboriginal people. They have a meal of bush tucker and they discuss with the traditional owners their

relationship with the land, what that land means to them and what the outstation movement means to them. The arrangement was negotiated with Ansett Trailways by the Central Land Council on behalf of the traditional owners. It has been a resounding success and you have to book well ahead to get on that tour.

At Hermannsburg itself, Aboriginal people took the initiative of applying to the Australian Bicentennial Authority for funds to restore the historical areas in that community. Honourable members are aware that that community has some of the oldest dwellings in central Australia and it will become a tourist destination that will link in with the Palm Valley area. The community has another proposal on the drawing board. It wishes to run a 4-wheel-drive bus service into the popular Palm Valley area. This service will be different from the existing services that go there at the moment because it will involve a far greater cultural emphasis.

At Standley Chasm, which is one of the major tourist destinations close to Alice Springs, the traditional owners are preparing to buy out the existing lease arrangements so that they can carry out an extensive upgrading and expansion of the facilities and prepare guided and specialised tours of the area.

In the Gosse Bluff area, there are on the drawing board proposals to utilise the sanctuary as a major tourist destination. The people are waiting for this government to formalise the legal arrangements which were negotiated some time ago with the government.

At Barrow Creek, the Kaititja people are attempting to obtain a formal secure title over the old telegraph station to allow its restoration and the development of a tourist industry which will focus on the early days of Aboriginal European contact in that area. The initial contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at Barrow Creek was not a happy one. It led to the killing of some European staff at the station and reprisal raids that left Aboriginal people dead over thousands of square miles. That is a tragic part of our history. However, it is a positive development, I believe, that Aboriginal people wish to involve themselves in the restoration of those areas and have indicated a determination which demonstrates their desire to ensure that what happened in the past is put behind people and that we can go forward into a far better future.

It is expected that the restoration of the telegraph station will lead to the development of a major outlet for Aboriginal arts and crafts. One of the problems that I have is explaining to people travelling up and down the Stuart Highway the fact that outlets controlled by Aboriginal people which provide genuine art and genuine craft, are few and far between. That is quite surprising, given the number of tourist buses that travel up and down that highway. I believe that the major arts and craft outlet at Barrow Creek will be very successful.

Further west, around Mount Liebig and in many smaller communities around the Centre, people are investigating the potential of utilising the natural resources to build up a network of smaller tourist centres aimed at providing a range of varied holiday experiences for the ever-increasing variety of tourists coming to the Territory. Arts and craft centres in communities right across the Territory are increasing their outlets and the quantity of the product. It is now estimated that arts outlets run by Aboriginal people themselves in major centres turn over some \$3m to \$4 every year and they provide genuine quality art to the visitor. They are not the rip-offs that

have sometimes given the industry a bad name. In Tennant Creek, the Anyinginyi Congress recently established an art outlet with the profits going back into the development of the Aboriginal community. Up in the Top End, there are many tourist operations which involve Aboriginal people. Aboriginal communities across Arnhem Land are expanding their arts and crafts industry as well as examining the presentation of the Arnhem Land area from an Aboriginal cultural perspective. Further examples of that involvement will be provided by my colleague.

Mr Speaker, I would like to turn to the second category of Aboriginal involvement: Aboriginal investment and equity in major tourist ventures. In the member for Arafura's electorate, there has been the outstandingly successful Melville Island project and we have the signing of the major joint venture at Jabiru where the Gagadju people are constructing a major hotel. Out on the Cobourg Peninsula, the Coral Bay Hotel project was initiated by the Aboriginal Control Board of Management and the Croker Island venture appears to have real potential for the future. Further east, the members for Arnhem and Nhulunbuy take every opportunity to wax lyrical about the Wessel Islands and the developments in that area.

In Central Australia, one of the largest scale tourist operations will be the Kings Canyon Wilderness Lodge. That development, which is termed 'low key' in that it blends with the environment, is controlled in a 50% equity partnership between Destination Marketing Australia and Centrecorp, a company owned by Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia. When completed, that project will bring great benefits to the Territory's economy and it will increase the staying time of the tourists travelling the Ayers Rock, Kings Canyon, Alice Springs triangle. The Northern Territory government is contributing to that project by the development of headworks in that area.

Mr Speaker, under that heading, I would also like to point out Aboriginal involvement in industries which service tourists in major centres. The prime example of that, as honourable members from Alice Springs would know, is the Yipirinya complex in Alice Springs. That major new development will be of benefit to local residents and tourists alike and will ensure that there are additional shopping attractions in pleasant surroundings for visitors to Alice Springs. The involvement of the Aboriginal Development Commission in that project is very substantial.

I turn now to the third category outlined earlier: tourism research undertaken by Aboriginal groups. An interesting spin-off of the Kings Canyon Wilderness Lodge venture has been further cooperation between Centrecorp, representing Aboriginal organisations, and the Destination Marketing Australia Group. The formation of the tourist consulting service for Aboriginal tourist ventures came out of that. That venture is known as the Mingjutja Consulting Services. This group acts as consultants to Aboriginal people right across Australia, advising on the establishment of tourism ventures. It also assists non-Aboriginal groups, who wish to become involved with Aboriginal people in tourism, to understand the processes that they should go through. I know for a fact that this service has received numerous approaches from groups right across the country regarding tourist proposals. It has achieved national status and is a fine example of how Aboriginal involvement in the industry is occurring at all levels in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Land Council, which this government unfortunately denigrates so loudly and so often, also has an extensive commitment to the development of the tourist resource in the Northern Territory. Two research proposals are currently being organised by the Northern Land Council to extensively examine the role of Aboriginal communities in Top End tourism.

The first of these will entail a period of some 12 to 18 months discussing with the communities right across the Top End the role that they would like to play in the industry. The guidelines for that proposal are threefold: to control tourism to allow for environmental protection and to prevent tourism taking on the aspects of an Aboriginal zoo; to ensure Aboriginal equity and involvement at all levels in any proposals; and to ensure that a high proportion of returns generated remain in the area. The second research proposal involves taking 3 to 6 months to examine, in particular, tourist potential in the north-west Arnhem region with a view to developing greater Aboriginal involvement and equity in that area. In both those cases, there is a commitment by the Northern Land Council and the people it represents to develop a viable economic resource, not only for those remote communities but also for the benefit of the Territory economy as a whole.

The final category I wish to discuss is the development of cross-cultural education as a major tourist development. I was interested to read in the *Centralian Advocate* recently comments made by Mr David Foster from the Department of Leisure Studies at Phillip Institute of Technology. He was part of a study group examining the potential of what is known as cultural tourism. He stated that the days of 'been there, done that' tourism were waning and the tourists, particularly international tourists, were looking for something more than that. In light of that statement, I would like to point out the Territory is uniquely placed in Australia to develop a commanding lead in the market in that area. The fact is that Aboriginal groups in Alice Springs beat Mr Foster to the punch and are already developing the market in this area. The Institute for Aboriginal Development, in conjunction with the Desert Discovery Group, is in the final stages of packaging a series of tours which are designed to give cultural education to the tourists.

Mr Speaker, the courses are designed to provide cross-cultural awareness without unduly impacting on the lives of ...

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

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I find the matter of public importance brought before this Assembly today really to be an abuse of what a matter of public importance is.

Mr Ede: Don't you believe that this is important?

Mr HANRAHAN: Certainly, we agree that it is important but the wording of the actual motion has been thoroughly discredited by the member for Stuart because he spent 20 minutes telling this Assembly what a good job the Northern Territory government has done in promoting and fostering Aboriginal involvement in tourism. There was not one single thing that the member for Stuart mentioned that has not largely involved an initiative of this Northern Territory government.

I take great exception to his opening remarks because the member for Stuart would have the people of the Northern Territory believe that, because we have principles involving the management of national parks within the boundaries of the Northern Territory and because we defend those principles, we create a climate that drives Aboriginal people away. Let me tell the member for Stuart that, if Uluru National Park was managed by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, you would not have this pie-in-the-sky claptrap about monorails between Ayers Rock and the Olgas. There would be a road; we would have built it. We have already offered to build it. We have offered to share the costs, but the answer is always no. With Kakadu, there

would not be all the talk about \$70m worth of non-existent capital works nor an unsealed road from the Arnhem Highway through to the East Alligator crossing into Oenpelli.

Mr Ede: It is your road so go ahead and seal it.

Mr HANRAHAN: It is not, Mr Speaker. There would not be an unsealed section of road running into Cooida and an unsealed section of road running into Jim Jim and Twin Falls. It would have been done a long time ago. But all the federal government has been able to do is talk pie-in-the-sky, and we have got nowhere.

I take great exception to the remarks of the member for Stuart, but I do agree with him on most other things that he had to say. He has suddenly developed a new-found interest in tourism, a subject he has not spoken on for about 2 years. He attended a conference and he has come back with this new interest. I am glad to see that he is finally supporting the Northern Territory government, and let me now proceed to outline the projects that we have developed with Aboriginal people because we recognised the importance of this back in 1984 when we finalised the report from the original Northern Territory Development Corporation. We have made absolutely no secret of the fact that we want Aboriginal people involved in tourism. We want it done properly. We do not want to be promoting paternalistic ideals. We want the people to have employment. We want them to help themselves and we want them to have equity. That is why we have gone absolutely out of our way, continually, to involve Aboriginal people, often in the face of total opposition, in various instances, from the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr HANRAHAN: Let me deal with Kings Canyon. What has the Northern Territory government done with Kings Canyon, not only the headworks and the building of internal roads, not only the provision of water but also 3 freehold excision areas within the national park and the provision of housing, electricity and water at the cost of some \$760 000?

Mr Ede: With federal money.

Mr HANRAHAN: Absolute rubbish!

There is also the establishment of a majority management committee involving Aboriginal representation. There would not be the 25% equity participation in that particular project without assistance, encouragement and promotion by the Northern Territory government. I am glad that the member for Stuart recognises that.

The Jabiru and Cobourg motels would have been there much sooner. In fact, 2 or 3 years ago, we could have had those motels in place but we have experienced continual procrastination by the ANPWS and the negative attitude of the federal government towards the Territory. The situation we face now is that we are being forced to develop alternative park areas, such as Litchfield and Gregory, because of the limitations on access into Kakadu which largely relate to the lack of accommodation facilities in the area. Mr Speaker, 3 or 4 years ago, we were prepared to stand behind developers and build accommodation in Kakadu. It still has not happened although, finally, I am very pleased to see the Gagadju Association involved at Jabiru. Although not everyone may know it, it is also involved at the South Alligator Motor Inn.

The Cobourg resort is another resort that involves Aboriginal people and which has been promoted by this Northern Territory government. I make no bones about the fact that I think the people at Cobourg will give an excellent stimulus to tourism because of their positive attitude to involvement in the industry. They will benefit through employment, various royalties and the spin-offs in respect of tours. I have visited the Cobourg area now on 3 occasions. Recently, with a representative from the people, I spent 1½ days travelling over the whole Cobourg area looking at the various islands and discussing the ways and means in which the Northern Territory Tourist Commission can continue to market that area.

Wigram Island is coming on and, as mentioned by the member for Stuart, Croker Island is developing with the total involvement of the Northern Territory government. We have been there promoting it. Putjamirra, Tiwi Tours and the Barra Base are all examples on Bathurst and Melville Island where the Northern Territory government has stood behind the private enterprise involvement of the Tiwi people. Although I realise that he is very busy over on Bathurst and Melville Islands, I am disappointed that the member for Arafura cannot be with us today because I would like to have heard his positive comments about the Northern Territory government's involvement with and encouragement of the Tiwi people. I have spoken to the member for Arafura on several occasions about future ventures that will involve the Tiwi people and he certainly recognises that the active involvement of the Northern Territory government and its positive recognition given to Aboriginal involvement in tourism, is acting as the catalyst to finally get Aboriginal people to see the light. It is working well and can only be encouraged.

I would like to deal with a few of the issues that certainly have not been recognised by the member for Stuart. We have prepared several brochures, videos and literature that has been distributed far and wide throughout the Northern Territory to every tourist operator and every Aboriginal community. It has been distributed interstate and overseas. For the benefit of the member for Stuart, we prepared the booklet, 'People of Two Times', widely acclaimed as an excellent book that deals with a cultural introduction to Aboriginal tourism. That has cost us about \$65 000 to date for the first and second editions. There are several means by which we have been involved in actively encouraging Aboriginal people to become involved in tourism. There is the tourism awareness video that I recently launched at significant cost. That is available to all Aboriginal enterprises and organisations and to everybody else in the tourist industry who wants it. Our aim is the active involvement of the Aboriginal people in tourism.

For the benefit of the member for Stuart, I will table this documentation dealing with what the Tourist Commission is doing at present to encourage Aboriginal people to see the benefits of tourism. There is an awareness video there that I am sure the member for Stuart needs. I should actively encourage him to view that tonight. There are documents dealing with tourism awareness, certain projects involving the Conservation Commission, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, Aboriginal heritage, as well as the various tours, the Mimi dancers, the Tiwi Tours, the Wildgoose Tours and 'People of Two Times' - an excellent publication. There is also 'Putjamirra Tourism - A Growth Industry in Australia's Northern Territory' and some other paraphernalia. If the Northern Territory government were not dealing with tourism and Aboriginal people in a positive manner, we would not have any of that documentation before us, and we would not have any of the active involvement by Aboriginal people.

We have actively involved Aboriginal people very deliberately. Bob Doyle and, formerly, the present member for Araluen, as the Chairman of the Tourist Commission, recognised as far back as 1982 that we needed to do something to actively involve Aboriginal people. We have stepped it up, as I have repeated in this House ad infinitum on various occasions, and highlighted the areas that the Northern Territory government has actively pursued. One of the things that we have kept as the mainstay of our principles is that you cannot have Aboriginal people actively involved in tourism unless they are prepared to recognise that, first, they need equity involvement and, secondly, they have to help themselves to a large degree. In order for them to help themselves, we have been prepared in all instances to actively provide employment because employment and equity involvement will give Aboriginal people the responsibility that they need to develop in order to ultimately pursue some of these tourist projects in their own right.

Mr Speaker, I can only commend the activities of Bob Doyle, the Chairman of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. When he came to the job, he stressed the major recommendation in the original report by the NTDC in 1984: to actively promote and encourage Aboriginal people and their involvement in tourism. Our efforts in relation to the Brolga Awards are an example of that. They may appear superficial but they demonstrate the high level of awareness in the Northern Territory about the importance of encouraging this involvement. We initiated the idea of an award for Aboriginal involvement in tourism. I actively pursued the federal Minister for Tourism, John Brown, to have that category recognised in the national awards for tourism because I thought it was very important. We were successful in having a cultural award recognised within the national awards. We were told that that could involve Aboriginal people but I felt there should have been a more specific category and I was very disappointed to receive the negative response of the federal minister. I make no bones about that because every Aboriginal person, community and private enterprise that is involved in tourism in the Northern Territory is very proud of their involvement and I would have loved them to have the opportunity to be recognised through a special award.

I have all the brochures for the member for Stuart to look at. I hope he takes the opportunity to make himself aware of some of the details. His MPI indicates that he is absolutely ignorant. Otherwise, how could he suggest that the Northern Territory government does not have a positive attitude to Aboriginal involvement in tourism? What a load of tripe! One of the biggest single factors holding back the development of Aboriginal people in tourism in the Northern Territory is the member for Stuart's continual divisive and racist approach and his continual carping criticism of all the positive developments in the Northern Territory government's approach to Aboriginal people. Mr Speaker, for that, the member for Stuart should be forever damned and ashamed of himself. There is absolutely no question that the Northern Territory government will continue in a very positive way to actively involve Aboriginal people in tourism.

The member for Stuart should have stood up and indicated what the government has done. After attending the 2-day conference in Queensland which suddenly interested him in tourism, he should be aware that the Northern Territory government has been actively encouraging all the approaches he mentioned. Not only that, we are prepared to go a lot further. Several proposed ventures will receive the active support of the Northern Territory government.

Let us start with the Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Berry Springs. Many honourable members may be surprised to learn that that project arose from an

initiative brought to me by various Aboriginal concerns looking for land in the Darwin inner city area. We felt that the obvious place for that development was near Berry Springs where there will be hundreds of thousands of visitors. The centre will provide employment and revenue. Artifacts will be manufactured and sold under one roof. The Northern Territory government is presenting those people with an excellent opportunity. There will be no charge for the land and we will probably put the services on. We are asking the Aboriginal concerns to be actively involved in pursuing the finance. I personally think that it will be a huge success.

Murgenella is at the hub in relation to Arnhem Land and the Cobourg Peninsula. We have been encouraging the Murgenella people to become involved in tourist activities in that area.

The member for Stuart mentioned Standley Chasm. We are aware of that project. The Northern Territory Conservation Commission has taken it a step further and has offered to train the staff as rangers. We have offered them employment and actively encouraged them in any business activities in which they require assistance because Standley Chasm is an important and integral part of the daily visitation of tours around the Alice Springs area and it is very important that it continue to be a success.

Mr Speaker, I can only reiterate what I have already said, which is that the member for Stuart has a very thick hide to walk into this Assembly and suggest that the Northern Territory government does not have a positive attitude towards Aboriginal involvement in tourism. That comment highlights his total ignorance but it also highlights his new-found interest in the operations of the Northern Territory government and the Northern Territory Tourism Commission. I might say that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission works hand in hand with the Conservation Commission. Both organisations have recently employed Aboriginal liaison officers for the specific purpose of actively encouraging Aboriginal people to seek training roles and jobs within both those commissions, especially the Conservation Commission, as we move to develop other parks such as Litchfield, Keep River and Gregory.

We are taking these initiatives on a daily basis and we are taking them for very good reason. We recognise that tourism in the Northern Territory will ultimately be a much better experience, especially for our international visitors, if Aboriginal people participate actively. We have gone a very long way down that path. I ask the member for Stuart to cease his carping and negative criticisms of the Northern Territory government and to address the issue positively. If he takes the time to read the material that I have presented to him and if he takes the time to read the follow-up brief that I will send to him, he will realise that we have spent thousands and thousands of dollars. It is up to him and other members opposite, as they move through the Northern Territory, to talk about the positive aspects of tourism and to tell the Aboriginal people, as I am sure the members for Arafura and Arnhem recognise, that they must help themselves and they cannot continually be led down a path by other people.

The government has a clear principle of involving Aboriginal people in tourism projects. That is working. Putjamirra is one of the greatest experiences I have ever been involved with. You go out there and stay in a safari-type setting but, on a daily basis, you are visited by people who are employed by the tour operators. The Tiwi people have equity in the project and you are taken on food-gathering experiences. That is starting to happen, not only in the Top End but in every part of the Territory and it is happening

with the active participation and encouragement of the staff of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the Conservation Commission who long ago recognised the importance of Aboriginal involvement in tourism.

I would implore members opposite to take a more positive attitude. To say in a matter of public importance that the Northern Territory government does not in any way fully recognise the importance of Aboriginal people in the development of tourism is claptrap. 'The need for the government to positively acknowledge ...'. We do positively acknowledge and the runs are on the board. The member for Stuart's ignorance in the matter is something that he should be ashamed of and he should spend more of his time addressing the positive aspects of the Northern Territory government's involvement with Aboriginal people, not only in tourism but right across the whole spectrum of the Northern Territory economy.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to speak in relation to the government's attitude towards recognising the positive aspects of Aboriginal involvement in tourism in the Northern Territory. The opposition has often stressed the importance of Aboriginal involvement in tourism and other industries such as mining, fishing etc. It is pleasing to note that the Minister for Tourism seems to be taking an interest in this. I can remember when former members of the Legislative Assembly did not want anything to do with Aboriginal people because of their fears that it was Commonwealth land which was being locked up by land rights. People in outstations did not want to have anything to do with ventures that are now occurring. Those fears were held by members in the Assembly until positive steps were taken by my people in terms of developing an interest in the development of tourism.

Mr Speaker, I have often stressed that tourism will be one of our biggest industries for the next 10 to 15 years. It will affect the lives of people in the remote areas such as central Arnhem Land and outlying areas. Those people have not been subject to the impact of tourism in the way that my people down in Alice Springs have. As the member for Stuart explained, it is very interesting to see the extent of the involvement of the people there through the Central Land Council.

I note and accept the fact that the Northern Territory government is playing a major role in terms of supporting and encouraging the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. All we ask is for the government to positively acknowledge the importance of our participation in the tourist industry. I would like to ask the Minister for Tourism again how many Aboriginal people are involved in the training aspect of the Tourism and Hospitality Unit?

Mr Hatton: Students or teachers?

Mr LANHUPUY: Students in the training field. What we seem to be getting is an attitude from this government that it wants my people involved out in the sticks, out in the scrub. Personally, I feel that that is rather paternalistic.

Mr Hatton: It is also wrong.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I accept the fact that Aboriginal people are involved in equity sharing, operating tours, tourist buses, boats etc but also there needs to be room for them on boards of management where people actually make decisions in respect of the financial aspects of particular tourism proposals.

Mr Speaker, I do not know whether you are aware that a very small tourist resort opened in Arnhem Land 6 months ago in the Cape Wilberforce area. The operator has gone about it with some assistance from the Northern Territory government. I believe the member for Araluen took a trip once out to Wigram Island. He would appreciate the fact that the couple who live on the island have gone ahead with the support of the Northern Territory government. I would like to express a concern that Terry Yumbull, who is based at Wigram Island, was used by some people involved in the industry and the Northern Territory government to fight against the basic fundamental rights of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. He was used to fight against land rights. This was expressed to me time and time again. Terry was asked to go out of his way to stand against some of the people who have traditional cultural links to that community. I stand to be corrected, but I believe that there were people in the Northern Territory who encouraged him to fight against the Northern Land Council and against the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, then Hon Clyde Holding.

Mr Hatton: In respect of what?

Mr LANHUPUY: In respect of the fundamentals of land rights.

Mr Hatton: How?

Mr LANHUPUY: By utilising a venture which would be of benefit to him. I support his tourism venture and I believe he is doing a good job, like the people on Bathurst Island and at Jabiru. I have often said that the financial and management assistance that these ventures receive from the Northern Territory government are essential at this stage. The locals are the best people to show our tourists how things happen in the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: Why should the land councils block them?

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, the land councils have a specific role in terms of protecting the interests of traditional owners. They act as sole agents for those people. The Northern Land Council has set up its own tourism unit. It would not have done that 5 or 10 years ago. It has set up that unit specifically because it understands why Aboriginal people want to participate in tourism ventures.

Some people in my electorate do not want to have anything whatsoever to do with tourism but others want to develop and exploit their land for their own benefit. Sometimes it is pretty hard to understand why people do not want to have anything to do with the outside world, but I feel for those people. What will happen to them if this massive push for tourism in the Northern Territory continues? In 50 years time, will Aboriginal people be confined to specific small areas because the rest of their country has been opened up to tourism? That is a real concern.

We are certainly prepared to have cultural exchange, given that the impact is minimal and we do not lose our culture. Our culture is one of the major drawcards for visitors to the Northern Territory. I spoke to one of the rangers in Kakadu National Park recently and he told me about a group which came in on a guided tour. A white ranger and an Aboriginal ranger were to drive the vehicles. The tourists went straight past the white ranger and spoke to an Aboriginal ranger because of his greater local knowledge of the park environment.

I am not knocking what the Northern Territory government has done. We are asking it to acknowledge Aboriginal involvement and to say that it intends to provide more funding for such Aboriginal involvement. As I said, I believe it is one of the best cultural assets that we have in the Northern Territory. I will go further, Mr Speaker, and support what the Leader of the Opposition intended when he said that the Northern Territory should consider having a Northern Territory festival of arts once a year. That would bring thousands of people to the Northern Territory, where the Aboriginal cultural life could be seen in the form of displays, dances and so on. I believe that would be a very major drawcard in the Northern Territory. I commend the member for Stuart for proposing a discussion of this important subject.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this matter of definite public importance raised by the member for Stuart. In doing so, I would like to take the opportunity of thanking honourable members opposite for their glowing compliments on the excellent work that is being carried out by the Northern Territory government and their recognition, for once, of the excellent work that we are doing in very positively promoting Aboriginal involvement in this most exciting of all industries in the Northern Territory - tourism.

It is a shame that, in doing that, honourable members opposite did not equally recognise the public statements regularly made by the Northern Territory government supporting and promoting active Aboriginal involvement in tourism. The member for Stuart suggested that the government makes only negative statements in respect of Aboriginal involvement. Quite clearly, that is fundamentally wrong.

I will refer briefly to a couple of matters. A press statement was issued by the Minister for Tourism on 28 February 1987 and, referring to the policies of the Northern Territory government on tourism, he said: 'Greater Aboriginal participation in tourism will be encouraged through programs such as the joint management of Conservation Commission parks, employment of Aboriginal rangers, project support, tourism awareness campaigns in Aboriginal communities and the promotion of traditional culture interstate and overseas'. Quite clearly, that is a public statement in support of the work that we are doing to promote and encourage the involvement of Aboriginal people in the tourism industry.

As honourable members opposite have outlined quite clearly themselves, we are demonstrating on the ground in a multitude of areas right across the Northern Territory, our encouragement of the active involvement of Aboriginal people in tourism and in the mainstream of life in the Northern Territory. I could take up the time of the honourable members with a litany of tourist and conservation projects and activities right across the Northern Territory. The Minister for Tourism and even members opposite have taken great pains to outline many of our projects. In fact, it is almost impossible to find a tourism-related project that has not had the support, involvement or encouragement of the Northern Territory government through the Tourist Commission or the Conservation Commission or some other agency of our government for the involvement of Aboriginal people. I could refer to Kings Canyon, Simpsons Gap, Chewing Ranges, Gosse Bluff, West MacDonnells, Barrow Creek, North Island, Tennant Creek, Telegraph Station, Keep River National Park, the proposed Gregory National Park, Finke Gorge and so on.

One of the interesting aspects of this is that, far too often, we hear the view expressed - and it is sometimes expressed by members opposite - that somehow the Labor Party is very strongly in favour of promoting the cause of the Aboriginal people whilst members of the government and the CLP are not so

supportive and, for some unstated reason, take great delight in trying to deny the actual work that they are doing and attempting to discourage the involvement of Aboriginal people in the mainstream of life in the Northern Territory.

The reality is quite different. I will take a very simple, stark and current example of the fact that the problem does not necessarily lie on this side of the House or on our side of the political spectrum. Honourable members will be aware of the proposed Barunga historical and tourist recreation development proposal of the Barunga community just outside Katherine. It has been proposed as a bicentennial project. Its historical associations would make it a tourist attraction with significant benefits for the Northern Territory as a whole and also for those particular Aboriginal communities. The project has received the approval of the Northern Territory government and the Northern Territory Bicentennial Authority. It faces only one threat and I trust that the member for Stuart will put his magazine down and listen to this.

The federal government, through Senator Ryan, has written to us advising that it proposes to withdraw any uncommitted funds so that they will not be available for proposed bicentennial projects. The amount in relation to this project is \$500 000. The federal Labor government is threatening the viability of an important bicentennial project by an Aboriginal community with significant benefits to the Northern Territory as a whole and the Aboriginal community in particular. By cutting off funds to the Bicentennial Authority, the federal government is sacrificing this project on the great altar of saving government funds and balancing the budget. That is a disgrace. I look forward to seeing members opposite openly and vehemently criticising the federal government for this action. People have been working hard, together with the Northern Territory government, for a considerable time to develop this imaginative program. It is totally inappropriate that it should be jeopardised by an off-the-cuff decision of the federal government in the final stages of preparation for Australia's bicentennial. If the opposition openly criticises that decision, it might gain at least some credibility in terms of its criticisms of the Northern Territory government, implied or otherwise.

Mr Ede: Hermannsburg.

Mr HATTON: No, Mr Speaker, it is not Hermannsburg; it is Barunga. It is not in the honourable member's electorate. It happens to be in the electorate of the member for Arnhem. The honourable member may wish to hold discussions with his colleague about that particular project, and I am quite prepared to make information available on the background, history, costings and the concept of that proposal. This information had been presented to the federal government with a recommendation that it support it as part of the 50:50 funding. The project is hung up at the moment by the federal government's cheapjack move in trimming off the last few cents on a bicentennial project. It threatens a significant and important Aboriginal bicentennial project. I am sure members opposite and the federal government want and need active and keen Aboriginal involvement in our bicentennial projects to offset the antics of crazies like Mr Mansell from down south. Here is an Aboriginal community that wants to be involved, is keen to be involved and it is the federal Labor government that, at this stage, is undermining its chances of success.

The member opposite spoke about our involvement and offered some criticism of our public statements. I understand the member for Stuart attended a tourism conference in Townsville recently, when Sir Frank Moore, the head of

the Queensland Tourism and Travel Corporation publicly acknowledged at that conference that the Northern Territory government was the trendsetter in providing Aboriginal cultural product for tourists. Assuming the member for Stuart was awake at the time or inside the conference room, he would have heard those statements indicating that even the Queensland government recognises our involvement.

Mr Ede: That was not in plenary session. It may have been during one of the seminars.

Mr HATTON: I can advise the honourable member. He was at that conference and that statement was made publicly by Sir Frank Moore. He recognised the Northern Territory's advanced role in this area, and that deserves nothing but praise from the opposition, not even implied criticism. Attempts to promote the false view that this government is somehow anti-Aboriginal simply will not wash any more.

We know the Leader of the Opposition became a bit nervous about our making inroads into the Aboriginal vote in the Barkly supplementary election, but the way to win the votes back is not try to paint the CLP as anti-Aboriginal because, quite frankly, the Aboriginal people are starting to realise that we are not. The truth is starting to get through to the Aboriginal people and that will continue be reflected in the Aboriginal vote as voting patterns throughout the Territory start to become more balanced.

Mr Speaker, there is only one other matter that I want to deal with now because I am not going to waste the time of this Assembly discussing an unnecessary MPI. This subject has been debated on many occasions. It was raised by the Minister for Tourism substantially in his second-reading speech on the Appropriation Bill. The honourable member opposite had a good opportunity to raise these points in his response in the budget debate or during the committee stage. If one can ask how many kids have been attending a particular school for the last 3 years, one could at least raise this matter, if one regards it as a definite matter of public importance.

Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem criticised the government for not involving Aboriginal people in the training programs. We have a bit of difficulty in trying to get accurate information on this because, being a non-racist government and administration, we do not keep records on the racial origins of people attending educational courses in the Northern Territory. However, over the luncheon period, we have been able to get some estimates and I can advise that it is estimated that 52 Aboriginal people are involved in courses, in vocational preparation programs, participation and equity programs for employment, apprenticeship schemes and short courses including such things as bar work, food and beverages, cocktail mixing, wine appreciation and flambe cooking courses. There are some 50-odd people involved there. In addition, through the NT Open College, some 5 students are involved in a 9-week tourism and hospitality course offered in June this year comprising customer relations, food and beverages, an overview of the tourism and hospitality industry and work experience. We encourage Aboriginal people to become involved in our tourism training programs. They are available to all Territorians. It is hard to get accurate information because we do not keep the information on a racial basis.

There is one last point that I would like to make. I think it was the most valid point that was made. It is an issue that all members need to address. The member for Arnhem raised the conflict between encouraging active and full involvement by the Aboriginal people in the tourist industry and

other industries and the difficulty in the retention of their cultural heritage and roots. It is a real conflict, and it is something that all members must address. I can appreciate the conflict that is created but I must say that I, for one, believe first and foremost that it is fundamentally important that we encourage the active and full involvement of Aboriginal people in the economic, social and cultural life of the Northern Territory whilst recognising the need and providing the opportunity for Aboriginals to retain their cultural heritage. It is not necessary to maintain Aboriginal people in what could be described as an anthropological zoo. Like all people in the world, I am sure Aboriginal people recognise that they need to advance and develop by becoming part of the modern economic and social world. Like all societies, they wish to maintain their own culture and that desire is not incompatible with tourist development. I can assure the member for Arnhem of this government's desire to assist the Aboriginal people to resolve such issues in a spirit of cooperation.

REINTRODUCTION OF BILL

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I reintroduce the Superannuation Amendment Bill (Serial 71).

SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 71)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): I move that the bill be now read a second time and seek leave to have my previous second-reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, the main purpose of this legislation is to provide for the inclusion of members of the police force in the Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme - the NTGPASS. As members will be aware, the government's superannuation policy is to have 1 Territory superannuation scheme covering the full range of Territory public sector employment. The Superannuation Act, which was passed in the August 1986 sittings of the Assembly, largely implemented this policy. The police, however, were excluded from the NTGPASS because insufficient time was available to finalise the necessary consultation process with representatives of the Police Association, the Police Commissioned Officers Association and the police administration.

Following further discussions with the 2 police associations, agreement has now been reached on the inclusion of the police in the main Territory scheme. Consequently, it is proposed that, as from 1 January 1988, new recruits to the police force will be covered by the NTGPASS while existing members of the force will have a period of 6 months in which to choose between either remaining with their current superannuation arrangements or transferring to the Territory scheme. The transitional arrangements to be offered to existing police officers are the same as those provided to other public servants who elected to transfer to the NTGPASS over the last 12 months.

The framework of the NTGPASS has been modified, where necessary, to reflect the special employment conditions applying to members of the police force. These modifications include provision for a nominee of the Police Association to participate as a member of the Superannuation Review Board where the board is hearing an appeal lodged by a police officer or the board is considering a rule change of particular significance to police officers as a group of employees.

Contribution and benefit salaries for police officers are to be standardised at the rate of 130% of the actual annual salary payable plus Northern Territory allowances at the rate received. The standardisation overcomes the need to take into account the wide range of allowances paid to the police which would otherwise be separately incorporated into the superannuation salaries. The standardisation of salaries also includes a loading to compensate police for their earlier maximum retirement age of 60 years and for the loss of the police supplementary benefits scheme which had been set up to address the reduced level of the Commonwealth superannuation scheme benefits payable at this earlier maximum retirement age.

The government is confident that the new arrangements will provide for a better distribution of superannuation benefits among all police officers, especially for those officers not able or wishing to devote their full work career to the police force. Benefits will be paid in the form of a lump sum and, on resignation, will include an employer-financed component after 5 years service. Lump sum benefits are generally preferred by employees since this type of payment allows the employees concerned to individually determine the best use to which their retirement benefits can be put. An assessment provided by the Australian Government Actuary also indicates that the payment of lump sums rather than pensions will result in a reduction in the existing long-term costs to the Territory of providing superannuation for the police.

Mr Speaker, I would like to briefly mention the other provisions of the Superannuation Amendment Bill which do not directly concern the police. The Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme has now been in operation for 12 months during which time there has been sufficient operational experience for the administrative provisions of the legislation to be reviewed. This review has brought to light the need for several amendments to the legislation to promote administrative efficiency in the day-to-day application of the act.

These amendments concern the following aspects of the scheme: the payment of all benefits in the scheme from the Employees Fund with complementary provisions for the Territory to reimburse the Employees Fund for the cost of the employer-financed component of any benefit; the clarification of the financial reporting requirements of the Investment Board; the payment of an advanced partial benefit to alleviate immediate financial hardship among dependants in the event of the death of a member without the administrators of the scheme having to await probate of the will or letters of administration; and, lastly, the recognition of de facto marriages and Aboriginal marriages for the purpose of assessing the level of death benefits payable where there are surviving dependants. I commend the bill to all members of the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 76)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This amendment has been prepared to remove one particular consequence of the Traffic Amendment Act 1987 which commenced on 1 October 1987 following passage in the June Assembly sittings. The consequence I refer to is that persons who were previously fully licensed are, on regaining their licences, subject to the provisional licence requirements of carrying a P plate, adhering to an 80 km per hour limit and adhering to the zero alcohol limit. Not only is this an extra imposition on these drivers, but it may severely affect their employment prospects.

While both sides of this Assembly supported the recent amendments, they also subsequently supported a substantial upgrading of the minimum licence loss requirements as part of the new Traffic Act, which is due to commence early next year once the regulations are finalised. The minimum penalty will increase to 6 months for a first 0.08 offence and 12 months for a 0.1 or second offence, which is in line with most state provisions. The government has no qualms in requiring drivers to face the direct consequence of their actions. Alcohol is still the major factor in our road casualties and these drivers create an extra accident risk. With the increased period of licence loss, however, there is not the same case for a further imposition of the 12-month provisional licence requirement, given the added employment and social consequences. The situation might be different if there was strong evidence to show that the additional provisional licence controls on experienced drivers would be significant in preventing further offences and accidents.

The actual amendment is quite simple. It amends section 10A(1) to limit the requirement for a provisional licence to new drivers and those who did not hold a full licence at the time of disqualification. Persons who lose their licence while on a learner's licence will still have to start again. Persons with provisional licences will be subject to a further 12 months on a provisional licence. Persons under 18 years, upon regaining a full licence, will still be required to abide by the zero alcohol requirement of the Traffic Act until they reach the age of 18. I note that the member for MacDonnell referred to the problem in the media. I do not believe the change will counter our overall efforts against drink-driving but, rather, it will help to ensure maximum community support for necessary actions.

Mr Speaker, the government intends to have the bill passed in the November sittings and I will be seeking a suspension of standing orders at that time. This will enable introduction by 1 January 1988. This will be the earliest date when experienced drivers who have lost their licence for 3 months or more under the recent legislation could regain it. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Local Government): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Shire of Litchfield (Validation of Rates) Bill (Serial 72) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

SHIRE OF LITCHFIELD (VALIDATION OF RATES) BILL
(Serial 72)

Continued from 21 October 1987.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I would like to thank the honourable minister for the introduction of this legislation and also for the accompanying information that he has given to me on this matter. The minister had no alternative but to introduce this legislation because of a legal problem that has arisen. The reason for the introduction of this legislation is not because we would not pay our rates in the rural area. The people are paying their rates and have paid their rates. However, there is a large London-based firm which owns a considerable amount of land in the rural area. It has been subdivided for some time and I think it may be either on the market now or it will be soon. Until it is sold, the company is responsible for the rates on each parcel of land.

This firm queried the legality of the Litchfield Shire Council imposing the rates, mainly on the ground that the flat rate had not been validated. Initially, the rate imposed in the Litchfield Shire under the previous legislation was struck under the Local Government Act and therefore based on the UCV. However, it was set at the level of the intended flat rate at that time. It left a legal loophole that had to be corrected.

I think the most important words in this piece of legislation are in clause 3, which is titled 'Amendment of Act'. Clause 3 amends section 4(1)(b) by omitting the words 'a rate' and substituting 'a flat rate per parcel rate' which takes the matter out of the realms of legal argument.

Mr Speaker, this is another piece of legislation along the long road we are travelling down in the Litchfield Shire in our endeavour to be governed in the way we want to be governed. My only regret in supporting this bill is that I am not supporting a piece of legislation that will endure for all time. This legislation has a sunset clause because it is an amendment to the Shire of Litchfield (Validation of Rates) Act, which also contains a sunset clause stipulating that it will cease in 1989. I do not know what we will do then. The bureaucrats will seek to base our rates on UCV, but we beat them before and, with a bit of luck, we might beat them again somehow.

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will answer that interjection from the honourable minister. If the minister would only speak up, I could hear him more clearly, but I think he said that we are getting out of paying rates, that it was our decision to live where we are living and we should be paying more rates. For the honourable minister's attention, the Minister for Local Government at the time said that about \$350 000 was required to be raised in the rural area. He said that he would be happy with that. If this honourable minister doubts it or that honourable minister doubts it, I have witnesses who can prove it. The

previous Minister for Local Government, the minister who has introduced this legislation, said we needed to raise \$350 000. At several meetings in the rural area, we worked out how we could raise the figure that he asked for. That is the reason for our having the rate of \$105 and \$55 in 2 areas.

Mr Speaker, I fully support this legislation and I hope that this will see the end of the necessity to introduce validating legislation in relation to the rural area. I am pleased that the honourable minister introduced this legislation with better grace than the previous minister introduced the Shire of Litchfield (Validation of Rates) Act. Perhaps he can stomach more. Probably he is made of harder and sterner stuff, having lived in the rural area for a number of years. At least this legislation did not stick in the craw of the minister who introduced it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of points that I wish to make. There is a contrast in the view that the government has taken in regard to the Shire of Litchfield and the view it has taken with regard to the rural area south of Alice Springs. A number of people around the White Gums area have asked for some form of shire council. Others have talked about proportional rating systems. These systems are being discussed and, while the people concerned acknowledge that they utilise some services in the town, they do not receive services commensurate with those available in urban areas.

I know the minister has an advisory group working on the issues in that area. My personal view is that, if it is incorporated into the Alice Springs Town Council boundaries, a ward system should be implemented. At present, 25 000 people elect aldermen, none of whom have individual responsibility for any particular area. People do not feel that aldermen represent their local concerns adequately in relation to council functions. As a result, they tend to come to my office. I am happy to have a yarn with them even though the council is a long way from my electorate. The problem is that the aldermen then ask: 'Why don't people want to talk to me?' I say: 'It is rather difficult for them to work out who to talk to about their own areas, given that there is no ward system'.

Alice Springs could probably be divided into about 4 multi-member wards. One-member wards would not be appropriate because the town is growing too rapidly. If the area south of the Gap were incorporated into 1 ward and 3 or 4 others were created, these problems could begin to be addressed.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart is speaking about a bill which relates to the Litchfield Shire Council, not the merits of a ward system for Alice Springs. I ask him to relate his remarks to the bill before the House.

Mr EDE: I am finished now, Mr Speaker. I thought I might be able to sneak it in before I was pulled up. I thank the members opposite for listening so silently.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to carry on from where the member for Stuart left off. I do not particularly want to canvass the issue of a ward system anywhere, but the question of rating systems as they relate to areas like the Shire of Litchfield is of some interest to those of my constituents who live in the farm area near Alice Springs. Mr Speaker, you would be aware that, prior to the 1983 redistribution, the entire farm area was in the electorate of MacDonnell.

I notice a querulous look creeping across the normally cheerful visage of the Chief Minister. I would like to point out to him that, in fact, I have

constituents in the White Gums area who will be affected by government policies on local government rating systems, such as that contained in this bill. For that reason, I want to make some comments about the general policy issues involved. The Treasurer will recall addressing a meeting at Sienna Village. A significant number of people from the farms area, including a number of my constituents, attended the meeting to discuss the issue of rating and; obviously, they have a particular interest in the outcome of this bill. I think there is general agreement amongst people in the farm area that some form of rates ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We have before us the Shire of Litchfield (Validation of Rates) Bill. The member for MacDonnell is not addressing any issue pertaining to that particular piece of legislation. Incidentally, I was not at the meeting he alluded to. It was attended by the Minister for Lands and Housing.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, my understanding of this particular bill is that it is germane to changing rating policies in areas outside the major urban centres. I appreciate that this particular legislation concerns the Shire of Litchfield but I would be derelict in my duties as a member of this Assembly if I were not to canvass the broad issues involved in the bill, particularly as they may contain a precedent which will affect my constituents and, dare I say, the constituents of the member for Flynn.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I support the point of order raised by the Minister for Local Government. In the normal course of debate in this Assembly, we have no objection to the member for MacDonnell canvassing wider policy issues in respect of local government. However, this is a particular piece of legislation dealing with a particular shire council which arose from a particular agreement with that community that led to the original legislation coming into this Assembly with a sunset clause attached to it. It has specific application for particular circumstances and cannot by any possible stretch of the imagination be brought into discussions about the possibilities for development of local government and rating in the farms area of Alice Springs.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I advise the member that he must relate his comments to the bill before the Assembly which is a bill for an act to validate the purported declaration of rates by the council of the municipality known as the Shire of Litchfield in respect of the financial year 1986-87 and to amend the Shire of Litchfield (Transitional Rating) Act.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I certainly will endeavour to speak in the context of the Shire of Litchfield (Validation of Rates) Bill. The honourable members who raised the point of order are fully aware of the fact that the farms area in Alice Springs is 1000 miles from the Shire of Litchfield. However, I remind them that both areas are part of the Northern Territory and they have this in common. The Shire of Litchfield ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is still not addressing his remarks to the bill. He is seeking to generalise and to reintroduce the matter of the farms area in Alice Springs.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I think the honourable member is at least attempting to connect his remarks to the bill.

Mr BELL: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will not canvass the issues of concern in the proposed local government arrangements in the rural area of Alice

Springs. That would be less than appropriate. However, I believe that I would be being derelict in my duty were this bill to go through the Assembly without my raising the question of the extent to which the rates that are to be charged in the Shire of Litchfield ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They are being charged.

Mr BELL: Are being charged. I thank the member for Koolpinyah for her comment in that regard. I am concerned about the extent to which this may or may not become a precedent. I am concerned, for example, that we may very well end up in my electorate with a Shire of Flynn or, horror of horrors, a Shire of Hanrahan, south of Heavitree Gap. This legislation may very well be appropriate in that regard. I will certainly be looking very carefully at it and studying the comments of the member for Koolpinyah who has had experience with this.

Mr Coulter: You have not even read the legislation.

Mr BELL: In answer to the Treasurer's interjection, I am more than happy to place on record that, of the large amount of legislation that I have had to research for these sittings, this is not a piece of legislation that I have researched in great depth. I am genuinely surprised that the member for Flynn in fact has not chosen this opportunity to canvass some of the ...

Mr Coulter: He knows more about parliamentary procedures.

Mr BELL: That has been demonstrated to be false on a large number of occasions.

I am concerned about the extent of this as a precedent for my constituents and I will be studying the bill in that context carefully. I am interested in the creation of the Shire of Litchfield per se. I am concerned that that may or may not be the appropriate way to go with the farms area in Alice Springs. We may be creating precedents that may not be desirable. We may be creating precedents for the farms area in Alice that may cause serious over-government. I would have thought that a conservative government would be raising issues of that sort. I certainly make no apology whatsoever for raising my concerns as a conscientious backbencher.

Mr COULTER (Local Government): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contribution to the debate. In particular, we now have a wonderful insight into the member for MacDonnell's ability to understand large bills. The legislative draftsmen now have some benchmark by which they can judge further legislation that is beyond the comprehension of the member for MacDonnell. This is the bill, Mr Speaker, that he has not read. It does not even cover a page and a half. He has not had the time to read the bill. I think it has been a wonderful day for this Assembly to have had the opportunity to have some idea of the extent of legislation that the member for MacDonnell can understand. The member for MacDonnell spoke at some length about a number of issues but, unfortunately, none of them was remotely related to this legislation before the House.

The member for Koolpinyah raised some interesting points and, in fact, addressed all of the issues. Indeed, she described quite adequately the circumstances leading to the need for this legislation. I thank her for her contribution.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to remind the minister opposite, who so freely flings abuse at members on this side of the Assembly, that, in relation to this particular bill, the opposition was asked to grant urgency and agreed to do so so that it could proceed through all stages at these sittings. We did that because we have an interest in good government and we considered this matter to be of sufficient importance to provide for it to go through all stages at these sittings.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You were also nudged by your mates in the rural area.

Mr SMITH: We also have been nudged by the outstanding group of Labor Party supporters in the rural area, one of whom could quite clearly be the next member for Koolpinyah.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Don't hold your breath.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, it is less than generous of the honourable minister, in the light of those circumstances, to abuse the member for MacDonnell in the tone and manner that he has adopted.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Chief Minister's Visit to Indonesia

Continued from 23 September 1987.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this statement because I was privileged to accompany the Chief Minister on that visit and I have some knowledge of Indonesia and a particular interest in developing good relations with Indonesia. I think it is appropriate that I rise at this time to support the Chief Minister's comments and perhaps acquaint members with some of the events that have occurred in the interim. Before I do that, I would like to quote from the Chief Minister's speech because I think it is important in terms of reopening this discussion. He said:

The Territory government is properly committed to programs of cooperation, particularly in health and education. ... These programs are developing a growing sense of mutual understanding and respect which will make a major contribution to peace and stability in our region, but the real benefit to the Territory will lie in the growing commercial opportunities and the creation of a favourable environment for Territory businessmen to gain openings in the Indonesian market.

Of course, that is the bottom line. It is indeed in our best interests to work towards developing and improving our relationship with Indonesia for a whole range of reasons, one of the most important of which is the eventual development of a strong commercial relationship. That will bring considerable benefits to both nations.

Before going on to discuss the details of the visit and what has happened since, I think it is important that I quickly give some background on the history and geography of Indonesia. Many people are not particularly aware of Indonesia's dimensions and what makes it tick. It is very important that people become more conscious of these things because Indonesia is our nearest

northern neighbour. It is very close to the Northern Territory. In fact it is only about 150 miles to the closest group of Indonesian islands, the Tanimbar Islands.

Indonesia is an archipelago made up of about 13 000 islands, stretching from Sumatra in the west right through to Irian Jaya in the east. It has a population of approximately 163 million people, compared with Australia's population of approximately 16 million. Its area exceeds 1.9 million square kilometres. It consists of 27 provinces and numerous different cultures. The first European to visit Indonesia was Marco Polo, who travelled all the way from Europe in 1292. In 1511, the Portuguese entered the Indonesian Archipelago and discovered spices in the Maluku region. Yesterday evening, I mentioned some people who are presently visiting Darwin from that region, which includes the so-called Spice Islands. In 1602, the Dutch arrived.

It is very interesting to note that, during the early 1600s, the Macassans and the Bugis people from south Sulawesi, known by the Dutch as the Celebes, travelled across the Banda Sea to the coast of northern Arnhem Land. They used to travel with the monsoon, starting in about November or December, arriving on the east Arnhem Land coast and visiting the areas around Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt and Milingimbi. They would fish for up to 6 months until the monsoon changed to the south-easterly. They would then travel with the trade wind and sail back to south Sulawesi. That was happening in the 1600s and it continued until early this century when the South Australian government put a stop to it in the belief that Australian business could tap into the trepang trade. The licences to fish our northern coasts were withdrawn and the 60 or so prahus which formerly visited every year with approximately 1000 fisherman were no longer permitted to visit. That broke the traditional ties between those people and the Aborigines, which is a story for another day.

It is interesting to note, however, that as a bicentennial project, the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth are jointly funding the construction of a traditional prahu. Mr Peter Spillett is in charge of the project from the Northern Territory end. That prahu will be sailing down to the Northern Territory on the coming monsoon. Eventually, having sailed its traditional waters along the northern Arnhem Land coast, it will be housed in the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery in Darwin.

We all know of the horrendous changes that occurred in the Pacific region during the Japanese invasion of the islands, including Indonesia, from 1942 until 1945. Immediately after the defeat of the Japanese, the Indonesian nationalists proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1945. That day will always be known in Indonesia as Proklamasi Day.

Indonesia is a very interesting place because it contains literally thousands of cultures and languages. One interesting aspect of this, which we in the Northern Territory could learn something from, is that the Indonesian constitution is based on the motto of 'unity in diversity'. Whilst the country contains a multitude of cultures, its constitution enables different cultures, religions, races and language groups to operate in unison. They all work together and I think we in the Northern Territory should take a leaf out of their book in that regard.

As the Chief Minister indicated in his statement, meetings were held with the President and various Indonesian ministers. Minister Soepardjo, who is the Minister for the Interior, issued the invitation to the Chief Minister to visit Indonesia and he was also our host in that country. He is the minister

responsible for provincial government in all 27 provinces. Indonesia has a system of regional government, with local government coming below that. The 27 regional governors all answer to Minister Soepardjo. We also met with Dr Mochtar, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, and had quite a fascinating discussion with him. Naturally, the issue of East Timor raised its head and I was quite encouraged by our discussions in relation to it. I will return to that subject later if time allows.

We then visited Minister Arifin, who was then acting as Minister for Trade. Minister Salah was not available. We also visited the Minister for Tourism, Post and Telecommunications, Mr Achmed Tahir, and had an interesting discussion with him, during which we met the Director of Tourism in Indonesia, Mr Joop Ave. We had some follow-up discussions with him and I have since corresponded with him. I believe there will be some very fruitful developments in respect of tourism in the near future.

An interesting discussion was held with Dr Faud Hasan, the Minister for Education and Culture. As you know, Mr Speaker, we have an education exchange program between the Northern Territory and Indonesia which has been ongoing for some time. We called on Mr Habibie, the Director of Sea Communications and sorted out some matters there. It was pleasing to note that an issue that was raised with the previous Chief Minister during his visit to Indonesia, relating to problems with and levels of custom duties, particularly with regard to timber exports from Indonesia and imports into the Northern Territory, was sorted out and so that trade can now flow quite easily.

Mr Speaker, several other discussions were held with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and the rapport is developing. I found our luncheon with KADIN, which is the Indonesian Confederation of Industries, quite fascinating. About 20 gentlemen attended that particular luncheon which the Chief Minister had the privilege to address. Those businessmen are the key people from private enterprise in Indonesia. We received a tremendous reception from them.

One thing I learnt caused me concern. I sat next to a chap who happened to be the president of a company that imports cattle into Indonesia. In fact, his company runs a feed lot just outside Jakarta. From memory, he told me that he has something like 3000 head of cattle in that feed lot. The company also has what he termed a cattle ranch on Sulawesi. Cattle are taken over there and run on that particular property. They are then transferred to the feed lot and, from there, into the marketplace. I was very disappointed when he told me that, some time before the Chief Minister and I visited Indonesia, he had placed an order with a Northern Territory company and, subsequently, had to cancel that order because of poor performance. It appears that the Northern Territory company tendered to supply a number of beasts, won the order and then started to back out. That was most unfortunate because the order was cancelled and transferred to a company in the Kununurra area. The cattle were supplied through Wyndham with no problems whatsoever, and I think that is to the great detriment of the industry in the Northern Territory.

Let me expand on our discussions with some various ministers. In the area of education, as I mentioned earlier, we have had an exchange program operating for the last 12 or 13 years. It commenced between the Northern Territory and Bali and ran for about 11 years. Last year, the program was expanded to incorporate several other provinces, so that it now takes in Kupang, Lombok and, of course, Ambon. It has been very successful and now 8 Northern Territory students exchange annually with 8 Indonesian students. They spend half of the school year in each destination, and we have 4 teachers

from Indonesia and 4 from the Territory each year exchanging places in the same way. The teachers stay for the full year and it is a very successful program.

The Northern Territory has been funding that program and I think a tremendous amount of good has come out of it. It is very good to see that, on their return from Indonesia, the majority of those teachers are teaching Indonesian in our schools. You would be well aware, Mr Speaker, that we have approximately 3000 students across the primary and secondary school system in the Northern Territory who are learning Indonesian. Since our return, a working party has been established to look at the possibility of picking up one of the ADAB programs, promoting technical education in Indonesia. That working party consists of a representative from the Northern Territory University College, from the DIT, from the Department of Education and several other representatives, and I am very privileged to be included in it. I believe that there is an enormous potential there.

The Hawthorn Institute of Technology from Melbourne has been operating a program in Indonesia for the last 5 years and, from memory, that program has absorbed \$34m of ADAB funding. It will be completed in November this year. Of course there will be ongoing programs and we have an opportunity to lock into perhaps the next program. I can see considerable benefits ensuing for the Northern Territory if we succeed in our endeavours.

I am very pleased to relate that, towards the end of November, the Director General of Education in Indonesia will visit the Northern Territory on his way to Brisbane. He will have discussions with our people from the Department of Education. Those programs and our relationship are developing month by month. There is an enormous advantage to us in developing those educational programs because, if our long-term objective of developing trade comes to fruition, and I do not doubt for one moment that it will, we will need many Indonesian-speaking people in commerce and industry. That is the long-term objective and that is one of the reasons why the Department of Education has adopted a policy of encouraging the teaching of Indonesian in our schools. It will give us considerable commercial advantage in the long term.

Another matter that was discussed was health, particularly in relation to East Timor. When we visited Dili and spoke to the Governor, His Excellency Mario Viegas Carrascalao who, I hasten to add, has just been reappointed for another term, he told us that, at any one time in East Timor, approximately 20% of the work force is laid up with malaria. They suffer from cerebral malaria which attacks the brain and can kill a person within 2 or 3 days. It is a very serious form of malaria. We have offered to do what we can to assist them and I know that the Department of Health is working through its position at the moment, although I am not quite sure whether we have finalised our approach on this matter. I know that we will be offering some technical assistance to East Timor to try to lessen the horrendous effect that malaria is having on the people there.

Tourism is a particular area of interest to myself. Tourism between the Northern Territory, Bali and Denpasar has been ongoing now for many years. In fact, a considerable number of Northern Territory people and, indeed, Australians would have visited that destination. I happen to know that the Minister for Education had a most enjoyable trip over there 12 months or so ago and stayed at a wonderful hotel on Bali. Many people have undertaken such visits.

In more recent times, the Merpati airline has developed a Kupang-Darwin return flight. It commenced with a 114 seater turbo prop about 18 months ago and now flies two F28s, carrying approximately 160 to 170 people per week into Kupang. That indicates how that tourist destination has developed. Prior to that flight, Kupang was a backwater in the eastern provinces and tourism did not exist there. Now there is a tourism explosion and there is some difficulty in coping with it.

There are other destinations. At lunchtime today, I had discussions with a gentleman who has just arrived from Kupang. He is the station manager for Merpati Airlines in Kupang and he is here for a week's training with Ansett Airlines. Next Tuesday evening, Merpati Airlines is conducting a function which will be attended by a number of tourism and travel people throughout Australia. I am not pre-empting what it will announce because it is common knowledge in the industry. The function is to announce officially that Merpati Airlines will be introducing an extension from Kupang to Flores, to Ujung Pandang and over to other destinations in Kalimantan and Balikpapan and places like that. They will use an F28 whereas, in the past, to reach those destinations, you had to fly on a Fokker Friendship or a smaller aircraft. In fact, the F28s that have been flying Darwin to Kupang recently have been chartered from Garuda and fly the Garuda colours. This particular aircraft will be flying the Merpati colours. I would like to congratulate Merpati Airlines for its vision in that regard.

Mr Dondas: For its perseverance.

Mr SETTER: And its perseverance because it did have some difficulties in the first 6 months.

There is another area that I would like to see opened up and that is the Maluku region into Ambon. I have been lobbying as best I can to achieve that objective. I am quite sure that, in time, it will occur.

While we were in Jakarta, the Minister for Tourism raised the possibility of Garuda introducing a Darwin-Ambon-Tokyo flight. Garuda currently brings in excess of 100 000 Japanese tourists into Denpasar every year. In fact, I have had discussions with the regional manager of Natrabu Travel in Denpasar and he told me that they bring 60 000 Japanese tourists into Denpasar every year. It is very interesting to note that, as a result of our discussions, the brochure for 1988 now includes Darwin as an add-on destination. We have much more work to do on developing that but it is actually shown in the brochure. You will notice that Natrabu has included Ayers Rock as an add-on destination, at its own cost. Perhaps we can lock into at least a small percentage of those Japanese tourists.

To get back to the possibility of the introduction of a Darwin to Tokyo flight, one can imagine Japanese tourists coming directly to the Northern Territory. I can assure members, without trying to make a pun, that the sky is the limit in that regard. The potential is enormous. Apart from that, there is the opportunity for investment in tourism. I know that many Darwin business people have been interested in developing tourism infrastructure in Kupang and I am quite sure that they will show the same amount of interest in the Ambon area when that flight is introduced.

We also have considerable sporting contact with Indonesia. I can recall 4 or 5 years ago when the Indonesian volleyball team played a series of test matches in Darwin for the opening of the Marrara Sporting Complex. Unfortunately, that particular competition has not continued. However, we

have had a number of sporting contacts, particularly the Darwin to Ambon Yacht Race which commenced in 1976. This year, about 38 yachts sailed in that event. One can imagine the tremendous impact that 38 yachts with their crews and support people have on a place like Ambon.

When we talk about developing tourism infrastructure and exchanges, our particular interest is encouraging Indonesian tourists to visit Australia. At the moment, it has been a one-way traffic. What we are talking about is developing tourism from Indonesia into the Northern Territory as well as the other way. That is our long-term goal. What this is all about is developing relationships. Indonesia is a fairly isolated area and it has been quite difficult to develop and improve our relationship. We are well down that track at the moment and I am quite convinced that, in the long term, there will be considerable benefits.

We have also had exchanges of boxing teams between the Northern Territory and Kupang. The Olympic soccer team visited Kupang and Flores and had a most enjoyable time. The concept has been mooted of a regional games, perhaps to be conducted in Kupang, involving teams from a number of provinces of Indonesia and including teams from the Northern Territory.

There have been a number of cultural exchanges. A number of Indonesian cultural groups have visited the Territory. We have also been there. One of the highlights of our sporting calendar with Indonesia was when the member for Ludmilla and myself last year played tennis against the Governor of Ambon. What a tournament that was! The then Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation was also involved. I must hasten to add that his performance at tennis was equal to mine and the member for Ludmilla's because we failed dismally.

The other thing that has come out of this particular exercise, particularly with regard to our discussions with the Minister for Trade and with our discussions with KADIN, has been the move to re-form the trade working party between the Northern Territory and Indonesia.

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

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Buffalo Industry

Continued from 22 September 1987.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, firstly, I must congratulate the minister on his timely statement. However, along with many of the other statements that have been made on the buffalo industry, including those made in the Buffalo Industry Symposium of 1981, it raises more questions than it answers.

Traditionally, the buffalo industry has been based on the harvest of feral buffalo, initially for the hide trade which began in about 1880 and continued through to the early 1950s, when it collapsed. More recently, feral buffalo have been harvested for meat consumption, both for humans and pets. The buffalo industry failed to keep up with developments in the cattle industry, largely because it perceived that it had an inexhaustible resource. There was little pressure to invest in the industry's future or to keep up with new developments in husbandry techniques or of range management. We cannot attribute blame to anybody for that lack of development in the industry; it was a historic phenomenon largely brought about by the nexus between the price of beef and the price of buffalo meat.

The buffalo industry now finds itself in a position where, because of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, it will lose much of its breeding stock, which was previously perceived as an inexhaustible resource. As an aside, the BTEC program on the Wagait Reserve alone has led to the shooting of about 20 000 head of buffalo. That is a shame and a grave economic loss in terms of potential production to the Northern Territory. I think shoot-outs of that magnitude, in both cattle and buffalo, will need to be looked at by the government. I do not believe they are necessary.

We need to consider our approach more carefully and consider using contractors with the necessary expertise and equipment to separate out potential breeding stock from young calves and yearlings, so that we can protect the industry's future. Beasts which are not suitable for breeding stock can be processed through abattoirs. In the later stages of the BTEC program, we can always go back to finally eradicate what is left of the feral stock but, at this stage, there is a high demand for meat. There are abattoirs in the Northern Territory which cannot get sufficient numbers of stock. At the same time, in the past 2½ years, we have shot so many animals that it is like something out of 'Apocalypse Now' - all helicopters and rifles.

If the domesticated buffalo industry is to become viable, it is necessary to act now to preserve adequate numbers of breeding stock and to ensure that those breeding stock have good genetic vigour. I support the member for Koolpinyah's comments on the need to expand our genetic base. We should be looking at herds in other places with a view perhaps to conducting artificial insemination campaigns or bringing semen into the Northern Territory to help bolster our genetic material. Also critical to the industry is the identification, subdivision and release of suitable land. Although much of the most suitable land in the Top End is taken up by national parks or Aboriginal lands, I believe there is sufficient land, if properly managed, to support a buffalo industry.

I believe that Aboriginal people should be encouraged to become involved in the industry. One of the problems they will face, of course, is that of finance. Unless they are to be totally dependent on government finance, they will have difficulty because they have nothing to offer by way of collateral in either land or stock. That is the problem which I believe Aboriginal communities wishing to get into the buffalo industry will face. I do not believe it is insurmountable.

Notwithstanding the problems faced by the industry in securing sufficient breeding stock and securing sufficient and suitable land, the major problem militating against the continuation and expansion of the Northern Territory buffalo industry is the establishment of secure, high-value and long-term markets. Traditionally, buffalo meat has competed with beef at the lower end of the market, with the exception of some intrusion into the European gourmet market and the local restaurant market. I believe it is incumbent on the government to lead or promote a marketing campaign whose thrust must be to emphasise the good points of buffalo meat and to break the nexus between the price gained for beef and the price gained for buffalo. Buffalo meat, as we all know, is extremely low in saturated fats. As the Minister for Transport and Works can attest, it is not as bad for the heart as beef. I believe that a marketing campaign directed at the good points of buffalo meat and industry itself can help to secure those long-term, viable and high-value markets that are necessary to ensure the viability of the industry.

It is apparent from production figures that are available from the early 1900s that this coastal area of the Top End can support a turn-off of about 20 000 head of buffalo per annum. That, of course, varies with the seasons. Keeping sufficient breeding stock in a controlled manner on quality pastures to meet a production of about 20 000 head a year, which is enough for one good-sized abattoir, will require a substantial investment in pasture improvement, in improvements to the properties themselves, and in capital items. The industry cannot expect the government to provide that investment capital. It must come from the industry itself.

The government's proper role is in the marketing of the product, to ensure that those who have invested in capital items, land and the necessary improvements to properties can obtain a proper return for their investments. The only other role for the government is in undertaking appropriate research into pasture types, genetic stock and the hybrid vigour of various types of buffalo which can lead to a more productive industry. I do not believe that the Northern Territory government should become directly involved in investing in the industry itself. Mr Speaker, I commend the statement to honourable members.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, in closing debate on this statement, I am a little disappointed that the opposition did not take the opportunity of giving me its comments on at least a couple of aspects of the buffalo industry because I am seeking some guidance in this matter. However, I will respond to issues raised by the member for Koolpinyah who raised the question about genetic improvement for buffalo.

My department advises me that the main objective of importation of new buffalo genotypes to Australia would be their use in improving the export potential of buffalo. It is unlikely that there will ever be a significant use for buffalo for either milk or draught in Australia. Honourable members may recall that the member for Koolpinyah indicated that we could enhance the buffalo's milking capacity with some genetic improvement, but we are not quite sure that we really need that. Export markets already exist for both breeding and draught buffalo from Australia. These markets are likely to be sustained as there is a shortage of draught and breeding buffalo in a number of tropical and subtropical countries, and Australia's relatively disease-free status as a livestock exporter is well accepted.

The issue of the importation of new and improved livestock genotypes is currently being considered by the Animal Production Committee of the Standing Committee on Agriculture. All domestic livestock species, including buffalo, are considered in those deliberations. However, there have been no comparative evaluations of Australian stock with swamp buffalo from other countries. An international research project is currently being undertaken to collect and collate comparative data on various aspects of productivity of swamp and riverine buffalo types and their crossbreeds.

However, with the existing Territory herd, considerable genetic variation is expected between breeding individuals, giving rise to the potential for genetic improvement through performance recording and selection programs. A current departmental project is directed towards investigating this possibility. The development of a wet glue process tanning industry in the Northern Territory requires special skills and could only be encouraged if there were a comparative economic advantage in the Northern Territory. Sadly, previous studies we have made indicate that the size of throughput required for a wet glue hide processing facility is far beyond what the Territory can produce from either buffalo and cattle, at least at this stage.

The honourable member also raised the matter of leasing. What she said about leasing was a little confusing. She indicated that perhaps we could allow and encourage leasing of buffalo for small landowners to take up. The advice I have from the department is that, regarding the leasing of breeding stock, the involvement of small property holders is certainly endorsed, but this must be done within the context of basically a free-enterprise, self-supporting industry. Certainly, we would encourage any of the rural landholders in the Territory. Some people have only a few acres, near Darwin, but they could keep buffalo there and perhaps gain a dollar from them in due course as they grow up or breed each year. However, we would not look at that sort of thing as being able to help the buffalo industry in the Northern Territory very significantly.

The answer to many of the questions relating to buffalo is purely an economic one in that we must raise the value of the beast to the producer. I mentioned in the statement that we were doing a number of things to try to increase both the price we get for buffalo meat at present, and increase the amount of the beast that is used for human consumption because, in the past, primarily only the fillet has been used. However, we have found that processes of tenderising the meat, such as electrification, are very successful with buffalo meat and we are trying to encourage restaurants and the like to accept meat taken from other parts of the buffalo.

The member for Karama raised a somewhat sensitive issue: the extermination of buffalo in difficult country in order to comply with the BTEC requirements, which are that virtually every feral animal in the Territory has to be tracked down between now and 1992 and either tested and, if clean, put behind wire or, if it is not clean, either slaughtered through an abattoir or shot. Certainly, it has to be taken out of the system. He said that, instead of having shoot-outs, which result in a large waste of animals, the government should organise contractors to go in well ahead of target dates for eradication for these areas and ensure that they can catch all the live animals possible or kill them in the field for pet meat. Certainly, that is acceptable. He suggested that we could catch them and keep the breeders to build up our domestic industry - which we are trying to do - and send the others to the abattoirs, because the abattoirs are always screaming that they cannot get enough meat, and that is true. However, it is all a matter of economics. Obviously, the abattoirs will only pay so much money for an animal. The price offered will dictate whether it is viable for someone to catch the beasts and deliver them to the abattoirs. The department goes to enormous lengths to minimise the number of buffalo which have to be what we call 'shot to waste'. We encourage all catching contractors to go into areas to catch buffalo for sale, either to the domestic breeding industry or to abattoirs. We encourage pet meaters to go in.

I have met some resistance, mind you, but I have even encouraged the department to concur with safari operators going on to land, as a last resort, and so obtaining some value for animals that are shot rather than simply having them shot at public expense and left to rot in the field. Those are the sort of lengths that I am prepared to go to in an effort to ensure that some value is obtained for the slaughter which occurs.

However, when you get into the country which is completely inaccessible, which we are into at present, where you cannot take vehicles or, if you can, it is over such incredible distances and such terrible terrain that it is quite uneconomic to bring loads of live buffalo out of the place or it does so much harm to their health that it is not worth the effort and is cruel, eventually you are faced with the necessity of authorising a shoot-out. These

shoot-outs are done by government officers at government expense, but they have to be done. If we are to meet the BTEC requirements between now and 1992, the last resort is to have a shoot-out and, sadly, it has already involved and will involve in the future thousands of animals.

Ever since taking up this portfolio, I have asked every buffalo person that I have come across - whether he was a buffalo breeder, a buffalo exporter or the owner of an abattoir that kills buffalo, of which there are several - to tell me how we can reduce the number of buffalo that are shot to waste. Every humane person would consider this a serious problem and we should do what we can to avoid it. Nobody has an answer to dealing with buffalo in inaccessible areas. No one has that answer, and they all agree that shoot-out is a last resort, but that it must take place. Sadly, we will do that.

In closing, I will pose briefly the dilemma that I find myself in. I have not been able to get any answers to it from the 2 members who contributed to this debate, from the Buffalo Industry Council nor from anyone else. The dilemma is that of trying to build up a herd of at least 20 000 breeding buffalo behind wire in the Territory by 1992 whilst, at the same time, selling animals so that access to markets will provide an income for buffalo breeders as they wait for the herd to become large enough to reproduce itself, with those programs being the basis of the future industry. One solution which has been suggested is the harsh one of restricting or prohibiting the sale of breeding buffalo either for export or slaughter.

Since I have been given no other solution to the problem, I now intend to write to as many people in the industry as I can track down to propose that course of action to them. I will then consider their responses, some of which no doubt will probably be pretty harsh because buffalo exporters are relying on buying up breeding buffalos all around the Territory in order to fulfil their orders. We have been sending shiploads of them to places as far away as Cuba. I am worried that, if we do not have a very sizeable herd of breeders in the Territory by 1992, we will be almost without a buffalo industry. That would be a terrible shame because this is probably the only place in the world that has the opportunity to capitalise on such a resource. Honourable members can be sure of hearing more about the buffalo industry as time goes by because, as 1992 approaches, these issues will become more controversial than they are today.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Grain Industry

Continued from 17 September 1987.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I congratulate the honourable minister on the presentation of this statement. It is very detailed and is probably long overdue.

Grain farming in the Northern Territory has always been very difficult and I expect it always will be. I felt that some of the minister's projections were a little too optimistic, particularly those identifying the amount of arable land available. In my lifetime, I certainly do not expect to see the amount of arable land that his department supposedly has identified actually being used by the grain industry.

The industry's major difficulties relate to soils, weather conditions and markets. There is a limited amount of suitable soil available in the Northern Territory. Weather conditions are difficult. At a most unfortunate time for the burgeoning industry, we have had 2 bad years in which the rains have not come as they should have. If one can believe the people who base their weather forecasts on the El Nino effect, we could well be in for another bad year this year. If that happens, my advice from the industry is that we will have serious problems. Some of the real pioneers of the industry, who have been just hanging on, will find it very difficult to survive another bad year. That is a good example of the difficulties we have here in establishing a grain industry.

Over the years, there have been a number of false starts in the Northern Territory grain industry. No one will forget the Humpty Doo experience. I am just old enough to remember the hype that occurred when Sir William Gunn and others came to the Territory to turn us into the world's great rice bowl. I think the member for Port Darwin and the minister himself can remember those days. I certainly do not knock that vision which was a great one for the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, because of the problems that we are all familiar with, the scheme did not work. The big lesson was that broadacre grain farming, as practised in other parts of Australia, does not work in the Northern Territory. I think everybody has now accepted that fact. We have to look at other techniques if we want a grain industry in the Territory. The government has approached the matter in the correct manner through ADMA which has encouraged what I would call small-scale broadacre farming. That is certainly a more realistic approach which allows, weather permitting, some prospect of success in the long term.

In the previous debate, the member for Karama spoke about the government's role in the buffalo industry and I think that issue needs to be addressed in terms of the grain industry as well. My view, which I think is a reasonably common one, is that government support for the grain industry should be in 2 basic areas. The first is in research, which covers the identification of appropriate soils and appropriate areas for farming, the identification of appropriate types of crops and the promotion of appropriate seed types. The second is in what I call the farm-to-market services.

We have recently begun to look more widely at the potential of crops that previously we have ignored. That is something to be encouraged. Both within and beyond the grain industry, there is a whole range of crops that are grown successfully elsewhere in the world and are suitable to the tropical and semi-arid areas of the Northern Territory. It is very encouraging indeed to note research into that wider range of crops to see whether there are some that have not been tried in the Northern Territory.

Although I have sometimes been critical of what at one stage seemed to be the government's intention to lead us into the 21st century on the back of kenaf, it certainly is a crop that has some potential in the Northern Territory and is worthy of further research. I understand that the first commercial kenaf crop in Australia has been harvested recently on the Burdekin and we will all be waiting to see the result of that harvest and whether there are lessons which are applicable to the Territory. One of the major challenges with kenaf is to bring tonnage rates to a level which will make it a commercially viable crop. Even on the Burdekin, which has advantages that we do not have in the Northern Territory, there were problems in terms of growing enough kenaf per hectare to justify it on a commercial basis. However, as I said, kenaf is one of a number of crops, both in and beyond the grain industry, which need to be looked at closely. I am pleased that the

minister's department has picked that up and that research activities are now directed over a much broader area than was the case 4 or 5 years ago.

The needs are obvious in terms of farm-to-market services and again have generally been picked up by the government. Mention has been made of them in the minister's speech. There is a need to provide grain handling facilities on a market-wide basis. I acknowledge that those facilities have been installed and I must admit that I was staggered by the size of the grain handling facility in the Douglas Valley when I visited the area a couple of weeks ago. It is a huge installation. I only hope that we are able to fill it on a regular basis because, if we can fill and empty it very quickly, that will be a very obvious sign that the industry has reached first base.

Another aspect of farm-to-market services is what the minister referred to as orderly marketing. It is interesting that there is room for what might be called more socialistic approaches to the marketing of grain crops and to farming in general than might be expected. It has always intrigued me that right throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the most socialistic party in Australia was the National Party. Some of the socialism was good, in terms of the protection of farmers and the establishment of marketing procedures and other forms of assistance. Other aspects of that planning put in place in the 1950s and 1960s are now recognised as not being of assistance to farmers and the country in general and are slowly being dismantled. Certainly, there is a case for saying that, when the grain leaves the farmer's property, there is a role for government to play in the marketing and the sale of that product. That has been recognised by the minister in his statement.

Mr Speaker, the minister referred to the connection between feed production and its use within the Northern Territory. Grain is a high bulk crop and therefore very expensive to transport. The more we can encourage its use in the Territory, the better. The minister mentioned in the statement that there is a growing market for sorghum, maize, soya beans and rice by the pig and poultry industries. It occurred to me as a result of the previous debate that perhaps there is a possibility for the use of grain in the buffalo industry.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Only if you go into lot feeding.

Mr SMITH: Thank you. Do you want to make my speech for me?

It is commonly accepted that grain-fed beef is of a higher quality than range-fed beef and is more acceptable. As the member for Koolpinyah said, there is an implication that, if you get into the grain-fed beef or buffalo industry, you must go into lot feeding. A couple of people have tried lot feeding. The President of the Cattlemen's Association, John Dyer, has conducted some lot feeding experiments on his property outside Katherine. Unfortunately, I have not kept in close touch with them. Certainly, one of the secrets of lot feeding is to have a regular and reliable grain supply very close in order to lessen the cost of bringing the grain to your property. It certainly is something that is worth exploring because it would provide a fillip to the grain industry by providing it with a regular market and provide a fillip to the beef and buffalo industry by giving farmers the ability to turn off higher quality beef and buffalo.

In the past, there have been problems in that area in the supply of feed as a result of competition from the Ord River. That was a burning issue 3 or 4 years ago. I know many people in the Territory obtained their feed from the Ord because it was cheaper than the local product. My understanding is that

those problems have been basically resolved and satisfactory arrangements have been reached within the Territory for Territory grains to provide the majority of stockfeed within the Territory and that is a very positive movement indeed.

I conclude by making a brief mention of the role of the research farms. It is important that the research farms continue their valuable work. There has been some concern expressed at the sale of land around the Tortilla Flats Research Farm. I hope that that is not an indication of a lessening of government commitment to the research area at Tortilla Flats. As I have said - and the honourable minister has agreed in his statement - if the industry is to advance, there has to be a continuing and perhaps an even greater research effort into the problems of the grain industry. The secret in relation to research is to determine the direction of that research. In the last 12 to 24 months, steps have been taken to provide for better identification of where we want research to occur. That will give us a better prospect of achieving the results required.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by congratulating the minister on his excellent statement. The grain industry does have a lot of potential. I only hope that, in our lifetime, that potential can be realised and we can provide the Northern Territory with a firm base for the continuing development of the grain industry.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, the opening sentence of the minister's statement on the grain industry in the Northern Territory says 'the Northern Territory has a long history of attempting to establish farming operations to produce gain'. That statement is true, but it has to be qualified. Grain can be grown successfully in the Northern Territory, but its farming operations and its marketing are another matter. It is true that rice growing was attempted in the 1950s at Humpty Doo which was unsuccessful for 2 main reasons: saltwater intrusion into main water use areas behind the bunds and the fact that this area of Humpty Doo was and is the most active magpie geese breeding area in the Northern Territory. These geese acted like front-end loaders when presented with the sumptuous and loaded banquet tables of the paddocks full of rice. That project failed because inadequate basic research was done before the start of the operations and a lot of money was lost by the investors.

The next large grain growing project consisted of 3 properties down at Tortilla Flats, which all set out to grow rice under the supervision of the Northern Territory administration at the time. Those 3 farmers struggled on for a few years growing and doing what they were told, but all to no avail. The project was given the chop after a few years: 2 farmers were almost broke and that left a third who stayed on and battled under great financial stress. If this project had been allowed to continue for another year or so with a new high-producing strain of rice, which had just then come out, I believe everything would have been saved and the 3 farms would have turned the corner of financial problems and had a future.

The third main grain failure in the Northern Territory was at Willeroo which happened about 1977-78 when the government unfortunately had some sticky interference and certain matters to explain away. In a nutshell, this farming failure was due to bad organisation and the principals spreading themselves too thinly financially, and having no backup finance in those early years. That is critical when one is setting out on a large farming operation.

A fourth main grain failure in the Northern Territory occurred in the mid-1960s at Tipperary or, more correctly, at the Darwin wharf. The

principals of this project set out to grow sorghum and they did it very successfully from vast acreages. The grain was standing uncovered in trucks down on the wharf in May. We had the granddaddy of a downpour when Hughie really sent it down. The grain was wet, it went mouldy, it was unsaleable and therefore the first harvest was lost. Unfortunately, in this case, the company had also spread itself too thinly financially in the first season and did not have the resources to put in a second crop to pull itself out of its financial bog.

In all of these cases, it was demonstrated that grains could be grown in the Northern Territory but, because of our unique position here, with small numbers of end users, high transport costs, long distances from markets and abysmal lack of market expertise, these farming ventures were all failures. This is not so today. The government's investment in the Douglas-Daly was money well spent. When that project was in its infancy, there was much controversy regarding farming contracts and land acquisition for furthering the project. At the time, whilst giving praise to the government whose party I belonged to, I nevertheless had differing views on the land acquisition to those officially reported. The 2 main reasons why the Douglas-Daly scheme was and is a success were the choice of farmers and the government-sponsored marketing scheme ADMA. This latter organisation has been of great assistance to growers. Anything can grow in the Top End but what is the good of growing the best, the biggest, the heaviest crop of whatever if you cannot sell it?

I read in an old Resident's report from the turn of the century that, among other produce, coffee and sugar were grown prolifically at Delissaville and at the Batchelor Experimental Station, part of which made up a property of ours at Batchelor, but the ventures foundered when no markets were found. As well as government-sponsored farming ventures, there have been any number of individuals who have ventured their own capital to grow crops of their choice, some with success and some without. Those people never received the praise in official circles that they merited. Until recently, when the Douglas-Daly scheme was started, farming, as distinct from pastoral activity, received very little notice from the Department of Industrial Development which existed some years ago, the Animal Industry Branch or the Department of Primary Production, which is now the Department of Industries and Development. The farmers were the innovators and experimenters, using their own money and expertise to try new crops with varying success, and then trying to sell the harvest without any of the advantages of economies of scale or operation and without a full knowledge of marketing operations.

My view on where the government should go in the future, not only with grain crops but with general agriculture, is that it should continue the trend to smaller, more intensive holdings, veering away from the large pastoral monoculture situation and the use of land in extensive land holdings. As well as catching up with agriculture in other states, as distinct from horticulture - I think we are equal to the states in terms of horticulture if not ahead of them - we need to grow tropical crops and animals, not those more suited to temperate climates. We need to find our own markets to our north where there is demand for our products and, in doing so, use our land to its best potential, having regard to the fact that only about 50% of the Northern Territory is viable for farming. Finally, in doing all of this, we must give the family man and the family farm a place. This must all lead to integrated farming practices of varying forms. I believe philosophically in this. In any monoculture, we may make a squillion when seasons are good and prices are high but, when markets vanish, so does the income. Varied farming, even if only for 2 or 3 lines, is a cushion against bad seasonal prices for one of the lines. It enables the farmer to maintain his viability and continue.

Being an end user of grain in my small farming operation, I know exactly what I pay for a bag of local feed. I know it is fresh and that it has been formulated for the tropical conditions in which my stock live. That is because we have our own grain industry. If I bought feed interstate, it would cost me about \$5 a bag more, not be nearly as fresh and not be formulated for tropical conditions and, therefore, it would not be as good for my stock. I will admit that, despite ups and downs in the early days, the grain industry is on its feet now, with progressive policies in place, progressive marketing carried on and active grower representation on the relevant boards and authorities. I still have some reservations about the Grain Marketing Act and its totalitarian control of all grain produced in the Northern Territory but, as situations of conflict with its implementation have not arisen yet, I am prepared to be silent on its draconian controls.

All in all, considering the minister's statement in toto, I would like to go on record as saying that congratulations are due to the government and the grain farmers for together putting the grain industry on a firm footing to be built on in the future and, perhaps, to be an example for other primary industries, and better than that I could not say.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am really pleased to be able to take this opportunity to talk about the grain industry. I do not intend to speak for very long because most of what needs to be said has been said in the statement. Mainly, I want to express support for the direction that has been taken by the Department of Industries and Development and the minister in this very important and still growing industry in the Northern Territory.

The grain industry, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, has had a very chequered history in the Northern Territory for a range of reasons, not the least of which has been the weather patterns of the Northern Territory. The other day, the Treasurer spoke about the problems that we have with weather, the cyclical patterns of our weather and the theory that we are currently in the third or fourth year of a 7-year dry cycle. I suspect that most other grain projects in the past in the Northern Territory have broken down for that very reason. We have a number of good years, things go well, everybody is happy and, all of a sudden, we have a series of very dry years, the bottom falls out of the whole project and we all lose confidence and walk away from it. I am very keen to see that this does not happen at this particular time.

As was pointed out, the ADMA farms were set up at a fairly substantial cost by government but it was a cost that was very well justified because we now have a number of farms operating in the Douglas-Daly area. Because of the crop contract scheme and a number of other support systems that have been instituted, there has been a regrowth of the grain industry in other parts of the Territory, particularly in Katherine and, to a lesser extent, at places such as Batchelor. That has been a magnificent effort not only on the part of the government but also on the part of those farmers who came here with little else but their equipment and expertise and worked, almost for the government, in the establishment of farms and then, as has been the case with 2 farmers in the last couple of years, took on the farms in their own right and continued to operate them. But the last couple of years have been fairly devastating for those farmers as a result of the very dry weather, not because of any lack of expertise or any inability to farm, or problems with equipment or seed. The biggest problem has been the weather. If we continue in this 7-year cycle, as is the theory, then it is quite likely that, without continued support from the government in the form of money, help and advice, some of those people are likely to go out of the system.

I could be accused of repeating myself here because I have said this many times before, but it is important that the farms around the Territory diversify. Every farming enterprise around Australia that started from scratch 50, 100, or 150 years ago started out as a mixed farm. At Douglas-Daly, we attempted to establish operations which basically grow grain and nothing else. If there is a bad year, of course, the grain grower is in trouble because he has lost his cash crop and there is nothing to pick up the shortfall. There is a great need to diversify those farms, and most of the farmers are very keen to do so. That has been indirectly discouraged in the past but it is encouraging to see the Department of Industries and Development, as did the Department of Primary Production in the last year or so of its life, pushing towards the idea of diversification in that area.

I am sorry that I was not here for the buffalo statement debate during this afternoon because I did want to speak with regard to buffalo. I was called out of the House for a short time and, because there were not many other speakers, I missed out on the chance to say something. But, last weekend, along with a number of farmers from Douglas-Daly, Katherine and other areas, I visited the 60-mile farm for a field day at the buffalo lot feeding area. It was very gratifying to see that project up and running because, last year, I was responsible for putting up the first funds to get it under way. It is good to see it operating and really making inroads into the lack of confidence that people may previously have had in relation to the the lot feeding of buffalo. The farmers from Katherine, Douglas-Daly and further afield were very keen to see the operation and I have no doubt that, in time, some of them will diversify into lot feeding of buffalo. There are times when crops fail or when the grain is not up to scratch for sale. To be able to lot-feed buffalo at those times and obtain some value from failed crops would give a return to the farmers and prove beneficial to the Territory generally.

Lot feeding is the way to go with young buffalo. In the past, we have shot out large numbers of buffalo because it was not worth while taking them to the market. Tipperary Station has been providing buffalo to the lot feed at the 60-mile. Tipperary is now seeing the benefit of lot feeding and it is becoming reluctant to pass on its young buffalo. I have no doubt that Tipperary will go into lot feeding in time, as will places such as Ban Ban, Camp Creek and the Douglas-Daly farms.

The farmers in the Territory at present are a valuable resource because they have expertise that does not exist anywhere else in Australia. They have learned to live with the vagaries of the Northern Territory climate and the problems that they face here. They are a resource that is too valuable to be lost to the Northern Territory. I certainly hope that we will not lose heart if the weather continues to cause us problems. It is important that farmers become involved in the high-value crops. There are some high-value crops such as sesame that will grow here. We really need to look at those because the returns in the Territory are not as great as they are in some other places, given the high cost of developing and maintaining farms. We have not yet met the Territory's needs in grain and we have a fair way to go before we do. With the growth of the Territory, we do not really need to look at the export market to any great extent. In fact, we could not meet the demands of an export market at present. However, if we had a good year, we could have a surplus. I cannot see that happening in the next year or 2.

The member for Koolpinyah mentioned her problems with the Grain Marketing Act. Philosophically, I think we all have a problem, certainly members on this side of the House - with things like the Grain Marketing Act which provide that a body acquires the property of other people by law and is then

able to sell it and nobody can grow outside that requirement. I certainly had some problems with that and also some problems with being the minister who eventually put it into place. However, I recognise why that was necessary. At that point in the growth of the grain industry in the Northern Territory, if a big developer had become involved, the money that the government had invested in the past and the expertise that had been developed with the farmers would have been lost to the Northern Territory. One big developer could have put all of the small concerns out of business in one year. We could not allow that to happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude by congratulating the Department of Industries and Development for continuing its work in relation to the grain industry. I congratulate the minister on his endeavours because I know that he has a very strong feeling for farming in the Northern Territory and has been around much longer than most of us in this House. He was responsible in no small way for seeing that the ADMA farms came into being and that the grain industry was put on a footing in the Northern Territory that will give it a future. I hope that the confidence of those of us in the Assembly and in the government generally, who in some ways have the power of life and death over grain farming in the Northern Territory, will maintain our confidence and ensure its future.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, the answer from now on for the grain farmers, particularly in the Douglas-Daly area, is clearly diversification and irrigation. The diversification should not be simply into other crops, which some of them are looking at now, but also into the animal industry. Indeed, one of them has diversified into the tourist industry and there may be more opportunities in the future for that. That is commendable because that little tourist venture will probably earn more than the farm in some years. It probably did last year, which was not a very good one in that area.

Being what country people would call a city person, it is difficult for me not to become enthused when I go to government research farms. When I see all the activity that is taking place there, I perhaps become a little frustrated that it takes so long to prove up some of the crops. Despite the fact we have been researching crops for a long time, there are simply so many varieties that have to be tested with different types of soil, different fertiliser rates, different water application rates and various insect problems that it can take many years to produce the information required to grow 1 crop, for which the starting point was that it grows in the tropics and therefore should be possible to grow in the Territory. No doubt, the successes which are beginning to emerge on the farms today are the result of many years of research.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, we are now branching into crops which we have not tried before. It was not that we have only just discovered those crops. In fact, the list of areas we would like to get into is as long as your arm. It is a step-by-step process because of the frustrating limitation on resources. We are fortunate in the Territory to have plenty of areas in which more farms can be set up, but the people and machinery are very expensive. In the Douglas-Daly area, some of the big planters required for some of the crops cost \$100 000. Each farmer may have to own that machinery because only a couple of weeks are available for a crop to be planted and every farmer in the area needs the same piece of machinery at the same time. The same may apply to crops that have to be harvested within days of a particular condition arriving. It is a very expensive field for government to be in. Some of the machinery on our government research

farms is antiquated because the department has tried to keep money flowing into the crops and the staff make do with ancient peanut harvesters. We are reluctant to spend \$50 000 or \$60 000 on the latest piece of machinery and have it sit in the yard for 350 days of the year.

As the member for Victoria River mentioned, we have been lot feeding buffalo in the Northern Territory for some time now. It is part of the buffalo marketing program where we are trying to see how good we can make prime buffalo meat for the gourmet game meat market. We are working not only on the fillet of the buffalo but the whole animal. At the 60-mile farm, we are experimenting with buffalo of differing ages and we are increasingly slaughtering them for trial in game meat markets down south. The aim is to slaughter these prime young lot-fed animals at the time when the maximum economic benefit is available. Hopefully, with the passage of time, people will pay more for a plate of buffalo than they will for ordinary beef.

It is fortunate that the government resisted a lot of pressure to expand the farm schemes when we first set them up. We poured considerable funds into them back in the early 1980s and we had faith the effort would determine once and for all whether the grain industry would succeed. We are now fairly well convinced that it will succeed. At that time, everybody with a piece of land wanted the sorts of incentives and infrastructure support that we gave the Douglas-Daly scheme. Thank goodness we resisted those pressures; otherwise we would have gone far beyond our capacity to keep up with the scheme. It has been expensive. ADMA was set up in about 1980. Its legislation was innovative in terms of the sunset clause it contained. It was the first Northern Territory act to contain such a clause and the expiry date has now been extended to 1990.

I hope that, as time goes by, members opposite will come to have the same faith in the Trade Development Zone as they have in the grain cropping scheme. They are similar: both are long-term programs which should be judged in the long term. Members are saying that, although we are having bad seasons at present, this program seems to be successful. We will judge it afresh in a couple of years and determine whether government support should continue. I am confident enough at this stage to say that it will continue. The Trade Development Zone is a much newer project. We have to stick with it for a while yet, despite the fact that it is expensive. It is certainly far too early for anyone to say that it is a failure.

I am pleased to hear that honourable members have faith in the cropping scheme and have supported the government in tracking it through, even though it is still costing us quite a lot of money each year.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

I am sure that honourable members will join with me in extending congratulations to the successful Territory entrants in the National Tourism Awards held last week in Perth. These include the Yulara Resort, Territory Editorials, which won a national award in the media section, and, of course, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission which won the national award again. It also won the award for the best tourism authority in Australia last year. I would like to place formally on record my sincere thanks to every member of

the Northern Territory Tourist Commission under the leadership of Bob Doyle because I believe their efforts, through offices in the Territory, around Australia and overseas, have been nothing short of outstanding. They have received proper credit in the national forum for their work. Without any shadow of doubt, we have Australia's best tourist authority.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on tourism and, specifically, Darwin as the gateway to the Top End and Kakadu as the destination. A number of years ago, the Territory government set an objective of bringing 1 million tourists a year into the Territory. It has worked very steadily towards that and is well on the way to achieving it. It might well surpass that figure by 1991. However, we are running into some troubled waters. I thought I would raise my concerns today because they need to be addressed more at a federal level than at a Territory level. The industry will need the support of the whole community in this hour of need.

The reality is that the promotion of Kakadu in the Top End has been so successful that agents can no longer sell seats on flights into Darwin because of the hold Qantas has on capacity coming into the Top End. This is very serious because nothing will destroy a market or a destination more quickly than potential visitors being told that all seats or all beds are taken. There is so much competition among destinations that travel agents do not worry about such places. They are interested in places where they can sell a ticket or a bed and earn a dollar.

Top End tour operators are faced with the great embarrassment of having people ringing up from Norway, Italy, South-east Asia and dozens of places in America. They are unable to provide seats into Darwin, particularly out of Singapore. The basis of the problem is that Qantas, through various mechanisms, has the capacity to thwart other airlines which would otherwise enter the market and drop passengers off in Darwin, either as a destination or as a through fare. The reality for people in the industry is that, if they cannot quickly get some seats into Darwin, they will go out of business. The large operators will survive because of their size but the small bus operators, tour package operators and motels will not survive, now that they have put all their resources into promoting existing packages. They cannot get people past Singapore.

In all fairness, I have to say that this is not a problem caused or made worse by the Northern Territory government. It is a matter that the Commonwealth government has to address. I raise it this afternoon particularly for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Tourism. There is a crying need for this problem to be taken to Canberra on a bipartisan basis and to be raised with the federal Ministers for Transport and Tourism. They must be told how much damage is being done to the Northern Territory and Australian economy because we cannot get people past Singapore and into Darwin. When one considers that the result will be that people will go broke and leave the industry, it is a crying shame.

The matter is compounded by the fact that, throughout South-east Asia and particularly in Australia, there is a shortage of aircraft. The airlines are unable to move the traffic that they want to move. Anybody who has been in contact with the travel industry recently knows that all the flights to Asian destinations like Bali are booked out until February and if you have not made your arrangements now you will not be going anywhere. Sales into Bali are 150% of capacity and the tourist agencies in Indonesia are looking for somewhere to send their excess traffic from Hong Kong, Tokyo and Korea because they cannot get people into Bali. Logically, this would be an ideal place for them to come.

I might mention that a tour package recently advertised in Singapore to bring gamblers to Darwin for a couple of nights filled 3 aeroplanes in 3 days. Unfortunately, those flights could not get landing rights in Darwin. It is past a joke when a country in our economic situation carries on with that sort of nonsense. We really are our own worst enemies. In my view, the tourist industry should take a delegation to Canberra. It would be appropriate if the government were part of it. Our federal members should undoubtedly be involved with it. We should be seeking a meeting with the federal ministers to try to gain some alleviation of the problem. The major airlines and the federal departments say they find Darwin a bit of a problem because it is so small. It is a nuisance. If that is the case, one of the options that we would have would be to suggest that we forgo some of the entitlements that we already have with Qantas or the Garuda Airlines and try to put together back-to-back charters that will serve the needs of the industry and serve the market that is out there.

Mr Speaker, we do not have many choices. If we do not do something quickly, and if we do not obtain a good hearing from the federal government, a great many people in this town will be hurt very badly. The government has promoted the Territory strongly and industry, of its own volition, has put together packages, made trips overseas and committed itself to printing brochures and marketing. The people are out there climbing over one another to get into Darwin and travel to Kakadu or wherever and, lo and behold, we now have the problem that we cannot get them past Singapore. I do not believe it is even a problem related to the construction of the airport. While it would have been nice if a new airport were available to receive these passengers, and hopefully it will become available, it is obvious that there are airlines which would come to Darwin and make the most of the opportunity if the Qantas control over capacity into Darwin were relaxed.

I do not blame Qantas particularly. It is using a power that the federal government has given to it over a long period. I am saying that it is probably time we reviewed that power and removed it from Qantas because it is harming the growth of the tourist industry tremendously. Given the shortage of equipment in the international airline industry, particularly in South-east Asia and with Qantas, it would probably not be unreasonable for the federal minister to allow Ansett, which has aircraft which sit overnight on the Darwin tarmac once or twice a week, to send them off to Singapore and back on special charters. I can well imagine the expressions of horror in the halls of Qantas at the possibility of Ansett having the right to get into an international market but, so help me, if we do not do something pretty radical to change the situation, the impact on many tourist businesses in this town and the Top End will be very serious.

Mr Collins: And through to the Centre.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is right.

The other thing that has been brought to my attention is that, for some time now, the Australian Tourist Commission has had Yulara on the front of its brochures, promoting it as a very attractive and saleable destination. I have heard that the industry is having so much trouble with obtaining accommodation there and seats on aircraft that the ATC, or its new equivalent, is about to take Yulara out of its promotions altogether. If that is true, the situation is really serious and bears investigation.

Mr Speaker, the tourist market is changing rapidly. What we perceived in the beginning to be a 'South-east Asian, Darwin, central Australia,

Barrier Reef' connection has now developed into a 'Barrier Reef, central Australia, Sydney' connection, and people are doing the triangle and going out. We cannot allow that sort of development to become the entrenched status quo or, in the long run, we will find it harder and harder to get the aviation authorities to change their rules to allow us to develop.

It could be that the tourist industries in Cairns, Townsville and other north Australian ports are suffering the same dilemma that we are suffering and I think it is time that we all made a concerted effort to solve the problem. I do not see it as a political problem, Mr Speaker. It is a commercial problem in the sense that Qantas is trying to protect its position and does not really give a tinker's cuss about what happens to everybody down the line while it does it. We are trying to develop a tourist industry that will probably benefit Qantas more than anybody else in the game. Given that the federal government has allowed Qantas to achieve this power over a long period, and that it allows Qantas the opportunity to flex its muscles, it is time the federal government intervened with Qantas and told it that there must be some new rules so that the market can be satisfied.

Mr Speaker, I say to everybody in this House, irrespective of their politics, that it is one of those issues that we ought to get together on and ensure that the federal ministers are prepared to give a special dispensation to the people of the Northern Territory, in their tourist promotion endeavours, because it is time to do that or our tourist industry will disappear.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, last evening I was addressing the matter of the re-forming of the Darwin City Brass Band in 1981 when, unfortunately, I ran out of time. My basic reason for raising the subject last night was to acknowledge the fine work of the people involved in re-forming the Darwin City Brass Band at that time, and also to congratulate all of the present members of the band. It is important also to acknowledge that there is a need to promote such organisations as a goal for our young people and Territorians who are interested in music and to give them something to aim for.

I mentioned that the re-formed band commenced practices in December 1981 in a demountable in Aralia Street, and that there were some 10 to 12 players at that time. From that very small beginning, the band has grown both in membership and stature. There are some 30 players now in the Darwin City Brass Band. Those players come from all walks of life. Some are very experienced in brass band music and others have never played a musical instrument in their life. It should be pointed out that the band master individually tutors experienced and beginner members. The band's members range in age from 11 years to 60 years, and there is an even mixture of males and females. The members sit for the Australian Music Examination Board's practical examination. Those examinations are very difficult and, in 1986, they were very successful, with most entrants achieving As or Bs. The rehearsals and performances have grown to the stage where they are performing or rehearsing at least twice a week, and that has been occurring now for some 4 years.

Since 1982, the band has given some 81 performances and that is a wonderful effort on its part. It entertains people not only in the Darwin area but at other centres throughout the Territory and elsewhere in Australia. In 1985, the band decided that it would attempt to compete in the Queensland State Brass Band Championship. At that time, the band was graded as Class C, which was a higher grading than its members had expected to receive. The band

was most successful and won all major band trophies on that occasion. The Queensland bands were soundly beaten in this particular grade. In 1986, the band performed once again. It was not quite as successful. It was the runner-up in that particular grade. The association then applied to the Queensland Band Association to be upgraded to B grade and, again, it was the runner-up in that particular grade.

I mentioned earlier that the brass band entertained people not only in Darwin but in other centres in the Territory and in the states. On one occasion, during the trip to the 1987 championships in Charters Towers, the band performed in both Tennant Creek and Julia Creek, and I understand that both performances were a resounding success. The NT association has done the Territory proud and the Darwin City Brass Band has been formally invited to play at the 1988 Expo in Brisbane. That really demonstrates the quality of the Darwin City Brass Band. It is a great honour for the band to have been invited to play on that particular occasion.

It also does a wonderful job in promoting the Northern Territory whenever it takes these trips. I believe that it is important that members of the Assembly and Territorians generally acknowledge the work of the band. It performs at openings of various facilities, it performs at fetes and it holds concerts for people to enjoy. It is important that its work be acknowledged and I congratulate Doug Fitzjohn and all members of the Darwin City Brass Band for a job well done. I pass on my best wishes for them in the future.

Mr Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, I would also like to mention a wonderful old lady who passed away recently. I refer to Mrs Sarah Feeney who was 7 years old when she came to the Territory. Like my grandmother, who passed away several years ago aged 96, Mrs Feeney was one of those who travelled to the Territory in a covered wagon. That trip took several months. I understand that Mrs Feeney's trip from Queensland to Darwin took some 4 months. There would be very few people living today who have been privileged to travel such distances in that form of transportation. Mrs Feeney was 90 when she passed away. She lived in various centres throughout the Territory and members may recall her sitting in a chair at many functions talking to the people and passing on stories about past events. It is important that people who have played a part in our early development are acknowledged in this forum, and I have a great deal of pleasure in making these comments this evening. Mrs Feeney was a proud woman and is survived by her daughter, 10 grandchildren, 31 great grandchildren, and 6 great great grandchildren.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to support the member for Barkly's comments on tourism. I spoke with members of the industry this afternoon and it is clear that people want to come here. It has been easy to book them on tours. The problem is they cannot book seats on the airlines to travel here. We have an outmoded situation whereby Qantas has the right to put the kibosh on their wishes. There are bigger planes available but the number of occupied seats has to be no more than what is occupied on the smaller aircraft. Darwin has roughly 60 passengers a week on Qantas' 3 flights. Many of those are Darwinites anyway.

Another point is that there is a great deal of difficulty in showing the Territory at its best. People who want to go to Kakadu have to catch a bus early in the morning, travel through what is basically boring country and arrive at Kakadu in the hottest part of the day. They then get back on the bus and make another boring trip home. We are not showing the Territory's beauty spots off at their best.

I have often said that, if you have not seen Palm Valley at sunrise and sunset, you have not seen Palm Valley. That is absolutely true. It takes on an absolutely magical character at sunrise and sunset. These days, you are required to camp about a mile from where the palm trees start. In the past, I have had the great pleasure on several occasions of camping right where the palm trees start. If there is water in the pools, to see it at sunrise and sunset is an experience not to be missed. The tours from Alice Springs normally arrive at Palm Valley at about 10 am and depart by 4 pm. People are not seeing Palm valley at its best, and that is a pity.

I spoke to some people in the real estate industry yesterday. They are concerned that Darwin is over-supplied with shops and offices. They are very concerned with the TIO's plans to erect a large building over on the old police station site in Mitchell Street. They could see that there would be a benefit to the building industry while it was being built but they are concerned that it would only add to the problem of over-supply and would drive away people who have invested heavily over many years. It seems to me that the TIO would be better off investing in a hotel as close as possible to Kakadu. Day trips from there would be more likely to give satisfaction to the people who want to see our beauty spots.

Another thought would be an airport at Jabiru. I do not know what the problems would be with the Commonwealth about having an airport which could accommodate at least an F28. It would be a costly exercise but, certainly, that would be one way of helping to get people in and out of Kakadu in a much more enjoyable way. If you have a satisfied customer, he will pass on the word to others. We have plenty of people who want to come. We must find ways of getting them here. I believe that bipartisan approaches must be made to the federal government to put the kybosh on Qantas which is only hurting the Territory and Australia. It is money that we badly need.

This morning, I asked the Minister for Industries and Development to examine a problem which has arisen in respect of the Patents Advisory Service. I am grateful that he has promised to do that. If a person is interested in a particular invention, it is wise to check inventions that are already patented. If somebody has already patented the idea, a would-be inventor is wasting his time. If it has not been patented, the person may well pick up other ideas which could complement his work. When the Commonwealth controlled this matter, all you had to do was visit the public library and indicate the area in which you were interested - for example, swimming pool safety. You would be given a microfiche which you could study at your own leisure and take photocopies. It was a pretty good service that cost no more than a handful of dollars.

These days, one has to go to the Patents Advisory Service in Minerals House where one is not given the chance to look at any microfiche but is advised to talk to lawyers involved in this field. The problem is that fees range between \$400 and \$1000. Often, inventors seem to be people who do not have a great deal of spare cash. The minister may find that the microfiche is no longer available because the set might not be complete. Obviously patents are being taken out all the time. I would like to think that the central patents office would send out microfiche frequently. There could also be patents pending. That argument does not really hold water because an initial search facility should be available to the would-be inventor. If he needs to be absolutely certain he can later use the services of a patents attorney. He should not be prevented from looking at all the patented devices in his field of interest.

I asked a question this morning of the Treasurer about the grassroots perception in the community that the government has become a slow payer of its bills. I have given him the details of one particular case, which has already been solved, of a person in my electorate. I gave him a general idea of other cases that I heard about in Tennant Creek and Darwin. The minister was very quick to jump to the defence of the people in Treasury and I would support him on that. When the paperwork reaches Treasury, it is dealt with very quickly. I have no reason to doubt that. Perhaps we are short of money or perhaps people have been told to slow down the rate at which they process the paperwork. I do not know because I am not behind the scenes. However, there is a very clear perception in the community that, over the last few months, the government has become a slower payer.

The government has had an excellent record since 1981, particularly in Alice Springs since the Government Accounting Bureau was established there. Before that time, I had constant complaints from contractors. Once the Government Accounting Bureau was set up in Alice Springs, it provided a superb service. I had no complaints until early this year. If the government is slow in paying its debts, the slow payment is passed on down the line. I hope the government will do all it can to have bills paid on time so that the good reputation that it has had over the last 5½ years will continue. I was not having a shot at Treasury people. However, I picked the perception up in 3 communities and I pass it on as advice to the government. It is up to it to do whatever it can to remedy the situation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I noted with interest a question and answer from the member for Araluen to the Chief Minister last week in relation to the Territory government's nominee on the Uluru Katatjuta National Park Board of Management. I wish to make some comments on the answer and I want to advise the Assembly that, not specifically as a result of the Chief Minister's comments but for a variety of reasons that I would like to explain this evening, it is my intention to tender my resignation from the board of management of the national park.

It is almost 2 years since the day in October 1985 when the new ownership and management arrangements for the Uluru Katatjuta National Park were put in place. I am proud to have been involved in those subsequent management arrangements to the extent that I have been and I believe that my contribution has been a positive one. I have been personally acquainted for many years with the members of the board of management who are traditional owners. In my capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly, I think I have developed a good working knowledge of the authority and instrumentalities that have had an input in the management of the park both prior to and subsequent to the new arrangements in October 1985.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to say that, 2 years on, the twin objectives of Aboriginal traditional ownership and the management of a national park for all Australians can be deemed to have worked. It is quite by coincidence that I make these comments in this evening's adjournment debate, having heard the matter of public importance debate today about the position of Aboriginal people in the tourist industry in the Territory. I listened with a great deal of interest to the comments that were made in that regard.

I believe my contribution to the board has been constructive. However, it is important that the deliberations of the board be free of any possible taint that may be associated with poisonous politicians such as myself.

Mr Finch: What an admission to make!

Mr BELL: Of course, with that adjective, Mr Deputy Speaker, I make no reference to the nominee of the Northern Territory government. It was simply reflecting an unfortunate public view of some of us who are elected to public office.

It is becoming clear to me that it is not appropriate for a politician to be a member of a board. My resignation will clear the decks a bit. In his answer to the member for Araluen's question, the Chief Minister expressed very trenchantly his view that it was inappropriate for politicians to sit on the board and he stressed that in no uncertain terms. Since I am referring to the Chief Minister's answer, I should point out one area of concern in respect of it. He said: 'It is very easy to criticise this government and to play party politics with issues like participation on the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management'. In concluding his answer, he said: 'We will never resile from our position that Uluru must eventually be a Northern Territory park managed by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission'.

I remind the Chief Minister that it has never been the opposition which has played politics with the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management. I remind the Chief Minister that the election in which he won his place in this Assembly was conducted in December 1983 after a 2½ week campaign. His predecessor, Paul Everingham, to his eternal discredit, however he may have been able to obfuscate the public debate in that regard, played party politics with the management and ownership of Uluru far harder and far more devastatingly for the purposes of Northern Territory control of Northern Territory resources than anybody else in this Assembly has ever done. His actions have earned the disapproval of all sorts of people. Mr Deputy Speaker, don't let me hear any member of this Assembly suggest that it has been the Labor Party or the opposition that has played politics with the ownership of the Uluru National Park. I remind honourable members that it was within the power of the former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, to give exactly the sort of Territory title that he referred to in his answer to the member for Araluen's question and that opportunity was never taken up. No Country Liberal Party politician in this Assembly has ever explained exactly why he did not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that my resignation from the board of management will clear the decks in this regard and will depoliticise the issue of Aboriginal traditional ownership of national parks, not simply with respect to the Uluru Katatjuta National Park but also with respect to what I would like to see as the Jawoyn national park. I would just like to let that sink in. How does that sound, Mr Deputy Speaker? I venture to say that we will be hearing a bit more about the Jawoyn national park.

Further, as an indication of the extent to which the board of management arrangements at Ayers Rock have worked, let me point out with respect to the Kakadu National Park, as it is called by we English speakers more often, is looking towards a board of management arrangement similar to that at Ayers Rock. You will call, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Bob Collins, in his maiden speech to the Senate, referred to the establishment of a board of management at Kakadu that would reflect the same sort of arrangements that apply, and have applied so successfully, at Ayers Rock.

For the benefit of honourable members who may not be so intimately aware of the details as I am, I point out that there are 6 positions on the board of management for traditional owners, and the people who hold them are indeed

remarkable, people like Yami Lester, Tjamiwa, Peter Kanari, Barbara Nipper and Nellie Peterson. They are wonderful people, highly intelligent people, whose contribution has been excellent. There are 5 non-Aboriginal members. There is the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Professor Derrick Ovington, for whom I have a great deal of respect. I do not necessarily agree with every position that he adopts with respect to everything that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service does in the Northern Territory. I do not think that I need to. In spite of the calumny that is heaped on him by government members in this Assembly, I have no doubt ...

Mr Collins: That is an unparliamentary word.

Mr BELL: It is not an unparliamentary word, for the benefit of the member for Sadadeen. Derrick Ovington is a man of integrity. I have appreciated the opportunity to work with him and I look forward to continuing to do so. There are also 2 nominees: 1 is the nominee of the federal Minister for Tourism and the other is the nominee of the federal Minister for Conservation and the Arts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with my resignation, I expect that the positions of a Northern Territory government and an opposition nominee on the board will lapse. It is my intention to promote the view that the Northern Territory nominees should be from the Tourist Commission and from the Conservation Commission, at officer level. I cannot be guaranteed ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Oh, shut up! Good grief!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my belief that that view will not necessarily meet with universal favour. However, it is my intention to promote that view. I believe that it is in the long-term interests of the national park objective and in the long-term interests of Aboriginal traditional ownership that Northern Territory instrumentalities be involved on as close a basis as possible. My respect for officers in the Conservation Commission and the Tourist Commission is already a matter of record, and I believe that only mutual benefit can come from their involvement in those management arrangements.

In conclusion, I hope that the actions that I have taken in this regard will enhance not only the activities at Ayers Rock, the visitor experience and the planning for the visitor experience but also the integration of Aboriginal traditional ownership into the national parks system of the Territory and, hopefully, of the country as well. I hope that that will go beyond Ayers Rock and will be considered also in relation to - let me say it again - a Jawoyn national park and for the Kakadu National Park as well.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to raise some points regarding Casuarina Secondary College. Last night, the Minister for Education made a series of rather incredible statements, half-allegations and half-truths in his speech which I think showed, once again, his absolute ineptitude. Unfortunately, he is unable to grasp some essential concepts that he really needs to comprehend if he is to continue as Minister for Education in the Northern Territory. If he is unable to do that, he will have to consider his own position or, if he will not do that, we will have to start

asking the Chief Minister to do it. Mr Deputy Speaker, he must realise that the provision of demountables is no solution to the education problems that I am talking about at Casuarina Secondary College.

The problems relate to the numbers of students that attend there and would not be solved if he spent another \$1m on getting the facilities into some sort of shape. The problem is with the size of the student body. There are too many students for the teaching body to cope with. Next year, it will affect 2 years: Year 11 and Year 12. The minister acknowledged in his speech last night that that is likely to happen and, unfortunately, if we once again have those large numbers, the students will not be able to get to know the teachers sufficiently to develop confidence and trust in them.

The care givers, the teachers and the associated support staff, will not be able to get to know the 1300 or so students adequately to be able to provide them with the support and encouragement that they require. The students will not know each other well enough to be able to build up the degree of pride in their school and in the knowledge of their peers which is part and parcel of those couple of years of education, as is the ability of the teachers to be able to form a cohesive group. The whole institution will become too big and that is something that the Casuarina Secondary College Council is aware of. The council is very concerned about the situation. The school is not interested in educating students as factory fodder. It wants to offer quality education and that is why, a couple of weeks ago, the minister was asked to visit the council so that it could explain that to him.

The staff want to ensure that the caring quality of the education offered at the school continues. They want to ensure that caring and quality - those 2 essential ingredients in education - are sustained, but they cannot be achieved when the numbers go over the top the way they have out there. Last night, the minister ran some figures past us and said everything was all right, it would be fixed up, and the school would not have any problems next year. However, I find it hard to see how the public can be assured of the veracity of the statements made by the minister. How can we be assured of that, when we look at the predicted enrolments for Casuarina High School that were compiled in 1985? The predicted figure for 1986 was 717 students and the actual figure was 1116. That is a factor of almost 50% error on the part of the honourable minister. In 1987, the projected figure was 888 and the actual figure was 1285. As the honourable minister agreed in his speech last night, we went over 1300 last year.

I have acknowledged all along that there are various factors involved but what I have attempted to have this government accept is that, having broken the 1000 student barrier, it has reneged on the commitment that it made to Territorians. If it didn't circulate the pamphlet 'A New Deal for Secondary Students', who did? I assumed that it was put out by the Education Department. On the basis of the assurances that they were given at that time, people accepted the development of the secondary colleges. On the one hand, they had continual statements that 1000 pupils was to be the maximum enrolment in a senior high school. It is agreed by most educationalists around Australia that enrolments in senior high schools should not be above 1000.

If people were worried when they heard that the government noted that 1000 pupil recommendation but thought it might go a little bit higher, they felt happier when they looked at the projected enrolment figures: 717 for 1986, 888 for 1987, 909 for 1988, and it was not until 1989 and 1990 that we have 1047 and 1075. What we have now will be nothing at all like that. We are already over 1300 and the minister says that that will happen again next year.

There are other questions arising from his speech last night. He stated that the Year 8 intake at Darwin High School would be modified. I would like that clarified and I think the people who intend to send their children to Darwin High School next year also want to know what will happen.

He said also that the Year 11 intake at Casuarina Secondary College would be restricted to students from the school's designated feeder area. We seem to be moving from a concept whereby people would have some option between schools towards a fixed zonal system. Is that what is happening? It certainly sounds like it. The Nightcliff Junior High School feeder area will go to Nightcliff rather than to Darwin High School. Some people were tossing up whether to send their kids to Darwin High so that they move through a comprehensive school or to send them to Nightcliff Junior High School and then on to the senior college.

The statement that the minister made here last night needs a great deal more clarification and it needs to be circulated to the people of the Northern Territory so that they know what is going on. I saw the press release that he issued in the paper today and it was his usual slam at Brian Ede without providing any information. The people need that information. Do we have a zonal system now? Will people be restricted as to what schools they send their kids? I see the Chief Minister shaking his head but that is what the minister was stating.

We cannot believe the numbers that we are told. The minister told us that, next year, the number will be 1250 or less - although 1300 may be exceeded a bit next year. I am particularly worried that, in his mind, that has now become an acceptable number for that school.

Mr Manzie: It has been the number for the last 2 years.

Mr EDE: I know it has been the number for the last 2 years and the Casuarina Secondary College Council has been complaining about it for the last 2 years. Mr Speaker, I will give you some indication of just how concerned it is. It did one of the most forceful things it could do. It went to the extent of stating: 'The council declares its intention to fix its own enrolment restrictions for 1988 if the department is unable to offer a suitable solution to excessive enrolments'. Because of the lack of action on the part of the minister and his government, the council was forced to say that it would determine its own limits. It was obvious that there must have been the most incredible breakdown.

The council is absolutely frustrated. It has been attempting for years to get the minister to accept the concept of caring education, quality education. He will not accept it and it really is time that he stopped using these throwaway lines like 'the best in Australia' or 'the best in the world' because that is not accepted by the school council at Casuarina.

He makes these other statements, Mr Deputy Speaker, and this is an indication of the man. This is an indication of the way that he plays with figures. Listen to this: '1986 ABS figures show that over 20% of Australian high schools have in excess of 1000 students so it is not an abnormal situation'. What the minister did not say was that those were comprehensive high schools. If he wishes to dispute that, I challenge him to name any senior high school which, in its first year of having Years 11 and 12, had over 1300 students. I challenge the minister to name me one. He cannot. I challenge him to tell us what is the percentage of Australian senior colleges that have over 1000 students. You will find that is nothing like 20%.

The honourable minister has taken a very good system of junior and senior high schools, which had the potential to be of real benefit to the Northern Territory education system and one that I consistently supported, and he has twisted it into something which it was not. The Northern Territory public trusted the government when all its documents and projections indicated a figure of less than 1000 until the end of 1986 and, subsequently, just over 1000. They trusted the minister and the department and now there are enrolment levels that are one-third over the maximums that were projected for the very worst years. All we can get from the honourable minister is that it is all right. It is not all right and the minister has yet to tell us what he intends to do about it. All he has done is told us how he believes he can stop it getting any worse. He has not said how he will improve it. I asked the minister yesterday to tell us what he will do. He still has not said how he will bring the figure back to around 1000. It is about time he did.

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

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, it certainly is disappointing. The information that the honourable member states that he is lacking regarding the Casuarina Secondary College and the government's role is available in Hansard. Possibly, if he had stayed in the House yesterday instead of leaving and doing other things, he would be a bit more aware. It has been stated in this House a number of times and I think it is incumbent on the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to make himself aware of the facts.

It is pretty disappointing for members of this House to have to sit here and listen to the line of the Teachers Federation pushed as the line of the opposition. Nobody in this House could argue that the quality of education at Casuarina Secondary College is not by far the best in the country. It is also most important to be well aware of the fact that, of senior education institutions in the country, the most heavily populated are universities. The number of students does not reflect on the quality of the education. It is the facilities and the quality of the teachers that count.

I again ask the honourable member to read the Hansards in detail and see what steps are being taken to ensure that problems of overcrowding do not occur. He may then be satisfied with what is going on. It is not worth wasting time in this House repeating for the third time the steps that have been taken. The performance of the member for Stuart was certainly most disappointing. The subject matter which he addressed is important but he refuses to look at what is occurring and prefers to run his negative line. That is disappointing. Repeating what has been done to ensure that problems do not occur is something that can be done twice possibly, but I think 3 times is going too far and therefore I would ask the honourable member to do some homework.

Last night, I had the pleasure of attending the Sanderson High School's musical production 'Bats'. It is the second musical production that has been put on by Sanderson High School and I would like to pay tribute to the students and the teachers who were involved in the production. The music teacher, Denise Muller, did an excellent job. I know that the 3-day season of the production was a result of many hours of rehearsals after school hours and over weekends. All those involved in both the production and the preparation of scenery and props put in many hours of work. It is indicative of the dedication of the principal, the staff and the students of Sanderson High School that they were able to produce this musical so successfully. I enjoyed a most entertaining evening.

I would like to turn now to the progress of Kormilda College's transition into an independent boarding college. The government's intention to have Kormilda managed by an independent board is well known. Indeed, I announced in December last year that Kormilda would be run as a fully independent college by a board of directors from the beginning of 1989. At the same time, I announced that an interim board of directors would guide Kormilda through its transition to independent college status during this year and next year. Honourable members may be aware that a number of claims have been made by various sectors that the changes will reduce the access of Aboriginal people to the college. It is unfortunate that allegations such as this, which certainly cause a great deal of concern amongst Aboriginal communities, should be used for point-scoring in political and industrial debates. Therefore, I would like to read into Hansard the conditions that I laid down last year for the future operation of Kormilda. Again, this is something that has been asked for by the member for Stuart. It is another instance where I have to repeat what has been occurring because the honourable member obviously has difficulty in carrying out any research. I do not mind doing it twice and, as I said, I will do it 3 times but, after that, the honourable member will have to do his own research.

These are the conditions: the college will offer an academic achievement oriented approach, a strong discipline policy within a clear religious, moral and ethical framework; the college will operate on a comparable economic footing to other boarding high schools in Australia; there will be a guarantee of places for Aboriginal post-primary, transition and secondary students; and the college will be run by a governing board with a similar composition to the interim board.

The college is operating under those guidelines. From next year, secondary courses will be offered on site for students in Years 8, 9 and 10 and Kormilda will continue to provide boarding accommodation for Year 11 and Year 12 students attending Darwin or Driver High Schools. Kormilda will continue to offer post-primary and transition courses for Aboriginal students from communities which do not have post-primary facilities.

There have also been suggestions that Aboriginal students will be excluded in the future because their parents will be unable to pay the fees. However, I can advise honourable members that agreement has been reached, in principle, with the federal government that Kormilda students will be entitled to assistance under the ABSEC scheme. While the interim board has yet to finalise its fees for next year, it is intended that these fees will be at a level that is covered by ABSEC assistance.

The college will become truly independent in January 1989 when it will be managed by a board of directors of similar composition to the interim board. The composition of the interim board will be finalised early next month with the appointment of 4 new Aboriginal members from communities in Kormilda's catchment area. This will bring the total membership of the interim board to 20, 10 of whom will be Aboriginal people, in keeping with my commitment that half the board membership should be Aboriginal people. There are 4 Aboriginal representatives from FEPPi, another from Batchelor College and 1 of the 2 ministerial appointees is Aboriginal.

Some suggestion has been made that, because there are 3 members of the Uniting Church on the interim board, the Territory government is handing Kormilda over to the Uniting Church. Of course, this is ludicrous and I am sure honourable members would be aware that there are also representatives of the Anglican and the Catholic churches on the interim board. The decision to

have a strong religious influence on the board came as a result of a survey of 34 Aboriginal communities in Kormilda's catchment area late last year. This survey told us that 50% of those communities favoured joint Aboriginal and religious control of Kormilda. The others favoured a range of different options which included government-religious control, Aboriginal-government control and Aboriginal-government-religious control. We responded by creating a board of directors with strong Aboriginal and religious representation and other members coming from the University College, the Darwin Institute of Technology, the Department of Education and the ICPA.

Most teaching staff at Kormilda have elected to remain there under a contractual arrangement with the interim board. Provision has been made for those teachers wishing to transfer from the college to be placed in other schools next year. Most public service staff at Kormilda wish to transfer from the college at the end of this year, and they will be offered permanent positions or temporary positions elsewhere within the public service as positions become vacant or available. Some staff have requested voluntary redundancy, and their cases have been referred to the Office of the Public Service Commissioner for action. Much of the debate over the changes to Kormilda College has been emotive and inaccurate. I believe anyone who looks objectively at what is happening at Kormilda will applaud this government's commitment to providing Aboriginal people with access to high-quality education.

Before closing, I come back to the contribution by the member for Stuart. I can assure the member for Stuart that there is a working group comprising people from the Casuarina college, the Darwin High School and members of the education fraternity, both DIT and the training centre, which is examining how we will cope with what we expect and what we hope will be an increase in secondary students as a result of activities by this government to ensure that our retention rates increase. This is in line with action taken by the federal government in terms of the removal of the dole for the 16 to 18 year-olds, its replacement with AUSTUDY and ABSEC and also the provision of the ability for students to obtain matriculation over a 2-year period without any restriction on the number of subjects they obtain each year.

Obviously, those changes, which have been made at very short notice, are causing problems, not only here in the Territory but all over Australia. I am sure that, with the cooperation and the enthusiasm of the people involved in education, both on the parents' side and on the administrative side, we will have no problems in being able to cater for any vast excesses. Again, I ask the member for Stuart to have a look at what has occurred during the last couple of years and at the debates in the Parliamentary Record and the directions that the government has been pointing out. We hope that he will be quite cooperative. What is occurring in terms of the areas from which the students come is spelled out quite clearly and concisely in the Parliamentary Record. At this stage, if the honourable member reads it very carefully, he will understand exactly what is occurring and will be able to make a decision and relate any comments he makes to fact, and not to the fiction that he cooks up in his head.

Mr FINCH (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to mention a long-term Territorian and a gentleman known, I am sure, to all members of this Assembly, Eddie Caffery. Eddie was a gentleman who used to sit up in the back left-hand corner, as you look from the Chair, on most sitting days. He would remain there for some 2 or 3 hours a day, taking in the activities in the Chamber. Sadly, Eddie passed away a few weeks ago, here in Darwin.

Eddie was born in southern New South Wales on 5 April 1910. He left Nowra at the age of 16 and headed to Sydney where he took up an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. He had his first taste of the Territory in 1941 when he worked at the army construction corps in Tennant Creek. He previously tried to join the merchant navy but, because of a bad leg and the fact that he was working in a reserved occupation, he was knocked back.

His efforts to join the merchant navy were obviously a sign of his desire to travel. Certainly, in later life, his wanderings took him through many areas of the Northern Territory and overseas. After the war, he and a couple of mates spent some time in Tennant Creek prospecting without any major success. Given the news of recent days, one wonders whether Eddie might have wandered through that country and may have just missed the pot of gold.

He then headed up to Darwin where he began work at Jolly's Garage on the site of the old Woolies' Smith Street store. While working for Jolly he lived in a hut at the Catholic Cathedral. Eddie was one of the volunteers who helped build St Mary's Cathedral about 30 years ago. He was a staunch Catholic who always attended Sunday Mass and a long-term friend, Father Corry, said that, although Eddie was a man of very few words, he was an active Catholic who was a great example to others.

After Eddie left Jolly's in the 1960s, he joined the Shell Company and left Darwin to work in Timor. On returning from Timor, he went to Rum Jungle to work with CRA as a mechanic. When he retired from Rum Jungle in the 1970s, he worked on the gate at the British communications base. Following that, he moved to Adelaide River where, in semi-retirement, he looked after the Adelaide River racecourse. Honourable members may recall his long-term involvement there. I first met him about 10 years ago with the formation of a Lions Club in that area.

Visitors to the Adelaide River pub may have seen a painting of a bar scene. The picture shows a couple of local characters at the bar, Eddie Caffery being a prominent figure in the painting. Eddie did not mind a glass of beer, not that he drank to excess. In fact, he was a man of quite modest and mild habits. He had a great grasp of the history of that region because he had the opportunity to talk to many of the old-timers there. On many occasions, at Tracy Lodge Hostel where he eventually came to live in Darwin, I had the pleasure of listening to some of those stories. As I mentioned, Eddie took an interest in current affairs and Territory politics. He was a staunch Territorian despite the fact that, like many of us, he was not born in the Territory. Certainly, Eddie was held in high regard by those who knew him, including his fellow residents at Tracy Lodge Hostel. It is with a great deal of sincerity that I pass on my condolences to Eddie's family who are still resident in the Nowra area.

During the sittings, the member for Sadadeen raised the matter of taxi drivers and seat belts. I have obtained some information for him as I undertook to do. To date, the policy of government has been that taxi drivers be treated the same as all other drivers in regard to seat belts. The reason is that, over the last 2½ years, 113 people have been killed in motor vehicle accidents as a result of not wearing seat belts where they were fitted. In fact, the matter has been raised a number of times before. It was discussed by the Taxi Advisory Council back in early 1986. Although it was acknowledged that seat belts would hinder taxi drivers in their efforts to defend themselves in the case of an attack on their person, the Taxi Advisory Council's attitude was at that stage that the seat belt requirement should stay. Notwithstanding that, I will certainly ask the council about its

present views. We hope that we will not have the situation that exists in Sydney and Melbourne where there have been quite malicious and, in some cases, fatal attacks on taxi drivers. In some areas, the taxi companies even go to the trouble of installing screens between front and back seats.

Certainly, this is a matter that I will raise with the taxi companies again. As a matter of interest, in South Australia, belts are compulsory and there are no exemptions. In New South Wales, taxi drivers have been exempt since 1964 but a recent parliamentary committee has recommended that they become compulsory again. In Western Australia, drivers are exempt after dark which is the main danger time for attacks but is also the main danger time for accidents. In Victoria, Tasmania and ACT, there are no exemptions.

The member for Koolpinyah asked a question about road signs. That matter will be brought before Cabinet for further consideration in order to formalise a policy. A policy has been under consideration for some time. It is not simply a matter of the standard and construction details for road signs but the permitting of private advertising signs, advertising bays and other relevant matters. I share the honourable member's concern about the proliferation of signs and I am not conceding that I am aware of any specific examples in the Darwin region. If she has any specific examples, I ask her to raise them either with myself or with the department. However, I am rather amazed that the honourable member herself has been advocating that permission be given to private entrepreneurs to erect roadside signs within the road reserve. That is a bit of a contradiction.

In regard to the specific concern about the size of a steel column used on a sign near the Noonamah area which was damaged significantly by a young driver from her electorate, unfortunately she had her facts wrong again. The honourable member claimed that the post that was there previously was some 60 mm in diameter and it had been replaced by a 100 mm diameter post. Both of those figures are incorrect. Both posts were 150 mm diameter, which is the national standard for size of posts for signs.

The vehicle, which allegedly had swerved to miss an animal, had in fact crossed the entire opposite lane of the roadway some 5 m off the shoulder, which is the separation distance that is recommended for such signs. In fact, if the driver had been unfortunate enough to swing in the opposite direction, similar distances would have taken him well and truly into the scrub and perhaps into a 2 ft diameter tree instead. The fact that that post sheared off is an indication that the size is correct. As a result, that person suffered a major injury rather than death.

As I mentioned, a review is being undertaken on the standardisation of signs - size, type and location - in relation to the road pavement and whether we should or should not be utilising information bays as opposed to allowing advertising. I hope that review will be completed in the next couple of months.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I wish to start by agreeing with some comments made by the member for Barkly concerning the present 50:50 policy of Qantas and international airlines flying people in and out of Australia. It is interesting that the federal Minister for Tourism, John Brown, last week made some comments that were reported in the Melbourne Age on 24 October. He said that he intends to pursue the matter with the Minister for Transport, Senator Evans. The problem is not confined to Darwin. It is a problem that is being experienced throughout the whole of Australia. With the boom in international tourism, Qantas just cannot keep

pace. As John Brown said, there have been people waiting for several days for flights to Australia in places such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Honolulu. Quite clearly, it is a major problem that needs to be addressed and Qantas does not have the capacity to bring in half of the people who want to come into Australia. It is only logical and sensible that that requirement be eased.

I would like to advise the Assembly that, next week, I will be meeting with Senator Evans and I intend to raise that matter with him then. I would also like to advise the Assembly that I am quite happy to participate with the Minister for Tourism in any joint approach that he would like to make to Senator Evans and other relevant federal authorities. It is an important issue that needs to be resolved. In my view, it is far more important, at this stage, to resolve that issue than to get a decision on the airport terminal, and I would be happy to make any joint approach.

Mr Finch: I appreciate your support.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, my main purpose for rising tonight was to address some remarks on issues concerning women in our community. In December, the government will be looking at replacing half of the Women's Advisory Council, as their term has come to an end. Among those departing will be the convenor of the council, June Tuzewski. I would like to acknowledge the fine job those women have done and to applaud particularly the performance of June Tuzewski as convenor. She has been diligent and extremely professional in her role. Not only this, she has been scrupulous in her bipartisan approach to issues. On our side, we have noted this and would like to be on the public record as congratulating her on a job well done.

I urge the government to be particularly careful in its selection of her successor to ensure that the credibility that June has established in the position is maintained and, further, that we build on the foundations she has put in place. It is necessary that we recognise the important role of this council and the significance it has for both government and the women of the Territory. We need to ensure, for example, that ethnic women have a voice in the council and that Aboriginal women are there in proportion to their numbers in the population. The women selected must have skills that ensure an effective contribution can be made by them. They must be truly representative of their particular communities and be able to reflect the views of all Territory women without fear or prejudice. There are many issues that they must grapple with and communicate to government. Women are under-represented on government boards and advisory bodies. There is no excuse for this situation now that we have a women's register which has been put together by the advisory council for this purpose. This way, through proper representation, their concerns can be brought to bear directly on the decisions that are made.

In general terms, women need forums to express their views, and that is particularly important for Aboriginal women who have inadequate participation in the consultative process. Women living in remote communities, whether Aboriginal or European, are similarly disadvantaged. The services women seek and need are often difficult to access because of such things as family commitments, distance from centres, lack of transport or money, or simply because we have not provided the services or understood the need.

Education, both for themselves and their children, remains an issue. The Open College needs to be very clear about programs designed to meet the needs of women in remote areas, particularly training for women in teaching their

children where ready access to schools is not possible. DIT must continue the access courses which enable women to take up study and either re-enter the work force or gain the necessary skills to facilitate their employment. 'Skills Australia', prepared by the federal minister, John Dawkins, makes specific points about the role of women in the work force and the economy of Australia.

In conjunction with this, we must continue to make available appropriate child-care facilities. This is not only for working women but for emergency situations also. Single parent families in the Northern Territory are almost double the national average and, in 1984, constituted 9.7% of all families. These families face real hardship in emergency situations. People coming to town from rural or remote areas, for whatever reasons, need sensibly-priced accommodation and easy access to child-care facilities, particularly in medical situations.

Issues of housing and accommodation are vital to women. The conditions of family accommodation impact greatly on women. The provision of basic requirements, such as water, is also of major concern on Aboriginal communities. As we all know, Aboriginal people have the worst housing conditions of any Australian group and, in the Northern Territory, it is worse, generally speaking, than in any of the states. Women are concerned about the health of their children in these appalling conditions.

Women's health itself has been the subject of a recent study initiated by the Victorian Minister for Health, Mr White. That report makes some interesting points about service delivery. It is significant to note that women in the Territory express concern about the health of their children as a more important issue than their own health. The luxury of women's health centres and other specific initiatives aimed at in the introduction of new service models, concerns about greater comfort and preservation of dignity, more women doctors, the provision of information services and so forth are beyond the expectations of Territory women, but are initiatives under consideration for Victorian women.

Something Territory women do have in common with their southern sisters is concern for their physical safety. I continue to raise the issue of domestic violence and, unfortunately, I always meet the same wall of silence from the members opposite. Whilst we applaud the support for the Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Alice Springs and Darwin, they were a long time coming and do little to prevent the incidence of rape. Such a facility is also needed in Katherine. We can do other sensible things to increase the security of women. For example, why has the Yulara Corporation never responded to requests from the women in its community for such a basic and simple facility as improved lighting along the route taken by women going home at night to the single quarters? Unfortunately, it is not only physically that women are abused. In the Territory, they still have no legislative protection against sexism and sexual harrasment. The women of the Territory are resigned to the fact that they will have to wait for a Labor government before they have the same rights as other Australian women.

However important equal rights and equal opportunities are, they pale into insignificance when you are living in poverty. I will remind honourable members of some of the statistics relating to women. In 1981-82, 60% of single-parent families in Australia had incomes below the poverty line. About 92% of single parents, who are pensioners or beneficiaries, are women. The Hawke Labor government's initiatives to combat poverty is well overdue and, of course, I am referring there to the election commitment that no one will live

in poverty in Australia by 1990, and I hope that the Northern Territory's government is prepared to play its part in that.

There are other factors that impact on the lives of women and their children and I quote from the Victorian report:

Women are more likely to be poor as their work is often underpaid or unpaid. Men and women are most often employed in different sorts of jobs, have different family responsibilities and are under different pressures. Women are employed in a narrow range of occupations, are concentrated in low-paid positions with generally poor working conditions, and have inadequate career structures.

Territory women, of course, face the added difficulty of living in isolation and in a developing economy where many of the services that are taken for granted elsewhere are simply not available. There is a considerable challenge for this government to address and meet the needs of this half of the Territory's population.

Over the years, considerable effort and resources have been put into ascertaining and reporting on the needs of women and the solutions to their problems. An impressive array of reports gather dust in the Government Archives whilst a paucity of programs have resulted from those detailed studies. In recent times, we have seen the d'Abbs Report on Domestic Violence, the Lawrie Report on Children's Services, the Groote Eylandt Task Force Report and now the Lazarus Report on Women Living in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory.

On 29 October 1986, the Chief Minister announced that he was relocating the responsibility for women's affairs into his own portfolio area. He said also that he had had discussions with key women and had directed that the Women's Advisory Council should report directly to him and that the Office of Women's Affairs would be located within his department. Along with Territory women, we looked forward to a revival of government interest and the introduction of positive programs for women as a result of the new interest displayed by the Chief Minister. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, very little has materialised.

In the same address, the minister announced that the Lazarus Report had been completed. Such is his concern that it took another 12 months before it was able to be tabled in this House. In the same speech, he also said that the Women's Advisory Council had put recommendations to government on many issues, including health, education, rural women, Aboriginal women and anti-discrimination. I would ask the Chief Minister to give details to this House about those recommendations and whether or not any of them have been implemented.

Mr Speaker, I have come to the conclusion that the Women's Advisory Council has ahead of it an enormous task. The new convenor will have to be a Wonder Woman indeed. The task of convincing this government to take any action on behalf of women is like pushing butter uphill with your nose. I would hope that this government, in the months and years remaining to it, will undertake some initiatives in that area and will start to consider the rights of women more seriously than it has in the past.

If it wants a guide for some of the things that it needs to do, it should simply go to the Lazarus Report, which makes very interesting reading indeed. The thing that struck me particularly about the Lazarus Report was the rough

end of the pineapple that women get at Yulara. It is appalling to read of the situation of women in Yulara. Not only are they basically ignored by the management of the town, they have very few services. They could safely be said to be second-class citizens. I think that that is the conclusion that the Lazarus Report comes to. I would particularly urge the government to address the problems that have been identified at Yulara because, in my view, they are quite simple to overcome in many cases. All they require is a change in the attitude of the Yulara town management and the recognition that women out there are equal with men in a pioneer society. In that particular circumstance, it is time that their role and rights were recognised and that they be given equal treatment.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to deal with a couple of matters that have arisen in the course of this debate. I will perhaps deal with the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition before dealing with the matter I originally intended to speak on.

It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to stand there and make the sort of snide and unsubstantiated comments that he is wont to make in respect of matters such as our government's attitude to women's affairs. The honourable member referred to the Lazarus Report. In his comments on it, there was no recognition of the fact that it happened to be my government that initiated the review. It is the first of its kind in Australia. There is absolutely no problem about the honourable member raising it. However, he could at least recognise the fact that our government has taken the initiative of at least supporting the Women's Advisory Council in pioneering research into the difficulties of women in remote areas and rural communities. That report has been brought out into the public arena through this Assembly. It has been tabled.

Mr Smith: What happened to the first draft of it?

Mr Ede: I still have not got a copy of it.

Mr Smith: That is right. I think I have about the only copy in existence.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says he might have the only copy in existence. At least he has a copy.

The reality is that the study was carried out as an initiative of this government. We took the trouble and financed that investigation, the first of its kind in this country. He cannot recognise that. He says that we are in error for not having implemented it.

Mr Smith: You have had it for 12 months. What have you done?

Mr HATTON: He cannot support the fact that our government has initiated this research. Everywhere else in Australia, our government is being congratulated for having done that. However, we are not congratulated by the Opposition Leader. He is always looking for the negative side of any government initiative. He ought to take a leaf out of the book of at least some of his colleagues on the opposition benches who have the decency to recognise positive initiatives of this government from time to time. It is always beyond the capacity of the Opposition Leader to be able to do that.

The issues in the Lazarus Report are being addressed, as are quite a number of other matters, and they will be addressed properly and appropriately

by the government. I am prepared to say that our government has quite a good record in women's affairs and that the Women's Policy Unit and the Women's Advisory Council have an increasingly active role in the processes of decision-making of government. We ensure that our government, in making decisions, is taking into account the needs and the perspective of women. I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to the policy and plans in respect of women's matters that were raised in the election campaign. The Leader of the Opposition fought the election campaign but it was some 6 months before he actually realised that we had all those public documents that we tabled.

Mr Smith: That is how significant they were.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, they worked fairly successfully for us during the election campaign - far more successfully than the Opposition Leader's campaign, as the numbers in this Assembly starkly demonstrate.

The documents were circulated widely during the campaign to women's groups throughout the Northern Territory. I might say that we are getting increasing support from communities for the policies that we are developing.

Mr Speaker, in order to try to justify itself as an alternative government, the opposition has developed the habit of making unsubstantiated and generalised allegations and accusations without ever providing any specifics or any substantiation. I suppose it hopes it will grab a quick headline in the newspapers. I can assure members opposite that it will not work because, quite frankly, the reason they have had to resort to that course of action is because they cannot find any specifics to relate to these nonsensical arguments.

It is a trend that seems to be developing. Yesterday, we heard some wild and unsubstantiated allegations from the member for Sadadeen. Tonight, he referred to the fact that there is a perception in some sections of the business community that the government is slow in paying its bills. This issue arises from time to time. I would remind him that this issue arose about 12 or 14 months ago when similar allegations were made. At that stage, I instituted a hotline which we advertise from time to time.

Anybody who says he is experiencing undue delay in government payments has direct access to my office. All such calls have been followed up immediately and the matter resolved as a matter of priority. Despite extensive advertising, we have had a total of 2 telephone calls raising concerns about that. They were dealt with. We have been monitoring the matter. I might remind honourable members that, during debates on the reductions in the cash position of the Northern Territory government, 1 of the reasons that was outlined late last year was the significant improvement in the speed of payment of our accounts and the reduction in our cash flow as a consequence of that.

I have some advice which, admittedly, is 2 or 3 months old but it is the latest of our periodic checks on the speed of payment and processing of cheques. This was an alleged area of delay. The average time for processing of cheques for distribution is approximately 3.6 days from receipt within Treasury to the cheque being sent out. There is a processing period before that for approval from the departments and, from time to time, that can cause delays. I reiterate the position of this government: it has consistently been our position since 1978 that we will ensure that payments are made within 30 days of accounts being forwarded. Inevitably, there will be periods when this can fluctuate. It is a matter that needs continuous monitoring by government and we do that.

I have had no complaints and I do follow this matter through fairly assiduously. The honourable member will be aware that, for a number of years, I worked as a representative of the business community and was a keen proponent of the need for government to be expeditious in the payment of accounts. I follow up regularly with the departments to ensure that they are expediting the payment of accounts and stress that any specific complaints by people that their payments have been delayed should be referred directly to my ministerial office immediately, where they can be picked up and handled through the hotline process. That is a standing invitation because we want to be made aware of any drift that may be occurring in the speed of payment. Particularly in times of high interest and difficult economic times for business, it is important that we pay businesses as quickly as possible.

Despite 2 questions in the House in these sittings and the statement today, I still have not heard of 1 example that I can do anything with. If the honourable member would like us to follow through anything, I would be happy to hear of it. I am sure it will be followed through. But, equally, the honourable member must recognise that occasionally payments will be delayed if there is some dispute over the appropriateness of a particular account. A number of the queries that have come in have been in respect of those. That is not to say that delays cannot occur. In large organisations, delays can develop. It is important for us to track the matter through and I would welcome any specific advice on it. I give the honourable member an assurance that it is my government's firm determination to follow through and ensure that payments are made as expeditiously as possible. I would urge all honourable members to raise specific matters that we can get our teeth into, rather than broad, generalised allegations which are virtually impossible to follow through.

Mr Smith: What about credit cards? Have you come to a decision about whether we are going to use credit cards for suppliers?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has raised the possibility of using credit cards for some suppliers. That matter is being addressed. It has not yet been determined. We are aware that some other governments use credit cards, particularly for small purchases. It avoids the necessity for petty cash accounts in departments. The matter is being investigated through a review of purchasing and tendering and accounts payment procedures. The Minister for Industries and Development is conducting that review in conjunction with the Treasurer. It has not been forgotten. It is being followed through but as yet I have not been advised of what measures are being implemented.

Mr Ede: Are you getting us copies of the Lazarus Report?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will find out what has occurred in respect of the printing and distribution of those particular documents to honourable members. They should have been distributed by now. If any of my departments have been lax in this matter, I offer honourable members an apology and I will ensure that they will receive the document as soon as possible.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I know that you have a pressing engagement this evening, but please permit me just a few moments to address some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition earlier.

Today, in question time, he made the statement that he was asking a question regarding the water gardens on behalf of the people of Jingili. Let me assure the Leader of the Opposition, and it is a shame that he is leaving,

that he in no way represents the constituents of my electorate. In fact, I think the majority of them would be quite horrified to learn that he made that sort of statement.

He was asking a question regarding the change of ground maintenance contractors at the Rapid Creek Water Gardens. He said that some concerns had been expressed regarding an alleged deterioration in the condition of those water gardens. The poor fellow was so misinformed about the Rapid Creek Water Gardens, or the Jingili Water Gardens - oh, he has returned; I am very pleased about that - that he did not even know which minister was responsible for them. He started by asking the question of the Minister for Transport and Works. He was redirected to the Minister for Mines and Energy, who did his best to respond to the question, but the Leader of the Opposition still has not realised that the responsibility for the Jingili Water Gardens has now passed to the Conservation Commission.

Mr Smith: Has it really?

Mr SETTER: Indeed, it has. On 23 October, the responsibility passed to the Conservation Commission, and I must say that I am quite pleased about that because it is my opinion it sits more appropriately with the Conservation Commission. It has been bounced around over a number of years from one department to another.

I understand that the original intention was that the government would construct the water gardens and that, in the long term, it would be devolved to local government. I understand also that the Darwin City Council has not been very keen to take on the responsibility for maintenance of the water gardens and so it remained with the Department of Transport and Works for some time. It then went to the Department of Mines and Energy's Water Division and, more recently, to the Conservation Commission. One imagines that it was the responsibility of the Water Division because it supplies the water that keeps the grass green and the trees growing. However, I believe it is certainly more the responsibility of the Conservation Commission because its officers know much more about maintenance of the flora there than does what is now the Power and Water Authority.

There is no doubt that the previous contractor, who held the contract for several years, performed very well. I refer to Mr Bob Adams whom the Leader of the Opposition would know very well because they are next door neighbours. Mr Bob Adams has done an excellent job over a number of years now in maintaining those water gardens. Mr Adams is a mature gentleman and I think he really took the maintenance of those gardens to heart. His approach to them was so dedicated that he treated them almost as his own personal garden. Personally, I was quite disappointed to learn that Mr Adams was no longer looking after those gardens.

Nevertheless, it is a process of government that, from time to time, tenders are called for the maintenance of various government responsibilities. The tender was due to be called for the water gardens some 12 months or more ago but, because of the uncertainty in relation to where responsibility for the water gardens would eventually fall, the previous contractor's contract was extended on a short-term basis. This happened on 2 or 3 occasions during the past 12 months until eventually tenders were called. Of course, as happens with the majority of government contracts, the lowest tenderer won that particular contract, and it was finally let on 1 October this year. That is less than a month ago, and I would have to concede that, during that 3 or 4 weeks, the standard of maintenance in the water gardens has declined. I

refer particularly to the fact that the grass is not being watered as it should be.

However, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that I am personally keeping a very close eye on it, and I will be following it up with the Conservation Commission if I continue to be dissatisfied with the performance of the maintenance contract. Having said that, it is fair and reasonable to give the new contractor a reasonable time to settle in. When you take on a contract of the magnitude of the water gardens, it takes a while to settle down, get your staff together and work out the best way to satisfy the needs of the area. I repeat that I have noticed a decline in the standards there, and I will be keeping a particularly close eye on it and I will follow it up with the Conservation Commission if the problem is not rectified in the very near future.

Mr Speaker, the water gardens is a beautiful area but, apart from attracting families - and hundreds use it every week - it also attracts some of the poorer element in our society.

Mr Smith: Flies?

Mr SETTER: I am not sure about that. However, I am talking about vandals. One of the problems is that, particularly during the early evening, a number of louts congregate in the water gardens and, from time to time, they indulge in vandalism. I can give some examples. On 23 May 1986, vandals broke into the gardener's compound and destroyed a quantity of equipment there. On 18 September 1986, there was further vandalism in some of the toilet blocks. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Bob Adams both featured in the NT News on that occasion, drawing attention to that problem.

In August this year, I was telephoned quite early on a Saturday morning and called down to the gardens by the contractor. The vandals had again broken into the gardener's compound, busted into his demountable, pulled out a lawn mower, set fire to it, stolen a box full of toilet paper and spread it all over the water gardens and Lakeside Drive. About 2 or 3 weeks ago, they went into the water gardens and tore up 20 beautiful young palms that had been growing there for some years. That is the sort of thing that we have to contend with.

How you completely overcome that problem in our society, I am blessed if I know. If anybody has the answer, please let me know. On a number of occasions, I have asked the police to come to my office to talk about this issue. I have gone to the water gardens with the police. We have inspected the damage and we have discussed how the police can best patrol that area. From time to time, they step up their patrols. They patrol the area every evening but it is not possible for them to be there for the 12 hours of the night and, of course, the young vandals are very quick to pick up when the police are about and disappear for a while. I can assure you that the police have been contacted on numerous occasions over the problem of vandalism in that area.

As well as that, I have also issued a number of press releases. Unfortunately, the media find it fairly difficult to print press releases that talk about mundane things like vandalism unless they have a nice photograph. In fact, I tried to get them down to the water gardens in August when there was toilet paper all over the place. Because it was Saturday morning, the photographer was occupied in some other place and the deadline for the next edition meant that the event did not receive coverage at the time. I issued a

press release which was printed about a week later in a single column in the Sunday Territorian. That is a shame because I think the media has a responsibility to draw these matters to the attention of the public. It is by doing that and asking for the cooperation of the public in reporting any presence of vandals or people behaving suspiciously that we can better address this issue.

There is another matter that I drew to the attention of the Department of Transport and Works. It concerns young people entering large stormwater drains, a matter which was raised in this House earlier in the week. There are 2 large stormwater drains under the water gardens. They are about 2.5 m in diameter. The children were walking up the drains. During this time of the year, with the possibility of flash flooding, there is a real danger of children being drowned.

I took that matter up. A comment was made a couple of days ago that a particular stormwater drain would have a grill placed over it. I requested grills on that particular occasion. Unfortunately, the department refused to put grills there because they claimed that young people would be caught when the water rushed down. However, it did put up a couple of signs. Unfortunately, shortly after one of those signs was erected, the vandals stole the sign. Maybe it is sitting near someone's swimming pool now. Who knows?

Apart from that, some positive things happen at the water gardens. I was able to organise a grant of around \$20 000 last year for the installation of 2 pieces of playground equipment. Indeed, I was quite amazed when I became the member for Jingili that there was no playground equipment in an area that was used by families and hundreds of children every week. I am pleased to report that those 2 pieces of playground equipment were installed late last year and are put to very good use every day of the week.

Another matter that arose was the access from one side of Rapid Creek to the other, from the Leader of the Opposition's electorate into my electorate where the water gardens proper are located. A footbridge was constructed about 12 months ago and has been very valuable in allowing people access from one side to the other.

Mr Smith: I hope you are not trying to take the credit for that.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition had been pushing for that for some time. However, I do not think that he is able to take credit for that because I know how that particular bridge was erected. I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that funds became available because of a surplus of funds from the bridge at the mouth of Rapid Creek. When that bridge was constructed, there was a slight surplus of funds and those funds were applied to construct the small footbridge that adjoins the Leader of the Opposition's electorate and my electorate.

In closing my remarks, I would like to say that, whilst I accept that there is a short-term problem at the moment with regard to maintenance of the water gardens, generally speaking, they are in excellent hands.

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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